Plato's *Gorgias*

an English Translation by Kenneth Quandt

PREFACE

Most scholars – and lay readers alike – read the *Gorgias* and the other dialogues as Plato presenting his own "philosophical" opinions, his conclusions and his reasons for them. But *who* do we modern readers think is he presenting them to, and why is he doing so? The modern reader, though never asked, would easily answer, "To me, and for my scrutiny and seeking consensus." The lay readers simply decide whether they agree with the great man, while the scholarly ones owe their employment to writing up their responses. And then in turn, Why? To whom (again) are they presenting their responses, and for what reason? Certainly not to Plato who is dead, but to their own contemporaries, present and future, who will write *their* comments in turn, all this aggregating into a "community" of discussants that keeps itself alive under the force of each projecting his own views into some imaginary and all-receiving shared space – a space hardly different, if different at all, for the *chora* of the *Timaeus*, or the cyberspace of social media "discussions" about someone, consisting in postings and counter-postings, all parasitical upon a public figure everyone knows – or has opinions about.

Under this regime all is lost, in comparison with the dialogues Plato wrote and his primary purpose in writing them! They are turned into something else by their readers and their readers' readers. In the *Gorgias*, for instance, Plato is not promoting his own views but depicting a conversation between Socrates and the famous sophist, Gorgias, interrupted first by one Polus and then by one Callicles. Socrates sets the topic of the conversation by asking the first question, but then the topic is forced to change, before agreement is reached, because Polus rudely interrupts Socrates with a new *ad hominem* "question"; and likewise the topics raised by Polus's new question and the conversation it leads to are then forced to be dropped before agreement is reached because Callicles interrupts with another objection *ad hominem*, this time a very extensive criticism of Socrates' manner and his entire way of life; a conversation does ensue, and the dialogue *does* end this time (there is nobody else present who is willing to be rude!), after Socrates has answered all that Callicles has said, who becomes less and less willing to converse at all, in the presence of the others, so that Socrates's investigation is more and more like a lecture, and concludes with a myth describing the afterlife we all are facing, with which finally is broached a solid criterion for worrying about what one is saying, and much more importantly, believing – for the beliefs and the action it leads us to take during our lives affect our souls in ways that will be punished or rewarded, if not in our conscience while we are alive, at least by the gods in an afterlife we did not believe we would have to face.

Socrates opens by asking Gorgias to tell about his profession by asking "who he is." He is a teacher of "oratory" – what he calls *rhētorikē* (ῥητορική): What, then, does teaching oratory entail? What does he teach?[a] Gorgias has come to powerful and democratic Athens (around 428BC) to offer his services for a fee, and in fact he has just finished giving a display-speech to a small audience of potential clients, which Socrates missed because he had been "detained" in the Agora. Gorgias's host in Athens, Callicles, now offers to persuade Gorgias to give another speech just for Socrates, but Socrates would prefer questions, conversation, "dialogue," over listening. Gorgias agrees to answer but in his own mind and in the mind of those present, to do so will constitute a further display and advertisement of his oratorical skills, and a bonus for the audience. He will therefore not try to provide information (this is entirely incidental) as much as to say and do what will make members of the audience all the more eager to hire him. The session with Socrates will for him be a continuation of his display, a shift from displaying a public speech to a display of being interviewed, or of "answering" questions, what these days is perhaps the primary public skill of a politician in a democratic society.

It is fundamental but consistently overlooked that in order to understand how he now behaves – how he answers Socrates and what his answers are – we must conjecture what he thinks it would please his audience to hear; and to imagine this we must ask what it is he thinks they are looking to acquire from him, what benefit to themselves might justify the not-inconsiderable expense of hiring him. And what this is, in the Athens of the day, is no mystery: His students desire political power and influence, won by the ability to *persuade* in the assembly, the council, and the law courts. But to achieve this desire immediately presents him with two problems. First, his honesty and self-knowledge as he puts himself up into politics: will he openly admit to himself and others that he wants power and influence, or will he more likely join the ever-forming elite-to-be who conspire with each other to achieve hegemony without really admitting that this is what they are up to, neither to

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a First of all, and by the by, it is not a Ph.D. in "Rhetoric." We must expel this ubiquitous translation for the term *rhētorikē*, at least as this term is used in this dialogue and elsewhere in Plato. Indeed, Plato devotes two dialogues (this one and the *Phaedrus*), and parts of others, to poke around as to its uses, and to expose and debunk the high status it is accorded. The problem persists today, both in general parlance and in the vocabulary of the academy. I recently asked a doctoral candidate focusing on "Rhetoric" at the major European university whether she considered "rhetoric" merely to be the name of an academic department, or does she think it something else? Here was her response:

> No, of course I don't think rhetoric is only a name of an academicdepartment. It is really hard to give a holistic definition of rhetoric (from my limited knowledge, I cannot still now quite well define it.) Because different people have different concepts of their own rhetoric.

It is unusual that the fundamental definition or scope of a field of study should be up in the air, even for those who say they are working in the field as professionals. Something like this happened a hundred years ago in the field of Physics, when in 1931 no Nobel Prize was awarded for physics since the physicists could not agree on what they were doing; chronically, moreover, it infect the self-conception of an academic Department of Philosophy (indeed it was for this reason that though I am a philosopher, I chose graduate work in Classics, where what the department was doing was not up for grabs or sudden re-definition). In the case of "rhetoric" however, the problem goes back to the term's first uses (not *rhētōr* [ῥήτωρ], for there have always been orators – but ῥητορική, the putative art or science of oratory; so also does Plato here coin *rhētoreuein* [ῥητορεύειν: 502D] which with non-committal opacity only means "to do what orators do"). In fact, its history as a putative art begins with Plato's *criticism* of it. The first use of the term we have occurs here, at the beginning of his *Gorgias* – and the brunt and even the purpose of the criticism it here receives is to deny that it is an art, indeed to impugn it its very name, *rhētorikē*, for this feminine adjective presupposes a noun, and the noun presupposed is τέχνη (art).

themselves nor to each other – let alone exposing themselves to the dangerous question whether they deserve it? The other problem is of course the fact that average men are not as well suited to decide important questions as are their superiors, and also that despite or even because of its incompetence the mass rushes to the bottom grasping after consensus on a vital question democracy makes them responsible to answer when they know they are incompetent to answer it, and as a corollary who they will lynch when things unaccountably go south. A person eager to participate in politics will more likely have his own interests in mind than that of the polis, or may even consider his own interests as being identical to theirs. In the former case he will conceive that he must deceive the audience in order to persuade them; in the latter he is required to do so, though he knows not whether for good or ill. If he is a naive and honest man he will hold to the apothegm of Cato the Elder – *Rem tene, verba sequentur* ("Keep your eyes on the issue: the words will follow") – and eschew oratorical training as Cato did; if less naive he will stay out of politics; but if less honest instead, he will be the one who would see fit to hire a coach.

In order choose to do so, at the expense of time and money, he must, rather more specifically, believe (1) that it will make him happy to have this power of his, and, if he believes that, then also (2) that in the hurly-burly cut-throat world of the ruling elite it is better for himself, even if shameful, to commit injustice than it is to suffer it. But once he gets this far he will look to his coach for something else, indeed the one thing upon reflection he would pay the most to secure – the very thing by fearsome economy best known to the con-man so skilled at dispelling second thoughts by anticipating and preempting them: His coach will enable his student to believe, from the very first moment and of course unasked, that he will show him how to hide his true motives and conceal their inherent shamefulness: to master a technique, if I may compare large things to small, that is so very akin to that of the man who is shooting the moon in the game of hearts.

Plato's method in the *Gorgias* is first to present Gorgias himself in kid-gloves, as a master at delivering this prerequisite and preemptive reassurance; and then to present Polus as Gorgias's less than discrete enforcer, frankly defending exactly those other two prerequisite beliefs; and finally he will present Callicles, Socrates's fellow citizen in Athens, as the both the paradigmatic client for oratorical training and also the embodiment what it likely turns such a man into. In the event, he will be cutting the very figure of the movers and shakers that would drag Socrates into court on a trumped-up charge, in 399 BC.

What I have come up with in my own close reading introduces a broad corrective to the main currents of scholarship on the dialogue. Besides the basic result that there is no oratorical art in the first place, my reading corrects the common opinion that Plato and his Socrates are gentle in their treatment of Gorgias out of deference to an old gentleman: instead, for the wary reader, the negative capability of a bland treatment intensifies the depiction of his mendacity. The total absence of any reference to Gorgias's "philosophy" such as it is, is due to the fact that what Gorgias himself might believe, if anything, is quite irrelevant to his teaching and the way he presents it. As to Polus, the usual camp of systematic critics concentrate at length, and among themselves, as to whether Socrates's arguments against his corrosive propositions are conclusive or fallacious, beliefs that Polus himself has no reason to believe but only defends so as to give further cover for those present to become

students of his boss, Gorgias. As to Callicles, the Oxford commentator E.R.Dodds finds him a character of Nietzschean dimension for his forceful acumen and daring radicalism, and even imagines that Plato for these reasons envies the Callicles he has invented – when in fact Plato puts into his mouth the most immoralist outlook ever dramatized in Western literature and reveals him a hopeless addict to pleasure.

All three of Socrates' interlocutors are despicable persons; the overall structure of the dialogue is "three-on-a-match." Gorgias's self-assured mendacity, the mercenary immoralism of Polus, and the vapid and degenerate egoism of Callicles, to which Plato's own fellow citizens might also be liable, serve as foil for the surprising and paradoxical challenges Plato here crafts for Socrates to use against them, arguments that, more importantly, catapult the discussion up and out of the Cave and the puddles the frogs of the *Phaedo* live in, to a world beyond the dismal horizon of their doxic lives – for the edification, instead, of Plato's intended readers, among whom I hope you will count yourself.

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INTRODUCTION

Fifth Century Athens, in its Golden Age, was at once the most powerful and the most democratic of the Greek city-states: this precarious combination called into being a new art, the art of oratory, whereby the wealth and prominence of a political career could be won by mere speech. Itinerant teachers of new techniques of persuasion bedazzled up-and-coming men with the prospect of power and fame, which they offered to teach for a significant fee. Of these teachers the most dazzling was Gorgias of Sicily.

But speech is the articulation of thought, thought the world of the soul, and the soul the seat of conscience and self-knowledge. By a miracle to which we owe the foundations of our Western Civilization, philosophy was born in Athens during this same period, most saliently in the person of Socrates, whose lifetime exactly coincided with the Athenian Golden Age. He discovered the life of the mind, and found a way to live that life with others, his fellow citizens, by an activity quite different from oratory and lecture, which he called dialogue.

The orator thinks language his tool, but in dialogue with Socrates he might discover that language knows him better than he knows himself and leaves him no place to hide: he might choose silence instead ... and even to silence his interlocutor.

An Overview

Plato's *Gorgias* is not an immediate pleasure to read, but without it the Platonic Corpus would only be the most substantial, imaginative, entertaining, variegated, influential, and edifying oeuvre by a single writer you are likely able to name. He wrote this work for the same reason he wrote the *Apology of Socrates*, his version of the defense speech Socrates delivered before the Athenian jury in 399BC – namely, to record and represent in painful detail the way the Athenians treated their fellow citizen, Socrates, to whose inspiration Plato owed both his justification and his ongoing commitment to write at all. Its purpose is more historical than philosophical, if I may put it this way, though philosophy is the true substance of the entire Socratic history.

No doubt Plato in his dialogues goes beyond what he heard and thought in the company of Socrates. What inspiration and enthusiasm he received from the encounter was expanded and enhanced by his own redoubtable gifts as a writer, a dramatist, and a psychologist, as well as by the ultimate fate he witnessed Socrates undergoing. The reception of Socrates in later literature and thought is overwhelmingly dominated by the Platonic depiction of him, as also is the self-identification of several later philosophical "schools," from the Skeptics to the Epicureans to the Stoics. To compare this multifaceted *Nachleben* with that of Jesus as he is envisioned in the four

Gospels is a commonplace, a commonplace largely due to the fact that in both cases the observer is not allowed to remain an objective bystander for very long. That the scholars feel they must and even *can* debate and disagree with each other "objectively" about both of them is more often an index of their own limitations at the same time as their high competence as scholars. But to exclude and ignore in one's account the personal fate of the divine Rabbi and the paradoxical Philosopher, who both in the end will be executed by their very fellows, would leave us with bloodless figures who would long since have been forgotten or buried in the sands of time.

We may read about Socrates's last day in Plato's *Phaedo*, just as we may witness Jesus's entry into Jerusalem in the *Gospels*, but while for the latter the trial of Pilate and Caiaphas is also vividly there described, it will be in the *Gorgias* and in it alone that Plato has delivered the needful account of how it could come about that Socrates was condemned that day. Here, if anywhere, it will be brought home even to those of us who complacently tell ourselves that we would never do such a thing to so great a prophet – a thinker whose only sin, as it is commonly put, was to "keep on thinking" – that we, too, may have counted, if not among those who found him guilty in the first vote, at least among the somewhat larger group who, in the second vote that determined the penalty, voted to condemn him to death, after he had the cheek to propose that his rightful punishment would be maintenance in the Prytany alongside the city's Olympic victors.

It is easy to believe the charges were trumped up against him, but at the same time it remains unaccountable that the majority of his fellows believed them, or voted as if they did. We have only his speech in defense, not the speeches made against him by his accusers. Having them, I believe, would take us no closer to understanding the jurors' behavior, for there was something behind the charges that moved the majority to get rid of him – something Socrates in the *Apology* calls the long-standing slander against him, underlying the justiciable charges. What I think I have learned from reading the *Gorgias* is that the way he converses with Gorgias and especially Polus is meant to exemplify the sort of behavior that peeved his fellow citizens in the agora, and that the subsequent speech of Callicles articulates and champions the real indignation, resentment, and envy his behavior aroused in them, not of course in justiciable terms as violations of law (we have already agreed the charges were trumped up), but with a defensive self-righteousness, presented as eloquently as such a position can be presented, which cloaks a corruption and immorality those fellow citizens wished they could ignore in themselves, which their one encounter with him, one day in the agora, had exposed, not only to others standing by but very much worse to themselves, brought back to the surface of their very consciousness, if they were willing to think at all. The very sight of his face would remind them of what they wished to forget, and so they called it an ugly face. But this was not enough: ugly or no, it would remind them as long as it was still around.

It is with the *Gorgias*, in my view, that Plato has revealed the motives, if not the very type, that would so vote and moreover would encourage his fellow citizens so to vote, through a sort of oratory that would please them to do wrong. Callicles is the type, otherwise unknown but completely recognizable nevertheless as the perfect counterpart to Socrates, delivering himself of answers but encumbered by no questions, aggrandizing himself entirely at the expense of others, and blind to his own enslavement to the pleasure of enslaving others and to slaking his own. He starts in full and

prideful stride, but as his encounter with Socrates brings those characteristics to the surface he becomes indignant, then bellicose, and finally truculent, refusing to continue.

A Summary of the Action

Socrates has arrived from the agora at the moment Gorgias the Sicilian has completed a display of his oratorical skills to a group of prospective Athenian clients, in the time that Athens has achieved a fearsome hegemony over all the other Greek city-states – Athens, the school of Greece, where democracy and therefore "eloquence" reign. Greater wealth and power than ever before now rest in the hands of those who can stand up in the law courts and the assemblies and win the day with compelling oratorical skill. This is what Gorgias offers to provide, for a fee. Though Socrates missed the display, he is less interested in undergoing a second performance than in learning from the master what it is in his teaching that enables a man to wield such influence. With this question the dialectical process begins, and Gorgias acquiesces in being questioned – but only because "answering" is another of his oratorical skills, and thus an opportunity to continue displaying his wares to the gathering of potential customers. Now we must be wary enough to supply what nobody there is able to say: that the oratorical skill he is offering is not, in the manner of Cicero, the rounding out of a *vir bonus in dicendi peritus*, but supplying individuals with an ability to succeed beyond their true merits. In his presentation therefore he must both hide and foster the secret motive for hiring him at the same time that he makes it attractive and even irresistible to do so. Socrates finds the very question that will bring this duplicity to the surface, by asking him whether the students he trains to perform in the law courts also know law and justice, or whether he teaches them this, also. It is surely not for rendering justice that his clients would pay him but for reaping still greater profits, so Gorgias waffles (-461A).

He is relieved by his helpmate and understudy, Polus, another Sicilian visiting along with him, who interrupts to reprimand Socrates for feigning to assert that the oratorical skill should consist in anything more than an amoral astuteness – as if Socrates were trying to make a show of impugning the integrity of Gorgias with such crass opprobrium. It will be with Polus, then, that Socrates will next engage in dialectic. He gives Polus the choice whether to ask or answer, and Polus chooses the former: "What do *you* think is involved in oratorical skill, Socrates?" But the question presumes Socrates thinks it a skill in the first place, and with his *petitio principii* Polus proves incompetent at asking good questions. In fact he is interested only in praising the teaching so as to sell it. Socrates thus teaches him how to ask him what he thinks it is and goes on to answer that it is just an ability to please the audience into agreeing with the orator rather than to offend them, a perverted use of argumentation whose counterpart is lawful speech fostering and promoting the good and opposing the bad, so that oratory is akin to the sweets of the delicatessen over against the truly healthy instructions the doctor or the trainer provides. Be that as it may, Polus responds, the orator has the life and limb of his opponents in his hands and can do what he wants to them. But does he really know what he wants? Surely he wants the good, but the delicatessen does not provide good provisions for the body; and likewise to commit or desire to do evil and injustice is harmful to one's own soul, leaving a man debilitated and unhappy (-470D).

Polus again will not believe Socrates does not envy the orator's power and tells the tale of King Archelaus, the would-be poor wretch who having carried out a series of unconscionably evil acts now sits on the throne, the happiest man in Macedonia! So Socrates again comes up with the crucial wedge-question: Polus and Gorgias's "skill" will enable one both to commit injustice and to avoid it being done them by other oratorical types, so Socrates asks which is the happier man, he who commits injustice or he who undergoes it. Surely, for Polus, it is the man who mistreats others, though it is shameful to do so (no less than this does oratory enable him to do), rather than the man who is mistreated; and likewise the wrongdoer who commits injustice without being punished is happier than the one who pays the penalty. Of course in each case it is the skill of oratory in the criminal court that might bring about the outcomes Polus prefers, but Socrates is primarily concerned not about getting the upper hand but about the fate of the soul. Polus's concession in passing that acting unjustly might be more shameful than undergoing it is enough for him to drive a wedge into Polus's edifice, and to draw the implication that as for getting the upper hand over others through persuasion, oratory would best be used to bring about the conviction of one's friends for its remedial effect, and to prevent the conviction of one's enemies just as long as possible so as to leave their souls unremedied, stewing in disease and befouled with injustice (-481B).

This high paradox now arouses a second interruption, again cloaked in incredulity, this time by Callicles whom we hardly know except for the crucial facts that he is an Athenian and a budding politician rather than a teacher from abroad: "If Socrates is right, our way of life is turned upside down!" Hereupon he delivers his Great Speech, opposing the person of Socrates (and the arguments he has used against these inconsequential charlatans from out of town). 'You have shamed Gorgias and Polus giving in to conventional beliefs, knowing as we all know that such are fabrications of the weak to protect themselves against the strong, by dressing up their democratic mediocrity with the high name of "justice," contrary to the true and real justice of Nature, where of course it is the strong who survive and rule. Of this real order of human affairs you are oblivious, fogged up in your refined philosophy, and vulnerable to the lowest accuser. Grow up from this youthful study of philosophy, which will leave you to live out your life muttering in the corner with a few young lads rather than entering the center of things and achieving something large and fine. I care for you as Zethus the politician did for his brother Amphion the poet, in the play of Euripides: grow beyond this empty talk of yours and join the real world, lest you suffer an undignified end.' (-486C)

In his usual manner, Socrates will now engage the only proposition Callicles has advanced along the way, outside his *ad hominem* remarks, that the strongest and best deserve more than the many weak. But in democracy the many are stronger… by best you mean smarter, perhaps? Yet the smart doctor does not prescribe himself more food than to a larger person… "Baloney Socrates: I am talking about political intelligence, along with the courage and strength to carry out the smartest plan!" But are these paragons of yours also able to rule themselves? Are they temperate? "You miss my meaning completely! I am talking about someone who will not be ruled by anything but will use his smarts and his guts to rule others and provide for his every desire, to the envy of them all! This is what virtue and happiness really is!" (-492C)

So now the question becomes whether this life of pleasure truly constitutes the good for man, and more particularly whether it is therefore a happy life. Callicles will always be striving for "more,"

but maybe a moderate life is happier. “No, no: all kinds of pleasure all the time,” he insists. Socrates finds the nearest possibility of such pleasure available to a man – to become an anal-passive prostitute. From this Callicles recoils in shame and comes back to conversation rather than braggadocio. The question to settle is whether pleasure and the good are in truth identical or not. Callicles thinks so, surely, but (by Socrates’s curious and surprising arguments) pleasure always includes pain, whereas the good does not include the bad; and good as well as bad men feel pleasure and pain. Callicles now claims he was “playing” Socrates in saying they were identical, just to watch him make his arguments: *of course* some pleasures are bad! (-499B)

At this point Callicles is bereft of a controversial thesis to defend. But the overall purpose of his long speech was not to prove that right makes right nor that intemperance was happiness, nor that pleasure is the only good, but to defend oratory by persuading Socrates to change his priorities and live a different life. So, zooming out, the question still on the table is, what life to live, the Socratic one of philosophy or the Calliclean one of politics: the criterion will be which leads to or consists in happiness. Hence arises the immediate question – which pleasures are good and which are bad – becomes important for determining which life to lead. But to tell which are which, for the soul, requires real knowledge, just as the doctor might know which pleasures are good and which bad for body. Socrates retrieves help from the earlier discussion with Polus: the distinction between oratory which merely seeks to please, and real argumentation whose goal is to reach the good suddenly has new relevance: more than guesswork is needed and pleased preference; can we apply that distinction in evaluating the two lives? Until now, Callicles has been saying what pleases him to say and has continually been brought back to something truer by careful thinking; predictably, as the sweep of his braggadocio becomes more and more hobbled and confined, his desire to hold forth will wane, but for now he continues, since Gorgias asks him to so that Socrates can finish (-501C). For anyone interested in the issues involved, Callicles and Gorgias have become Socrates’s clepsydra!

Socrates begins with an empirical survey: many forms of entertainment aim for pleasure rather than edification, maybe even performances of Greek tragedy before a large audience; and yet, if you took the music out of tragedy and it were mere prose, and narrowed the audience to Athenian citizens, it would begin to resemble oratory at court or assembly: do you orators also aim at pleasing the crowd? – Such is not the case with the Virtuous Orators like Pericles and others, Socrates! – Not if virtue is the life of pleasure as you were saying above, Callicles! Can you point to an orator that made better men of the citizens? – Not so easily – Well look to other trades, and how they produce something good – even architecture: it is by imposing order and decorum onto their raw materials. So also perhaps for the body, with medicine; what then for the soul? A Virtuous Orator would foster order and balance in the soul of his audience, while conversely unbridled intemperance is bad for men, though you advocated it and even called it virtue and happiness, above. (-505B)

At this point Callicles refuses to go on, and for the sake of “completing” (which by now means to reply to all the rest of what Callicles packed into this Great Speech), Socrates adopts the role of lecturer, though he begins at least by summarizing what they have established together, by asking and answering himself, all of which led to the conclusion that the good soul is temperate and not boundlessly licentious. (505C-507A) And thereupon he delivers a continuous speech, to argue that pursuing a life of temperate virtue leads to happiness and peace among men and gods, ‘so that my

advocacy of the proper use of oratory, about which you wondered whether I was serious, to convict the wrongdoer even if a friend, is correct; and correct it is that it is better suffer injustice than to commit it, as I argued with Polus, and that the orator does know justice, as I argued with Gorgias.' (-508C)

The horse seems to be heading to the barn! But now Socrates takes up that refrain in the speech of Callicles, that as a philosopher he was vulnerable to political persecution, and in particular vulnerable to orators. If it is better to suffer injustice than commit it, the edge is taken off this warning; if one wishes to avoid such mistreatment but be able to wreak it instead, he must become like those who have the power to harm him in this way and be willing to harm others! Length of life was never the first and greatest value: even the boatman who ferries people through the dangers at sea is paid very little. The orator might make much of his ability to protect people but so all the more would a maker of catapults. You want to achieve political power through oratory but to do so you will need to assimilate yourself to the very deme that you despise; and if you believe someone who tells you otherwise, you are getting bad advice (-513C).

Socrates is here sailing very close to the wind, for this last can only refer to Gorgias, who continues silently to look on. Think of the movie version, and how the camera would pan across the faces of the onlookers glancing over to him! In response to this speech, Callicles makes a new sort of remark: "Somehow what you say sounds right, Socrates… but like the many I am not particularly persuaded by you." Nevertheless, Socrates will continue, not by defending his life choice but by impugning that of Callicles: "If one were to put up his shingle as an architect people would look for a building he had built or ask where he studied; and if as a doctor whom he had healed. Just so, Callicles, now that you are entering politics, one might ask whom you have improved, in the manner of the good politician and orator we have by now depicted?" – "Score one for you, Socrates!" (-515B).

I (yes, I, dear Reader!) was shocked to hear he is just starting: from all he has said he seemed a seasoned expert! Socrates objects he is not trying to defeat Callicles but only to secure his agreement that the orator we want is the one who improves his citizens; and so he reverts to the Virtuous Orators Callicles had mentioned above. It is not clear that Pericles and the others improved the Athenians: to the contrary the Athenians rejected them in the end. – "But look what they achieved, persuading the Athenians to build their wall and their harbor!" – But such "services rendered" are not improvements of the citizens; and if they had improved *them* they would never have been rejected. Similarly with the sophists: if they are improving those who hire them why do they require pay? Surely their wards would freely repay the favor in return, and yet there are cases where the sophists have to sue for their fees! (-520E)

So now Socrates can move to the real question: which kind of politician do you aspire to be, Callicles? – "The servitor." – "A flatterer then!" – "Call it what you will, but just remember …" – "Don't say it again, that anybody who wants will be killing me!" – "You talk as if you thought yourself somehow beyond the reach of calamity, my friend!" (-521C)

With this we must recall and reflect. Callicles's Great Speech had emphasized Socrates's vulnerability in the public forum, but what of course was unmentioned in that speech was any reason why someone should in the first place attack this irrelevant nobody his speech was making Socrates out to be. And yet Callicles *had* given an indication, outside the speech, in his very first words. 'Socrates must be kidding: his arguments, if true, would turn "our" world (the world of "us men" as

he puts it) – upside down.' Thus, anybody included in his "our" would have a motive to silence Socrates in order to maintain his own position in that world, especially if "upside down" is taken hierarchically. And yet *within* the speech, the sorts of arguments Socrates makes are not depicted as widely promulgated in public places, so as to have some widespread effect that might threaten "us," but are ridiculed as being "mumbled off in a corner among three or four lads" (485D). The change we here witness in the behavior of Callicles is exactly due to the conversation he himself has just had with Socrates. When he interrupted Socrates's conversation with Polus, Callicles could imagine that the audience present would have recognized *in themselves* the threat brought by the arguments Socrates had just used with Polus, resulting in the broadside against oratory. After all, the very presence of the audience bespeaks their interest in training with Gorgias and becoming the kind of orator Socrates is criticizing – at least earlier that day.

It is not Socrates's *arguments* that bother Callicles – he ignores them at will; what bothers him is what the conversation shows him to be, both to others and perhaps even to himself. What remains is for Socrates to make the bold and obviously overdrawn claim that the true politician is none other than himself, even though entering the public arena will only arouse public anger – clearly forecasting the events in 399BC which happened some twenty years after this conversation might have taken place (if ever), and twenty years before Plato in turn submitted what it might have been to the public.

Socrates closes with a myth reminiscent of his final words to the jury in the *Apology*, where he looks forward to meeting the judges in Hades. It is his own account of the fates of the departed in Hades, that confirms the basic outlines of theology: the gods *do* exist and they *do* care about human affairs. There, a virtuous life will be rewarded, one's soul sent off to bliss forever among the Isles of the Blessed; as for the other lives one must hope his errors are remediable through penance, for if not his soul will serve only as an exemplary vision of horror, hung up and flailing in agony for all who arrive there to see. (-527E, The End)

One might hazard to speculate on Plato's intentions. Callicles's speech may be viewed as an accurate and rhetorically successful statement of what the majority of jurors actually felt that day in 399BC when they voted to condemn Socrates. It *advocates* the thing Socrates referred in his *Apology* as "the older slander against me," as opposed to the formal charges that had been brought. In the courtroom one may only bring justiciable charges, and we do not have the speeches of Socrates's prosecutors, but Callicles's speech would have given those jurors a legal but more than pleasing justification for their verdict, stemming from the the indignation and anger they might have felt when they themselves encountered him, one day, in the Athenian agora, feelings brought back now and again by the chance of seeing his ugly face in the city. Indeed, the speech could serve as a commemorative placebo for these, to recite to themselves once a year to re-forget or re-dignify their guilty verdict, in case some inkling of guilt had since glanced in their direction!

I present herewith a translation of my new edition of the Greek text as published in my new book, *The Gorgias of Plato* (Washington~London 2025), there fully explained with copious exegetical notes. For this translation I have supplied this new Introduction, minor points of information in footnotes to keep the translation clear as you read along, and larger exegetical endnotes that might help clarify the flow of the conversation and alert you to what I say that is new.

The *Gorgias* of Plato

CALLICLES: “It’s to war and battle, they say, that one should arrive as you have, Socrates!”(447)

SOCRATES: “Don’t tell me we’ve ‘arrived after the feast’ and are late!”[1]

Call. “Yes and quite a splendid feast it was: Gorgias has just finished a really fine performance for us.”

Soc. “Let me tell you, Callicles, it was Chaerephon here that made me late. He made us tarry[2] in the agora.”

CHAEREPHON: “No problem, Socrates: I will make you whole as well. Gorgias is a friend of mine and so he’ll put together a performance for us – now, if that seems best, or another time – whichever you want.”

Call. “What’s this, Chaerephon? Are you saying Socrates desires to hear Gorgias?”

Chaer. “Well that’s the reason we are here...”

Call. “Then just come to me, to my *house* that is, and *whenever* you want. It’s with *me* that Gorgias is lodging, and you’ll get your performance!”

Soc. “That’s kind of you, Callicles, but let me ask something. Would he be willing to *converse*[3] with us? I want to get some information about the power of the fellow’s art, and what it is he professes to teach. As for a performance let’s just have that ‘another time,’ as you suggest.”

Call. “There’s nothing like asking the man himself, Socrates, since this was one of the elements of his display. Just now he invited anybody within[4] to ask him whatever they wanted, and declared he would give an answer on any topic.”[5]

Soc. “That’s quite something. Chaerephon, go ahead and question him!”

Chaer. “What am I to ask him?”

Soc. “Who he is.”[6]

Chaer. “How do you mean?”

Soc. “If for instance he were a provider of shoes he would presumably respond he is a cobbler – or don’t you get my meaning?”

Chaer. “I get it and I’ll ask him.[7] Tell me, Gorgias, is it true what Callicles here says, that you profess to answer whatever question a person asks you?” (448)

GORGIAS: “True it is, Chaerephon, and in fact I was carrying out that exercise just now, and I can say that nobody has yet asked me a question too exotic[8] to answer, for many years now.”

Chaer. “It seems you really do have an easy time answering, Gorgias.”

Gorg. “Now’s your chance to try and test my claim, Chaerephon.”

POLUS: "Yes by Zeus, if only you will spend that chance on *me*, Chaerephon! Gorgias seems to me to have begged off performing. After all, he's taken us through a lot just now."

Chaer. "My gosh, Polus, do you imagine *you* could do a finer job of answering than Gorgias?"

Pol. "What difference does that make as long as I'm able to answer well enough for *you*?"[9]

Chaer. "None at all. Since *you* are willing, answer."

Pol. "Ask."

Chaer. "Ask I will. If Gorgias were a master of the art his brother Herodicus has mastered, who would we properly be calling him? Wouldn't it be the same as we call his brother?"

Pol. "Quite so."

Chaer. "So if we were saying he was a doctor we would be saying the right thing?"

Pol. "Yes."

Chaer. "And if it were of the art of Aristophon the son of Aglaophon or that of his brother that he was master of, what then would we correctly designate him to be?"

Pol. "A painter, obviously."

Chaer. "So given the art he *has* in fact mastered, by what professional designation would we correctly designate him?"

Pol. "Let me tell you, O Chaerephon.[10] Many are the arts in the world of man, invented as they have been out of devoted endeavor. For it is endeavor that ushers our lives along artfully, whereas without endeavor, life would proceed according to chance. Now of these arts, one man has a share of one and another of another, each in their different way; of the greatest of arts it is the greatest men that have a share: one of these in fact is my man Gorgias here, and he has a share in the finest."[11]

Soc. "Finely indeed does Polus seem to come equipped for speaking, Gorgias, but he is not making good on his promise to Chaerephon."

Gorg. "What can you mean by that, Socrates?"[12]

Soc. "He is not really answering what he was asked."

Gorg. "Well then *you* question him, if you please."[13]

Soc. "In case *you* would want to answer I would much prefer to ask *you*. It's clear, particularly from what Polus has just said, that he is well practiced in the 'oratorical'[14] so-called, rather than in conversing."

Pol. "How's that, Socrates?"

Soc. "Well, Polus, though Chaerephon asked what art Gorgias was the master of, you praised the art as though someone were criticizing it,[15] but you didn't answer what it is."

Pol. "So I didn't answer that it was the finest."[16]

Soc. "Quite forcefully you did. However, nobody is asking you about the quality[17] of Gorgias's art but which art it is and which kind of professional Gorgias ought to be said to be. Just as before, when Chaerephon laid out some cases for you and you responded to him succinctly, (449) so now follow that method and say which is his art and what we are to call him. Or better, Gorgias, tell us on your own behalf what we are to call you, and of what art you are a master."

Gorg. “The oratorical, Socrates.”[18]

Soc. “And so one ought call you an orator?”

Gorg. “A good one, Socrates, if you would call me ‘what I hope and brag to be’, as Homer puts it.”[19]

Soc. “Surely I would.”

Gorg. “Then call me that.”

Soc. “And shall we also declare you able to make others into orators?”

Gorg. “Well, I do profess to do so, both here and elsewhere as well.”

Soc. “Would you perhaps be willing, Gorgias, to continue in the manner of our conversation just now, with first a man asking and then a man answering? As to this lengthy expression we just saw – the sort of exordium Polus launched into – might you be willing to put that off for another occasion? Make good on your promise – don’t play false – and acquiesce to answer what is asked in the briefer manner.”

Gorg. “Among answers, Socrates, there really are some that must of necessity make their statements with length. Nevertheless, I assure you I will endeavor to make my answers as short as possible. In fact this, too, is one of the items I claim, that nobody could say the same thing in fewer words than mine.”[20]

Soc. “I assure you that’s what we need, Gorgias. In fact make me a display of just this, of short speaking, and put off the display of lengthy speaking for another time.”

Gorg. “Alright I will: than nobody, you will say, have you heard a shorterspeaker.”

Soc. “To move on, then, you are claiming to be a master of the oratorical art and that you can make another man also an orator, but oratory: what things is it actually about? For example, weaving is about the manufacture of cloaks – right?”

Gorg. “Yes.”

Soc. “And musical art is about the composing of melodies?”

Gorg. “Yes.”

Soc. “Hera bless you, Gorgias! How I admire your answers, and how you are answering in the shortest possible way!”

Gorg. “The reason is that I think it quite appropriate to do this.”

Soc. “I am glad to hear it. So now answer me in the same way about the oratorical art, too: about which things is it a mastery?”

Gorg. “About speeches.”

Soc. “Just ‘speeches,’ Gorgias? The speeches that explain, in the case of the sick, what kind of regime would make them healthy?”

Gorg. “No.”

Soc. “So oratory is not about any and all speeches.”

Gorg. “Certainly not.”

Soc. "But it does make people able to speak."

Gorg. "Yes."

Soc. "And to be knowledgeable about the topics about which it enables them to speak?"

Gorg. "Yes, how not?"

Soc. "So (450) to follow up on what we are now saying, it would be the medical art that enables persons to speak about and understand the sick."

Gorg. "Necessarily."

Soc. "So the medical art, too, is about speeches, as it seems."

Gorg. "Yes."

Soc "Namely the speeches that are about diseases."

Gorg. "Exactly."

Soc. "The gymnastic art is also about speeches, those about the body being in good shape and bad shape."

Gorg. "Quite."

Soc. "And to be sure it's the same with the other arts, too. Each of them is about speeches, namely the ones that concern the activity that is the peculiar province of the art."

Gorg. "Seems so."

Soc. "And so just why do you not call the other arts oratorical arts, being as they are about speeches, if that is what you would say the oratorical art is, the art about speeches?"

Gorg. "Because, Socrates, the competence of the other arts lies in the work of the hands and other such actions if I may put it this way, whereas in oratory there is no such business at all with the hands. To the contrary, all its operation and all the success it achieves[21] come through speech. This is the reason I make my claim that the oratorical art is about speeches, in a rigorous sense I would say."

Soc. "Am I then catching on to what sort of thing you are calling it? Perhaps I'll know if only you'll answer:[22] We have arts, right?"

Gorg. "Yes."

Soc. "Now of all these arts, I fancy that some consist largely in activity and need a minimum of speech, while others need none at all but could complete what they do even in silence, like painting and sculpture and a lot of others. It is these sorts you seem to mean when you say they are not the oratorical art."

Gorg. "You are taking up my meaning quite nicely Socrates."

Soc. "But another group of arts execute their entire function through speech, needing no supplement of actions at all, if you will – or quite a small amount – like arithmetic and counting and geometry, and dice-playing for that matter, and many others – arts a few of which might have a virtually equal amount of speech as action, whereas the majority have more speech than action, so that viewed overall the entire 'operation and success they achieve' comes through speaking – and it is to this last group that you seem to be arguing that the oratorical art belongs."

Gorg. "True."

Soc. "But still, you know, I'd guess you don't want to call any one of this latter group oratorical, merely because on the face of it you have said that 'the art that achieves what it achieves through speech is oratorical,' so that a person could latch upon what you say, in a captious and literalistic way, 'Therefore arithmetic is oratorical.' No, I don't think you are arguing that arithmetic or geometry is oratory."[23] (451)

Gorg. "You guess right, Socrates and have taken up my meaning fair-mindedly."

Soc. "So then take your turn to complete your answer to the question I've asked. Since a certain one of these arts that operates largely by means of speech is oratorical, but there are in fact others that are of this kind, try and tell me *which* art, wielding its power through speech in *what* field, is the oratorical art? Just as if someone asked me, 'Socrates, which art is the arithmetical art?' I would give him the reply you just made, that it is one of the arts that wields its power through speech; and if he went on to ask, 'Of those concerning what subject?' I would say of that it is knowledge of those concerning the even and the odd, and how much each of these two are. And if he asked me another question, 'And logistic: which art do you say *that* is?' I would say that this one too belonged to the group that govern what they govern by means of speaking. But if he went on to ask, 'Concerning what?' I would answer, to adopt the style of the scrivener, that the logistic art is 'the same as arithmetic in all the ways above'[a] – for it concerns the same thing, the even and the odd – but it differs to this degree, that the art that takes charge of the questions of how these relate to themselves and to each other in quantity is the art of logistic. And say someone should challenge me on astronomy, once I had said it wields its entire authority by means of speech, and should ask me, 'But these speeches that belong to astronomy: what are they about, Socrates?' I would say they are about the movement of the stars and the sun and the moon, and their relative velocities."

Gorg. "And you would be speaking properly, Socrates."

Soc. "So now you take a turn, Gorgias. The fact is that the oratorical art is among those that carry out their entire activity and wield all their power by means of speech, correct?"

Gorg. "So it is."

Soc. "So, out of those, try to tell us concerning what is it that, out of all entities, the speeches the oratorical art uses are about?"

Gorg. "The most important of all human things, Socrates, and indeed the best."[24]

Soc. "But Gorgias, you are asserting something again disputable and therefore not yet definitive. I imagine you have heard men singing that ditty at drinking parties, in which they list off in song how "being healthy is the best thing but the second is to become beautiful, while the third (quoting still from the author of the ditty) is to become wealthy, fair and square." (452)

Gorg. "Yes I have heard it, but what is the connection?"

Soc. "Here is the connection: Let's imagine the providers of those things the poet praised in his ditty showing up at your side – the doctor that is, and the trainer and the businessman – and let's say the first to speak was the doctor and he said, 'Socrates, Gorgias is deceiving you. Your fellow's art concerns not the most important good for men – but mine does!' If I then asked him, 'But you, what kind of artist are you to say that?' He would probably answer that he is a doctor. 'What, then, are you saying? That the thing your art achieves is the most important good?' 'How could that not be health, Socrates? What greater good is there for mankind than health?'

a Perhaps a reference to the standard language by which a "rider" or codicil to a measure is proposed in council.

"Imagine then that the trainer would argue, 'I, too, would be surprised, Socrates, if Gorgias has a more important good to display coming from his art than I have coming from mine.' I would again respond by asking, 'But you, sir – who are you and what is it that you produce?' 'Trainer's my name, beauty and strength for men's bodies is my game.'

"After the trainer the businessman would speak, with scorn I imagine against each and all: 'Think about it, Socrates! Is there going to be some obvious better than wealth, in your eyes, whether it be what you get by associating with Gorgias or with anybody else?' We would reply, 'Aha! Is that what *you* provide?' He would say it is, and we would ask, 'But being who?' 'A businessman;' and we will say, 'And *you* for your part choose wealth to be the most important good for mankind?' and he would reply, 'How could it not be?' We would say, 'Yet my man Gorgias here disputes this, and says the art one gets in *his* company results in a more important good than yours does,' to which he would surely reply, 'And just what is this good you are referring to? Let me hear it from Gorgias!'

"So come along, Gorgias. Take it that you were being asked this question both by them and also by me, and answer what is this thing you, for your part, declare is the most important good for mankind, and that you are the professional that brings it about.

Gorg. "The thing, as I said before, Socrates, that is the most important good, in truth, and is what confers freedom upon the men that have it, and the power to control others in his respective city."[25]

Soc. "So what is it that you describe in this way?"

Gorg. "Persuading. Being able to persuade with speeches, whether it be in a law court the jurors or in the council the councillors or in the assembly the assemblymen or in any other gathering,[26] whatever constitutes a political gathering. Let it be known that this power[27] will in turn place that doctor in your thrall, and that trainer in your thrall, and as for that businessman of yours, he will find himself doing business for somebody else and not himself, namely for *you*, the man who is able to speak and thereby persuade these several masses."

Soc. "Now, I think, you are coming as close as one can hope,[28] Gorgias, to having revealed what art you take the oratorical art (453) to be. You are saying, in fact, if I basically get your meaning, that the oratorical art is a 'producer of belief,' and that this, on the whole and in chief part, is what it busies itself to achieve. Or is there something more you can say oratory is able to do, beyond creating persuasion in the soul of those who are listening?"

Gorg. "Nothing at all, Socrates. You have marked it off adequately: this is its chief element."

Soc. "So listen, Gorgias. When it comes to me, you may be sure, as I have persuaded myself, if *anybody* who is conversing with someone wants to know just what it is they are talking about, I am surely one of those people – and I would think this much of you, too."

Gorg. "But what do you make of this?"

Soc. "I'll tell you straight. For me, as to this persuasion that comes from the oratorical art, as to what it is that you are talking about and about what things, you may be sure that I do not know *exactly* what you have in mind, despite the fact that I do have my suspicions as to what you are saying it is and about what. Nevertheless, I will ask you what is the persuasion you are saying comes from oratory, and about what things. But why do I ask you when I have suspicions of my own, rather than taking the initiative to say what those suspicions are? It is not out of deference to you personally but deference to our discussion, so that it might proceed in such a way as to make as clear and certain as possible what is being discussed.[29] Consider therefore and decide whether I am justified in putting this question to you – just as if I were now asking who is Zeuxis among the portrait painters and you said he is the one

that paints portraits: wouldn't I be justified to press the further question, 'The one who paints which kinds of portraits, and where?'"

Gorg. "Quite justified."

Soc. "And isn't that because there are other portrait painters painting lots of other kinds of portraits?"

Gorg. "Yes."

Soc. "Whereas if on the other hand nobody else than Zeuxis were painting, in that case you would have already acquitted yourself of answering well?"

Gorg. "How not?"

Soc. "Then come and tell about the oratorical art. Do you think that it alone produces persuasion, or do other arts do this also? I mean the following sort of thing: if you have a person who teaches something – anything – is he persuading in connection with what he is teaching?"

Gorg. "No indeed, Socrates! He is persuading more than anyone!"

Soc. "So then let's go through the same arts we just went through. Arithmetic teaches us how big a number is, as does the arithmetical man."

Gorg. "Quite."

Soc. "Does it also persuade?"

Gorg. "Yes"

Soc. "And so the arithmetical art is also a 'belief producer'."

Gorg. "It appears so."

Soc. "And if someone asks us, 'Of what sort of persuasion and persuasion about what?' I presume we will answer him by saying it is a teacherly persuasion about numbers (454) and how large they are. And we will be able to show in the case of each and every one of the arts we reviewed before that they are 'persuasion producers,' and what sort of persuasion they provide and about what – no?"

Gorg. "Yes."

Soc. "Therefore it is not only the oratorical art that is a 'persuasion producer'."

Gorg. "What you say is true."

Soc. "But since you agree that it is not this art alone that carries out this task but that there are others that do so also, we would be justified, as we put it above in the case of the portrait painter, to follow up and confront the man who has said this[30] with the question, 'Of just what kind of persuasion, then, and persuasion about what, is oratory the art?' Or do you not think it justified to confront him with this follow-up question?"

Gorg. "No but I do."

Soc. "Then answer that question, Gorgias, given the fact that you do think this."

Gorg. "The *sort* of persuasion I say it provides, is that sort that occurs *in* courts of justice and the other crowds as I was saying a moment ago, and *about* those things: what is just or unjust."[31]

Soc. "Indeed I was suspecting you were speaking of that kind of persuasion and about those topics, Gorgias. Still, don't be surprised if soon again I ask you something that seems obvious but nevertheless put it to you as a question – as I have said, this is only to enable the argument to succeed step by step and not out of consideration for you, lest we settle into assuming on our own what each other is thinking so as to ambush each other's arguments.[32] But please, decide for yourself how you would want to carry on, in accordance with the position you have taken."

Gorg. "In my judgment you are doing the right sort of thing, Socrates."

Soc. "So come then and answer me this: Is there something you would call 'having learned'?"

Gorg. "There is and I do."

Soc. "How about 'having become sure'?"

Gorg. "I do."

Soc. "Do you think they are the same thing, 'having learned' and 'having come to trust,' and learning and trusting for that matter, or are they different?"

Gorg. "For my own part, Socrates, I'd guess they are different."

Soc. "You guess well, but from the following you will *know* it is true. If someone should ask you, 'Is there such a thing, Gorgias, as false certainty as well as true?' I believe you'd say yes."

Gorg. "Yes."

Soc. "But knowledge? Is there both false and true?"

Gorg. "No way."

Soc. "For in their case we know they aren't the same thing."

Gorg. "That's true."

Soc. "And yet those who have learned have been persuaded no less than those who have been become certain and have come to trust?"

Gorg. "That's correct."

Soc. "Would you want us then to posit two kinds of persuasion, one that brings about feeling certain without knowing and another that brings about knowledge?"

Gorg. "Quite so."

Soc. "Now which of the two kinds of persuasion does oratory produce, in courts of justice and in other crowds on the topic of justice and injustice? The type from which confidence arises without knowing taking place, or the one from which knowing arises?"

Gorg. "I think it's clear that it is the type from which confidence arises."

Soc. "So the oratorical art is (455) the '*trusting* persuasion producer,' not the '*teacherly*,' on the topic of the just and the unjust?"

Gorg. "Yes."

Soc. "And the orator, in turn, is not a teacher-man of the courts of justice and the other crowds on the topic of the just and unjust, but a 'confidence-man' only. After all, he could not instruct such a large crowd about matters so great in so little time."[a]

Gorg. "Certainly not."

Soc. "Come, then, let's see what we are actually saying about the oratorical art.[33] For my part, I cannot quite grasp what I should say. When it is about selecting physicians for the city that a gathering occurs, or about shipbuilders or some other group of providers, on that occasion shall I say the oratorical expert will not give counsel? For clearly in these several selections it will be the most skillful man that must be selected. Nor when it is about the building of walls or the furnishing of harbors and dockyards: rather, the architects will give counsel. Nor in turn when the deliberation is about the choice of generals or the choice of a certain formation to use against the enemy or capturing a territory: rather, the experts in generalship will then be the ones giving counsel, and the oratorical expert will not. How about you, Gorgias? What is your attitude about these things? For since you claim that you yourself are an orator and also make others oratorical, it would be appropriate to receive information about this art of yours from none other than you. And recognize that I am at the same time being zealous for your cause. For it may be the case that one of those who listened to you within is wanting to become your student, as I perceive people are now doing in virtual droves, who may perhaps be ashamed to put this question to you.[34] Though you are being posed the question by me, think of it as if it were being put to you by them: 'What will we get once we study with you? On what matters will we become able to counsel our city? Will it only be on questions of justice and injustice, or also on the subjects Socrates just now mentioned?' Try to answer them."

Gorg. "Try I will, Socrates, to unveil to you clearly the power of the oratorical art in all its glory, for you have given me just the segue I need. After all, I presume you know that those very dockyards you mention and the walls the Athenians call their own, as well as the furnishing of the harbors, happened because of the counseling of Themistocles, and others of these because of the counseling of Pericles – and not because of your craftsmen."

Soc. "I have heard, Gorgias, about Themistocles's influence; as for Pericles I was myself in the audience when he advocated the inner wall." (456)

Gorg. "And whenever there is a choice taken on the topics you just now went through, Socrates, you can see with your eyes that the orators are the ones giving counsel and the ones that win the measures concerning these things."[35]

Soc. "It is exactly because I have wondered at this, Gorgias, that I have been asking all along what is the power[36] of the oratorical art. For it strikes me as superhuman when I see the way it wields such sway."

Gorg. "If only you knew the whole story, Socrates! It's as if it contained within itself all the powers there are, and marshals them all under its sole command. I will give you a telling indicator of this. Often in the past have I gone in with my brother, and with other doctors, too, to the bedside of one of their patients who was unwilling to take his medicine or to give in to his doctor to be cut or cauterized; and though the doctor lacked the power to persuade him otherwise, I persuaded him, and I did so with no other art than oratory. I declare that if an oratorical expert likewise goes in to a city – any city you wish – along with a doctor, and they should be required to contend in speech with each other, in the assembly or in some other gathering, as to which of them should be chosen as city doctor, the doctor

a He refers to the water-clock (*clepsydra*) that meted out the time a litigant was allowed to hold forth.

will fall out of view, and instead the man who is able to make a speech will be chosen, if that's what he wants. And if he should contend with any other 'provider' you may wish to name, it would be he, the oratorical expert, who would persuade them to select himself and not the other, no matter who he was. For there is no subject on which the oratorical expert could not speak more persuasively than any of the providers, in the presence of a large audience.

"Such then is the extent and nature of this art's power, and yet I must add that one must, Socrates, deploy the art of oratory just as one would deploy any skill in athletic competitions as well. For the arts of competition also ought not be deployed against any and every person merely because of this, that a person has learned to box, or to fight the pancration, or to battle in armor, and has thus become stronger than friends as well as enemies. One ought not because of this beat up his friends or stab them, and so kill them. Nor for that matter, Zeus be my witness,[a] if a person in good physical condition has done a stint at a wrestling studio and has become an expert at boxing, and then goes on to assault his father or his mother or some other member of his household or a friend, one ought not because of this despise the physical trainers or the men that teach fighting in armor and exile them from the cities. Those worthies, for their part, handed it down for its just use by these students, against their enemies and those who have wronged them, for the purpose of defending against them, not to initiate an aggression, (457) but the others perverted it so as to use their physical strength and their skillful expertise for improper ends. Thus it is not the teachers that are wicked nor the art that is culpable or wicked because of this, but rather those who would employ it I'd say improperly.

"The same argument applies to the oratorical art. Able he is, our orator, to speak against any opponent and about anything, in such a way as to be more persuasive in the presence of large audiences on almost any topic, if he so choose. But not at all because of this ought he strip the doctors of their reputation, merely because he would have the power to do so, nor the other providers, but must employ the oratorical art with fairness, just as one must employ athletic skill. If a person I'd say has become oratorical and thereupon by means of this power and this art does commit injustices, one ought not despise the man who taught him and exile him from the cities. All he did was pass on the skill for a just man's use, whereas the other used it in the opposite way. To despise the man who employed it in a manner that is improper, is just – and also to exile him and to execute him – but not the one who taught him."[37]

Soc. "What *I* daresay, Gorgias, is that like myself you have experienced many discussions and have come to observe what I have. Men are not so able to converse in such a way as to define clearly what it is they are trying to discuss as they try to learn from and teach each other so as to bring their conversations to completion, but rather that if they have different views on some point[38] and the one says the other is incorrect or unclear in what he says, they become angry and think that they are arguing out of rivalry about the positions they are taking, and that they are trying to beat the other out of pride rather than to search for and learn the truth about the topic they are talking about. Among these, some terminate their conversations in the ugliest of ways, giving themselves over to slander, and dealing out as well as being dealt a treatment one to the other that then embarrasses the group listening to their conversation for having thought it worthwhile to pay attention to men of such ilk!

"But 'for what purpose,' as you put it, do I say all this? It's because in our present conversation you seem to me to be arguing things that don't really follow from or jibe with what you were saying at the beginning about the oratorical art. At the same time, I am afraid to test you step by step, worried you might take my arguments not to be contending with you about the problem so as to clear it up, but contending with you about you, personally. (458) For my part, if you are the kind of person I am, I would gladly interrogate you step by step; but if not I would let it go. And what is this

a With the oath he feigns indignation.

kind of person I am? I and others like me would gladly be refuted if arguing something false or gladly be doing the refuting in case someone else should argue something false, and would be no less glad to be refuted than to refute. For in my view this would be the greater boon, to the same extent it is a greater boon oneself to be released from the greatest of evils than to release somebody else. For I think there is no evil for a man greater than false belief about the things we are discussing just now. So – if you are like this also, let's have a dialogue; but if it seems better just to let it go, let's call it quits and break off our discussion."

Gorg. "Well, Socrates, though I am of course of the very kind you have described, still more, perhaps, ought we take into consideration those who are present. It's been a while now, even before you two came, that I was giving a big presentation to the people here, and we will be stretching things out even further if we carry on a dialogue. So we ought to be mindful how it is for these people here, in case we are detaining some of them from doing something else they might be wanting to do."

CHAEREPHON: "The general commotion you can hear for yourselves, Gorgias and Socrates, from these men, wanting as they do to listen if only you will continue talking; but for myself I pray I never become so busy that I would pass up arguments on these topics carried on in this way because I had something else more profitable to be doing."

CALLICLES: "Yes, by the gods, Chaerephon! For I myself have attended many conversations in the past but cannot say I have ever felt such enjoyment as now. For me at least, if you were willing to spend even the entire day in dialogue, you'd only make me glad."

Soc. "Well, Callicles, I have no objection, if only Gorgias is willing."

Gorg. "You've left it only to me to take the shame for being unwilling, especially since I myself issued the challenge to ask me whatever question one wanted. If it seems best to these people here, go ahead and conduct your dialogue: ask whatever you want."

Soc. "Alright then hear, Gorgias, what I found so surprising in what you said. It could be that you were arguing correctly and I just didn't understand correctly. Do you claim to be able to make a man an orator if he is willing to study under you?"

Gorg. "Yes."

Soc. "And thus to become persuasive on any topic in a crowd, not by teaching but (459) by persuading?"

Gorg. "Quite so."

Soc. "And did you just argue that even on the topic of health the orator will be more persuasive than the doctor?"

Gorg. "Yes I did, in a crowd at least."

Soc. "But this 'in a crowd' expression of yours means among those whom you assume lack knowledge? For presumably he would not be more persuasive among those have knowledge."

Gorg. "That is true."

Soc. "So if he is more persuasive than a doctor this implies he is more persuasive than a knowledgeable person?"

Gorg. "Quite so."

Soc. "While he himself is no doctor?"

Gorg. "Yes."

Soc. "But if the man is not a doctor then he is presumably unlearned in the things in which the doctor is learned?"

Gorg. "Clearly that is so."

Soc. "Therefore, the person who is ignorant will be more persuasive among the ignorant than the person who knows – if, that is, the orator is more persuasive than the doctor? Is that what follows or does something else follow?"

Gorg. "It follows in that case at least."

Soc. "But doesn't it hold this way for the orator and his oratorical art in each and all the other arts, that his art does not need to know the truth about their various subject matters, but rather must have invented some persuasion-device so as to appear to ignorant people to know more than the knowers do?"

Gorg. "Quite a *bonus* isn't it that a person who does not know the other arts but knows only this one, should in no way be worsted by all those specialists!"

Soc. "Whether or not your orator comes off worse than the others by virtue of having only this ability you describe we will consider in a moment, if it becomes relevant. But first let's investigate this: Is it the case that the oratorical expert has the same relation to the just and the unjust, the ugly and the beautiful, and the good and the bad[39] as he has to health and the subject matters of the other arts? That is, does he also not know what the good and what the bad are in themselves, or what is beautiful and what is ugly, or just and unjust, but instead has mastered a device for persuasion on these topics also, which makes him seem among ignorant persons to know more than the man who does know, though he does not? Or is it that he does need to know and the candidate who would learn oratory must likewise master this before coming to you; whereas if he hasn't, you as a teacher of oratory will teach none of this to the student who comes to you – it's not your job to, after all – but will make him *seem* to know those sorts of things as he stands among the many, though he doesn't, and *seem* to them a good man though he isn't?[40] Or will you be unable even to begin to teach him oratory unless and until he has learned the truth about these things? Or what is your position on this, Gorgias?[41] (460) In Zeus's name pull back the veil from oratory, as you said a moment ago, and reveal its true power!"

Gorg. "Well, Socrates, I'd guess if he happens not to know he'll learn that, too, from me."

Soc. "Bear with me, then. You've said something fine: that if you really are to make a person a trained orator, it is necessary that he know the just and the unjust, having learned them either before he came or afterward, from you."

Gorg. "Quite."

Soc. "So what about this: Does a person who has learned about matters of building become a trained builder?

Gorg. "Yes."

Soc. "And the person who has learned about musical things becomes a trained musician?"

Gorg. "Yes."

Soc. "And about medical things a medic? And similarly with the other categories of things: the person who has learned the respective things becomes the sort of person that the respective knowledge turns him into?"

Gorg. "Quite so."

Soc. "By the same argument is the person who has learned about just matters just?"

Gorg. "I should think so, most assuredly!"[42]

Soc. "But presumably the just man behaves justly?"

Gorg. "Yes."

Soc. "So we can infer that the trained orator is a just man, and that the just man has a mind to act justly?"

Gorg. "Well, it *seems* so."

Soc. "So never will the *just* man, since he is just, be of a mind to act unjustly?"

Gorg. "That follows necessarily."

Soc. "But our trained orator necessarily, by the force of what we have said, is just."

Gorg. "Yes."

Soc. "Therefore the trained orator will never be of a mind to act unjustly."

Gorg. "Well, it *seems* at least that he won't."

Soc. "So do you remember what you said a moment ago, that one ought not to bring charges against the trainers and expel them from the cities if the boxer employs the boxing art and also commits an injustice, and that analogously if the orator uses the oratorical skill unjustly you advised us not to bring charges against the man who taught him and drive him out of the city, but to bring them instead against the man who acts unjustly and uses the skill incorrectly. Was all this said in your speech, or not?"

Gorg. "It was said."

Soc. "But now we are seeing that this same person, the trained orator, would never act unjustly – aren't we?"

Gorg. "So we are."

Soc. "And, mark you, during the conversation we had at the beginning, we were arguing that the oratorical art was not about speeches concerning the odd and the even but speeches concerning the just and the unjust – correct?"

Gorg. "Yes."

Soc. "Let me tell you, at that point I took you to be saying that oratory could never be unjust in practice given that it is always formulating arguments about justice, but then a moment later when you were arguing that the orator (461) *could* use oratory unjustly I was so struck with the sense that what we were saying was out of tune with itself that I made those remarks that if you thought it profitable to be refuted, as I do, it was worth the trouble to discuss the matter, but if not that we should just let it go. And still later, in the course of our closer scrutiny of the matter, you can see with your own eyes that we have now gone back to agreeing that it is impossible for the trained orator to use oratory unjustly –

to act unjustly, that is. By the Dog, Gorgias, to investigate adequately how it stands with this will call for a session far from short."[43]

POLUS: "What's this, Socrates? Don't tell me you, too, subscribe to *that* attitude! Do you really think – given that Gorgias would demur[44] to stipulate for you that the real orator is of course cognizant of justice, and also the beautiful and the good, and that if someone did come to study with him who was not already knowledgeable about these things that he would himself teach him, and consequently because of this 'agreement,' as you might see it, there follows some contradiction in what he has said – do you really take pleasure in this, that you can lead someone into these questionings of yours? Who after all do you think will deny even of himself that he knows what is just, or would refuse to teach it to others? My gosh! To lead us into such as that shows a huge boorishness as to what speaking and discourse is all about!"[45]

Soc. "But most excellent Polus, let me just say how lucky we are to have our very sons as companions, so that as we grow older and slip and fall we have younger men standing by who will take it upon themselves to keep our lives upright by getting us back on our feet, not only literally but also in what we say. And so, just now, if Gorgias and I have somehow stumbled in our conversation, here you are, standing by to pick us up – you owe it to us elders – and as for myself, if there is some step in the things that have been agreed to that was erroneously agreed, I am willing that you retract whatever you want to, as long as you try to get one thing under control..."

Pol. "What thing is that?"

Soc. "Your macrology, Polus[46] – if you would please hem it in – which you tried launching into at the start."

Pol. "What's this? I'm not to be allowed to say as much as I want?"

Soc. "What shocking abuse it would be, my finest of men, that you should arrive here in Athens, home of the broadest freedom of speech in all of Greece, only to be the one person denied the privilege![47] But look at it the other way: if you speak at length, shirking to answer the question you are asked, would it not be an abuse equally shocking that I would suffer if I should not be allowed (462) to walk out rather than sit here listening to you? Nay, if you find that you care about the argument that has been made and want to redeem it, then as I just said revise it as ever you wish, taking turns to question and be questioned, to refute and to be refuted, as Gorgias and I have agreed to do. You do affirm, don't you, that you also are a master of the same things as Gorgias?"

Pol. "I do."

Soc. "So do you also make a practice of telling people to ask you whatever they want, thinking yourself a master at answering?"[48]

Pol. "Quite so."

Soc. "Just so, do whichever *you* have a mind to: play the questioner or the answerer."

Pol. "I will do what *you* are suggesting. Answer me, Socrates. Since you find Gorgias to be in a jam about oratory,[49] which do *you* say it is?"

Soc. "Do you mean to ask which *art* I think it is?"

Pol. "I do."

Soc. "No art at all, in my opinion, Polus, if I am to speak candidly."

Pol. "But what is oratory in your opinion?"

Soc. "The thing that you, in your manual, allege has made it into an art, as I have recognized just now."

Pol. "What are you talking about?"

Soc. "A kind of 'experiencedness' I'd say."

Pol. "You believe oratory is a 'being experienced'?"

Soc. "I do, unless you say otherwise."[50]

Pol. "Being experienced at what?"

Soc. "At effecting a sort of good cheer or pleasure."

Pol. "So it is a *fine* thing you judge oratory to be, as being able to please our fellow men!"

Soc. "What's this, Polus? Have you already learned from me *what* I say it is, so that you go on to ask me the next question, whether I don't think it *fine*?"

Pol. "So I didn't learn from you that it is a kind of 'being experienced'."

Soc. "Since you value pleasing people, would you be willing to please me in a small way?"

Pol. "I would."

Soc. "Then ask me about producing delicacies, whether it is an art."

Pol. "Alright. Which art is it that produces delicacies?"

Soc. "No art at all, Polus."

Pol. "But then what is it? Say!"

Soc. "Say I will: it is a kind of being experienced."

Pol. "At what? Say!"

Soc. "Say I will: at the effecting of good cheer and pleasure."

Pol. "And producing delicacies and oratory are the same thing!"

Soc. "Oh no, not at all, but parts at least of one and the same occupation."

Pol. "And what occupation is that, according to you?"

Soc. "I hope telling what I truly think will not seem even more slovenly of me! I shrink from answering because of Gorgias, fearing he'll think I am trying to parody his own occupation. Let me put it this way: I do not know whether what I am talking about is the sort of oratory Gorgias (463) is occupied with – after all, the discussion we just conducted left not at all clear what your man holds on that question – but still, for me, what *I* am calling oratory is a part of an activity not at all among the things that are fine."

GORGIAS: "A part of what activity, Socrates? Out with it! Blush not for *me*!"

Soc. "Alright then, Gorgias. It seems to me to be a sort of practice not truly artful, but rather the practice of a soul bold at guessing and by nature clever at dealing with people.[51] Speaking on a general level I would call it pandering; within it there are other parts besides this one, one of which as I was

saying is delicacies, which may seem to be an art though what I am trying to say is that it is not an art but a sort of empirical knack. And I call the oratorical knack another part of it, as well as the cosmetic knack and the sophistic knack – four parts, these, operating on four things respectively. If Polus is interested in getting answers, let him ask. For he has not yet asked what kind of a part of pandering I say oratory is, and he failed to realize that I had not yet answered that question. Instead, he moved on to ask if I didn't think it was a *fine* thing, but I won't answer whether I think oratory is a fine or an ugly thing before I first answer *what* it is. To do that is not proper, Polus. Instead, if you want to ask questions, ask what kind of part of pandering I say is the oratorical one."

Pol. "Ask I will. Answer what kind of part."

Soc. "Is it conceivable you will understand my answer? For I say that the oratorical is an image of a part of the political pandering."[52]

Pol. "So *now* I will ask whether you say oratory is a fine thing or an ugly thing."[53]

Soc. "Ugly is my answer – for I call bad things ugly – since I must answer you as though you know what I am saying."[54]

Gorg. "By Zeus, Socrates, even I am not getting what you are saying."

Soc. "That's to be expected, Gorgias, since I have not said anything at all clear as of yet, whereas this coltish Polus I am having to deal with is young and headstrong."

Gorg. "Just let him go and tell me, instead,[55] what you mean by saying the oratorical is 'an image of a part of the political pandering'."

Soc. "Then I'll try to express what the oratorical seems to be to me at least, and if it turns out not to be, this Polus here (464) will do the refuting. Presumably you call something body and something soul?"

Gorg. "How not?"

Soc. "And do you believe that each has its own state of well being?"

Gorg. "I do."

Soc. "How about this: do you believe they have an apparent well being that is not real and true? I mean something like this: many people appear to be well in their bodies, people one could not readily perceive not to be well unless he were a doctor or a gymnastic expert of some kind."

Gorg. "That is true."

Soc. "The sort of thing I am speaking about, in both in body and in soul, is what creates the appearance that the body and the soul are well, while their actual state has nothing to do with it."

Gorg. "That is how it is."

Soc. "Come then. If I am able, I will lay out for you more clearly what I am trying to say. Just as there are two things, I say there are two arts: the art dealing with soul is what I call the political;[56] as for the art dealing with the body, though I do not likewise have a name for it as a single art, while itself single this caring for the body has two parts,[57] the one being the gymnastic art and the other the healing art. And of the political art, the part that correlates to the gymnastic I call the legislative, whereas the correlate to the healing art I call justice. Now these several parts have some overlap with each other, respectively, since each pair deals with the same thing – the healing art overlapping the gymnastic, and justice overlapping legislation – while at the same time they are distinct from one

another.

"Now while they are four and while it is always with a view to its noblest state they are administering their care, the one pair for the body and the other pair the soul, the pandereutic,[58] sensing them – not understanding, that is, but guessing – distributes itself fourfold, and, donning the apparel of these four parts respectively, feigns that it actually is the thing it dresses up as. It has no concern at all for the best state of things, but by exploiting any opportunity to maximize pleasure, it always hunts after mindlessness and works its deception with the result that it is judged a thing of highest worth. In the robes of the healing art lurks the pandering of the delicatessen, and portrays itself as knowing what are the noblest of foods for the body, so that if among children there should be a contest between the delicatessen and the doctor – or for that matter among grown men as mindless as children – as to which of these can really tell the difference between foods wholesome and corrupt, the doctor or the delicatessen, the doctor would starve for patients.[59] I call the thing pandering, and I condemn it as ugly (465), Polus – this answer I direct to you[60] – because it aims at pleasure without regard for the noble. Moreover, an art I deny it to be, only accumulated experience, because it has no rationale at all by which it prescribes the things it prescribes, according to what they are by nature, out of the lack of which it is unequipped to say what causes what. For my part I do not call any activity that lacks a rationale an art.

" … If you dispute these things I am willing to defend them in argument…

"Now as I am arguing, in the garb of the healing art lurks the delicatessen's pandering. In that of the gymnastic art by the same token lurks cosmetic pandering, a practice destructive, deceptive, ignoble, and slavish that deceives with lines and colors and smoothness and sensation so as to create a beauty that people can bring on to themselves that is quite alien to the appearance that is their own resulting from their neglect of exercise. To keep from going on too long I would put it to you as the geometers do – you doubtless can already follow it: as the cosmetic is to the gymnastic, so is the delicatessen to the medical – but now make it thus: as the cosmetic is to the gymnastic, so is the sophistic to the legislative; and as the delicatessen is to the doctor, so is oratory to justice. Now as I already said, they really are distinct in this way from each other by nature, but by dint of their being close to each other, the sophists and the orators are mixed together and taken to deal with the same things, so that they do not know which name to use for themselves, just as the rest of mankind doesn't know what to call them.[61] For so it would be if the soul were not overseeing the body but rather the body oversaw itself; and if it were not by the soul that the pair of them, the delicatessen and the doctor, were observed and distinguished, but rather the body were the judge, weighing between them the pleasantries they render it: we would have the Anaxagorean condition in a big way, Polus my pal[62] – something for which you have your own knack. All things would be mixed together in the same place, with medicine and health and delicacies indistinguishable.

"So you have now heard what I say oratory is: the correlate for the soul to what delicacy was for the body.[63] Perhaps, in summary, I have done something very untoward in not allowing you to make long speeches while I myself have stretched out a continuous and long speech. Looking back, perhaps I deserve some clemency, since when I spoke in short compass and directly, you were not getting my meaning[64] nor were you able to deal with the answer I gave you, but were needing to be taken through, step by step. And so if I, too, (466) prove unable to deal with an answer of yours, go ahead and stretch out your own explanation in turn; but if on the other hand I am able to deal with it, let me deal with it. So much is only fair. And likewise, if you are able to deal with my answer, deal away!"

Pol. "So what are you saying? To you, oratory is *pandering*?"

Soc "A *part* of pandering, I said. But you don't remember, Polus, though you are so young. What are we to expect from you as you become older?"

Pol. "Do you really think our goodly orators in the cities are held in low esteem because people think them panders?"

Soc. "Is that a question or the beginning of a speech?"

Pol. "I only mean to ask."

Soc. "They are not even estimated."

Pol. "How can you say they are 'not estimated'? Don't they wield the greatest power in the cities?"

Soc. "No, if you are saying that having power is something good for the person who has it."

Pol. "But I certainly do."

Soc. "Well in that case, of all the people in the city the orators seem to me to have the least power."

Pol. "What? Don't they, like the tyrants, execute whomever they want, and fine and exile from the cities whomever they decide to?"[a]

Soc. "By the Dog, I really cannot decide, Polus, whether what you are saying are arguments you are making in trying to reveal your own opinion, or whether they are questions for me to answer."

Pol. "You heard me, I *asked* you!"

Soc. "In that case, my dear, I'll say you are asking me two things at once."

Pol. "How two?"

Soc. "Didn't you just say, 'Do the orators not execute whomever they want, as the tyrants do, and fine and expel from the cities whomever they decide to'?"

Pol. "I did."

Soc. "Well then I say to you that your questions are two, and as such I will give you an answer for both of them. What I say, Polus, is that both the orators and the tyrants have the smallest amount of power in the cities, as I was just saying, for they do almost nothing they want, though I do say they do what they judge is best."

Pol. "And isn't that having great power?"

Soc. "Not so, as Polus asserts."

Pol. "I *deny* it? You may be sure I *assert* it!"

Soc. "Oh my, no! Not you of all people, since you just said having great power was a good thing for the man who had it."

Pol. "So I do say."

Soc. "So do you think it a good thing whenever someone does what is in his eyes noblest, assuming he has no understanding? Is even that having great power, according to you?"

Pol. "No."

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a Punishments are commonly categorized with the triad death, exile, and the abridgment of rights; in addition there is the pecuniary fine, imprisonment, and beating.

Soc. "Then will you show the orators to be understanding and (467) show oratory to be an art rather than a pandering, thereby refuting me? If you are going to leave me unrefuted, the orators who enact what they decide in the cities, and the tyrants, will have none of the good you see in that. But power is a good thing, as you assert, whereas doing what one judges to be best without understanding is a bad thing, as you grant along with me. No?"

Pol. "Yes."

Soc. "How then could the orators 'have great power,' or the tyrants, in the cities, as long as Socrates has not been shown to be wrong by Polus in respect to their doing what they want?"

Pol. "What am I to do with this man!"

Soc. "I deny they are achieving what they want. Come on, try and refute me!"

Pol. "Weren't you just now agreeing that they achieve what they judge to be best, right before you said this?"

Soc. "I do agree, even now."

Pol. "But not that they achieve what they want?"

Soc. "I say no."

Pol. "Achieving, however, what seems to them best?"

Soc. "I say yes."

Pol. "It's an intractable argument you make, and outlandish."[65]

Soc. "No accusations, peerless Polus, if I might address you in your own style. Instead, if you are able to ask me questions, bring to light that what I am saying is false. And if you are not able to ask questions, then play answerer."

Pol. "Nay I *will* play answerer, if I might see what it is you are arguing."[66]

Soc. "Say then whether you judge that men are always doing what they want, or whether what they want is that for the sake of which they are doing what they do. For instance, people that drink the medicine given them by doctors, do you judge that they want to do the thing they are doing – drinking the medicine and feeling horrible thereby – or do they want that other thing, being healthy, for the sake of which they drink?"

Pol. "Clearly, being healthy."

Soc. "Also with those who are sailing or are engaged in some other money-making activity. It isn't the thing they are doing that they want (for who wants to put himself at risk on the high seas and make trouble for himself?) but the thing for the sake of which they sail: to be wealthy. For it is for the sake of wealth that they sail."

Pol. "Quite so."

Soc. "Isn't it this way in general? Whenever somebody does something for the sake of something, it is not the latter which he is doing that he wants but the former, for the sake of which he acts."

Pol. "Yes."

Soc. "Now is there anything that is neither good nor bad, nor somewhere in between and neither good nor bad?"

Pol. "Very necessarily not, Socrates."

Soc. "Would do you say that good is wisdom and health and wealth and the other things like these, whereas bad are the opposites of these?"

Pol. "I would."

Soc. "And would you say the following sorts of things are the things that are neither good nor bad: things that sometimes have some good in them but other times some bad, and still other times neither, like sitting and (468) walking and running and sailing, or again stones and sticks and the other things of that sort? Do you not say so? Or is it some other things you would call neither good nor bad?"

Pol. "No, these things."

Soc. "Which is it, then? Is it these in-between things that people do for the sake of the good things, when they do them, or do they do the good things for the sake of the in-between things?"

Pol. "Presumably it is the in-between things for the sake of the good ones."

Soc. "Therefore it is in pursuit of the good that we walk when we walk, thinking it better to do so, or oppositely when we stand still we stand still pursuant the same thing, the good. No?"

Pol. "Yes."

Soc. "And we execute if we do execute somebody, and exile or fine a person, thinking it better for us to do these things than if we didn't?"

Pol. "Quite so."

Soc. "Therefore it is for the sake of the good that people who act do all these things they do?

Pol. "I say yes."

Soc. "And so we have agreed that the things we do for the sake of something, we do not because we want those things but because we want that for the sake of which we do them?"

Pol. "Exactly."

Soc, "Therefore we don't just want to cut a man's throat nor exile him from the cities nor fine him, according to your image. Rather, whenever doing these things leads to some benefit we want to do them, given what they are, and whenever they are harmful we do not. For it is good things that we want to do, as you yourself affirm, whereas things that are neither good nor bad we do not want, let alone the bad things.

….. "Is that how it is? Do I seem to you to be speaking the truth, Polus, or not?

….. "Why aren't you answering?"

Pol. "True."

Soc. "So if we do agree to these things, then, if a person executes somebody or exiles him from a city or fines him whether in his capacity as a tyrant or his capacity as an orator, thinking it is better for himself, but if in fact it makes things worse, we may say such a man is doing what he decides.

"… Isn't he?"

Pol. "Yes."

Soc. "Is he also doing what he wants, if as we said the thing is in fact a bad thing?

"Why don't you answer?"

Pol. "Alright, then, he does not seem to me to be doing what he wants."

Soc. "And so is there any way the man in this situation is wielding great power in that city of yours, if wielding power is a good thing, as you agreed?"

Pol. "There is not."

Soc. "Therefore what I was saying was true when I said that it is possible that a man who achieves what he decides in a city is not wielding great power, and is not doing what he wants."

Pol. "But *you* of course would *refuse* the prerogative to do whatever one 'decides' in the city, rather than not – and you never feel envy when you see somebody executing or fining or binding in chains whatever popped into his mind to 'decide'."

Soc. "Do you mean justly or unjustly?"

Pol. (469) "Whichever way he does it, isn't it enviable both ways?"

Soc. "Don't talk that way!"[67]

Pol. "What way?"

Soc. "One ought not envy the unenviable any more than men who are wretched, but rather pity them."

Pol. "What now? Do you think the men I am talking about are in that state?"

Soc. "Why wouldn't they be?"

Pol. "So in the case where a man executes whomever he decides to, but is executing him justly, do you still judge the man to be a pitiful wretch?"

Soc. "I do not, but neither do I judge him enviable."

Pol. "You didn't just now declare him to be a wretch?"

Soc. "The one who killed unjustly, yes, my fellow, and pitiable to boot; but the one who did it justly I declare to be unenviable."

Pol. "Ah so: it's the one that did the unjust *dying* that is pitiable and wretched?"

Soc. "Less so than the one who killed unjustly, and less than the one who dies justly."

Pol. "How can *that* be, Socrates?"

Soc. "Here's how: the fact is that the greatest of all evils is acting unjustly."

Pol. "So *this* is the greatest? Being done injustice isn't greater?"

Soc. "Hardly."

Pol. "You, then, would want to be dealt injustice rather than to deal it out?

Soc. "As to what I would want, I would want neither; but if it were necessary either to deal it out or be dealt it, I would choose to be dealt it rather than deal it out."

Pol. "You, then, would not welcome exercising a tyrant's power?"

Soc. "No, not if you describe exercising it the way I do."

Pol. "Well *I* describe it as I did just now: having the prerogative in the city to do whatever seems best to one, whether killing or fining or doing whatever, according to his decision."

Soc. "My redoubtable fellow, give me a chance to describe it my way and then confront me with your description! Imagine in the open marketplace I were carrying a concealed dagger and came up to you and said 'Polus, I have just come into a certain power of an amazingly tyrannical sort: All I have to do is decide by my own lights that one of these men you see around you here must die right now, on the spot: dead will he be, whichever I decide. And if I decide some one of them is to have his head bashed in, he'll have it bashed in, right now on the spot; or have his cloak cut off him, then cut off his cloak will be so great is my power in this city of mine.' And thereupon, when you didn't believe me and I showed you my dagger, once you saw it you might say, 'Socrates, by that argument everybody would have great power since a house could be set on fire if you decided to and for that matter the harbors of Athens and her triremes and all the boats, public and private.' So this isn't what having great power consists in – 'doing what one judges – or would you judge it is?'"

Pol. "Not at all, not *that* way."

Soc. (470) "So can you say what it is you find fault with in that kind of power?"

Pol. "I can."

Soc. "So just what is it?
"… Tell me!"

Pol. "The person who does things that way would necessarily be punished."

Soc. "But isn't being punished bad?"

Pol. "Quite bad."

Soc. "And so my admirable fellow, back to the topic of having great power, it again seems to you that if he who is doing what he decides to do benefits from it then it is a good thing, and moreover that this, as you see it, is what it means to have great power; whereas if he does not benefit, doing what he wants is a bad thing and constitutes having little power. But let's also investigate my point, too: We are agreeing, aren't we, that sometimes it is a better thing to do what we were now talking about, 'to execute and exile men and disenfranchise them,' but sometimes not?"

Pol. "Quite."

Soc. "On this much at least we agree, both you and me."

Pol. "Yes."

Soc. "So *when* would you say is it better to do these things? Tell me how you draw the line."

Pol. "Since this is your question, let's let *you* answer it."

Soc. "For myself, then, Polus, if it pleases you more that I should play answerer, I say that when it is justly that one is doing these things it is better, but whenever unjustly then it is worse."

Pol. "You may be hard to beat in conversation, Socrates – but no, even a child could quash what are now saying as untrue."

Soc. "Great, then, would be my gratitude to the child – and equally so to you, if you do refute[a] me and relieve me of talking nonsense[68] So please don't let off but help a fellow who's your friend. Bring on your refutation."

a In Greek, as in English, to "refute" (*elenchein*) denotes rigorous examination and evaluation. If successful in its tendency it will overturn the thesis or person under examination.

Pol. "Fine, Socrates, but there's no need to look to yesteryear for grounds to defeat your position: the latest news you have is quite enough to pull it off, and to show that many men who practice injustice are happy."

Soc. "And what is this 'latest'?"

Pol. Archelaus, the son of Perdiccus whom you see ruling Macedon."

Soc. "Even if I haven't seen him I have heard about him, at least."

Pol. "Well, do you judge him happy or destitute?"

Soc. "I haven't seen him, Polus: I've never spent any time with the fellow."

Pol. "What's that? If you spent time with him you could tell but you can't already tell he is happy?"

Soc. "Zeus be my witness, not at all!"

Pol. "Clearly then, Socrates, you will say you do not even know that the Great King[a] is happy!"

Soc. "And in so saying I will be speaking the truth. I don't know about his upbringing or his justness."

Pol. "What? On this alone all happiness is based?"

Soc. "So do I argue, at least, Polus: it is the fine and good man and woman that I say is happy, and the unjust and base unhappy."

Pol. (471) "Unhappy then is our Archelaus."

Soc. "Yes, provided he is unjust."

Pol. "But really – how could he *not* be unjust, he who in the first place has no proper claim to the realm he now holds, born as he is from a slave of Alketes, the brother of Perdiccus, so that as for justice he is a slave of Alketes, and if he wanted to do what justice commands he would be serving as a slave to Alketes and as such would be a happy man according to your argument. Instead he has become astoundingly *un*happy, since he has by now committed the greatest of unjust acts, he who started out by summoning that very master of his for the purpose of restoring to him the rule that Perdiccas had stripped him of. He received him into his house as a guest, him and his son Alexander, who was his cousin and about the same age, and got them drunk and loaded them into a cart and drove them out under cover of darkness, slit their throats and dispatched their bodies. Even though he committed these greatest injustices it was lost on him that he had become most miserable and he had no regrets. Soon after it was his brother, the legitimate son of Perdiccas, a child of about seven to whom the rule was passing on by right: Archelaus did not want to become happy by raising him justly and passing on the rule to him, but threw him into a well to drown him instead and ran off to his mother, Cleopatra, to report to her breathlessly that the boy had been hunting a swan and fell into the well and died. And just so, at present, seeing that he has committed the greatest injustice in all Macedon, he is the most unhappy of all the Macedonians – not the happiest after all – so that Yes, we'll find some Athenian, starting with you for instance, who would sooner be any Macedonian *other* than Archelaus."[69]

Soc. "Just so, early on in all our talk, Polus, I said in praise of you that it seems to me you are well brought up in oratory, but that you have ignored dialogue. So too, now: Is this really the speech by

a The King of Persia, proverbially envied for his wealth and, putatively therefore, his happiness. See Herodotus 1.30-33.

which even a child could 'defeat' me? Do I now stand utterly *defeated* by this speech in your eyes, for claiming as I do that the man who behaves unjustly is not happy? On what basis, my good man? In very fact, I do not agree with *anything* you have said!"

Pol. "You aren't willing to – since you believe what I am saying."

Soc. "My redoubtable fellow! Now I get it: you are trying to refute me oratorically, the way they take it to be refuting in the law courts. In those venues, the one party is judged to be refuting the other if he brings in lots of reputable witnesses to testify for the positions he is advocating, whereas his opponent has brought in only one somebody-or-other, or even none. But your kind of refutation is worthless (472) as to the truth. In fact, a person is sometimes even brought down by large numbers of influential persons who give *false* witness. Just so in the present case, almost everybody will corroborate what you are saying, Athenians as well as foreigners, if it is witnesses you want to adduce who will testify against me that what I am saying is not true. As witnesses you might call Nicias the son of Niceratos, if you wish, and his brothers to back him up, for whom those tripods have been set up in a neat line in the Dionysian Theatre, or if you wish Aristocrates the son of Skellios in whose honor that fine monument stands in the Pythian Stadium – or if you want the entire family of Pericles, or some other clan you might single out from these parts. But I, a single person, disagree with you, and you are not compelling me. Instead you try to adduce many false witnesses against me so as to exile me[70] from the realm of what really counts and what is true. But as for me, if I fail to summon you yourself as my witness, a single man to corroborate what I am saying, by my lights I have achieved nothing worth mentioning, whatever comes up in our conversation. And my sense is that you haven't either, unless I myself as a single man serve as your witness and all those others of yours you leave aside. That is a refutation in a way, according to you and many others; but there is another kind according to me. Let's set them side by side and see how they differ. For in very fact the question we find ourselves on opposite sides of is no small matter but I daresay the one question about which to be knowledgeable is the finest thing and ignorance the most shameful. For ultimately it is a matter of succeeding or failing to recognize who is happy and who is not. Just so, as to the present question, the first point is that you really hold that it is possible that a man can be blessedly happy who commits injustice and is an unjust man, if in fact you hold that Archelaus is unjust but nevertheless happy. Let this be our interpretation of what you believe, unless you say otherwise."

Pol. "Quite."

Soc. "And what I say is that it's impossible. That is the first thing about which we differ. Next, if one acts unjustly will he be happy if he encounters the penalty and recompense?"

Pol. "Hardly, given that at under those circumstances he would be most destitute."

Soc. "But if he does not encounter the penalty, then according to your argument, he will be happy."

Pol. "Yes."

Soc. "But conversely, according to my opinion, Polus, the man who commits injustice and is unjust is utterly destitute, but even more destitute if he does not meet with justice and pay the penalty, having acted unjustly, and yet less destitute if he does pay the penalty and meet with justice, at the behest of gods and men."

Pol. (473) "The thing you are trying to argue is kooky, Socrates!"

Soc. "Nevertheless I will try to bring you to make the same argument that I do, for I view you as a friend. But as of now, here is the point on which we differ – and see if you think so. In what we have said so far, I have declared committing injustice to be a greater evil than suffering it."

Pol. "Quite so."

Soc. "And you, that suffering is."

Pol. "Yes."

Soc. "And I argued that those who act unjustly are unhappy, and was fully refuted by you – "

Pol. "You can be quite sure of that!"

Soc. "– as you think."

Pol. "Thinking truly."

Soc. "Maybe, but you for your part think those who act unjustly are happy, as long as they don't pay the penalty."

Pol. "Very much so."

Soc. "And I for my part assert they are the most unhappy of people, while those who pay the penalty are less so. Do you want to challenge this point also?"

Pol. "Oh my, Socrates, this is even harder than your other point to defeat."

Soc. "No, not harder: impossible. The truth is never defeated."

Pol. "How can you say that? If a man is caught in the unjust act of plotting a tyranny, and once caught is strung up and castrated and has his eyes burnt out, and, himself having suffered disfigurements many and great and looked on as the same things were inflicted upon his wife and children, then meets his end by being nailed to a board or burned alive,[71] shall this man be the more happy than if he were to get away with that act and assume the tyrant's throne and live the rest of his life in his city doing exactly what he wants – envied and counted happy by the citizens and by foreigners to boot? *This* is the thesis you are saying cannot be defeated?"

Soc. "Now you trying to intimidate me, brave Polus, and not refute me. And before you were calling witnesses! And yet remind me: did you say, 'If he *unjustly* plots against a tyranny'?"

Pol. "I did."

Soc. "Well then happier neither will ever be, neither the one that captures the throne unjustly nor the one that pays the penalty – of a pair of destitute men neither can be the happier – but you *can* say that the one who gets away with it and becomes tyrant would be unhappier.

"… and what's this, Polus – you laugh? Still another type of refutation when somebody asserts something, that you ridicule it but not refute it?"

Pol. "Don't you think you have already been been defeated, when you find yourself arguing something of such ilk that no man would agree? Just ask any of these here!"

Soc. "Polus, please! I don't make a career of politics: Just last year, when it fell to my tribe to serve in the Prytany, I had (474) to put something to a vote and I was laughed down for not knowing how to do it. So don't bid me to put this to a vote now, among these here; instead, if you have no better method of refutation to run than these, give me a turn at it, as I said before, and try to work through the sort of thing I call a refutation. In my case there is one witness I know how to adduce for what I argue,

the very man with whom I am having my discussion: the testimony of the many I forgo. Likewise it is one man that I know how to poll: with the many I likewise forgo to dialogue. See then if you will finally submit to testing by playing answerer. I truly do think that both I and you and everybody else believe that committing injustice is a worse thing than suffering it, and that not paying the penalty is worse than paying it."

Pol "And I think that neither I nor anybody else does – since you *would* accept suffering injustice more than committing it."

Soc. "You would, too – and everybody else."

Pol. "Far from it: not I, not you, not anybody."

Soc. "So you won't answer?"

Pol. "I certainly will, for I am eager to know what in the world you are going to say!"

Soc. "Then tell me, so you can know, as if we were starting all over with this question: 'Tell me, Polus, which do you judge is worse, to do injustice or to be done it?' "

Pol. "To be done it, I would say."

Soc. "But which is more *shameful*? To do injustice or be done it?
"... Answer!"

Pol. "To do it."

Soc. "Is it also worse, if as you say it is more shameful?"

Pol. "Not in the least."[72]

Soc. "I get what you are saying: You deny that the same thing is both fine and good, or bad and shameful."

Pol. "Yes, not at all."

Soc. "What about this: Of all things that are fine, whether bodies or colors or shapes or voices or practices, are you calling them fine in each case looking off to nothing as a reference? For instance, first of all, bodies that are fine: don't say they are fine in accordance with their usefulness in connection with whatever in each case they are useful for, that it is in connection with this that they are fine, or in accordance with some pleasure they provide, if in being beheld they give joy to the beholders? Have you anything else to mention besides these two, as to the fineness of a body?"

Pol. "No I haven't."

Soc. "And isn't it so for all the other things, whether for shapes or colors, that either because of some pleasure or some usefulness or because of both, you denominate them 'fine'?"

Pol. "Yes I do."

Soc. "And isn't it also so for voices and everything else that is musical?"

Pol. "Yes."

Soc. "Moreover, in the matter of laws and practices: they are not exceptions, presumably, the fine ones, from being either useful or pleasurable, or both."

Pol. (475) "They do not seem exceptions to me."

Soc. “And is the fineness of studies similar?”

Pol. “Quite so. Indeed you are doing a fine job of distinguishing this time, using the pleasant and the good as distinguishing marks of the fine.”

Soc. “Is it by the opposite that we define the ugly – by pain and by badness?”

Pol. “Necessarily.”

Soc. “Therefore whenever one of two fine things is finer, it is because it exceeds the other in one or both of these two aspects that it is finer, whether in pleasure or in usefulness or both.”

Pol. “Quite.”

Soc. “And so, on the other hand, when one of two ugly things is uglier, it is either because it exceeds the other in pain or in badness that it is uglier – or does this not necessarily follow?”

Pol. “It does.”

Soc. “Come then, what was being said just a moment ago about committing and suffering injustice? Were you not saying that undergoing injustice was worse but committing it was uglier?”

Pol. “So I was.”

Soc. “And if as you aver committing injustice is uglier than undergoing it, it is either more painful – exceeding the other in pain, that is – or in badness, or in both? Is this equally necessarily?”

Pol. “How could it not be?”

Soc. “So first let’s investigate whether it is in pain that doing injustice exceeds undergoing it, and whether those who act unjustly suffer more pain than those who are dealt injustice.”

Pol. “That, for sure, Socrates, is not the case.”

Soc. “So it is not in pain that it exceeds.”

Pol. “No indeed.”

Soc. “And if not in pain then the possibility of exceeding it in both is ruled out.”

Pol. “Clearly.”

Soc. “And so to exceed in the other is what is left.”

Pol. “Yes.”

Soc. “In badness.”

Pol. “So it seems.”

Soc. “And since exceeding in badness, doing injustice would be worse than suffering it.”

Pol. “Clearly so.”

Soc “Now didn’t we agree just a moment ago that, according to the majority of mankind and to you yourself, doing injustice is uglier than suffering it?”

Pol. “Yes.”

Soc. “But now it appears also to be worse?”

Pol. “Seems so.”

Soc. "So would you sooner accept something both worse and uglier than something less so? "Don't shrink from answering, Polus – no harm will come to you. Have the heart to give yourself over to the argument, as to a doctor, and answer. Say 'Yea' or 'Nay' to what I am asking you."

Pol. "You're right, I would not accept it, Socrates."

Soc. "And would any other man?"

Pol. "No, it seems to me, given this argument."[73]

Soc. "And so it was true when I said that neither I nor you nor any man would accept doing injustice rather than suffering it – for the fact is, it is worse."

Pol. "So it seems."

Soc. "So now you can see, Polus, by setting one style of refutation alongside the other, that they resemble each other not at all: in yours all others agree with you except for me, whereas in mine it suffices that you, as only a (476) single man, agree with me and serve as my witness, and in polling only you I can ignore the others.

"Let's let that be how it stands between us on this first topic. Next, let's investigate the second question on which we had discrepant views: whether for the man who acts unjustly to pay the penalty is the greatest of evils, as you were thinking, or whether not paying it is a still greater evil, as I was thinking. Let's investigate the matter as follows. Are paying the penalty and being justly punished, when one has committed injustice, according to you, the same thing?"

Pol. "They are."

Soc. "Are you able to argue against the idea that all just things as such are fine, to the extent they are just? Think carefully and answer."

Pol. "Nay, I *do* judge them to be, Socrates."

Soc. "Then think also about this: Would you say that if somebody does something, that by necessity there is also something that undergoes what this doer does?"

Pol. "I think so."

Soc. "And does this thing, by virtue of undergoing what the acting agent does, also take on the quality of what the agent does to it? What I mean is something like this: if somebody strikes something, it is necessary that something is struck."

Pol. "Necessary."

Soc. "And if he who is striking strikes intensely or fast, the stricken thing is struck in like manner?"

Pol. "Yes."

Soc. "The undergoing that belongs to the stricken thing is of the same quality as the way the striking element struck."

Pol. "Quite."

Soc. "And if someone burns, it is necessary that something is being burned?"

Pol. "How not?"

Soc. “And if he burns it intensely or painfully, so also is the cauterized thing cauterized – namely, the way the cauterizer cauterized it?”

Pol. “Quite.”

Soc. “And is it analogous if he cuts something? Is something cut?”

Pol. “Yes.”

Soc. “And if the cut is large or deep, or it is painful, the cut that was cut has the quality as the cutting agent’s cutting?”

Pol. “It seems so.”

Soc. “And bundling all that together see whether you agree, as I just now put it, that in all cases, whatever way the acting agent performs his action so does the undergoing element undergo it.”

Pol. “But I do agree.”

Soc. “That being agreed, let me ask, is paying the penalty an undergoing or a doing?”

Pol. “Necessarily it is an undergoing.”

Soc. “An undergoing under some active agent?”

Pol. “How could it not be? Under the agency of the punisher.”

Soc. “Does he who punishes correctly punish justly?”

Pol. “Yes.”

Soc. “Doing just things or not?”

Pol. “Just things.”

Soc. “Does he who is punished, in paying the penalty, undergo just things?”

Pol. “It seems so.”

Soc. “But hadn’t it been agreed that just things are fine?”

Pol. “Quite.”

Soc. “Therefore, one of these two does fine things and the other undergoes them, namely the man being punished.”

Pol. “Yes.”

Soc. (477) “If they are fine, are they good, as being either pleasurable or beneficial?”

Pol. “Necessarily.”

Soc. “Therefore it is good things that the person paying the penalty undergoes?”

Pol. “So it seems.”

Soc. “He is being benefitted, therefore?”

Pol. “Yes.”

Soc. “Is it the same benefit that I assume it to be – that he becomes more noble in soul if he is justly punished?”

Pol. “Well, I guess so.”

Soc. “And so the person paying the penalty is released from a badness of soul?”

Pol. “Yes.”

Soc. “Is it from the greatest evil he is released? Look at it this way: as to the status of a man’s possessions, do you observe any other badness than poverty?”

Pol. “No, it is poverty.”

Soc. “What about the state of his body? Would you declare that weakness is its evil, and disease and ugliness and such things?”

Pol. “I would.”

Soc. “Do you also take it that there is a baseness of soul?

Pol. “How could there not be?”

Soc. “And would you call this injustice and ignorance and fearfulness and such things?”

Pol. “Quite.”

Soc. “So for the three things – possessions, body, and soul – you have named three basenesses: poverty, disease, and injustice?”

Pol. “Yes.”

Soc “Which of your three basenesses is the ugliest? Isn’t it injustice and intemperance and baseness of soul in general?”

Pol. “Quite so.”

Soc. “But if the ugliest, isn’t it also the worst?”

Pol. “How would you argue that?”

Soc. “Here’s how. Always, the ugliest thing is ugliest because it brings on the greatest pain or the greatest harm, or both, based on the agreements we have already reached before.”[a]

Pol. “Exactly.”

Soc. “But didn’t we reach just now the agreement that what is ugliest is injustice and the whole badness of soul taken together?”

Pol. “So we did.”

Soc. “Isn’t it the ugliest of these things as being the most annoying and exceeding in annoyance, or as being exceedingly harmful, or both?”

Pol. “Necessarily.”

Soc. “Is it a more painful thing than being poor or being sick that one should be be unjust and unbridled and timid and ignorant?”

Pol. “Not in my opinion, Socrates – not at least on the basis of the present agreements.”

Soc. “Then it is by exceeding all others in some extraordinary and great harm and some astounding evil, that the badness of soul is the ugliest of all things since it is not so in its painfulness, as you argue.”

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a At 475AB2.

Pol. "It seems so."

Soc. "But presumably what is exceeding in this greatest of harms would as such be the worst of all things that exist."

Pol. "Yes."

Soc. "Injustice therefore, and rashness, and the rest of the badness of soul is the greatest evil of all things that exist."

Pol. "Evidently."

Soc. "Now which art is it that relieves us of poverty? Not the art of moneymaking?"

Pol. "Yes."

Soc. "And which of disease? Isn't it medicine?"

Pol. "Necessarily."

Soc. (478) "But which of badness and injustice? If you don't have any ideas at the moment let me make a suggestion. Where, and to whom, do we lead people who are sick in their bodies?"

Pol. "To the doctors, Socrates."

Soc. "And where do we lead those who are committing injustice and those who are acting rashly?"

Pol. "You are saying that it is to the judges."

Soc. "In order to pay their penalty?"

Pol. "Yes."

Soc. "And isn't it by employing a kind of justice that those who punish correctly are doing their punishing?"

Pol. "Clearly!"

Soc. "So moneymaking relieves poverty, medicine relieves sickness, and justice[74] relieves licentiousness and injustice."

Pol. "Apparently."

Soc. "Which then of these that you are speaking of is the finest?"

Pol. "Which 'these' do you mean?"

Soc. "Moneymaking, medicine, justice."

Pol. "Far superior, Socrates, is justice."

Soc. "So it, in turn, creates the greatest pleasure or benefit or both – given that it is the finest."

Pol. "Yes."

Soc. "Now is being treated by a doctor pleasant? Do those who are being treated enjoy it?"

Pol. "I think not."

Soc. "But it's beneficial – right?"

Pol. "Yes."

Soc. "After all, one is being relieved of a great evil, so that it profits him to endure the pain and be healthy."

Pol. "Of course."

Soc. "Now is this the way for a man to be happiest about his body – if he submits himself to medical treatment – or if he doesn't even fall ill in the first place?"

Pol. "Clearly, if he doesn't fall ill."

Soc. "For happiness never was merely being released from evil, but never having taken it on in the first place."

Pol "That is true."

Soc. "What about this: Of two men who are in a bad way, which is the worse off, whether as to body or soul: the one who is getting treatment and being relieved of the evil, or the one who though badly off is not getting treatment?"

Pol. "To me it seems the one who is not getting treatment."

Soc. "Was paying the penalty a release from the greatest evil, from baseness of soul?"

Pol. "It was."[a]

Soc. "For what tempers them and thereby makes them juster and turns out to be a medicine for baseness is justice."

Pol. "Yes."

Soc. "So the happiest man is he who is not bad off in his soul, since it became apparent that this is the greatest of evils."

Pol. "Clearly, indeed."

Soc. "And second happiest, I presume, is the man who is being relieved of it."

Pol. "It seems so."

Soc. "But this was the man, by our argument,[b] who submits himself to reproach and chastisement – who, in short, pays the penalty."

Pol. "Yes."

Soc. "And so if he has injustice and is not being relieved of it, he is living the worst life."

Pol. "Apparently."

Soc. "And isn't this man the one who, while committing the greatest of injustices and adopting injustice as his way of life, contrives never to be chastised (479) nor punished nor pay the penalty, all set up like Archelaus, according to you, and those other tyrants and orators and strong men of yours?"

Pol. "So it seems."

Soc. "For what these men, my best of fellows, have contrived is virtually the same thing as if a person wracked by the greatest of ailments should contrive to avoid paying the penalty to the

a 477E.
b 477A.

physicians for his sins against his body, and avoid being treated by them, out of a childish fear of being cauterized or cut merely because it is painful. Would you agree with this?"

Pol. "*I* at least would."

Soc. "... yet ignorant all the while, as it seems, of what sort of thing the health and virtue of the body is. It may just be, given the agreements we have reached, that they would be doing the same sort of thing as those who seek acquittal from paying the penalty, Polus: looking at the pain involved but utterly blind to the benefit and ignorant of how much worse it is to be living and dwelling with an unhealthy soul than with an unhealthy body, a soul unsound and unjust and impious, which for its own part leads one to do everything he can to avoid paying the penalty and to avoid being released from the greatest evil, both by managing his money and his alliances, and by hoping to become as persuasive as possible at speaking.[75] But if the agreements you and I have reached are true, do you see the upshots of our discussion? Or should we perhaps summarize them?"

Pol. "If you already plan to."

Soc. "Doesn't it turn out that the greatest evil is injustice and acting unjustly?"

Pol. "It seems so."

Soc. "But it became apparent that paying the penalty is a release from this evil."

Pol. "Looks like it."

Soc. "Whereas not to pay the penalty is to abide in the evil."

Pol. "Yes."

Soc. "The mere act of committing injustice is therefore the second greatest of evils, though in the true nature of things to do so without paying the penalty ranks the first and greatest of evils."

Pol. "Seems so."

Soc. "Isn't this the very gravamen of our disagreement, my friend, you admiring the happiness of Archelaus as a doer of injustice who never paid a penalty; and I thinking the opposite, that any man, whether Archelaus or anyone you wish, who does not pay the penalty after acting unjustly, can only expect to exceed all other men in being badly off, and that always the man who commits injustice is worse off than the man who has it done to him, while the man who does not pay the penalty is worse off than the man who does. *These* were the things that were proposed by me, weren't they?"

Pol. "Yes."

Soc. "Does it now stand proved that the points proposed are true?"

Pol. "Apparently."[76]

Soc. (480) "Well then, if these things are true, Polus, wherein lies the great usefulness of oratory? For we have come to agree that one must first and foremost scrupulously avoid acting unjustly, oneself, recognizing that to do so in itself already constitutes quite enough trouble. No?"

Pol. "Quite so."

Soc. "And that if a man does commit an injustice, whether himself or somebody else under his care, what he must do is voluntarily to betake himself to you-know-where, where he might be able to pay the penalty right away, just like going to a doctor, lest the illness being prolonged should make the soul fester and render it incurable. What else are we arguing than this, Polus, assuming of course that

our earlier agreements stay put. Isn't it necessarily true that drawing this conclusion is consistent with those earlier agreements, and drawing a different conclusion is not?"

Pol. "What indeed, then, Socrates, *are* we to assert?"

Soc. "Well, for mounting a defense of unjust behavior, whether one's own or that of fathers or associates or children, or of the fatherland when it commits an injustice, oratory is of no use at all for you and me, Polus, unless if one should assume to the contrary that one must *prosecute*, in the first instance, oneself, and then one's family members and any others that are friends who might at some point become involved in injustice, and seek not to conceal the unjust act but bring it into the light of day, so that one might pay the penalty and be healed; and to compel both oneself and the others not to shrink in timidity but to step up and grit their teeth and step forward with nobility and bravery, as if they were to be cut or cauterized by a physician, in pursuit of being good and admirable; and were taking no account of the pain involved, whether it be being beaten for having done something deserving of stripes, or being imprisoned if that is the penalty, and exile if exile is what one deserves or dying if it is death, oneself being his own first accuser and that of his relatives also, and using oratorical power for just this purpose, so that by their unjust deeds becoming totally visible they might achieve a release from the greatest of all evils: injustice. Shall we declare this to be so, Polus, or shall we not?"

Pol. "To my mind it's kooky, Socrates, though to your mind it may well jibe with what came before."

Soc. "Isn't it necessary either to dissolve those agreements, or else to accept that these entailments necessary follow?"

Pol. "With that much I can agree."

Soc. "And to look at the other side of it,[77] if one is called upon to treat a man badly, whether an enemy or anyone else – with the sole exception when oneself is suffering injustice at this enemy's hands, in which case he must worry about his own downside – but if instead it is somebody else that his enemy is treating unjustly, in that case one must use all means (481) available in speech and in action to manage that he *not* pay the penalty and *not* come before the judge. And if he does, one must machinate that his enemy somehow escape judgment and get off without paying the penalty – instead, if he has stolen a lot of gold, that he not pay it back but keep it and spend it on himself and his people unjustly and impiously; and in turn that if he has committed misdeeds whose penalty is death that he not see his death but if possible will live forever as a base man, and if not that, at least live that sort of life just as long as possible. It is for these purposes, Polus, that oratory seems to me useful, seeing that for somebody who is not bent on injustice I'd say it's of no great use, if of any use at all – which at least our previous discussion has plainly shown it not to be."

CALLICLES: "Tell me, Chaerephon,[78] is Socrates serious in what he says or is he kidding?"

CHAEREPHON: "If you ask me he's dead serious – but 'there's nothing like asking the man himself'!"[a]

Call. "But Zeus be my witness, I'm really eager to. Tell me, Socrates, are we to say you are serious or joking in arguing this? For if you are serious and what you are saying ends up being the truth, the

a Chaerephon remembers and recalls the remark Callicles made at the very beginning of the dialogue (447C)!

way we now live as people would be turned upside down, and likely everything we are doing is exactly the opposite of what we ought to be doing!"

Soc. "Callicles, I have to say that if there were no certain experience undergone by men, some undergoing it for one thing and others for another thing or for the same, but instead some one of us underwent some private experience rather than that of the others, then it would not be at all easy for the one to describe what he was undergoing to the other. I say this recognizing that you and I do in fact undergo the same experience and feeling, both of us being in love, each with his own, I with Alcibiades and philosophy, and you with a pair of Demoses, the demos of the Athenians as well as Pyrilampes' son. Just so I have often looked on and witnessed that whatever your beloved asserts – however he says things stand – clever man though you are, I see you powerless to contradict him but flip upside down and backwards however you must to suit him: in the assembly when you are making a case and the Demos of the Athenians denies that that's how it is, you shift your position and say what *Demos ipse* wants, and you act the same way, *mutatis mutandis*, in the presence of the son of Pyrilampes, your beautiful boy. You just can't oppose your beloved, whether in his counsels or in what he says, – and the result is that if someone on such an occasion were to express bewilderment as to how you could say things so strange at his behest, you would perhaps say to him – if you wanted to tell him the truth – that unless someone intervenes and causes your beloved to stop saying those things you aren't going to stop saying them, either. (482) So believe likewise that you are hearing the same kind of thing from me: don't express bewilderment at what I am saying, but instead intervene and cause philosophy, my beloved, to stop saying them. For she it is who is saying what you have just heard, my friend and fellow, and she is a good deal less excitable than my other beloved. That son of Cleinias is of different minds at different times, but philosophy's arguments are always the same, and just now you express surprise at the things she says though you yourself were present while they were being argued.[79] So either defeat her in what I argued with Polus just now by arguing that it is not true that doing injustice and that not paying the penalty for acting unjustly is the ultimate of all evils, or, if you allow this to stand unchallenged, then I aver by the Dog, that Egyptian god, that Callicles will not agree with you, Callicles, but will be in disharmony every day of his life. Yet to my mind, my best of men, it is better for me that my lyre be poorly tuned and play discordantly – and a chorus, too, if ever I should lead one – and that the vast majority of men not be agreeing with me but hold the opposite position, than for me who am but one man to be out of harmony with myself and to be arguing contradictories."

Call. "Socrates! You come across as playing the virtuoso in your way of arguing,[80] making a real public speaker of yourself! Here you are, playing it up to the crowd that Polus is undergoing the same experience he criticized Gorgias for undergoing in his conversation with you. Polus said, didn't he, that when Gorgias was asked by you whether, when a student who wants to learn oratory arrives for instruction having no knowledge of justice, whether Gorgias would instruct him, that he was shamed into saying that he *would* instruct him, simply because this is the way people act and people would hold it against him if he said he would not – that once he had agreed to this he was forced into contradicting himself, that this is all you are trying to bring about – and he ridiculed you for it – correctly, as I at least thought at the time. And this time he himself is undergoing this same experience all over again, and I am less than pleased with Polus over this, that he yielded to your suggestion that doing injustice is uglier than undergoing it. Once he agreed to that, it was his turn to become ensnared in the nets of your argument and be reduced to silence, ashamed to say what he plainly sees in his mind's eye. You really do force the argument into such crass and demagogical notions, Socrates, though you claim you are pursuing the truth of the matter – in particular into this notion of what by nature is not admirable though admirable by convention. Most of the time these things are contrary to

each other, nature and convention, so anytime someone out (483) of shame dares not say what he thinks and knows, he is compelled to contradict himself.[a] Just so you, having mastered this paltry trick, cheat in your way of talking. Whenever someone says something according to convention, you ask a question tacitly aimed at what is according to nature; and if he talks nature you talk convention. So it is in the present case, the case of committing injustice and suffering it: when Polus was saying which is more shameful and ugly according to convention, you attacked the convention according to nature.

"For by nature it is entirely uglier, besides being worse, to undergo injustice, though by convention uglier to commit it. For indeed to suffer this lies not in store for anyone who is a real man – to undergo injustice – but for a man in chains, who would be better off dead than alive: the sort who though wronged and besmirched hasn't the resources to do anything for himself nor for anyone under his care. But as to law, let me tell you the people that make the laws are the weak men, the many. It is with an eye to themselves and their advantage that they write their laws, praise what they praise, and blame what they blame: In order to deter those who are the more vigorous of mankind and able to have the upper hand, lest they have the upper hand over *them*, they make their case that it is shameful and unjust to have more, that this is the essence of injustice, to seek to have more than the rest – for they are satisfied for themselves – I'll say it – if they have "equality," given the fact that they are inferior. And so by convention this is said to be unjust and shameful – seeking to be better off than the many – and they call the act a crime. But regardless, nature herself makes plain the facts: It is *just* that the better have more than the worse, and the more able than the less able. She shows this not only in the animal realm but the human also, among whole cities and among the races of mankind, that this is how justice is determined: the stronger rules over and is better off than the weaker. Since what kind of justice did Xerxes employ when he brought his army against Hellas, or his father against the Scythians, or thousands of other such cases one could speak of along these same lines. Anyway, my sense is that these men did these things in accordance with nature, the nature of the just – indeed, by Zeus, in accordance with the *law* of nature, if you will,[81] but not, you may be sure, in accordance with the law that *we* institute, molding the noblest men like clay, the most vigorous in our midst, taking charge of them from their youth like young lions; by singing incantations and magic spells over them we enslave them to believe (484) the story that equality must be the rule and this is what is the fine and the just. But mark you if ever a man is born with an adequate endowment from nature, shaking all that off and breaking it down and eluding it and trampling under foot our edicts, our charms, our incantations, and our laws, each of them contrary to nature, then *Voilà*! he who was our slave arises now as our master, and embodied in him, right then and there, the justice of nature bursts into the light!

"Our Pindar is evincing the same thing in his poem where he says,

It is law that is the king of all,
Of mortals and immortals alike.

It is this supernal king-law, he says, that

Achieves the most just of forceful deeds[82]
With insuperable hand. My witness is
The deeds of Heracles, since…'

a The idea of "nature and convention" is new to the conversation. Are the natural things a different set of things from the conventional things (as the expressions "things by nature" and "things by convention" suggest)? If so, why do they have the same name (e.g., "just" and "ugly"? Or are they two "respects" or points of view in which or from which the same things are seen, but seen differently? The distinction will not stand the close scrutiny is seldom receives.

… '*unpurchased* …' something like this: I don't know the poem by heart.[a] What he means is that Heracles led off the oxen without paying for them and without Geryon giving them to him, believing that what is just according to nature is this: that oxen and all other possessions that belong to those who are worse and weaker belong to the nobler and stronger man.[83]

"Now that's the truth of the matter, and you will come to recognize it if you move on to bigger things and finally say goodbye to philosophy. I grant you it is a pleasant enough thing, Socrates, if one takes it on in a moderate way during youth. But if one gets more deeply involved in it than one ought it becomes the ruin of men. For even if one is well endowed by nature and philosophizes beyond his youth, it is inevitable that he will come out unfamiliar with all the things one ought to be familiar with if he is to become a good and fine man, and a reputable man. For instance, they show up unfamiliar with the laws of their city, and with the ways of speaking that a man must employ when relating to people in negotiating agreements both private and public, and with the pleasures and desires of people, and to put it generally they prove to be utterly unfamiliar with the range of human personalities. So when they enter into some private or public action they come off laughable, just as I daresay that political men, conversely, if they go into the kind of activity and conversations of you and yours, also come off laughable. What Euripides says is right on point, each man is brilliant in this, and 'hastens toward this,'

> *... devoting most of his day*
> *Where as chance has it he is more noble than himself.* [b](485)

But where he is meagre, thence does he flee, and casts aspersions on it, but praises the alternative instead, out of self-serving goodwill, thinking that in doing this he is praising himself. Regardless, my sense is that the most proper thing is to have a share in both: in philosophy, to the extent that it is part of education, it is good to have a share, and it is not shameful when one is a lad to philosophize; but when a person, once he has gotten older, continues to philosophize, the thing becomes laughable, Socrates. And for myself, my experience of those who philosophize is just like my experience of those who lisp and act like a child: when I see a young child whom it still befits to talk that way – lisping like a child – I enjoy it and it seems to me a charming thing and natural and appropriate to the child's time of life, whereas when I hear a little child conversing with clear articulation it is a bothersome thing to me, and it pains my ears and has something slavish and forced about it; but when one hears a grown man lisping or sees him acting childish, one finds him laughable and immature and needing to be slapped. And that's the way I feel about philosophers. In a strapping youth it makes me glad to see philosophy, and it seems appropriate to me, and I have the impression this is a freeman, while in contrast the one that does no philosophizing seems crabbed and lacking the ambition ever to pursue a fine or noble career. But when I see an older man still doing philosophy, not giving it up, at that point it is a whipping it seems to me he needs, Socrates, that man of yours. For as I was just saying, what's in store for that type, despite his inborn gifts, is to turn out less than a man, since he shuns the center of the city and its business, the places where 'the eminent' are turned out, as the poet says.[c] Lying low instead, he lives the rest of his life with lads off in a corner, three or four of them murmuring nonsense, never to be heard giving a speech free, substantial, and adequate.[84]

"Really, Socrates, I view you as something of a friend. And so I might find myself in the same position as Zethos toward Amphion in the Euripides passage I just mentioned. In fact the very sorts of things come to my mind to say to you as he said to his brother: You are neglecting, Socrates, the things

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a In fact, Callicles has misremembered his Pindar: see endnote.
b Callicles quotes Euripides's lost *Antiope*, here and below: Zethos is the active brother and Amphion the contemplative.
c "The poet" refers allusively to Homer (*Iliad* 9.441) just as we call Shakespeare "the bard."

you should be taking care of, and 'the nature of a soul so noble as yours' you are (486) 'perverting into the form of a teenager's'; and 'you could not speak on the planning of justice, nor could you grasp what is likely' and persuasive; nor 'on behalf of another could you give inventive counsel.' And yet, friend Socrates – and don't be angry with me, for what I shall say is meant in all good will toward you alone – don't you think it shameful to be the way I think you are, as is the case with any others that stay on too long in philosophy? For as you are, if somebody arrested you or any of the others like you and tried dragging you off to prison on the claim you did some wrong though you didn't, face it: you would not be able to handle the situation, but would get all confused and sit there agape not knowing what in the world to say, and once you got up to the podium in the law court, even if you had drawn an accuser quite petty and base, you would be condemned to death if that were the penalty he preferred against you. And yet how can this be a wise thing, 'some art that took hold of a man and made him a worse one,' and made him unable to come to his own aid nor to rescue him or anybody else from the greatest of dangers, but instead to be stripped by his enemies of all his wealth and to live virtually disenfranchised in his city? A man like this, if I may cut to the chase, one can slap in the face[a] and get away with it without being penalized. Nay rather, my good man, listen to me: 'Put a stop to your cross-examinings!' 'Practice the great art of deeds!' and practice what might make you seem sound of mind. 'Leave these subtleties of yours to others!' whether they are to be dubbed ravings or flights of nonsense, 'leading you to inhabit an empty home'; emulate not men when they make these small points of yours but those who have a living, a reputation, and goods in abundance!"

Soc. "If my soul were made of gold, Callicles, don't you think I would be pleased to have found one of those stones that test for gold, in fact the best one, if when I applied it it would confirm for me that I have properly tended to my soul – then I would know for sure that I really am alright after all, and that I need no other sort of trial?"

Call. "What are you talking about?"

Soc. "I'll tell you. I now think that in my encounter with *you* I have by coincidence encountered a thing of that sort!"

Call. "Huh?"

Soc. "I am sure that if ever *you* agree with me about what my soul is opining, then it is opining the very truth. I say this because I am thinking (487) that the person who intends to perform an adequate test of the soul, whether it is living properly or not, needs to have three things, of which I now realize, you have all: knowledge, good will, and frankness. In my experience I have encountered many who are unable to test me because of their not being wise –like you; but then others who are wise, alright, but are not willing to tell me the truth because they do not care about me – like you; and then these two visitors here, Gorgias and Polus, are wise enough and friendly enough toward me, but are lacking in frankness and are more modest than they should be. Who could deny it? They have come to such a peak of embarrassment that, emboldened by shame, they went so far as to make arguments contrary to their own thoughts in the presence of many people, and on the most important things, to boot! But when it comes to you, you have all the things one or the other of these lacks. Your education is sufficient, as many of the Athenians would vouch, and you are well disposed toward me – how do I know this? I will tell you: I know that the four of you, Callicles – you, Teisander of Aphidna, Andron the son of Androtion, and Nausikydes of Cholargos, have become colleagues in wisdom. One time I overheard you taking counsel with each other about how long one ought pursue the discipline of

a The expression (*epi korrēs tuptein*) appears to denote a public gesture of derision by slapping with a glove, in this case the recipient being in no position to rise to a duel.

wisdom, and I know that the opinion that won the day among you was this: you encouraged each other not to pursue philosophizing to some refined degree, but rather to take care, as you became more and more wise, to avoid being destroyed unbeknownst. And so now, hearing as I do that the advice you are giving me is the very advice you reached with your closest companions, I have sufficient reason to believe you are truly well-disposed toward me. And that you are disposed to speak frankly and not be ashamed, you yourself declared, and the speech you just gave corroborates it. And so here is how these things stand at this time: If you reach agreement with me in conversation, the matter will then and there have undergone a sufficient test, carried out by the two of us, and there will be no further need to bring the question to some other test. For you could never have granted it out of a deficiency in wisdom nor out of an excess of shame, nor would you grant it out of deceiving me, for you are my friend as you yourself declare. And so, in truth, for you and me to agree will mean we've reached the truth.

"An inquiry on the very things you criticized in me is the finest inquiry of all. What kind of man is one to be? What should his pursuits be (488) and at what point in his life, when younger and when older? As to myself, if there is some way I am acting improperly in the course of my life, you can be sure of this, that I am erring not intentionally but out of my own damned ignorance. And as for you, just as you set out to correct me, don't leave it off but show me sufficiently well what it is that I should be trying to do, and how I might acquire it; and if you get me to agree with you today but later on find me not doing the things I agreed to do, count me quite an imbecile and give me further correction never again, seeing as how I am unworthy of your efforts.

"Take the whole thing up from the beginning, for me: What do you say is the situation with justice, you and Pindar, this justice by nature? Is it just that the stronger man pillages by force the weaker men, and that the nobler man rules the inferior ones, and that the better man has more than the worse one? Maybe you said something else – or have I remembered correctly?"

Call. "No, that is what I *was* saying then, but also I say it now."

Soc. "Let me ask, do you call the same man nobler as well as stronger? I ask because I didn't get what you were saying at the time. Do you call the hardier men stronger, and say that obeying the hardier man is what the more feeble men[85] must do, as I think you were trying to show when you said that the large cities march against the small cities 'according to the just by nature' – because they are stronger and hardier, thinking the stronger or hardier and the nobler are one and the same? Or is it possible for a man to be nobler and yet weaker and more feeble, or stronger and yet baser? Or is the extent of the nobler and the stronger one and the same? The line between them is what I need you clearly to draw: are they the same thing or different, the stronger and the nobler and the hardier?"

Call. "Nay, I say it loud and clear: they are the same."

Soc. "Are the many stronger than the one, according to nature? Those, that is, who in fact establish the laws that rule the individual, as you said just now?"

Call. "How could it be otherwise?"

Soc. "So the convened beliefs of the many are the convened beliefs of the powerful men?"

Call. "Quite so."

Soc. "Thus the beliefs of the nobler men? For the stronger men are the nobler men by far according to your argument."

Call. "Yes."

Soc. "So the beliefs of these are fine according to nature, since they are they are the more powerful men?"

Call. "I affirm it."

Soc. "Now is it the case that the many hold the following belief, as again you were saying a moment ago: that having an equal amount is what is just, and that committing injustice is more shameful than undergoing it? (489)

"… Is that the case or not? And take care that you don't take a turn at being caught by shame for your own part.

"… Do they believe it or not, the many, that having an equal amount rather than a greater is just, and that it is more shameful to commit than to undergo injustice?

"Callicles, don't begrudge me an answer, so that by your agreeing with me I might achieve confirmation by your witness, given that a man adequate at deciding will be on record agreeing!"

Call. "Nay, the many do believe that."

Soc. "Then it is not only by convention that committing injustice is more shameful than undergoing it and having an equal amount is just, but by nature also. So that you just might not have been speaking the truth in what you said before, nor were justified in bringing the accusation against me, when you argued that convention and nature are opposite each other, that I was aware of this and was playing unfair in the conversation, when my partner was speaking of matters according to nature, in leading the discussion to matters according to convention, and when according to convention to matters according to nature."

Call. "Will you look at this fellow! He just won't stop spewing nonsense! Socrates, are you not ashamed to be chasing after words, at your age, and exploiting every opportunity to make hay of it when someone errs in his expression? Do you actually think I am saying that for men to be more powerful is anything other than for them to be more noble? Didn't I tell you long since that I assert that the more noble and the more powerful are one and the same thing?[86] Don't tell me you take me to mean that if you rounded up a gang of slaves and sundry sorts of men, worthless except in bodily exertion, and if such a group weighed in, such would *eo ipso* be the lawful convention?"

Soc. "Alright, then, most wise Callicles, is this what you are arguing?"

Call. "Quite so."

Soc. "Well I have to say, my marvelous man, that I have long since guessed this is the sort of thing you were saying is the more powerful, but I have put the question to you out of eagerness to see unambiguously what you are arguing. For *you*, obviously, would not hold that two are more noble than one, nor that your slaves are more noble than you because they are stronger than you. But go back to the beginning and tell me what you say the nobler men are, since it is not the stronger. And, my marvelous man, teach me more gently or else I might leave your tutelage."

Call. "Such irony!"

Soc. "By your Zethos not I, Callicles, whom you just now greatly used in an ironic attack on me! – But anyway, who do you say are the nobler?"

Call. "The better."

Soc. "Look how it's *you* that are mouthing words without indicating the meaning. Tell, won't you, whether you are saying the nobler and stronger are the smarter or somebody else?"[87]

Call. "Nay, by Zeus, I am saying just these – and exceptionally smart they are." (490)

Soc. "Sometimes then, a single man, when he is thinking, is stronger than thousands if they are not thinking, according to your argument, and this is the man who must rule, and the others must be ruled, and the one who is ruling must be better off than those being ruled. This is what I think you want to argue – and I am not just trying to pin down your expression – in the case when the single individual is stronger than thousands of others."

Call. "No that *is* what I am saying. For exactly this is what I think is the just by nature: to be the ruler and to have more because one is nobler and smarter than one's inferiors."

Soc. "Stop right there: What are you saying *this* time? Imagine we were all in the same place, as we are now, a good number of us gathered together, and there was a good deal of food and drink here for us we held in common, but that we were a motley crew, some strong and others weak, and one of us was smarter about food and drink – a physician, say – while himself being in all likelihood more robust than some of us but also slighter than others: won't he, given that he is smarter, be nobler and stronger regarding food?"

Call. "Exactly."

Soc. "So is he to get the better share of this food than the rest of us because he is more noble? Or, although he is the one to distribute all the food by virtue of being in charge because of who he is, still, when it comes to the eating up and finishing off of the food he is not to have more of it for his own body, if he is not to suffer the unhealthy outcome that would result in, but instead to have a greater share than some and a lesser one than others? And in case he happens to be the slightest of all, then the least share is to be had by the noblest man, Callicles?

"… Isn't it this way, my good man?"

Call. "What's this? You're talking food and drink and doctors and nonsense; I am not talking those things."

Soc. "Aren't you saying the smarter person is nobler?

"… Say yes or no."

Call. "Yes."

Soc. "And don't you say that the nobler ought to have more?"

Call. "Not more food! Not more drink!"

Soc. "Oh, I get it: Maybe more cloaks? And the cloakiest man ought to have the largest cloak and go about dressed the finest and the mostest?"

Call. "Cloaks shmoaks!"

Soc. "Then *shoes* the man clearly ought to have in excess, the one smartest and noblest at that? The shoemaker ought to have the largest shoes and strut about better shoed than everyone?"

Call. "You blather shoe-talk!"

Soc. "If that's not what you mean, maybe it's this: Take a farming man, who is smart about farmland, and fine and good: maybe it's this person that ought to have a larger share of seeds, and employ a maximal seed-use – in the farmland that is his own."

Call. "Amazing how you, Socrates, are always saying the same things!"

Soc. "Not only that, Callicles, but also *about* the same things." (491)

Call. "By the gods, you just won't stop talking leather-workers and wool-carders and cooks – along with doctors – as if you think our discussion is about those."

Soc. "But you – will you say about what the stronger and smarter person, in having an excess, justly has an edge? Or will you neither abide my promptings nor volunteer an answer yourself?"

Call. "But I *am* saying it and have been: First of all, as to the stronger, which ones they are, I'm not talking about shoemakers and butchers but anybody who is smart about the business of the city, how it would be well managed, and not only smart but also brave, being up to the task of carrying through whatever he has in mind rather than giving up early out of feebleness of soul."

Soc. "Anybody can see, my most noble Callicles, that what you accuse me of is not the same as what I accuse you of. You say I am always saying the same things and blame me for it; but I charge you with the opposite, that you never say the same things about the same things. Instead, at one time you define the nobler and stronger as the more powerful while at another time it is the smarter; and just now you serve me with something else: the stronger and the nobler are now said to be somehow braver. So my good man won't you just deliver yourself of your opinion and be done with it, as to who the nobler and stronger are, and stronger at what?"

Call. "But I've already said it is those who are smart at the city's business and brave. For it is fitting that these be the rulers of cities, and the just is this, that these have more than the others, the rulers more than the ruled."

Soc. "What? than themselves, my friend?

Call. "Who they?"[a]

Soc. "As rulers or as ruled?"

Call. "What do you mean?"

Soc. "I'm talking about each individual as himself ruling himself. Or is that unneeded – ruling oneself – only ruling others?"

Call. "What do you mean, 'ruling oneself'?"

Soc. "Nothing tricky – just what most people mean – being a mindful master of oneself, ruling over the pleasures and desires within oneself."

Call. "How naive! It is the imbeciles among us you are referring to as being mindful. How can you deny it?"

Soc. "Nobody would fail to recognize that that is not what I am saying!"

Call. "But that *is* most assuredly what you are saying – since how could a person be happy if he is enslaved to *anybody*? Nay, here is what is fine and just by nature – finally I will express it in all frankness: He who is to live the right way must allow his own desires to grow to the maximum and not bridle them, (492) but also must be adequate to the task of serving these[88] though they have become as great as can be, by dint of his manly courage and intelligence, and fulfilling each and every desire as it might arise. But this, I daresay, is beyond the ability of the many, and so they condemn such men out of shame. They try to divert attention from their shameful lack of power by calling 'shameful' the lack of a bridle, just as I was saying before, in their attempt to turn the naturally nobler men into slaves; lacking the power in themselves to satiate their desires with pleasures they praise moderation and justice because of a lack of manly courage in themselves. Since for anyone who had in store from birth

a The text is here as vague as my English; I have followed the best manuscripts.

to be sons of kings or, through natural endowment, to be adequate to procure some office for themselves, whether tyranny or dynasty, what in very truth could be more shameful and evil than moderation and justice for men such as these, if though able to rake off the goods for themselves with nothing impeding them, they should by their own choice bring law or usage to bear on themselves as their master, or the repute and censure of a mere majority? How, I ask you, could they not come off as losers for being overcome by the fine thing that justice and temperance is, and distributing no more spoils to their friends than to their enemies though they hold the very reins of the city?[89] No! In very truth, Socrates, since the truth is what *you* claim to be after, here is how it stands: Luxury, license, liberty as long as it has serving support at hand, *this* is virtue and happiness.[90] The rest you mention, this prettifying camouflage, these compacts contrary to nature, are nonsense, human, and of no worth."

Soc. "With no mean frankness, Callicles, do you prosecute our subject, for now you are stating very clearly what the others are thinking but are unwilling to say. I beg you please not to let up, so that we might truly grasp for once and for all how we are to lead our lives. Tell me: you are saying that one must not rein in his desires if he is to live as he ought, but that as he allows them to grow as great as possible he must try to work on having the means to fulfill them from separate sources around him – and that is what virtue is."

Call. "That is my position."

Soc. "So the saying that those who are in need of nothing are happy, is incorrect?"

Call. "Yes: mere stones would in that case be the happiest, and the dead for that matter."

Soc. "But by the same token, you would have to agree that being *alive* would be one hell of a thing if you are right. In fact, I wouldn't be so surprised if Euripides was right in saying,

> *Who knows whether being alive is really being dead,*
> *And being dead being alive?*[91] (493)

and that somehow we are in fact dead. Indeed, I have heard from some wise man that we are now dead and our body is for us a tomb; and that the part of the soul where desires reside is of such a nature as to be fickle and subject to the most extreme vacillations in mood, and that, as he told me, some clever man, maybe a Sicilian or an Italian, made up a fable about it – that since it is both *pithanos* (persuasive) and *pistikos* (trustworthy) he called this part a *pithos* (a pot for storage) adjusting the letters; and by another respelling he called mindless persons (*anoetous*) uninitiated (*amuetous*), and the place in the soul of the mindless that is the regime of the desires he called the unbridled part of it and unsealed for holding things in, as if it were a perforated pot, expressing with this image its insatiability. This fellow gives the picture – quite the opposite of yours, Callicles – that among the inhabitants of Hades (*Haides*), which he calls the "invisible" realm (*aeides*), these are the most destitute – namely, the uninitiated ones – in that they carry water to a perforated pot with something likewise perforated – a sieve: The sieve he speaks about is for him the soul, as the man who told me reported, and he likened their soul – that of the mindless – to a sieve as itself being perforated, inasmuch as such a soul is not able to keep what is in it because of its lack of trustworthiness and its forgetfulness.

"I grant this story is strange enough, but it does show the picture I want to put before you, to persuade you, if I might, to switch your vote and in place of living insatiably and debauched, to select a life meet and satisfied with whatever is ready to hand. But say whether I am at all persuading you actually to switch to the outlook that the happier people are those who are graceful and moderate

rather than dissolute and rash? Or would you be no more disposed to change even if I came up with a whole lot of such fables?"

Call. "The latter result you laid out is the truer."

Soc. "Come then: Shall I give you another image from the same school, and see whether you would do the following about the life of each, the temperate man and the dissolute man? Imagine that each of the two own many pitchers, and that those that belong to the one are sound and full, one of wine, one of honey, and one of milk, and many others full of many other liquids; and that the sources from which they draw these liquids are few and far between and difficult, accessible only with great and hard labor; and that the one man, once he has filled them up, would neither be lugging them back and forth nor be at all anxious, but was calm about the whole matter; whereas for the other, that the sources, just as for the other man, can be reached but only with difficulty, and that his vessels are perforated and cracked, and he has to be filling them (494) all the time, through night and day, or else suffer the greatest of pains. What do you say? Given these respective lives do you say the life of the dissolute man is happier than that of the moderate? Am I persuading you at all in saying this, to give in and say that the moderate life is better than the dissolute one? Or am I not persuading you?"

Call. "Not persuading, Socrates. The man who has finished filling them up no longer feels any pleasure: this is what I was just saying was living like a stone once he has filled them, no longer feeling either joy or pain. But the life of pleasure consists in maximizing successive influx."

Soc. "And yet doesn't a maximal influx require also that much leaves, and the perforations would need to be quite large to allow for the outflows?"

Call. "Quite so."

Soc. "Then you are talking about the life of a little gully,[92] rather than of a corpse or a stone! But say more. Are you talking about something like becoming hungry and then once hungry eating?"

Call. "I am."

Soc. "And becoming thirsty and then once thirsty drinking?"

Call. "So I am, and saying it about the other desires as well, each and every one: it comes upon him, he has the power, he fulfills the desire, he reaps his enjoyment, he lives a happy life."

Soc. "Bravo, my noblest of men! You are carrying it through just as you began, and let's hope you can continue shamelessly! And it seems I mustn't let shame stop me, either. So for starters, tell me if, also, feeling an itch and desiring to scratch, being abundantly able to scratch, carrying through scratching one's life away, is to live a happy life?"

Call. "You're a damn kook, Socrates, and an unscrupulous demagogue."

Soc. "Stop and think, Callicles! Polus and Gorgias I shocked and brought to shame – but you – please! Don't be shocked and ashamed! You are a brave man! Just answer!"

Call. "Alright then, I say that even the scratcher would be living a pleasurable life."

Soc. "But if pleasurable, happy also?"

Call. "Quite so."

Soc. "If it is only his head that he is desiring to scratch? Or should I proceed a bit farther with my questions? Mind what you will answer, Callicles, in case someone goes on to ask you about all the connected parts right down the line till he reaches what is the culminating case of things of this ilk, the

life of a Ganymede, serving all and sundry:[a] isn't that a hellish and shameful and destitute life?[93] Or will you dare say these are happy, as long as they have an abundance of what they crave?"

Call. "Have you no shame, driving our conversation into such topics?"

Soc. "So is it *I* who drive them there, my redoubtable friend? Or is it any man who so unguardedly asserts this thesis of yours, that those who are having enjoyment whatever the enjoyment might be, (495) are happy, and does not draw a distinction among pleasures as to which sorts are good and which are bad? But even now: say whether you declare that the pleasurable and the good are the same, or is there any pleasurable thing that is not good?"

Call. "In order to keep the argument from going inconsistent on me in case I shall say they are different, I say they are the same."

Soc. "You are undermining what you said at first, Callicles,[b] and you can no longer examine the truth in an adequate way with me, if as you say you are going to argue contrary to your opinion..."

Call. "... just as you are doing, Socrates."

Soc. "I'll say I am not acting properly myself, if in fact I am doing that, no less than you. But, my winning friend, look closely to see whether the good really could be this, enjoyment of any and every kind, since many shameful things such as were alluded to just now come into view as entailments of that position, but many others, too."

Call. "So *you* think."

Soc. "But *you*, are you really going to maintain this position?"

Call. "I am."

Soc. "Shall we then make a test of this argument, supposing you are serious?"

Call. "Absolutely!"

Soc. "Come then: if that's our consensus, let's make the following distinctions. Presumably you think there is such a thing as knowledge?"

Call. "I do."

Soc. "And weren't you speaking of a kind of courage that goes along with knowledge?"

Call. "So I argued."

Soc. "But thinking of courage as other than knowledge, you were speaking of them as two different things?"

Call. "Very much so."

Soc. "And what about this: are pleasure and knowledge one and the same thing or different?"

Call. "Different I should think; now it is *you* who seem so wise!"

Soc. "And is courage different from pleasure?"

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a The "life of the *kinaidoi*." The term appears only here in the classical corpus, apart from its use as a mere slur by Demosthenes's arch-rival, Aeschines. From this passage alone we can infer it denotes a man addicted to the pleasure of receiving anal sex: its relevance here is that only the passive recipient is physiologically able enjoy a continual onslaught of pleasurable frictions, perforce from a series of men.

b His enthusiastic identification of the pleasurable with the good, at 491E5-492C8.

Call. “Of course.”

Soc. “So let us review. Callicles, an Acharnian, has said the pleasurable and the good are the same thing, and that knowledge and courage are different both from each other and from the good.”

Call. “And meanwhile Socrates from Alopece does not agree with us on this – or does he?”

Soc. “He does not agree. But I’d guess Callicles won’t either, once he sees himself aright. Just tell me, don’t you take it that people who are doing well are undergoing the opposite of those who are doing badly?”

Call “I do.”

Soc. “So isn’t it necessarily so, that if as you aver these really are opposites to each other, it stands with them the same as with health and disease – that a man cannot thrive and suffer sickness at the same time, nor can he secure an abatement of health and of disease at the same time?”

Call. “What does *that* mean?”

Soc. “Take for example any part of the body considered by itself. (496) Say a man is sick in his eyes – it’s called ophthalmia, right?”

Call. “Of course.”

Soc. “Presumably it is not the case that at the same time he is healthy in the same respect, in his eyes.”

Call. “No way.”

Soc. “What about when he has an abatement of ophthalmia? Can he at that time also have an abatement of health in his eyes, so that he ends up in a state of simultaneous abatement of both?”

Call. “Hardly!”

Soc. “That leads to a surprising and nonsensical result, right?”

Call. “Very much so.”

Soc. “But I fancy he can take on and lose either of them in turns.”

Call. “I affirm that.”

Soc. “And isn’t it similar with strength and weakness?”

Call. “Yes.”

Soc. “And speed and slowness?”

Call. “Quite.”

Soc. “How about good things and happiness, and their opposites, bad things and misery? Does one get the one at one moment and lose it at another, in the case of both these?”

Call. “Surely, I think.”

Soc. “And so if we find things which a man can be relieved of and in possession of at the same time, it is clear that they cannot be the good and the bad. Are we in agreement as to that? Think hard and well about it before you answer.”

Call. “But I overwhelmingly agree!”

Soc. “Then come, let’s review what we have agreed to before. Being hungry: did you say it was pleasurable or painful? Being hungry considered in itself.”

Call. “I said painful, though eating when hungry is pleasurable.”

Soc. “I get that, but in any event being hungry in itself is painful? Or not?”

Call. “Painful.”

Soc. “Likewise with being thirsty?”

Call. “Very painful.”

Soc. “Am I to ask more along these lines or do you agree that any and every lack and desire is painful?”

Call. “I agree: no need to ask.”

Soc. “Alright then. As to drinking when one is thirsty: do you say that is anything but pleasurable?”

Call. “Agreed.”

Soc. “Presumably, the ‘when thirsty’ in your expression ‘drinking when thirsty’ means when being pained?”

Call. “Yes.”

Soc. “Whereas the ‘drinking’ part of it, on the other hand, is a filling of the lack and a pleasure?”

Call. “Yes.”

Soc. “So it is in reference to his drinking that you say he is enjoying.”

Call. “Exactly.”

Soc. “Assuming ‘when thirsty’.”

Call. “Yes.”

Soc. “That is, when pained?”

Call. “Yes.”

Soc. “Do you see the implication? When you say ‘drinking when thirsty’ you are saying that when pained he is at the same time enjoying. Or is it not happening at the same place and time, whether in the sphere of the soul or the body, as you wish – myself, I don’t care which. Is this true or not?”

Call. “It is true.”

Soc. “And yet you averred it is impossible to be doing badly (497) while doing well.”

Call. “And I do aver it.”

Soc. “And yet to be enjoying while being in pain you have now agreed is possible.”

Call. “So it seems.”

Soc. “That implies that enjoying is not doing well and being in pain is not doing badly, so that the pleasurable turns out to be different from the good.”

Call. “I don’t see what all this cleverness is about, dear Socrates.”

Soc. "You do see but no doubt you play dumb,[a] dear Callicles – but move on to the next step..."

Call. "Seeing that you are continuing to babble?"

Soc. "...so that you may see how clever you are to scold me: Isn't it the case that one stops being thirsty at the very same moment one stops having the pleasure that comes through drinking?"

Call. "What's the case is that I don't know what you are talking about!"

GORGIAS: "Quit that, Callicles! Answer for our sakes at least, so that our conversation can be completed."

Call. "But this is how Socrates always is, Gorgias, pressing his worthless little questions to defeat his interlocutor."

Gorg. "What difference does that make to you? No way does it affect our estimation of *you*. Just bear up under Socrates as he contrives whatever 'defeat' he is trying to contrive."

Call. "Go ahead, you, and ask these small and tight questions of yours, since Gorgias says so."

Soc. "Happy you are, Callicles, that you have been initiated into the larger questions before the smaller – I didn't think it worked that way. So, answer from the point where you left off: whether it is at the same moment that any of us stops feeling thirst and feeling pleasure."

Call. "I say that it is."

Soc. "And does one also stop feeling hunger and leave behind the other desires and pleasures at the same moment?"

Call. "That is the case."

Soc. "And pains and pleasures one leaves behind at the same moment?"

Call. "Yes."

Soc. "And yet goods and evils one does not leave behind at the same moment, as you agreed.[b] … but now do you not agree?"

Call. "I do agree – what of it?"

Soc. "That it entails, my friend, that the goods are not the same as the pleasurables, nor the bads the same as what hurts. One leaves the one pair behind at the same moment but not the other pair – seeing them to be different from one another. So how could what is pleasurable be the same as what is good or what's painful be the same as what's bad?

"If you want, I have another way to investigate it as follows – for it seems that even by that way the refutation does not reach your agreement – but look into this nevertheless: Isn't it by virtue of the presence of good things that you call your good men good, just as you call beautiful those to whom beauty is present?"

Call. "I do."

Soc. "But really, do you call foolish and cowardly men good? You didn't a moment ago, when you were calling the brave and intelligent good."

"... Or do you not call these good?"

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a "Play dumb" (*akkizein*) appears to be an allusion to a moronic woman named Akka, who whiled away the time, while weaving, in a conversation with a reflection of herself in a mirror.

b At 496C.

Call. “No but I do.”

Soc. “And this: have you ever witnessed a mindless child feeling joy?”

Call. “I have.”

Soc. “And have you never yet witnessed a mindless man feeling joy?”

Call. “I suppose I have, but what’s all this you’re up to?” (498)

Soc. “Never mind, just answer.”

Call. “I have.”

Soc. “What about a mindful man feeling pain and feeling joy?”

Call. “I have.”

Soc. “Which of the two are more joyful or pained, the intelligent ones or the mindless ones?”

Call. “To me there doesn’t seem much difference.”

Soc. “But that’s enough. In war have you ever witnessed a man being cowardly?”

Call. “Of course.”

Soc. “And when the enemy is receding which do you think the more joyful, the cowardly or the brave?”

Call. “I don’t think the more of either, though presumably their reactions are about equal.”

Soc. “It doesn’t matter: In any event, the cowardly do rejoice.”

Call. “Definitely.”

Soc. “And so do the mindless, it seems.”

Call. “Yes.”

Soc. “And when the enemy approaches, is it only the cowardly who are pained, or the brave as well?”

Call. “Both.”

Soc. “Equally?”

Call. “Maybe the cowardly somewhat more.”

Soc. “And when they are receding do the latter not feel greater joy?”

Call. “Maybe they do.”

Soc. “So when it comes to feeling pain and joy, the mindless and the intelligent and the cowardly and the brave behave similarly, as you say, but the cowardly more than the brave?”

Call. “So I say.”

Soc “And yet the intelligent and the brave are good, whereas the cowardly and mindless are bad?”

Call. “Yes.”

Soc. “Therefore when it comes to feeling pain and joy the good and the bad behave similarly.”

Call. “So I say.”

Soc. "Would you say that the good and the bad are good and bad similarly to each other? Or are the good still more good, and the bad still more bad?"

Call. "Wait! By Zeus I really don't know what you are saying."

Soc. "You mean you don't know that you say that good men are good by virtue of the presence of good things, and likewise the bad bad by the presence of bad things? And that the good things are the pleasures, whereas the things that are painful are the bad things?"

Call. "I do."

Soc. "And so for those who are enjoying themselves, the good things are present – the pleasures – if in fact they are enjoying themselves?"

Call. "How could it be otherwise?"

Soc. And good things being present, those who are enjoying themselves are good."[94]

Call. "Yes."

Soc. "And for those who hurt aren't the bad things present – the pains?"

Call. "They are present."

Soc. "And it is by virtue of the presence of bad things, you say, that bad men are bad? Or do you no longer say that?"

Call. "I still do."

Soc. "Therefore those who are enjoying themselves are good, and bad whoever is in pain."

Call. "Quite so."

Soc. "And those who are doing so more are more good and more bad; and if less so, they are less good and less bad; and if equally, are equally good or bad?"

Call. "Yes."

Soc. "Do you claim that the intelligent and the mindless have similar experiences of pleasure and pain, and also the cowardly and the brave – or if anything the cowards a little more?"

Call. "I do."

Soc. "Put together along with me what is the upshot for us from what we have agreed. They say, you know, it is fine (499) to say fine things two and three times, as well as to inspect them more carefully. We have said the intelligent and brave man is good, right?"

Call. "Yes."

Soc. "And bad the man who is mindless and cowardly."

Call. "Quite so."

Soc. "And we agreed in turn that the man who is enjoying himself is good."

Call. "Yes."

Soc. "And bad the man who is hurting."

Call. "Necessarily."

Soc. "And that the good and bad feel pain and pleasure similarly – the bad man more, if anything?"

Call “Yes.”

Soc. “So the bad man is bad and good in a way similar to the good man, or if anything the bad man is more good than the good. Doesn’t this follow, and those earlier things, too,[a] if one asserts that the pleasurable is the same as the good

“… Isn’t all that necessary?”

Call. “You know, I have been listening to you lecture for some time now, Socrates, agreeing at each step down the line and thinking all along that even if someone grants you something only in jest you latch on to it gladly, just like a teenager. As if you actually believe that I or anybody else no matter who doesn’t believe there are better and worse pleasures!”

Soc. “Oh no! Callicles! How unscrupulous you are to toy with me so, at one moment averring the same things to be so that at the next moment you deny, in order to trick me. I have to say at the start I had no idea I would be tricked by you, not intentionally at least, for I took you as a friend; but as it has turned out I was deceived, and it seems I will have to ‘make do,’ according to the old saw, and ‘work with what is left me’ by you. It seems that your position now, as you have said, is that among pleasures some are good and some bad. Is that so?”

Call. “Yes.”

Soc. “Are the beneficial ones good, whereas the harmful ones bad?”

Call. “Quite so.”

Soc. “And beneficial are the ones that do some good, whereas the pleasures that do something bad are bad?”

Call. “Yes.”

Soc. “Do you speak of pleasures as follows, that for example as to pleasures of the body having to do with eating and drinking that we were just talking about, if, I now infer, the one set of these producing health in the body or strength or some other goodness of the body, this one set comprises good ones, that conversely the ones that produce effects opposite to these are bad?”

Call. “Quite so.”

Soc. “And isn’t it the same for pains – some of them are useful and others are worthless?”

Call. “Of course.”

Soc. “And one should select out the useful pleasures and pains and pursue these?”

Call. “Yes.”

Soc. “But the worthless ones not?”

Call. “Clearly.”

Soc. “For if you remember, it seemed to Polus and me that it’s for the sake of good things that everything is to be done in each instance.[b] Does it seem so to you, also? That the goal of each and every action is the good, and that for the sake of the former all the rest is to be done, (500) rather than the former for the sake of everything else. Will you join us in this, making three who vote this way?”

Call. “I will.”

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a Referring to 497D.

b Referring to 467CD.

Soc. "Therefore it's for the sake of good things that we must do all the rest, including all pleasurable things, but not for the sake of pleasurable things that we do good things."

Call. "Quite."

Soc. "Is just any man capable of selecting out which sorts are good – of pleasurable things, that is – and which are bad, or is there need for an expert in each case?"

Call. "An expert."

Soc. "Let's call back to mind, in turn, the things I had occasion to say to Polus and Gorgias. I was arguing, if you remember, that acts of provision are of two kinds, one kind endeavoring to bring one to pleasure but no further than just that, ignorant of the question of what is nobler and what baser; and another kind that knows what is good and what is bad. And among the provisionings that concern themselves with pleasure, I listed the butcher's, as a knack but not a skill, whereas among those concerned with the good I listed the doctor's, as a skill. And in the name of Zeus-Friendship himself, Callicles, don't get the idea that you ought to kid with me or answer any old thing contrary to your opinion, and conversely don't take it that I am kidding in what I am saying to you. For it is plain to see that for us, what we are talking about is something than which even the least thoughtful of men could not take something else more seriously[95] – that is, the question, 'What should be one's orientation in life?' To turn toward the life you are advocating for me, doing those deeds a 'real man' does, as you put it, speaking in the assembly, practicing oratory and doing politics in this way you all do politics? Or toward my kind of life, the life in philosophy? – and the question, 'How does this life differ from that life?' Maybe the best thing to do, as I tried to do a moment ago, is to draw distinctions, and having drawn them and having agreed with each other about the distinctions, thereupon – assuming they really do constitute two alternative lives – to go on to investigate how they differ from each other and which of the two is worth living.

"... Maybe you still don't know what I am saying..."

Call. "I certainly don't!"

Soc. "Well then I will make it clearer. Since you and I have reached the agreement that there is such a thing as the good and such a thing as the pleasurable, and that the pleasurable is a different thing from the good, and that in the case of each of the two there is a commitment, if you will, and an instrumentality for acquiring them – the one a hunt for the pleasurable and the other a hunt for the good.

"… But first, agree or don't agree with me so far.

"... Do you agree?"

Call. "Yes, I agree."

Soc. "OK then, consider agreeing step by step with what I was arguing with my two associates and tell me if you judge what I was saying is true. I said that the delicatessen's work was not in my judgment an art but a knack (501) but medicine was, arguing that the one has both investigated the nature of the thing it serves, and has investigated the reasons it should itself do what it does, and that it is able to render an explanation for each of these things – I speak of medicine; but that the other, in its alterity, of pleasure with which alone it is concerned, goes at this alone, flat out and without art, neither investigating the nature of pleasure nor what causes it, and with no method at all keeping track of virtually nothing, but by dint of experience and knack retaining only a memory of what usually works – and this is how it provides what pleasures it does. Tell me first whether you judge this much to have been adequately argued, and whether there do exist certain similar occupations having to do in

an analogous way with soul, some of which qualify as artful since they have some prudential concern for the best state of the soul while others neglect this so as to devote themselves, as in the case of the others, to investigate only the pleasure of the soul and by what turn of events this in itself arises, without investigating the question which of the pleasures are nobler or worse, being concerned only that enjoyment occurs, whether nobler or baser. I ask because in my judgment, Callicles, these do exist, and I do say that this sort of thing is pandering, whether about the body or the soul or any other thing for which one might cater to its pleasure with no regard for the question of the better and the worse. But you, do you posit with us the same judgment about these things, or do you say 'Nay'?"

Call. "No 'Nay' from me! I yield it instead, both to help you finish your argument at last and to cater to my man, Gorgias."

Soc. "Does this pertain to one soul but not to two or for that matter to many souls?"

Call. "No, it pertains also to two and to many."

Soc. "And likewise, is it possible to please in one fell swoop a *gathering* of souls, with no regard at all for what is best?"

Call. "I do think so."

Soc. "Can you say which are the professions that do this? Or instead, if you like, I will ask about them, and if one in your judgment falls into that category say so, or if not say not. First, let's look at flute playing. Doesn't this seem to you to be of that sort, to be pursuing our pleasure and paying attention to nothing else?"

Call. "Seems so to me."

Soc. "And what about the following sorts of things, such as cithara playing as it is done in public contests?"

Call. "Yes."

Soc. "And what about directing choreography and the composing of dithyrambs? Doesn't it strike you as being that sort? Or do you have the sense that Kinesias the son of Meles is paying attention to improving those who hear it, rather than to what is going to give enjoyment to the crowd of spectators?" (502)

Call. "It's clear in the case of Kinesias at least!"

Soc. "What about Meles, his father? Did he seem to you to be considering what is the best for us when he sings to his cithara? Or in his case was he not even concerned with the most pleasant: it would depress the spectators when he sang! But think about it: Doesn't cithara playing as a whole seem to you, along with the composition of dithyrambs, to have been conceived for the sake of pleasure?"

Call. "I seems so to me."

Soc. "And what about this thing judged so solemn and wondrous, tragic compositions? Is their aim, in *your* judgment, and all the elaborate fuss they stir up, meant only to give enjoyment to the spectators, or also to take up cudgels against what though it pleases them and gives them enjoyment is an evil thing, so as not to say it? And conversely in case something is unpleasant but beneficial, to present this, both in episode and chorus, whether the spectators enjoy it or not? For which of the two has the composing of tragedies been developed, in your judgment?"[96]

Call. "This much is clear, Socrates, that it is driven more toward pleasure and to entertaining the spectators."

Soc. "Now isn't this sort of thing what we just now called pandering?"

Call. "Quite so."

Soc. "Come then. If one sectioned off melody, rhythm, and meter from poetry of any kind, wouldn't speeches result as the residue?"

Call. "Necessarily."

Soc. "And aren't these speeches spoken to a big crowd, even a deme?"

Call. "Yes."

Soc. "Then poetry is a kind of demagoguery!"

Call. "Seems so."

Soc. "It would be an oratorical demagoguery. Or do you not judge the poets are doing what orators do, though in the theaters?"

Call. "So they are."

Soc. "Thus by our own lights we have discovered an oratory of sorts, delivered to a deme of sorts, one that consists of children and women and men both slave and free, an oratory we hardly admire – for we have dubbed it 'pandering'."

Call. "Quite so."

Soc. "Well then. What about the oratory delivered to the deme of Athens, and to the other demes in the cities, those that also consist of free men: how shall we characterize this? Do you judge that the orators characteristically speak with what would be best in mind and aiming for this – how the citizens might in future become as noble as possible as a result of their speeches? Or are these, too, driven toward pleasing the citizens and neglect the common interest for the sake of their own personal interest, addressing their demes as children, seeking only to give them enjoyment, paying no mind to whether they will become better or worse because of what they say?" (503)

Call. "This last question is no longer black or white. There are some that care about the citizens in saying what they say, but there are some that are like those ones *you* are arguing about."

Soc. "You've given me enough with that, for if at least the question is black *and* white, the one part of it would clearly be pandering and shameful demagoguery, and the other part admirable, the activity of providing that the souls of the citizens be as noble as possible and of taking up cudgels in their arguments for the noblest ideas, no matter whether these be more pleasant or more painful for the audience to hear. You at least have never yet seen oratory practiced *that* way – otherwise, if you do have such a man to mention among the orators, why didn't you say his name?"

Call. "By Zeus surely you can't expect *me* to be able to point to a single one of *our* orators!"

Soc. "What then? From among orators of former times can you mention one through whose services the Athenians are praised for having been made more noble from the time he began orating, they having been less noble before? For my part I do not know who it is you have in mind."[97]

Call. "What's this? You don't hear it said that Themistocles came to be a great man, and so did Cimon, and so did Miltiades, and the great Pericles, who only recently died, whom you yourself heard?"

Soc. "Only if what you on your own were arguing virtue was, a while ago, is really true: the mere fulfilling of desires, whether one's own or those of others. If this is not true but instead what we together were forced to agree in the interim is true – that whatever desires make a man nobler through being fulfilled, true virtue is to fulfill these and not those that make him worse; and true that to do this requires art – that such a good man as that, one of these orators of yours came out to be, are you able to say?

Call. "I know not *what* I am to say about the matter."

Soc. "Search properly and you will find out what. Let's investigate it just that way – carefully, that is. Try this: The man of virtue, who as such speaks for the best in whatever he says, will speak not at random but with his eye on a certain something, won't he? Just as all other experts have their eyes on their own work when each of them ministers selectively to his own task, not by chance but with the intent that the job he is working on should achieve a certain shape for him. Look for example at the painters, if you will, the builders, the ship-makers, all the expert workmen, any one you wish: See how in every case they place each thing they place into an order! How each part requires the other parts to be appropriate so as to fit, so that in the end the whole work stands together as an ordered and finely arranged object! (504) Likewise the other experts but particularly those we were just talking about who deal with the body, the trainers and the doctors, give a fine arrangement and coordination to the body as it were. Are we in agreement that this is how this is, or not?"

Call. "Let's say this is how it is."

Soc. "So that once the building has reached organization and arrangement, it would be a worthy building, but if disorganized it would be a faulty one?"

Call. "Yes."

Soc. "And the same with a boat?"

Call. "Yes."

Soc. "And can we also say so about our bodies?"

Call. "Quite so."

Soc. "How about the soul? If it reached a disorganization will it be worthy, or if it reached some sort of order and arrangement?"

Call. "Necessarily, given the foregoing, this case falls under the same account."

Soc. "So what is the name for the thing that arises as a result of order and arrangement within the body?"

Call. "Let me guess: You mean health and strength?"

Soc. "I do. And what, in turn, for the thing that arises in the soul as a result of order and arrangement?

"... Try to find it and say what its name is, as you did for body."

Call. "Why don't you take a turn answering that one?"

Soc. "If that would please you more, I will; but you for your part, if you judge I've spoken well, then say you agree, and if not, challenge me and don't just let it pass. In my judgment what to call the orderly arrangements in the body is 'healthy,' and from the 'healthy' arises 'health' and all the rest of the body's virtue. It is this correct, or not?"

Call. "It is."

Soc. "But for the soul's orderings and arrangements, the name is 'orderly'[a] and 'lawful,' whence men become lawful and well-behaved; and these two results are justice and moderation. Do you agree or not?"

Call. "Let it be so."

Soc. "So the orator I dream of – the artful and virtuous one – will keep his eye on these matters as he ministers to the souls with whatever speeches he delivers and whatever deeds he does, and will grant whatever reward he grants and exact any fine he exacts with his mind always directed toward this: how, for his fellow citizens, justice might be instilled in their souls and how injustice might be let go; how moderation might be instilled and licentiousness let go; and how the rest of virtue might be instilled and vice might take its leave.

"… Do you acquiesce in this conclusion, or not?"

Call. "I acquiesce."

Soc. "After all, what benefit is it, Callicles, to give a body that is sick and in a wretched state a lot of food, even if the most pleasurable, or drink, or anything else, if there is no way it will be the more beneficial for the body itself, or on the contrary, according at least to a just accounting, might even be less beneficial?

"… Isn't that so?" (505)

Call. "Let it be so."

Soc. "After all, it doesn't pay off for a man to be living with a wretched body, for necessarily his living, too, will be wretched. Or is that not so?"

Call. "Yes."

Soc. "And also to satiate the desires – for example for a hungry man to eat as much as he wants or for a thirsty man to drink. The doctors usually allow it when he is healthy, but when he is sick they almost never allow him to indulge his appetites. Do you yourself agree with this much, or not?"

Call. "I do."

Soc. "But in the case of the soul, my best of men, isn't it the same? As long as it is vicious, because mindless and unbridled and unjust and impious, one must hold it back from its desires and not accede to its doing anything other than what will make it nobler. Do you agree, or not?"

Call. "I do."

Soc. "For this would be the better course for the soul, considered in and for itself."

Call "Quite so."

Soc. "And to hold it back from what it desires is to restrain it?"

Call "Yes."

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a I replace, with others, the *nomimon* of the mss. ("lawful"), with *kosmion* ("orderly").

Soc. "Therefore to be constrained is better for the soul than the sort of unconstrained license you were just now thinking to be better."

Call. "I don't know what you are saying, Socrates. Ask somebody else!"

Soc. "This man! He won't tolerate being helped, even when undergoing the very thing we are talking about, being restrained."

Call. "No more than I care at all about what *you* are saying; and the answers I gave were only for the sake of pleasing Gorgias."

Soc. "Well then what are we going to do? Are we breaking up the argument right in the middle?"

Call. "That will be totally up to you."

Soc. "But they say it's not right to leave off even *stories* in the middle, before one has capped them with an ending – otherwise they will run around headless. So answer the rest, so that the argument, too, can be given a head."

Call. "You're so *pushy*, Socrates! May I persuade you to let this argument go – or else dialogue with somebody else."

Soc. "But who else is willing? Please let's not leave the argument unfinished."

Call. "Can't you go through the rest of the argument, off by yourself, or by answering your own questions?"

Soc. "Just to make Epicharmus's line come true in me, that 'The things before, I spoke as two men,' I should prove able while being only one?[a] But why even ask, when it appears completely necessary? So let's go ahead and do it this way: Myself, I'd say all of us ought to vie to know what is the truth about the matters we are discussing and what is false, since it's obviously a boon for all of us if the very truth of the matter comes into view, no matter by whose lights. I will go through step by step how things stand as I see them, (506) and in case any one of you thinks it is an untruth I am granting myself as answerer, you must take the floor and try to refute me. For it is not as if I presume to be speaking knowledgeably in what I am saying. Instead what I am doing is searching jointly with you, and thus if the person that argues a different position from mine brings something to light, I will be the first to grant it. But still, I propose all this only if you all do judge the argument should be pursued to completion: if you do not want this, let's drop it as was suggested, and part our ways."

GORGIAS. "Surely in *my* judgment, Socrates, we really ought not as of yet part company, but rather your argument should be brought to completion – it looks like the others agree. I *do* myself want to hear you yourself, as you go through the rest."

Soc. "Just as surely, Gorgias, would I gladly be continuing the dialogue with this Callicles here, to the point of having delivered to him Amphion's counter-speech to the speech of Zethus.[98] And you, Callicles, since you are not willing to join with me going through the argument to the end, still, at least, interrupt me as you listen in case you judge I am putting something badly. And in case you refute me soundly, I will not be angry with you, as you were with me: instead, you will be commemorated forever, in my world, among my greatest benefactors!"

Call. "Speak on by yourself, my worthy, and get it over with."

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a Athenaeus (7.308C) quotes from the comedian Epicharmus a line like this being spoken by a character whose interlocutor refuses to answer.

Soc. "Listen then, as I resume the argument from its beginning: Are the pleasurable and the good identical? – No, not identical, as Callicles and I agreed. – Are we to do the pleasurable for the sake of the good, or the good for the sake of the pleasurable? – The pleasurable for the sake of the good. – And what is pleasurable is what by virtue of its becoming present to us, makes us feel pleasure, and good that by whose presence we are good? – Quite so. – And yet we are *good*, as are all things that are good, by virtue of a certain goodness or virtue becoming present? – I at least think that is necessarily true, Callicles. – But the *virtue* of any thing, whether a tool or a body or a soul of any animal, does not become present to it in the finest way just by chance, but rather by orderliness and correctness and by an art, whichever art is devoted to each of these things. – I at least would say so. – Therefore it is by dint of orderly arrangement that this distinct virtue of each thing has its order and decorum? – I would say so – Is it therefore a coming into being of the distinct decorum peculiar to each thing that confers distinct goodness upon all the things? – Yes in my judgment. – So a soul, too, by virtue of having the decorum-principle proper to it is better than an indecorous one? – Necessarily. – And yet the soul that has decorum is decorous. – How is it not to be so? – But (507) if decorous, then temperate? – Quite necessarily. Therefore the temperate soul is virtuous and good.

"For myself, I have nothing to affirm against all that, friend Callicles; but if you do, please tell me where I am wrong."

Call. "Speak on, my worthy."

Soc. "Speak I will. If the temperate soul is virtuous, the one that has undergone the contrary of the temperate soul is vicious and bad. But the vicious soul was the mindless and unbridled one. – Quite so. – And yet the temperate man by the nature of the case would behave with propriety, both in regard to gods and in regard to men: he would not be acting temperately if he behaved inappropriately. – Necessarily that is so. – But to behave appropriately toward men is to behave justly, and appropriately toward the gods is to behave piously, and one who behaves justly and piously is necessarily just and pious. – That is true – But in fact he also is necessarily brave, for it is hardly the mark of a temperate individual to pursue and prosecute any more than to flee and defend what is inappropriate, but rather what one must, whether it be actions and men or pleasures and pains to avoid as well as embrace, or defend and prosecute, and have the fortitude to stand the ground he must.

"So as we have now seen, step by step, there is an overpowering necessity that the temperate man, by virtue of being just and brave and pious, is a good man in the fullest sense; that by virtue of being a good man he does whatever he does in a way that is good and admirable, that by virtue of behaving this way he is blessed and happy, whereas he who is base and does evil is a hapless loser. This latter type would be the man living in the opposite state to that of the temperate man, this unbridled man whom *you* were praising.

"I propose all this by my own lights, and assert that this is true. But if it is true, then it would appear that if one wants to be happy, he must pursue temperance and make that his practice, and must run away from licentiousness as fast as my legs and yours can carry us, and we must so equip ourselves as never to need being chastised in the first place, but that if we should, whether it be one of us or of one of our own, whether an individual or our city, we must impose the dictates of justice and chastise the person, if he is to have any hope of being happy. This, by my lights, is the target one must keep in his sights in living his life, and concentrate everything both private and public on this, at making justice as well as temperance be present in him who hopes to live a blessed life: these things to do, and not to allow his desires grow uncontrolled and then endeavor to fulfill them – an evil that knows no end! the life of a whore![a] For neither by his neighbor could such a man be loved, nor by a

a For the *lēistou bion zōnta* ("living the life of a pirate") of the mss., I suggest reading *laisitou bion zōnta.*("living the life of a whore"), to bring it in line with Socrates's remark at 494E (*kinaidōn bios*) which he seems to be quoting: cf. note

god: he is unable to share, and a person who lacks the ability in himself to share cannot have friendship. But the wise men say, Callicles, that heaven and earth and gods and men are held together in the embrace of sharing and (508) friendship and decorum and temperance and justice (and for this reason they call all the great whole a cosmos, my fellow), not of chaos and indecency. But in your case, I think you pay no attention to all this, clever man though you are: you are utterly unaware that equality – the geometrical type[99] – among men and among gods, has great power, while you think that you must devote yourself to having more than the next man: you do not appreciate the geometry of things.

"But enough: either we must refute the argument that by acquiring justice and temperance the happy are happy and by evil the unhappy, or if this argument is true we must follow out what it implies. Every damn one of those things follow about which you at first asked me whether I was being serious, when I said one must summon into court both himself and his son and his associate in case they committed an injustice, and that this was what oratory was to be used for; and also that what you thought Polus was ashamed to grant was true after all, that committing injustice really is more evil than suffering it, to the same extent that it is more shameful; and also that the man who would practice oratory properly must, after all, be just and knowledgeable in matters of justice, which Polus in turn said Gorgias had been unwilling to admit, out of shame.

"Given all this, let's look into what you reproach in me and whether the argument for it is correct, namely that I am really unable to be of any help either to myself or to any of my friends and family, and powerless to rescue them from the greatest of dangers, but that I am like a disenfranchised sitting duck for anybody who wants, yes, to 'slap me in the face' as you so petulantly put it – or strip me of my possessions, or exile me from my city, or after all that to kill me; and that to be so situated is of all things the most shameful, as your argument has it. What is my argument, you ask? One that has been said many times already though nothing prevents its being said again: I deny, Callicles, that being slapped in the face unjustly is the most shameful thing, nor for that matter being cut up, whether it be my own body or my purse, but rather that the act of striking me or mine unjustly as well as cutting is both more shameful and more evil; and add that stealing too, and kidnapping, and breaking in, and in short doing any unjust act against me and mine is a thing more evil and more shameful for him who commits the injustice than it is for me who suffer it. And since these things, having become apparent to us as being so in the previous discussion above, are held together and have tied me up with reasonings iron and adamant (509) (if I, too, may be permitted a vivid metaphor[100]) – so at least it would seem at present –, and if you will not untie them, either you or someone still more petulant, then one cannot well argue other than as I have argued them now. For in my world the argument is always the same: I do not know how these things stand, and yet of all the men I have encountered, including present company, nobody is able to argue them otherwise without making a ridiculous fool of himself.

"So for my part I will in the meanwhile posit anew that this is how it is, so that if it is so, and the greatest of evils is injustice for the man who commits it, and it is even a greater one than this, though already the greatest, if such is possible, for a man who commits injustice not to pay the penalty, then what sort of help would a man be laughable for being unable to provide himself? Wouldn't it be whatever would avert from us the harm we could undergo that is greatest? It is inescapable that this is the most shameful aid one would be unable to provide, whether to oneself or to his friends and family, while the second most shameful applies to the second most evil, and the third to the third – and so in general: the magnitude of the given evil determines how admirable is one's ability to provide help

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ad loc., *supra*.

when it happens, and likewise how shameful it is that he not be able. Is it otherwise or is it so, Callicles?"

Call. "Not otherwise."

Soc. "So between the pair of evils – committing injustice and undergoing it – we are saying that committing injustice is the greater evil and undergoing it the lesser. And so what should a man best prepare for himself as an aid to possess both these benefits, an aid that averts committing injustice and an aid that averts undergoing it? Is it power or will? Here is what I mean: Is it the case that if he does not *will* to undergo injustice, he will not undergo it, or that if he equips himself with *power* to avert undergoing it that he will not?"

Call. "This much is clear: with power."

Soc. "And what about averting to commit injustice? If he wills not to do it, is that sufficient – for he simply won't? Or against this must he be equipped with some power or art, such that unless he does learn certain things and makes a practice of them, he will commit injustice?

"... Won't you just answer me this at least, Callicles, whether we seem to you properly to have been forced to agree, during the arguments that came before, Polus and I – or were we not – when we agreed that nobody chooses to commit injustice, but rather that all who commit injustice do so unintentionally?" (510)

Call. "So be it just for you, Socrates, so that you might get to the end of your speech."

Soc. "And so against this, too, we must be equipped with some power or art, in order that we not commit injustice."

Call. "Quite so."

Soc. "What then could the art be for equipping oneself against suffering injustice or suffering it as little as possible? See if the way seems the same to you as to me. This is what it seems to me: one must himself be the ruler of the city, or even its tyrant, or else must be allied with the current regime."

Call. "Just watch, Socrates, how ready I am to confer my praise once you say something admirable! This seems to me to be stated quite admirably."

Soc. "Alright then, see whether this also you judge I say well. In every individual case, to me it seems a man is friendly with a man who, as the ancients and the wise put it, is like to like. You too?"

Call. "Me too."

Soc. "Would you say that wherever a tyrant is ruling who is rough and uncultured, if someone in the city is much nobler than he, the tyrant would presumably fear him, while he would not be able to become friend to him without misgivings?"

Call. "That's right."

Soc. "Nor for that matter could an utterly insignificant man: the tyrant would despise him and would never take him seriously as one does a friend."

Call. "That, too, is true."

Soc. "So by elimination, the only logical alternative as a friend to such a person is one who has a like character, and praises and blames the same things, and thus would be willing to be ruled by and subservient to the ruler. Here is the one who will have great power in this city, here the one nobody will happily mistreat. Isn't that so?"

Call. "Yes."

Soc. "So if one of the youths in a city in that condition should consider in his mind, 'How might I have great power and no one really would mistreat me?' *this* it seems would be the path available to him: to train himself from his youth to welcome and be put off by the same things as the despot, and to equip himself as much as possible to be like him. Isn't that so?"

Call. "Yes."

Soc. "And so by this means an immunity from being treated unjustly, at least, and acquiring great power in his city, will have been achieved, as we are now arguing?"

Call. "Quite."

Soc. "And also from committing injustice? Or won't he be far from that if he is to be like his ruler who is unjust, and will wield great power right alongside him? Instead I imagine the opposite: that in being this way, he will be equipping himself to be able to do the greatest amount of injustice and while doing so not to pay the penalty. Am I right?"

Call. "So it seems." (511)

Soc. "So the greatest of evils he will have in store, being corrupted in his soul and denatured by his attempt to imitate his master as well as by his own power."

Call. "How is it that you're always twisting arguments into the opposite, Socrates. Don't you see that this imitator will be killing anyone who doesn't imitate his great original, if he wants, and will strip him of all he has?"

Soc. "I do see, my good Callicles, unless I am deaf. I hear it both from you, from Polus several times a while ago, and in fact from nearly everybody in our city. But hear me also: 'Yes he will kill, if only he wishes to, a base man killing a man good and decent.'"

Call. "That's what really gets one's goat!"

Soc. "Not one who is thinking, given the dictates of the argument. Or do you imagine that one must equip himself for this, that he live as long as possible and practice those arts that will rescue us from whatever dangers might arise, just as the one you are suggesting I practice, this oratorical profession that comes to our rescue in cases at court?"

Call. "Yes, by Zeus – and valuable counsel it is."

Soc. "But how, my most noble man? Does the knowledge of swimming also seem to you a high and exalted thing?"

Call. "No, by Zeus, not to me."

Soc. "And yet this too saves men from death when they find themselves somehow in waters that call for this knowledge. Still, if this seems a minor knowledge to you, I will mention a greater one: navigation, which saves not only life but limb and one's possessions from the ultimate and terminal dangers, no less than oratory does. And yet this knowledge, itself modest and orderly, puts on no airs as though achieving something marvelous, but while it achieved things equal to those of litigator, if it saves a man coming hither from Aegina the cost will be two obols; or if all the way from Egypt or the Pontus, for this helpful work – saving as it does all that I just mentioned, his client, children, goods, his women, and disembarking them at the dock – it'll cost two drachmas at most; and the man – the individual who possesses this art and made this money – gets off and stretches his legs by his boat

down at the harbor like anybody else. For he is able, I think, to weigh in his mind that it is unclear which ones of those who sailed with him he helped by keeping them from drowning at sea, and which he harmed! For he knows (512) that they stepped off his boat no better than they were when they came on, whether in body or in soul. He estimates that it is not the case that if the one man, afflicted with great and incurable diseases in his body, was not asphyxiated, that this man was badly off for not dying and was not at all benefitted by him, whereas if for another it was the more honorable part of him, his soul, that is afflicted with many incurable diseases, him he needed to keep alive and that he benefitted him by saving him whether from the sea or from the law-courts or from anywhere else. To the contrary he knows that for an evil man it is not better to be alive: the life he lives will perforce be vicious.

"This is why it is customary that the captain not put on airs even though he keeps us safe, nor for that matter the engineer who at times is able to save no fewer than a general can, nor fewer than a captain nor anybody else: in fact there are times when he even saves a whole city! Don't tell me you put him on the same level as your lawyer! And yet if he should want to say the same things you all do, Callices, in exalting your métier, he would bury you with his arguments, with proofs and recommendations that you simply must become engineers, that all the rest is nothing – and there's a lot on his side. And yet you despise him and his art nonetheless, and would disparage him as a 'mechanic,' and would never give his son your daughter's hand in marriage and neither yourself take his. And yet, out of all you have said in praise of your own occupation,[101] what can you point to that justifies you to look down upon the engineer and the other professionals I have just now mentioned? Yes, you'll claim yours is 'nobler and of nobler lineage.' But as to this 'nobler,' if it is not what I say, but if instead the only virtue is saving one's self and one's own no matter what his character happens to be, then to condemn the engineer no less than the doctor and the other arts that have been created for the sake of saving lives, becomes ridiculous for you.

"But my splendid fellow what is noble and good must be something other than saving and being saved – it might be just this: to live, yes, but as to how long, a real man must let that go and not be so fond of life but leaving that up to the god and trusting in women[a] that no man can elude his fate, he must on top of that ask what might be the way to live the time left to him the best way he can. Will it be by conforming (513) himself to the city in which he happens to make his home, no matter which? – which in the present case would mean that you must liken yourself as much as possible to this deme of Athenians if you are to be liked and thereby wield great power in the city. But beware whether this would pay off for you and for me without suffering, my redoubtable one, what they say the Thessalian maidens suffered when they brought down an eclipse: that we will bring down 'our dearest possessions' to pay for seizing this power you are thinking of within the city.[b]

"But if you imagine that anybody on earth will confer upon you the sort of art you have in mind that will make you powerful in *this* city while remaining unlike it in your civic outlook – whether better than it or worse – in my judgment you are making a mistake, Callicles: You must not merely *mimic* them but *be* the same as them in your very bones if you are to achieve redoubtable popularity among the deme of the Athenians – and also, by Zeus, with the son of Pyrilampes as well![c] The one who will actually make you most alike to them will be the one who will make you the politician you desire to be, a politician-orator. For everybody enjoys arguments of a character that is their own being presented to them, and are bothered by what they find alien – unless of course you

a Wiser women, we know, learn the blind vanity of ambition from their men; and ineluctable fate is entrusted to the three divine Moirae (Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos).

b These proverbial Thessalian witches were able to cause an eclipse but in doing so they were struck blind, and lost their children.

c Socrates taunts Callicles for his abject fealty to his beloved's whims, a man also named Demos (cf. 481D-482A).

disagree and argue otherwise, my dear fellow. Do we have anything to say in response to this, Callicles?"

Call. "Somehow you seem to be making a good argument, Socrates – and yet I feel the way they all do: I'm not particularly persuaded."[102]

Soc. "As for that it's your demos-love, Callicles, deep in that soul of yours that aligns you against me. But if we ever really investigate this matter, persuaded you will be.

"Be that as it may, please recall that we said there are two activities one may practice in treating something, whether body or soul, the one conversant with pleasure and the other with finding the noblest: not bare gratification but rather the taking up of cudgels. Wasn't that the distinction we drew before?"

Call. "Quite."

Soc. "And the first of them, the one aiming for pleasure, is ignoble and turns out to be nothing but flattery. Right?"

Call. "Let it be so, if you want."

Soc. "But the other aims that the thing be as noble as possible, no matter whether it is body or soul we are caring for."

Call. "Quite."

Soc. "Now in treating the city and its citizens mustn't we likewise busy ourselves with making the citizens as noble as possible, in themselves? For without this, as we discovered in our previous discussion, not a single improvement of them is of any use (514) unless the mindset of those who are going to be getting a lot of money, or rule over some group, or acquire any other power whatsoever, is good and decent. Shall we posit this?"

Call. "Quite – if you find it more pleasing."

Soc. "If then we were giving suggestions to each other, Callicles, thinking to carry out the public management of city contracts having to do with construction – the bigger edifices like walls or harbors or temples – would we need to be checking our own credentials and examining first of all whether we are competent at the art or not – the art of building, that is – and asking from whom we might have learned it? Would we be needing to do that or not?"

Call. "Quite."

Soc. "And secondly, if we had ever built a house for private use, whether for one of our friends or our own home, and whether this building was beautiful or ugly. And if, on the one hand, our investigation revealed men who taught us that were worthy, who had accrued good reputations, and that many beautiful buildings had been built by us in concert with these teachers, and many buildings done by ourselves as well, after we had left studying with them, if on the one hand we were so situated it would intelligent for us to move up to the management of public works. But if on the other hand we had nary a teacher of ourselves to point to, nor any building or many unworthy ones, in such a case it would surely be mindless to take up the construction of public works and encourage each other to do so. Shall we affirm this is a correct formulation?"

Call. "Quite."

Soc. "And wouldn't we carry out such an examination not only in other areas but in particular when getting involved in public business we were encouraging each other, thinking ourselves suitable

and adequate as physicians: we would presumably check each other's credentials, I yours and you mine, saying: 'Reply under oath: This Socrates, is he himself healthy in respect to his own body?' or, 'Is there any record of someone getting over a disease through Socrates's help, whether a slave or a free man?' And I imagine I would be asking similar such things about you. And if we failed to discover anybody who had gotten physically better because of us, neither a foreigner nor a local, neither man nor woman, then in the name of Zeus, Callicles, would it not be laughable for us to cut the figure of such foolish men that before some career in private practice where we had often done some things indifferently by our own lights but also had done others correctly, adequately disciplined by the art involved, we should before that "learn ceramics by making a pithos,"[a] as the saying goes, and should take up practicing in public and should encourage each other to do so? Doesn't it seem unintelligent to you to act this way?"

Call. "Yes." (515)

Soc. "But now consider our present situation,[103] my best of men. Since you yourself are just now beginning to engage in the business of the city,[b] and you are encouraging me to do so and berate me for not doing so, shall we not likewise investigate each other thus: 'Come: as to Callicles, is there some record of him having made someone a better man? Is there anybody who earlier was vicious – unjust and intemperate and mindless – that has become fine and good through the agency of Callicles, whether a foreigner or a local, slave or free?

"... Tell me: if somebody examines you in this way, Callicles, what you would say? What man will you affirm you improved through his association with you?

"... Do you shrink from answering whether there really is some work you performed while still a private individual, before you took up politics?"

Call. "You win, Socrates."

Soc. "It's not to compete with you that I ask, but truly wanting to know how in the world you think one is to practice politics among us. Or will we find you have some other concern for us as you enter politics than to make us citizens the best men we can be? Have we not said this several times already, that this is what a political man is supposed to do?

"... Have we agreed to this, or not?

"... Answer!

"... 'We have indeed agreed to this': I will answer for you. And so if it is this that the 'good man' is meant to provide for his own city, remind me and talk about those famous men you mentioned a little earlier, and whether they still seem to you to have been *good citizens*, Pericles and Cimon and Miltiades and Themistocles."

Call. "They do seem so to me."

Soc. "And if in fact they were good, clearly each of them was working at making the citizens better instead of worse – were they doing so or not?"

Call. "They were."

Soc. "So when Pericles began orating in the deme, the Athenians were worse than when he was addressing them at the end?"

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a The proverb is "learning ceramics on a pithos," i.e., skipping the simplest and starting with the hardest case, the pithos being the largest of vessels, used for storing.

b What a surprise! – or is it? Both Socrates and Plato have kept us from knowing this factoid, leaving the decks clear for Callicles to over-represent himself as a seasoned expert.

Call. "Maybe."

Soc. "Not maybe, my noblest, but necessarily, as our agreements imply – if at least that famous man of yours was good as a *citizen*."

Call. "What are you getting at?"

Soc. "Nothing. Just tell me this about him: are the Athenians said to have become better because of Pericles, or to the contrary that they were corrupted by him? That's what *I* hear, at least: that Pericles made the Athenians lazy and fearful, talkative and materialistic, being the first politician to institute the policy of mercenaries."

Call. "You hear that from your guys that cauliflower their ears."[a]

Soc. "On the other hand I not only hear but know, and so do you, that at first Pericles enjoyed a good reputation and the Athenians never voted a shameful indictment against him during the time they were worse; but once they had become fine and good (516) by his doing, at the end of Pericles's life, they indicted him for embezzlement and came close to executing him, clearly thinking him a corrupt man."

Call. "Ha! And that's what was *wrong* about Pericles?"

Soc. "Well, clearly a caretaker of asses or horses or cows that acted that way would be judged a bad herdsman, if upon taking on a herd that did not kick against him nor butted nor bit him, he turned them out so clearly fierce as to do all those things. Or do you not think it's a bad caretaker that takes on relatively tame wards and turns them out more fierce than he had taken them on, no matter what kind of caretaker nor what the animal?

"… Yes or no?"

Call. "'Quite so' – Let me please you."

Soc. "And please me the more by answering this: Would you say that men also are animals?"

Call. "How not?"

Soc. "And was it not men that Pericles was taking care of?"

Call. "Yes."

Soc. "So, wasn't it necessary that they, as we just agreed, had become more just in place of having been less just, under his care, if he was "good" at political matters?"

Call. "Quite."

Soc. "And aren't men who are just, tame as such also, as Homer has it?[b]

… "What do *you* say? Isn't that so?"

Call. "Yes."

Soc. "And yet they showed themselves to be fiercer than they had been when he took them on, and fierce toward himself to boot, which was hardly his plan."

Call. "Do you want me to agree with you?"

Soc. "If at least you think what I'm saying is true."

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a Callicles's slur refers to the right-wing element in Athenian politics, thought to be sympathetic to the Lacedaemonians whose love of boxing gives them cauliflower ears.

b Perhaps referring to *Odyssey* 6.120 (and 9.175).

Call. "Let it be so."

Soc. "And if fiercer, more unjust and worse?"

Call. "Let it be so."

Soc. "Therefore Pericles wasn't good at politics, based on this argument."

Call. "Not, according to *you*."

Soc. "Nor you, by Zeus, given what you have agreed to. But let's turn to the case of Cimon. Didn't they ostracize him, the very persons he was taking care of, so that they wouldn't have to listen to his voice during ten years? And they did the same to Themistocles adding exile to his punishment. And against Miltiades, who served at Marathon, they brought an action to throw him into a pit, and if it hadn't been for the Prytany he would have gone down. And yet these men of yours, if they were 'good men' in the way you mean it, would never be suffering such treatment. Surely it is not the case with good charioteers that they are not thrown from the traces at the beginning, but once they take care of their horses and themselves become better charioteers, only then they are thrown. That's not how it works with chariots or anywhere else. Don't you agree?"

Call. "I agree."

Soc. "Therefore it looks like our previous arguments were true: (517) we have seen not a one that turned out to be a man good at politics in our city here. You agreed that none of the present are, but thought earlier ones were, and you brought up these men, but now they have proved to be on the same level as the present ones, so that if it is 'orators' we are to call your men, it was neither true oratory[104] they were practicing – for they wouldn't have fallen out of favor – nor the flattering kind!"

Call. "In any case, it's a far cry, Socrates, that anybody *these* days should pull off a deed like the deeds *they* did, any one of them you might wish to name."

Soc. "My dazzling man, I fault them not for their being *servitors* of the city: Indeed, they seem to me to have turned out more servitical than those of our day, more able to provide the city what it was desiring. And yet, as for redirecting its desires rather than giving in to them, by persuading and by pushing toward what would make their citizens better, they were not a whit better than these – the one task that defines a good citizen. As to ships and walls and harbors and a lot of other such things, I too agree with you that those men were more clever than these at providing them.

"So I have to say we are making a laughable affair of our arguments. During our whole dialogue we keep going in circles back to the same place, continually ignoring each other and what we are trying to argue. For my part, at least, I think you have agreed and recognized several times that this activity is in a way two-fold, both about the body and about the soul, and that the one part is a serving activity, by which a man becomes able to provide food for our bodies if they are hungry, and drink if thirsty, and cloaks if they are cold, as well as blankets, shoes, and other things for which desire arises in our bodies. And it is right for me to go through the same examples so that you might more easily understand what I am saying: to be a provider of these things, whether by being a merchant, an importer, or indeed a maker of any of the things in question, as a cook or a delicatessen or a weaver or a shoemaker or a tanner, it is not at all strange that, being such, one should seem both to himself and to others to be a caretaker of the body – to anybody, that is, who does not know that besides all those professions there is an art consisting in gymnastics and medicine, which is the *true* therapy of the body and which as such properly rules over all those arts and determines the use of their products, because it knows among foods and drinks which is helpful and which harmful as to the virtuous conditions (518) of the body, while all those other arts don't; and hence that these latter are slavish and ancillary and

dependent concerning the business of the body – the other arts – whereas gymnastics and medicine have just title to be their masters.

"That the same then holds for soul you sometimes seem to understand from my arguments and give me your agreement as if you knew what I was saying, but then a bit later you come and say that we have had certain fine and good political types in our city, and when I ask which men you mean, you appear to me to bring up the very sorts of men in politics as you would answer if I were asking you who are known to be good in gymnastics and in therapy for the body, and you would say to me, in all seriousness, 'Thearion the baker, and Mithaikos the author of the Sicilian cuisine,[105] and Sarambos the merchant – these are the most wonderful therapists for our bodies, the one for providing us with wonderful loaves, the other with delicacies, and wine the third.'[106] You might well get upset if I said, 'Buddy, you are completely clueless about gymnastics: you are talking about servitors, guys who provide for the desires but don't know the first thing of any worth about them, who willy-nilly engorge and fatten the bodies of men and receive their praise in return, but who will only further destroy what health they started with. And they for their part, out of inexperience, will not blame those regaling them as being responsible for their diseases and the loss of the health they had originally had. Instead it is whatever persons happen to be there in charge of policy – the moment all that satiety comes over them to make them sick, even though soon after, brought on with no consideration for the healthy – it is these they will blame, these they will berate, and will do them some harm if only they are able, but will sing praises to the ones that started it all and who are responsible for their ills.

"Indeed, Callicles, you are doing the very same thing. You sing praises for men who regaled our people and served them up whatever they desired. They say they have made the city great: but that it is now outwardly bloated and festering within (519) because of those who were in power before, this they do not perceive. It was these after all who, with no regard for moderation or justice, engorged the city with breakwaters, harbors, walls, tariffs and taxes, all such stupidities; so when the onset of weakness occurs this time, it is whoever happens to be present at that moment that they will blame as their counsellors, but Themistocles and Cimon and Pericles they will praise, the ones who are actually responsible for their ills. And they might just lay their hands on *you*,[107] if you aren't careful, and my ally Alcibiades as well – the day they lose their principal capital in addition to what they have made with it, even though you and he are not the cause of their troubles, though you might just be guilty in part.

"Just so what I see among the present ones is as mindless as what I hear about the greats that came before. I notice that once the city starts treating one of their political men as a wrongdoer they become vexed and complain how horribly they are being treated: 'Despite having done all the great things they have done, my gosh! how unjustly they are being brought down by her!' – so they say. But the whole story is a lie: No *leader* in a city would ever be unjustly brought down by the very city he is leading! And perhaps it is the same with the sophists as with these pretend-politicians. For in fact the sophists, though wise in all fields, do the same strange thing: although they claim to be teachers of virtue, they are known to bring accusations against their students for doing them wrong, in shorting them their fees let alone giving them any thanks at all, although they had treated them so well.[a] And yet what reasoning could be more unreasonable than this, namely, that men who are becoming good and just by first being stripped clean of injustice by their teacher and then acquiring justice in its place, should commit injustice with the very instrument they no longer possess?

"... Doesn't that seem strange to you, my friend?

"... And look: I grant I am carrying on at length,[108] compelled to do so by you, Callicles, since you are unwilling to answer!"

a E. R. Dodds helpfully cites a case mentioned by Demosthenes (*Against Aphobus* 27.46), and Isocrates describes the sophists' practice of having their fees put in escrow (*Soph*.5), clearly for avoiding this very eventuality.

Call. "As if you would be unable to speak if there was no one to answer you!"

Soc. "It seems I could! At the moment at least I am drawing out long swathes of argument since you are unwilling to answer. But, my good man, tell me in the name of friendship: don't you think it nonsense that after claiming to have made an individual virtuous, he should be criticizing him, claiming that although he became and now is virtuous under his tutelage, in the next breath he's the opposite of virtuous?"

Call. "I do."

Soc. "And do you hear such things said by those who claim to be educating men to become virtuous?" (520)

Call. "I do, and yet what else is there to say about such worthless types?"

Soc. "And what would you have to say about the ones were were just talking about, the ones who after claiming they have taken charge of the city and concern themselves with making her as virtuous as she can be, now turn on her at some point and accuse her of the uttermost vice? Do you think these are any different from those? My blessed fellow, an orator is the same as a sophist, or nearly so and equivalent, as I argued with Polus.[a] Out of ignorance you think the one thing is sensational – oratory – but the other you despise. In truth, sophistic is more admirable than oratory to the extent that legislation is more admirable than remedial justice and gymnastics than medicine. These together but only these, I also was thinking – the public speakers and sophists – are barred from faulting the very thing they themselves teach as wreaking evil against themselves, else at the same time and by this same argument they are accusing themselves of not having helped at all those they claim to be helping. Isn't that so?"

Call. "Quite."

Soc. "And to afford to give their help free of charge was in all likelihood possible only for them, if in fact my claim is true. For if it is some other help one has actually been helped by, such as to have become quicker through the services of a trainer, he would perhaps withhold his thanks if the trainer should render his services for free, and not having agreed with him on a fee should try to collect his pay right at the moment he conferred speed onto him. For I don't think it is by slowness that men commit injustice but by injustice."

Call. "Yes."

Soc. "Now if one strips away *this* thing – injustice – he needs not at all worry he will ever be treated unjustly: rather, he alone becomes safe in giving his services for free, if in truth one should be able to make men virtuous. No?"

Call. "Yes."

Soc. "This then is the reason, it seems, that taking money to give consultation in other areas, as for instance house-building or the other arts, is nothing to be ashamed of."

Call. "So it seems."

Soc. "Whereas in counseling on *this* activity – how one might be as noble as possible and might best manage his household or his city – we take for granted that it is shameful to refuse to give counsel on condition of being paid. True?"

Call. "Yes."

a At 465C.

Soc. "For clearly it is because this benefit, alone among benefits, made its beneficiary desire to do good in return, so that there is good reason to believe that in rendering benefit in this way one will be treated well in return – but if he does not, he will not. Is this the way it is?" (521)

Call. "It is."

Soc. "So distinguish for me which of the two kinds of ministering it is that are you encouraging me to take up in ministering to the city. Is it the ministry of taking up cudgels for the Athenians that they be as noble as possible, analogous to that of the doctor, or that of a servitor with the purpose of catering to their gratification?[a] Tell me the truth, Callicles, for it is only right that just as you embarked upon speaking frankly to me you should tell the rest of what you have in mind. Speak again with all your noble brashness!"

Call. "I will say catering."

Soc. "Pandering, then, you are encouraging me to do, my most brash of men."

Call. "Call it what you will,[b] Socrates. You'd better *do* it, or else ..."

Soc. "Don't say what you have said so many times: 'or else anybody who wants will kill me,' for then I'll have again to say 'he being evil, me a good man.' Nor say he will strip me of whatever I own, or else I'll say 'But what he strips from me will be of no use to him,' and that 'just as he stripped me unjustly so will he use what he took unjustly – and if unjustly, shamefully – and if shamefully, badly.'"

Call. "How you seem to trust, Socrates, that you could not undergo any one of these things, as if you lived out of reach and so could not just be dragged into court by some man quite evil and insignificant."

Soc. "A nitwit I am in very truth, as you say, Callicles, if I do not think that anybody could have who-knows-what done to him in this city! But of this I am certain, that if I do indeed find myself hauled into court and facing one of these dangers, then as you yourself say it will be a base man that brought me in – no worthy man would bring in, being a person guilty of nothing – and it would be nothing strange if I should be killed. Would you like to know why I expect this?"

Call. "Very much."

Soc. "I imagine that few Athenians, maybe myself alone, are putting their hand to what truly deserves the name of political *art* and that I alone among current men am practicing "politics" in that sense. So, since it is not for entertainment that I say what I say in my daily conversations but for the noblest and not the most pleasing,[109] and since I am unwilling to practice what you recommend – 'these subtleties of yours'[c] – I will indeed be at a loss for words in the law-courts. I'll put it the way I put it to Polus: I will be judged the way a physician accused by a maker of delicacies would be judged in a court of children.[d] Just think how such a man would defend himself, brought before such a jury, against an accuser who would say, 'Children of the jury, many are the evils this man I bring before you has wreaked on you – upon your very persons! Even the youngest among you he has debilitated with his cutting and burning, and (522) by starving and suffocating you he stops you in your tracks, giving you the bitterest of drinks or forcing you to fast or thirst, so different from me who have been regaling

a With this sentence Socrates allusively assembles many of the points he has made over the last twenty pages, and thus brings to bear the entire weight of their discussion to on this single question.

b In the Greek, "call it Mysian if you want," a proverb too indecipherable to trouble over.

c He quotes Callicles's quotation from Euripides at 486C, but now the subtleties in question are not the recondite musings of a philosopher but the clever subterfuges of a sophistic orator. Another chip is removed from the table.

d Bringing forward the image he used in conversation with Polus, at 464D-E, to apply it to his own case.

you with such a wide variety of sweets!' What do you fancy the physician, caught up in this evil situation, would have to say in his defense? Or, if he spoke the truth and said, 'I confess I have done all those things, children, but *for your health*,' how big an outcry do you imagine would then break out among such jurors as these? Wouldn't it be deafening?"

Call. "Perhaps? You can bet on it!"[110]

Soc. "And so do you imagine he would be entirely unable to make his case?"

Call. "Quite."

Soc. "So there you have the sort of treatment I, too, know I would suffer, if I went into court. For neither will I have pleasures to tell of having provided – which they would count as good deeds and benefits, whereas I neither envy those who provide nor know the means by which a pleasure is provided – and if someone claims that I corrupt young men by making them stop in their tracks, or that I slander their elders by saying things they find bitter, before others or in private, I will not be given a hearing to say, '*For justice* I say and do all this, indeed in your interest, men of the jury!' nor to say anything else. So yes: 'perhaps' just about anything will happen to me."

Call. "And so would you judge a man honorable, if he had such standing in his city as you describe, unable to help himself?"

Soc "Only, if he has within himself that one asset, as you have often agreed: if he himself was his defense, for never having said or done anything against men or against gods. This is the most important kind of help for himself, as we have often agreed. So, if someone should with argument show me out as unable to help myself or help another with *this* kind of help, I would be ashamed for being shown out, whether in the presence of many or of few, or even alone with him; and if I were put to death because of this sort of inability I would be very upset. But if it is because of a shortage of pandering oratory that I should meet my end, I am sure you would see me accepting my death lightly.[a] The mere fact of death nobody fears, unless he be utterly destitute of intelligence and bravery, but committing injustice he surely does fear: That a soul should arrive in Hades freighted with unjust acts is the worst of all evils. And if you'll consent, I would tell you a story."

Call. "Now that you've gone all the way with the other, go the rest of the way with this." (523)

Soc. "'Hearken then,' as they say, 'to a very fine story,' which I'd guess you will take to be a myth, whereas I think it factual. What I am about to say I will say believing it true.

"As Homer tells us, Zeus and Poseidon and Pluto arranged to divide the rule among themselves after they took it over from their father.[b] Now the law concerning men, under the regime of Cronus as it ever was and still is among the gods – is this: Whoever among men went through his life justly and piously, once he died he was to go off to the Islands of the Blessed and live there in complete happiness exempt from evils, but if unjustly and atheistically, he was to go to the prison of judgment and vengeance which they call Tartarus. The judges over these, in the time of Cronus and up until Zeus newly took control, were living judges judging the living, and they rendered their verdicts on the very day a man was to die.

"They were rendering their verdicts poorly. Pluto, along with the caretakers of the Islands of the Blessed, came and told Zeus that men were arriving into both their demesnes who did not deserve it, some into this and others into that. Zeus said, 'I know it well, and I will be putting an end to it: at

a In these last pages Plato allows Socrates to prophesy the event of his trial and even the language he uses there – e.g., *Apology* 35E, 38D.

b Between and among them they divided heaven, earth's surface, and the world below (cf. *Iliad* 15.187-195).

present, the judges are rendering their judgments ill. The men are clothed as they are being judged,' he said, 'since they are being judged while still alive. Many of them, though they have wicked souls, are clothed in beautiful bodies with marks of their family and wealth, and during the judgment many witnesses come forward witnessing on their behalf that they had lived just lives. The judges are distracted by these,' he said, 'and at the same time are themselves clothed as they render their judgments, their souls ensconced behind their eyes and ears and their bodies as a whole.[111] All these layers get in the way, both their own clothing and that of those being judged. First,' he said, 'they must stop knowing in advance when they are to die – as now they do. As to this, at least, the announcement has been made by Prometheus of his goal to stop[112] it among them.[a] But second, they must be stripped naked of each and all these things. They must be judged after they have died. And the judge must be naked, himself dead, observing with his bare soul a soul that is bare, without exception, right after the individual died, apart from all his family members and having left behind on earth all that ornamented him, so that the judgment might be just. I recognized the need for this before you did, and set up my sons as judges, two of them from Asia – Minos and Rhadamanthus – (524) and one from Europe: Aeacus. These, once they die, shall sit in judgment in the great meadow where the path splits in two, the one path leading to the Islands of the Blessed and the other to Tartarus. And those who come from Asia Rhadamanthus will judge; those from Europe, Aeacus; and in case either of them object to the other's decision I grant to Minos the prerogative to settle the matter, so that the judgment be as just as possible as to which path men are to take.'[b]

"That, Callicles, is what I have heard and I rely on it as true. And from this story I infer the following. What dying is, in fact, is just the unbinding of the pair of things, the soul and the body. And once they are unbound from each other, look at them: each retains the condition it had been in when the man was alive no less than the other, both the body retaining its nature and all the ways it was cared for and what it underwent altogether visible – for example if a man's body was large when he was alive, whether by nature or by nurture or both, large also is his corpse once he is dead; and if fat, then fat in death, and so on. And again if he kept his hair long in life, you'd see it there in his corpse, too. Or if he was a man that needed to be whipped and has traces of the blows he received during his life, welts on his body, whether from whips or other wounds he suffered, the dead man's body can likewise be seen to bear the same. Or if his limbs had been broken or contorted during his life, these same things are visible in his corpse when he is dead. To put it simply, whatever the bodily state he was in when he was alive, all its affects are visible once he is dead, or most of them, for some time at least. And, Callicles, it seems to me the same in fact with regard to the soul, if again you think about it. All these things in the soul are there to be seen once it is denuded of the body, both its natural endowments and the affects the man had acquired in his soul from pursuing the things he pursued in life.

"Now once they come before the judges, the ones from Asia, that is, before Rhadamanthus – Rhadamanthus has them stand before him and studies each man's soul, knowing not whose soul it is: for all he knows he is looking upon the soul of the Great King himself, or any other king or powerful man you may wish to name, and beholds within it nothing to recommend it, but instead that it has been whipped all through and is full of welts (525) from oath-breaking and injustice, marks which his distinct behavior left as smudges on his soul, and he sees everything made crooked by lying and bragging with nothing straight, because his way of life owed nothing to truth. A soul filled with the licentiousness and gluttony and violence and cravenness of his deeds, and disproportion and ugliness, is what he beholds, and beholding this indignantly consigns it directly to the prison where upon arrival

a I translate this passage differently from the others: see endnote.

b I read *aporrhēton* (524A6) with the manuscripts, rather than *aporhēton* (conjectured by Findeisen in 1796 and subsequently read by editors and translators).

it will undergo a suffering suited to it.

"What is suitable for everyone being punished, if being rightly punished by another, is either that he become better and benefit from it or that he serve as a paradigm for others, so that such others in watching him suffer what he suffers will, out of fear for themselves, become better. The ones who are benefitted in paying the due penalty exacted by gods and men are those whose sins can be remedied; and yet it is only through pain and wailing that the benefit accrues to them, as here on earth so also in Hades: indeed there is no other way one can be exonerated of one's injustice. But the ones who commit the ultimate injustices and by dint of such injustices are rendered irremediable: these are the ones who supply the paradigms, whereas in themselves they receive no benefit from it at all inasmuch as they are irremediable, whereas others receive benefit, those who behold them undergoing without surcease the greatest, the most painful, the most fearsome of sufferings on account of their sins, baldly hung up there on display, in the prison in Hades, to serve as paradigms for the unjust as they arrive there, admonitory spectacles of injustice – among whom I declare will number Polus's Archelaus if what Polus said about him is true, and any other tyrant of his ilk.[a] And I imagine that the majority of these paradigmatic men came from the tyrants and kings and from the powerful men who had on earth been employed in political affairs. For these are the ones who, given their opportunities, commit the greatest and most impious sins.

"We have testimony of this from Homer. He depicted kings and dynasts as the ones in Hades who were suffering eternal punishment, Tantalus and Sisyphus and Tityus. But nobody ever depicted Thersites, or any other private man who was evil, as being beset with huge punishments for being incurable[b] – for I don't think he had the opportunity, and in fact he is luckier than those who did. But in any case, Callicles, it is from the ranks of the powerful, indeed, that extremely evil men also come to be. (526) And yet nothing prevents that even among these there be found men who are good, and it is quite right to wonder at and admire those who are. For it is difficult, Callicles, and highly praiseworthy, that a man who comes to enjoy great opportunity to commit unjust acts lives his life justly instead. Such men are scarce. Yes, both here and elsewhere they have appeared, and I imagine that in future there will be men well endowed in the virtue of carrying out with justice whatever is turned over to them. In fact there did appear one man widely rumored as such among the Greeks at large: Aristides the son of Lysimachus. But, my best of men, the majority of the powerful turn out bad.

"So as I was saying, when the awesome Rhadamanthus takes in hand one of that sort, though he saw nothing else about him – neither who he is nor his family – but that he is a wicked man. And once he saw this he sent him off to Tartarus, stamping a mark on him as to whether he judges he can be reformed or is irremediable, and when he arrives there he undergoes the appropriate penalty. But from time to time he sees in that of another one who had lived a pious life and true, whether of a man outside politics or someone else (especially, I would add, Callicles, that of a philosopher) who minded his own business during his life and did not play the busy-body, he sent him off in admiration to the Islands of the Blessed.[113] So also with Aeacus: both of them judge with a staff in their hand, and Minos supervises them from his seat, he alone with a golden scepter, as Homer's Odysseus says he saw him:

> *holding his golden scepter, he decrees justice to the shades.*[c]

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a Socrates refers to Polus's speech at 471AD, and another chip is removed from the table. This Macedonian (European) would have been sent to Tartarus not by Rhadamanthus but by Aeacus.

b In *Iliad* 2.211-277, Thersites, a commoner – ugly, bandy-legged, and sharp of tongue – got up and railed against King Agamemnon in assembly on the shores of Troy; Odysseus reviled him and beat him with his staff, and the Greeks laugh derisively at his cries of pain.

c At *Odyssey* 11.569.

"For my part, Callicles, I am persuaded by these stories and so I watch for the ways by which I will show myself before the judge as a soul as hale as possible. Passing up the honors sought and conferred among the majority of mankind and practicing only honesty, I will try in truth to live ever as nobly as I am able and, when my time comes, as nobly as ever to die. And to the extent I am able, I enlist all men – but you in particular I enlist, over against your advice to me – to join in this life, this contest, which I would rank the equal of all the other contests of this world put together;[a] and I say against you in my turn that you will be at a loss to help yourself when the time comes for you to face the trial and the judgment I now have described. You'll come before the judge – (527) that awesome scion of Aegina[b] – and once *he* gets hold of you and brings you in,[114] it will be you who go agape and become dizzy in that place no less than I in this place, and you might just receive that slap of the disenfranchised on your face, and every other degradation.[115]

"But maybe all this seems to you an old wives' tale and you scoff at it. There would be nothing strange in scoffing at these things if through research we were able to find something better and truer to say.[116] But as it is we have you three, the very wisest Greeks of our day, you and Polus and Gorgias, and you are unable to demonstrate that we should live a different life than this, which now appears also to hold the advantage in the world beyond. Instead, among so many arguments, the others all being refuted, the only argument that still stands firm is this, that we must take more care not to commit injustice than to avoid undergoing it, and that what a real man must concern himself with above all is not merely to seem good but to be so, both in his private and his public life. And if one has become bad in some way he must be chastised, and this is the second best good, second after *being* a just man, namely to *come to be* so through chastisement in paying the penalty. And that pandering of any kind, both concerning oneself and the others, concerning both the few and the many, must be avoided. And that oratory is only to be used only in pursuit of justice, and so also with the whole of human activity.[117]

"Hearken to me, then, and follow me to the place where you will find happiness both in life and afterwards, as reason has made clear. And let somebody despise you as mindless and degrade you, if he prefers, and do by God do buck up to let him strike you with that dishonoring slap of yours. You'll suffer nothing dire if you are a decent man in truth and you are practicing virtue. And later, after we practice this together, only if it *then* seems we ought, will we make our entry into politics, or do whatever else it seems we ought to do: only then shall we make our plan, since then we will be better at giving and taking counsel than we are at present. For it is shameful that people in the state in which we now find ourselves should nevertheless try to make a novel appearance on the scene,[118] as if they were somebodies, when in fact they never think the same thing about the same things, and about the most important questions to boot! Such is the measure of our lack of preparation and understanding![119]

"So let us adopt as our leader the argument that has now become clear to us, which dictates to us that this is the best way of living, to practice both justice and the rest of virtue, both in the way we live and the way we die. Let us follow this way, and let us call on the others here to join us – not to take the path you called me to with such confidence. That path is of no worth,[c] Callicles."

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a Socrates is remembering Gorgias's characterization of the oratorical profession as a contest, at 456C, which he will recall again just below.

b I.e., Aeacus, in stately periphrasis: see endnote.

c With this closing phrase ("of no worth") he reuses, and replaces, the phrase with which Callicles closed his parrhesiastic speech at 492C.

1

ENDNOTES

1 Callicles quotes as proverbial wisdom what Socrates is *not* doing: he is late for the very thing cannot want to be! And Socrates proves he "gets" Callicles's allusive remark with a counter-proverb of his own, with exactly the same number of syllables in the Greek. One thinks of Shakespeare's Falstaff at *Henry IV Part 1*, IV.1, "To the latter end of the fray and the beginning of the feast | Fits a dull fighter and a keen guest." He suspects not at all that there may well be a battle of words on the horizon, though even this might for Socrates count as a feast of argument.

2 The Greek word, *diatribein*, evokes the picture of Socrates allowing himself to while away the time in rigorous conversation.

3 Again the verb, *dialegesthai* (whence "dialogue"), is hardly harmless in Socrates's mouth. A "conversation" with Socrates is no tame affair of confabulation!

4 The audience is *sequestered* in some sort of performance venue, in contrast with the persons Socrates met in the agora.

5 Socrates wants to postpone display and asks Gorgias instead to characterize *what* he is displaying, but Callicles takes his question in another sense, that answering questions is just another opportunity to perform. The sophist Hippias is made to describe himself as putting on a performance at Olympia consisting first of delivering whatever speech his audience might like to hear from a catalogue of prepared speeches, and then presenting himself for questions, presumably as a complementary act, *ex tempore*. Compare the claim of Alcidamas that he can produce timely and elegant answers to whatever is put before him (*Soph*.31). The confusion of performance with discussion can therefore continue; and since the dialogue is in dramatic form (not reported as an event in the past, by a narrator) Plato is leaving it to his readers, who know Socrates better, to notice these points.

6 The question is unexpected both in its content and in its formulation. First, we had thought he wanted to know the "power" (*dunamis*) of oratory, but now it is "Who is Gorgias?" that Socrates wants Chaerephon to ask; second, the expression of the question insouciantly leaves its meaning and purport unclear. Good question! Wait for Plato's answer.

7 Chaerephon immediately grasps from Socrates's example what his question meant, showing he is on the same page as Socrates where the other two might not be. As we shall see, Polus never quite understands what Socrates is trying to focus upon because he is preoccupied with his own agenda.

8 The Greek, *kainon*, is interestingly ambiguous. Literally, "novel, new fangled"; but really Gorgias is boasting that no challenge was too clever for him to rise to. He goes on to invite Chaerephon to take a shot.

9 In all strictness, for an answer to be adequate it must be adequate to the question, not the person asking it. Polus's selection of this term continues, now into his conversation with Chaerephon, the "disconnect" that had already come to the surface between Socrates and Callicles and then Gorgias's use of *kainon*. Indeed, Polus is challenging or even daring Chaerephon to ask him something *kainon*, in Gorgias's sense of the term.

10 Polus's vocative announces that in truth he has has broken off answering and begun responding with an oration. From his own point of view he is finally presenting an Answer in the epideictic sense. He is not *unable* to grasp what Chaerephon had grasped, with a single example, but *uninterested* in doing so. His motive and his desire to answer, even before Chaerephon gave him any examples, was only to stand in for Gorgias and impress him or the onlookers with an answer of Gorgianic caliber.

11 The speech in form and content is a priamel of the sort that might begin an encomium. It proceeds by introducing as foil the entire field of human endeavor, including a reference to human vicissitude, and then by two steps locates Gorgias's art as the representative of the finest of the most virtuous of these. Behind the two superlatives is the conventional formula "fine and good" (*kalos kai agathos*), which purports to identify true value by means of a comprehensive doublet that blandly adduces the esthetic and the moral. With "most virtuous" Polus first filters out the best of the human arts, and then with "finest" he selects the choice case among these best. Thereby he has presumptively determined the single art that is Gorgias's province, in the sense that there could not be two finests among the best. As to its form, in addition to the two step *gradus* note the use of chiasm for closure: whereas three times arts are mentioned before the men that are their exponents, in the capping case of Gorgias the order is reversed, so that Polus can end with the term with which he began, namely the topic of Chaerephon's question. Notable also are *technē* / *tuchē* echoing across the antithesis (tr. *Kunst / Gunst* Schleiermacher, *arte* / *forte* Ast) and the redundant amplitude gotten by doubling

of terms (*diplasologia*) for which he is famous (cf. *Phdrs*.267C1).

12 Gorgias really does not understand the underlying issues, which allows the disconnect to continue.

13 It is possible not to notice the perfect absurdity of person A suggesting to person B that he ask person C who person A is, because person C had failed to answer the question when it was asked him by person D: Gorgias (person A) would presumably have the easiest time telling who he is, but he would prefer to give his student an opportunity to continue his display. Indeed it is exactly a continuation of display that Socrates next indicates he hopes they will forgo.

14 With "so-called" Socrates evinces reluctance to use the adjective "rhetorical" or to let it stand without being questioned, a reluctance I share with him though for different reasons, both of which are served by using the more neutral and literal translation, "oratorical". In his Greek, the gender of the adjective presumes a feminine noun, idiomatically *epistēmē* (knowledge, mastery) or t*echnē* ("art"), but Socrates is not sure it is an art or science, while in English "rhetoric" has taken on a wide spectrum of meanings, ranging from a derogatory characterization of speech or writing as mendaciously deceptive to a field of study recognized as a department of knowledge in the university. We at first wondered why Socrates wanted Chaerephon to ask "what" or "who" Gorgias is: in then explaining his question (447D) Socrates suggested that it is what an expert does that provides him with his professional name (e.g. making shoes makes him a shoemaker) and that this kind of name is what he is after (with "who he is"). Chaerephon's parallel questions therefore asked for the *exponent* to be identified, not the art (physician, B8; painter, C1), and in fact even avoided introducing a name for the "art" by means of consistently designating persons by their proper names. In his oratorical answer, however, Polus focussed on the art (isolating it as the finest one, without even identifying it), and as such avoided the question of what we should call Gorgias as its exponent (again referring to him there only by his proper name). Now if Polus had identified this "best and finest art" as "oratorics" he would have exposed himself to answering the question *pari passu* with the others, and would have had to say that Gorgias is an "orator." But just as plainly as we know that Gorgias is a teacher of oratory, we know that he is not really an orator, for if he were – according to an Attic prejudice at the very least – he would be at home in Leontini delivering speeches and participating in politics there. This entire problematic lurks in the background, and with "so-called," Socrates broaches the question whether "the oratorical" is something one teaches (and professes) or whether it is something one does (like making shoes), or in other words whether "the oratorical" creates orators or creates speeches. It is noteworthy that exactly this same technique of questioning is used at the beginning of the *Protagoras* by Socrates, on the way to defining what Protagoras will do to the young Hippocrates (311B-2A).

15 Polus "answered" Chaerephon with his praise speech. Socrates persists in treating it as a genuine answer in order to convey what he means by an answer, and thus he invests Polus's "answer" with a dialogical motive, as if it were a "reply" to someone who had just said that oratory is a bad thing. Polus however is not thinking of answers as being answers to questions, but, in the Gorgianic manner, as holdings forth (*epideixeis*, displays) *fulfilling* (not answering) *requests* (not questions) on a *topic*. But there is also the unstated possibility of a prejudice against oratory, a prejudice that soon enough receives great emphasis, the response to which will occupy the larger part of Gorgias's great answer about oratory, below (456C-7C).

16 Polus believes he has defined it by singling it out with his superlatives!

17 The commentators view Socrates's distinction between the questions "of what sort" and "what" as a "first lesson in logic" (distinguishing essence and accident) on the basis of passages in other dialogues where the distinction is theorized (e.g., *Meno* 71B, *Prot*.360E6-1A3, and even *Tht*.182A8-B7), but here it is merely a distinction between asserting something and praising something, and not a logical distinction or lesson, but of a piece with the related distinctions between questioning and requesting, and answering and responding, that also remain beneath the surface.

18 Gorgias has given the briefest possible answer rather than merely agreeing to answer, so that again his answer is a performance. Socrates for his purposes will nevertheless take the behavior to constitute not only an acquiescence in his request for pertinence in answer, but even a promise that Gorgias will keep it up in the sequel.

19 Though he *boasts* of being a good orator, his actual *profession* is to make others orators (a similar question arises in regard to Hippias of Elis: cf. *H.Maj*.282B1-C1). Despite his title as orator this is all he does, else he would not be traipsing around all Greece but keep to being a citizen in Leontini. For the second time Gorgias answers whether he can do something by saying that he has claimed he can at another time (cf. 448A2-3) or elsewhere (καὶ ἄλλοθι, B3). This manner of answering wrong-foots his interlocutor into the position of asking him to do it again, here and now (as Chaerephon almost does at 448A4). In other words his answer is essentially a solicitation for business. Gorgias is not taking into consideration with whom he is talking, nor engaging in a discussion to see where it might lead, but instead sees his interlocutor as a potential client. Socrates will show he is aware of this, later on (455C5-8).

20 The answer is again both more and less than an answer. His opening begins an oration and ends up introducing foil for his assertion that he can answer in briefer compass than anybody else – another advertisement for himself.

21 Again Gorgias cannot tell merely what it does without also praising its efficacy, for which he uses the recondite Sicilian term, *kurosis* (~ "success") – which in itself smacks of a sales pitch.

22 This is the first of several self-interruptions and asides (uniquely frequent in this dialogue) by which Socrates will take the trouble to explain to his interlocutor the motive of his upcoming questions. In this case he stops only to say he will

start; the true motive of the question will be explained below (453A8-C5).

23 This time, as opposed to a moment above (B3-5), Socrates couches the perfectly warranted inference – that Gorgias's characterization of oratory as "about speeches" is still too wide – as an attack by an imaginary captious interlocutor. He does this to avoid forcing Gorgias into a corner, because he wants Gorgias to describe his "art" rather than defend who he is. To this end he immediately interposes some illustrative examples to help Gorgias find his way.

24 Gorgias "answers" with exactly the same unanchored superlatives Polus had used, not because he, too, is stuck in an unscientific "rut," but because he, too, needs his "answer" to advertise the value of oratory without defining it. Gorgias understands his potential client to be asking him not what will he do for him, but what *good* thing he will do for him.

25 By his discreet and indirect manner Gorgias leaves it to his auditor to connect the dots. Thrasymachus's technique in Book One of the *Republic* is more explicit, but both contrive by their expression to make the prospect of studying with them irresistible. The benefit that Gorgias advertises his potential client will garner from the "art" he is selling is a personal autonomy or self-determination that consists merely in its sway over "others" around him, whose identity is left appropriately fuzzy.

26 The stress on the locations, which are listed first and thereby determine the designation of the persons being persuaded, indicates that the size of the gathering, rather than the rank of the persons, is crucial.

27 With this term Gorgias means to point up that his is a "second order" ability, in the sense that rather than produce something it has the power to control the arts that produce something, or more exactly to control the circumstances under which the other arts might succeed. Thus Gorgias will not be a "producer" in the received sense of the term after all, and we again see the point of the curious question with which Socrates began his inquiry. The businessman's haughty attitude was based on his own claim that his money-making art was also in a sense second-order, in the sense that money can presumably *buy* trainers and doctors: Gorgias tops him by asserting that he'll be making money alright, but for "*you*" (Socrates now being moved into the position of his potential client). He hesitates not at all to presume this outcome would appeal to him, and so "unveils" to Socrates his art, by out-orating the several purveyors of goods with a more recondite eloquence.

28 What is shocking in what he has revealed so far is that the great benefit for "mankind" is in fact the empowerment of one man to enslave many! Socrates's dialogical art, including his various techniques for keeping Gorgias on board, is progressively "hulling out the kernel," but Socrates at the moment demurs to draw inferences about the purport of what Gorgias is saying, a thing not so pretty.

29 Socrates now begins to disambiguate his motive for all the scrupulosity he has been exercising in his treatment of Gorgias so far. It may have seemed out of deference to the "great man," but now that it has become unavoidably clear that Gorgias is presenting his message indirectly and that he is inviting his potential client to "connect the dots" on his own, Socrates refers to this connecting of the dots he is supposed to be making as his "suspicion" about what Gorgias is saying. By dialectical questioning he will require Gorgias to say it himself, but in order for that actually to occur, the conversation must remain a real conversation and not a conspiracy to play along with Gorgias's unstated under-meaning.

30 With the introduction of an imaginary thesis-holder, Socrates slightly distances Gorgias from the position he has been upholding, and instead, with the first plural designating those who are questioning him, brings him over to his own side as partner rather than opponent – again for the sake of the conversation, the logos.

31 The very mention of the topic of justice (*to dikaion*) is entirely new, included by Gorgias as an insignificant detail inspired by the name of the "law-courts" (*dikasteria*).

32 As the oratorical art is becoming narrower and narrower, at every stage Socrates increases his "meta-commentary" on the process of question and answer, repeating in substance what he had said just before, but now adding "lest we settle" which further specifies "for the sake of the argument" by envisioning how the argument might crash. Gorgias's usual interlocutor (i.e., his prospective client) just might conspire with him to leave unsaid the shameful truth about wanting to learn what he teaches and his own wanting to teach it, but Socrates might also hold back his objections to Gorgias's under-meaning in order to refute him only after he has said more. With this new alternative, Socrates brings opposition and controversy closer to the surface than before; and again he asks for permission before proceeding.

33 One more time Socrates scrupulously leaves room for Gorgias to agree or disagree with the inferences he draws – for they do not describe the reality, as Socrates already knows and as Gorgias will point out on the next page.

34 At the beginning of the *Protagoras* we see such an ashamed diffidence in Hippocrates since he asks Socrates to accompany him to the great man, but shame also when Socrates asks him what he wants to become by being with Protagoras (*Prot*.312A1-7). For it is "success" that the sophist's students want – in the present case, freedom for themselves that consists in nothing more than controlling the thought or will of others!

35 Finally become evident why, according to Gorgias, large numbers must be involved in the success of the orator's persuasion: it is because the orator's "persuasion" consists not of teaching but *winning a majority of votes*!

36 Socrates comes back full circle to his opening question at 447C. In sum he has learned from Gorgias, apologizing at every step for pressing his question, as we have seen, that the oratorical art enables a person to make someone else an orator (449B1), that the orator only deals in pure speech though he is not alone in this (449D8-451D4), that this pure

speech is an asset greater than health, beauty, or wealth because it enslaves even the providers of these to the orator (451D10-452E8), that though it may be dubbed "persuasion-producer," oratory produces not the persuasion consisting in learning but only in opinion, and that it operates in large audiences on the topics of justice and injustice (454B5-455A7). Given all this, one would expect not to see orators even stand up in the assembly when a technical issue is raised; but Socrates has known all along that (1) they do (and are allowed to) stand up, and even more that (2) when they do they win the day – whence he calls its power "superhuman." With this remark, as well as his invitation above, we have completed the initial dialectical section, and he gives Gorgias the "green light" to perform, rather than answer – though for Gorgias, as we shall see, he is indeed "answering" a question, in the sense of answering he advertised at the beginning.

37 The speech is long, relative to other speeches in the dialogues. It consists of a praise of the power of the oratorical art (456AC) and then a lengthy apology regarding its misuse (456C-457C) almost three times as long, which must as such be considered something of an outburst. The key to its structure and inner motivation is the paradox or contradiction between *praising* the power of the art as enabling the orator to defeat *anyone he wishes* – something tantamount to his 'freedom to enslave' (452DE) – suddenly receiving what purports to be a rational corrective that denies exactly what he just dangled before the emotions: he who learns it can use it without limit, but just because he has it does not mean he *will* use it without limit (!). But this utterly mendacious latter point is next extended, by logic-less linguistic parallelisms, to an exoneration of the teacher as well. The vision of the all-powerful orator is presented with force and directness, whereas the subsequent backpedalling is redundant and insipid for it does nothing to articulate the very needful criterion of the proper and improper use of this awesome power, but seeks only to protect the teacher's opportunity to make his living in a democratic society. The redundancy of its expression is perhaps Gorgias's attempt to appear he himself has a conscience about the just and the unjust, but to a cannier listener it will be received as the height of astute arch and cheek. As to the question of proper use, Gorgias allows and therefore indirectly invites his prospective client to decide that; and if anything he encourages him to justify his use of the skill against his "enemies" (452E3) by providing him the excuse that they are acting unjustly (E4). It moreover serves not the art but the teacher of the art – Gorgias, that is, who in truth is not an orator else his business would be in Sicily. He is a teacher who travels from city to city, selling his wares to citizens where democracy is alive, to be used to their advantage against their fellow citizens. Thus he argues that himself, the itinerant sophist, should be allowed entrance in "the cities," and that it is the abusive citizens that should be exiled from them (cf. 460D). As to the style of the speech, the most salient feature in both form and content is the repetition of ideas and phrases as if repetition makes the argument they contain more valid or true. Notice the *climax* from saying that sheer competence in boxing does not justify beating up friend as well as foe, to saying that sheer competence in boxing used against father and mother should not be blamed *on the teacher*. A similar argument and a similar *climax* is used by Isocrates at *Antid*.251-2, where Isocrates, like Gorgias, likens teachers to bequeathers, merely passing something down.

38 Socrates is describing the devolution of a conversation in order to justify his suggestion that they start by defining their terms, which parties to a discussion seldom do and indeed certain types of demagoguery and rhetoric must avoid doing.

39 These three categories (and their opposites) constitute the Socratic "most importants" (*megista*). Moreover the triad may well conventionally correspond to the different goals of the three types of oratory (cf. Arist. *Rhet*.1358A36-9A6), giving Socrates's question still more point.

40 That the appearance of *knowing* the good would include or imply the appearance of *being* good is meant by Socrates to illustrate the level of credulity that is satisfied by appearance, and does not derive from a putative belief of "Plato" or "Socrates" that knowing "logically implies" or is a "sufficient condition" for being virtuous, as the critics have said. To the contrary Socrates is in effect suggesting how the teacher will enable the student to seem to know without teaching him the knowledge, namely, by acting like a "good guy."

41 Note that Socrates herewith postpones to respond to Gorgias's distracting sales pitch and promise that the orator will win out with ease, in order to focus on the question whether the "important things" are part of Gorgias's curriculum, and he gives him a wide spectrum of choices: (1) the oratorical expert (i.e., teacher) will be just as ignorant of these as he is of medicine, but nonetheless will be able to persuade the ignorant mass that he does know them; or (2) he *does* by definition of his trade know them but it is not part of his (i.e., "your") job to teach them, though if his (i.e., "your") student arrives ignorant of them he will enable him to seem to know them and seem to be good; or (3) you will not be able even to begin teaching oratory unless the student already knows them. In short, knowledge of the good will never be part of the lesson, either because (1) the teacher does not know it, or because (2) it is not your job to teach it, or because (3) you cannot do your job unless the student already knows it.

42 The modern commentator-referees disagree with Socrates's analogy, but it is Gorgias's vociferous agreement that needs to be interpreted. We have already seen that for him knowledge ("content") is trumped by the sheer device the orator learns from his teacher ("form"). As such he will presumably welcome the argument Socrates has made not because he finds it valid (what inherent worth could validity have, in his eyes?) but because it might serve to persuade the masses to be coddled into believing that both he and his orators are moral, a belief that is just as prerequisite to the perceived value of his lessons as the belief that his teachings are not immoral is prerequisite to his being allowed to enter the cities

in which he peddles them. Again the prejudice against oratorical instruction lurks beneath the surface in much of what he says.

43 Socrates's solicitous concern for Gorgias's willingness to go on, at every turn, is unique in the dialogues and goes far beyond his usual deference to the interlocutor, though in the same direction. I believe he knows that Gorgias has no business engaging in real dialogue but must appear credible and reasonable nevertheless. Socrates is essentially shaming him into continuing just as long as possible, for Gorgias must keep up appearances just as much as he must avoid confessing what his teaching truly consists in; Socrates's goal can only be to reveal to his fellow Athenians what it is that Gorgias is selling. Polus, aware of Gorgias's problem as a fellow professional, now gets him off the hook by intervening. What is taken by the commentators as gentlemanliness in Gorgias and impetuosity in Polus accordingly evince their respective brands of professional strategy; and when finally Callicles comes onto the stage, Socrates will face the opposite problem, of an interlocutor without a portfolio whose candor leaves him high and dry. Where Gorgias deftly succeeds to hide, Callicles will leave himself nowhere to escape to.

44 In a *private* conversation with Socrates, Gorgias's student Meno expresses admiration that Gorgias never claimed to teach virtue and indeed derided others for professing this when what mattered was to make men clever at speaking (*Meno* 95C). For Gorgias to have a worry about the personal morality of the orator is also to countenance his own culpability as an accomplice in magnifying his client's evil designs, so he must *be thought to believe* he is good lest his own personal morality come into question and he become liable to expulsion. Personal probity – more exactly the appearance of it – must be assumed. Seeing Gorgias dodge the question of the orator's morality, whether by demurral or derision, provides the prospective student with cover for paying him his high fees at the same time that it gives him a model for the behavior he may himself deploy when he himself rises to the podium.

45 Polus's "speech" is an onslaught of well-worn bluffs and dodges.

46 Polus had been silent since performing his fancy preamble at 448C; Socrates immediately characterizes his present interruption as a second attempt at such a performance. It is not the sheer length that he criticizes, there or here, but the quantity of words in the numerator measured against its relevance *as an answer* in the denominator – a denominator in the present case perilously close to zero.

47 Polus, too, is a Sicilian, but somehow expects to enjoy, even at a private meeting, the freedom of speech vouchsafed in Athens to its citizens and also to its metics and even to its slaves – but not to a *xenos* (foreigner)! Socrates alludes to the fact that it is exactly this maximal parrhesia afforded by Athens, in combination with her pre-eminence in the Delian League, that has created a market for this foreigner's services as an "orator," a market so much stronger than the market back in Acragas, not to mention the danger of being scapegoated among the people one lives with if one teaches only some of them. Conspicuous, in contrast to the rights and interests of Polus, are those of Athens which is providing him a forum for his teaching.

48 Of course the ambiguity as to whether one is "able to answer" because he knows, or because he has an "answering skill" that simply disposes of questions, is brought forward; but now a new problem arises: one must know what a question is in order to know what an answer is!

49 Both the charge and the inference are unjustified. It was Polus, not Socrates, that judged Gorgias to be at a loss, at 461B – which is why he interrupted before Gorgias could reveal he had no answer; nor is the inference justified that Socrates, from so judging, should himself know something. He is not able to answer merely because he asked him hard questions – though this impression that Socrates knows is often felt by his unsuccessful answerers. Similarly, Laches has no warrant to hope Nicias would have an answer about courage merely because he had said Laches did not (*Laches* 199E-200A). In truth, Polus is not asking for a definition nor even challenging Socrates to define it, but only challenging him to acquit himself successfully against whatever onslaught of questions he, Polus, might be able to devise. To act this way is exactly to display his oratorical ability, in the viewing of the small and attentive audience. But the very formulation of his question implicitly presumes that oratory is an art (i.e., a *technē*), since his interrogative pronoun is feminine not neuter – as Socrates immediately explicitates.

50 Socrates encourages Polus to consider that they are engaged a dialogue, aimed at *homologia*, not a boxing match ended by knock-out blows.

51 The essentially derogatory notion, and its expression, are close to what Isocrates *desiderates* in the potential orator, at *Soph.*17. We come close to the notion with our term, "astuteness."

52 The notion of "an image of a part" is unprepared, and what noun we are to supply with the feminine adjective "political" (is it *technē* – or not!!) is not as obvious as the expression seems to presume. These are the reasons Socrates wondered if Polus would understand. Socrates wants to present his thesis dialogically, needing Polus to answer questions step by step so that he might reach his conclusion, but Polus only wants to refute him rather than deal with questions, so that he will take each dialectical question as a Socratic thesis to be attacked rather than a step toward a conclusion. Thus, Socrates (as we shall see) here jumps to the end and leaves *all of us* in the dust!

53 Socrates's "the oratorical is part of pandering" was completely unclear, as he will presently admit, but Polus, since he has waited for it, now feels he has the right, whether he understood it or not, to jump to the "value question," which for him is nothing but a grounds for praising his profession. He wants to know whether to agree or disagree with Socrates

so that he can know whether to disapprove and combat the answer, or receive it favorably and praise it. He has no interest at all in learning what Socrates means, as Socrates foresaw. For this, the more circumspect and polished mediation of Gorgias will be needed.

54 With this, Socrates points to and shoe-horns in one more step in the argument that Polus's importunate question about admirability leaps over: not only does the praiseworthiness depend categorically upon what it is, but also one praiseworthy thing depends upon another ("admirable" depends upon "goodness")!

55 Gorgias has the rank to dismiss Polus in this way, and Socrates agrees to let him, with the promise of returning to conversing with Polus once he has had a chance to present his position and give Gorgias the clear account he craves. So it is now Gorgias that he will engage in dialectical conversation, with a promising reversion to the dialectical and dihaeretic manner (i.e., by division and distinctions) begun at 463AB. Though no dialectician, Gorgias must at least be polite and allow Socrates to go step by step – and the plot thickens since it is after all Gorgias's understanding and agreement about the oratorical that we really need. Once his account has become crystal clear, Polus will intervene again (466A4) and we shall immediately see how necessary the change of interlocutors had been, and that Socrates was prescient in saying just now that Polus would "refute" him.

56 We cannot but assume he is actually looking back to the first word in his concatenated expression, "image of a part of the political," since to bring in the political within the newly established context of body and soul has no other warrant. We must wait and see: in the event, somatic pandering will serve as a more palpable analogue for introducing the less palpable psychic type. With its prospective inkling that oratory will be a part of pandering to the *soul*, along with its back-references, Socrates's argument alternately runs ahead of itself and catches up with itself from behind!

57 "Part" being the second term of the concatenation, all that is needed now is the notion of an "image," and this anticipation will be fulfilled in the next step ("donning the apparel … feigns").

58 Dialectic finds things that do not yet have names; thought races ahead of language. The coinage has a satirical tone, like so many coinages in the *Sophist*. Compare 490D, *infra*.

59 A reminiscence of Gorgias's hyperbole about the power of oratory (458BC), but now it is the stupidity of the audience that is powerful!

60 Socrates *returns* to Polus, not out of deference to Gorgias, but because the basis has finally been laid for answering what Polus importunately asked at 463D.

61 Though he professes to teach "the oratorical," Gorgias is not a orator, as the flow of the argument required him to claim (449A), but a sophist. The need and justification for Socrates's original question, Who is he? (447D1), is herewith revealed.

62 By means of this critique of Polus, Socrates, who had been addressing Gorgias, can now once again turn to Polus, thereby making him the person upon whom it is incumbent to respond, and he will immediately respond in his typically captious way. It is hard to imagine what Gorgias would have or could have said in reply to this thorough condemnation of the oratorical art he professes to teach, if Socrates had asked him to, or had left it for him to do. Once again Socrates protects him to keep the conversation going; and once again Plato requires us to notice the Gorgianic silence.

63 It is noteworthy that the enigmatic language of Socrates's original three-term "definition" of oratory (the image of a part of the political) has now been superseded. In here saying it is the counterpart of delicacy in the soul he has telescoped the entire dihaeretic scheme into a *different* three-term definition. But we can spell it out for him: oratory is the kolakic (flattering) i*mage* of the justice-p*art* of the p*olitical* art, itself the psychic part of *therapeia*. If we would mimic the dihaeretic syntax of the *Sophist*, we might write, in the descending form, θεραπείας ψυχῆς μορίου πολιτικῆς δικαιοσύνης εἴδωλον κολακευτικόν; or in the ascending, εἴδωλον κολακευτικόν τοῦ τῆς δικαιοσύνης μορίου τῆς πολιτικῆς, ψυχῆς θεραπείας.

64 Socrates is referring to the moment he introduced his puzzling concatenation which, by now we see, expressed the conclusion he would have reached if Polus had been a patient dialectical interlocutor. Despite not knowing what the concatenation meant, Polus asked the wrong question about it because he did care to understand, as Socrates there recognized, but merely sought captiously to caricature or co-opt Socrates's reply for his own "benefit."

65 Commentators find Polus unable to make a logical distinction between means and ends, but it would be a little closer to the truth to say that he wishes his audience to view the tyrannical wielding of power as an end in itself. With an analogous shortsightedness, Gorgias had suggested that ruling others was tantamount to being free (452D). It is not that these two sophists cannot distinguish means from ends but that they want their clients not to do so, and want them instead to believe that what they will provide them with is an end in itself when it is not. Similarly, Polus placed the evaluation before the definition (448E), not because he was unable to distinguish essence from accident but because he is only interested that his wares be embraced as good no matter what their inner nature.

66 Socrates had given Polus the choice to "answer" in the manner of Gorgias, or to ask (462B); Polus chose to ask but proved awkward and unable to ascertain what Socrates was thinking by asking, and so now paradoxically he proposes to learn what Socrates thinks by *answering*! Conversely, Thrasymachus told Socrates if he truly wants to learn what justice is he should give his own answer rather than ask questions (*Rep*.336C), but then immediately bars a large spectrum of answers because they are not his kind of answer, namely, an answer like his own which he then cannot

resist to reveal (337D). For both of them, answers are not steps along a path of inquiry leading to further questions, but performances that terminate conversation and invoke applause. For such an interlocutor, conversely, good questions would be challenges that threaten to stymie or thwart a successful performance by the other man. A great "answerer" like Gorgias, however, has enough experience in the matter as never to be stymied or thwarted.

67 Socrates is showing his aversion not to what Polus is saying but to his lurid motive for saying it. The key to understanding the subsequent exchange is that whereas *athlios* denotes wretchedness (being destitute, lost, ruined), by Polus it can be used as a derogatory slur, denoting a "loser." Polus is preoccupied with winners and losers and for him an *athlios* is a loser, but for Socrates it denotes a person who is so badly off that he is on the border of losing his dignity as a man and losing any chance to be happy.

68 In Greek, as in English, to "refute" (*elenchein*) denotes rigorous examination and evaluation. If successful in its tendency it will reach a negative conclusion. Socrates here adds a prefix (*ex-elenchein*) that narrows the verb's denotation to success, thereby dangling before Polus the prospect of being defeated by him, and encouraging him thereby to continue in the dialectic, which in the end will defeat him. The play between the two forms of the verb continues in subsequent pages: it is another term of the dialectical vocabulary (like "question", "answer", "demonstrate" [prove or make a showing?]) that is misunderstood by oratorical types.

69 Polus's speech deploys a style we may pause to characterize. It opens with a paradoxon; the subsequent essentially proleptic relative clauses suggest the form of a kletic hymn; together these moves already announce that it is an encomium. It is swift and vigorous in its *narratio*, its appositives with and without article, and its stringing together of participles in ekphrasis. The purpose of the speech is to isolate and ridicule Socrates in the eyes of the onlookers, exactly for his *lack of moral unscrupulosity*.

70 The sense of this far-flung metaphor hangs on "exile" as one of the three judicial harms. As Polus becomes more indecent and aggressive and harsh, Socrates becomes more penetrating, more perspicuous, more cold.

71 In contrast to the standard list of judicial punishments he had used before, Polus now presents a vivid and strident description of a nightmare of barbaric torture and execution designed to shock and scandalize (compare Glaucon at *Rep*.361E-2A). It is important to keep in mind that when and where such elaborate punishments have been conducted, they are always carried out in public view.

72 We do not know what it is that Polus is vociferously denying, whether it is the predication of κάκιον (worse) to ἀδικεῖσθαι (being dealt injustice), or the inference from the one predicate (αἴσχιον, more shameful) to the other (κάκιον, more evil) that entails that predication – let alone why he is denying it. He may even be denying the inference from the one predicate to the other only in order to block the conclusion. We need to infer the answer from what Plato has given us so far, else the conversation loses dramatic validity.

73 The commentators do object, finding it fallacious, but what "others" think is of no consequence to a dialectical conversation, the very point Socrates next makes. In his conversation with Socrates, Polus will no longer use the others to support an opinion he no longer holds.

74 Forensic justice or the virtue δικαιοσύνη (justness)? The ambiguity or overlap was tolerated during the conversation with Gorgias, also, where Gorgias's concentration on the forensic or dicastic application of oratory enabled Socrates to ask him whether he teaches the virtue.

75 A shocking surprise at the end of an excited list, broaching the hitherto suppressed object of oratorical skill, telling exactly what it is that Polus and Gorgias are peddling and what their prospective clients, including the Athenian auditors here present, are deciding whether or not to buy; and thereby laying a foundation for the question about the usefulness of oratory that Socrates adds below, after the dialectical scrutiny of the two disagreements between himself and Polus is completed.

76 Not only does Polus agree with Socrates (C7-D6). He also no longer agrees with his own initial position (D7-E9). Socrates was able to carry through two elenchi with him (474C4-479E9), because their subject was not oratory or injustice (the subjects Polus must gingerly defend) but the interrelation (rat's nest?) of epideictic value-predicates – good, admirable, beneficial, and their contraries or contradictories – considered in themselves and in isolation from those subjects (indeed, the secondary qualifications [*poia*: 448E6-7, 462C10-D2] have become primary "whats"!). The two elenchi have included several steps that rely upon unstated premises, equivocations, presumed analogies, and even nothing more than the configurations of items in lists, including a new list of the meanings of "fine" (*kalon*), to which steps Polus agreed with little or no hesitation. Each logical peccadillo can be reformulated as a semantic technique. The syllogistic result of these agreements about the predicates, when applied to the subjects of oratory and injustice, constitutes a huge and perhaps total devaluation of the instruction Polus has come to Athens to sell (480A1-481B5). One reader will liken the paradox Socrates foists upon Polus, that undergoing is better than doing injustice, to a Stoic position – irrelevantly; another reader may well identify several points at which Polus's agreement about the predicates and their relations might justifiably have been withheld, with the result that these results would not have come about; when Polus nevertheless agrees, as if to his own detriment, the reader might go further and, posing as the defender of Polus or even of the truth, accuse Socrates, or worse, Plato, of ill-intent and conscious deception – unless of course he goes so far as to accuse Plato of failing to see the weak points that he himself has seen. But the immediate application of

the paradox Socrates chooses, and the results of his elenchus in concert with Polus, are the only things that matter to the drama, which is exposing the teaching of Gorgias and Polus as being inappropriate to and corrosive of democracy, a regime where tyrants and tyrannical types ("tyrants and orators and strong-men," 479A2-3) are not welcome. The logic by which the agreements are reached needs neither to be valid nor to be reproducible in some other context or some ideal meta-conversation, but to the contrary needs only engage the thought of the interlocutor and the silent audience standing by, in such a way as to achieve his (and their) agreement within the perspective of his (and their) own thinking (esp. visible at 475C3 and 476D6-7, agreements which Socrates has just now given him an extra opportunity to rescind). Polus neither has nor desires to have a rational defense of oratory but only to sell it – he trades in trust and belief and above all seductive obscurantism, but not teaching (cf. 454C7-E2 for the distinction, already made) – as his method of elenchus (i.e., defeat) by cajolery, threat, ridicule and demagoguery (470C-473E) has shown. He may agree so as not to appear captious, or may disagree so as to appear fearless, or may agree out of shame, as he told Socrates Gorgias had done and probably did himself when he declared that doing injustice is ugly (474C7-8). Socrates's most fearsome and beloved conversational skill is not logic-chopping but recognizing the interlocutor's values in the way he behaves and speaks, and then luring these up to the surface, as motives and bases for argumentation, with the result that the interlocutor's emotional commitments lead him, and expose him, to as much truth and self-scrutiny as he can sustain, and usually more – all to his happy amazement, stunned surprise, fearful resistance, or truculent resentment. Indeed, if anything it was to Polus's benefit, not his detriment as some analytic commentators would say, that he has here agreed with Socrates. If the analytic reader wishes to think of himself as a would-be interlocutor for Socrates, he would do well first to ask himself whether Socrates would take the trouble of talking with him at all, and if so why, or – what comes perhaps to the same – whether Plato would see fit to memorialize such a conversation with a *Dialogue*.

77 Rather than pounce on him, Socrates prefers next to pile Pelion onto Ossa: besides harming his friends by advocating their guilt the orator must help his enemies by defending them and their friends, in such a way as to deny them the amelioration of punishment.

78 Callicles takes the floor by *interrupting* the conversation between Polus and Socrates, before Polus can respond to Socrates's long paradoxical statement, thus exonerating Polus from the embarrassment of having to answer it – exactly the same way Polus exonerated Gorgias at 461B.

79 In response to Socrates's large system of real and sham arts of body and soul (463E-466A), Polus ignored the whole argument to carp at a single aspect of it, quoted out of context, that he might attack as paradoxical – Polus's feigning not to remember what had just been said is a correlate to Callicles's feigning not to have heard the argument that just occurred.

80 His term (*neanieuesthai*) is uncertain of meaning; but most important, Socrates brings it back at the very end (527D).

81 "Nature" goes from a dimension or category to being a realm that includes some aspect of justice; and, conversely, "law" is now an aspect of nature or a realm within which there is nature. In lieu of defining his terms, Callicles employs syntactical parallelisms with different denotations, as if the parallelism were sufficient to constitute them.

82 I read *agei biaiōn to dikaiōtaton* ("achieves the most just of forceful deeds") with all the manuscripts and almost no editor. The passage is preserved elsewhere with *dikaiōn to biaiōtaton* ("justifies the utmost force") but – I presume Plato wants us to see – Callicles's memory has been overcome or dictated by what he *wants* the poem to say, and yet even the spoonerism his memory has given him is barely able to reach the meaning he wants. On the basis of the superlative he introduces, *dikaiōtaton* ("most just"), he is arguing that the law of men and gods (i.e., the law of all nature, not just the self-serving *grammata* [written laws] of the weak), which is the despotic king of all (as opposed to a flimsy law enacted democratically by a mere majority of men), carries out the most purely just of violent deeds with nothing to stop it. Misquotations, or quotations misused, are not unknown in Plato; it is just a question whether we notice them, and whether Plato is expecting too much in thinking we might.

83 Note that Callicles conceives of the weaker as many and the stronger as one!

84 There is a recondite bit of dramatic irony in what Callicles is saying. He depicts the philosopher whispering in the corner rather than, like the politician, holding forth in the glaring light of the forum, while in fact Socrates, who is the only philosopher in the dialogue, spends all his time out in the agora – indeed, too much, for that is why he arrived late and missed Gorgias's private séance, which *itself* took place "within" (447A-C): think of the French term, *coin*.

85 Socrates has noticed Callicles conceives of the weaker as many and the stronger as one, from his interpretation of the Pindar poem he misquoted above (484C).

86 That being stronger men means nothing other than being nobler men (extensionally), is not logically equivalent to identifying stronger-ness with nobler-ness (intensionally): the identification not only substitutes the extensions of the predications (being stronger, being nobler) with the intensions of the predicates (the strong, the noble), but also makes the attributes – i.e., the predicates considered as subject matters – intensionally identical, "two words for the same thing." With "nothing other than" he had said that being in the group of the stronger means for him only that one is in the group of the nobler; but this does not imply that being nobler conversely consists in "nothing but" being stronger: otherwise the power of the democratic majority would make that majority nobler, and the strength of the slavish rabble he next mentions would make it noble. Does he recognize that he has asserted so much? Or is he upbraiding Socrates

for failing to recognize that by strength he means something noble – i.e., praiseworthy, as his counterexample goes on to suggest?

87 With his plurals, Socrates (again) is asking whether the *extension* of the better and stronger men is identical with that of the smarter men. We might take it to mean something else, e.g., that what makes them better and stronger is that they are smarter but this is not what the Greek here says. Such will however be said in Socrates's next question.

88 Has Callicles chosen to be a slave after all?

89 This last point was likewise stressed by Thrasymachus at *Rep*.343D6-E6.

90 By dubbing the life of pleasure "virtue," Callicles does not indicate that he is a "hedonist" – a person who believes pleasure is good or the good – but only that he is addicted to pleasure.

91 Socrates quotes from a play that has been lost.

92 With Erasmus (*Adages* 3688), but no modern editor, I relocate the accent, reading *charadríou* (diminutive of *charadra*, ravine) rather than *charadrioú* (a certain bird with greedy habits). The metaphor of a little fissure or gully in the rocks (standing in contrast to the metaphor of a rock just above) is more pertinent in the context of perpetual "flow."

93 *kinaidos* denotes a man addicted to the pleasure of anal sex: its relevance is that only the passive recipient is physiologically able enjoy a continual onslaught of pleasurable frictions. Socrates's use of periphrasis (a "life of") moreover characterizes the proclivity for this pleasure as a feature that dominates such a person's daily life; and his use of the plural indicates that the general public has a clear enough concept of such a life that they can group such persons together. We need no more to understand Callicles's subsequent reaction.

94 Commentators interrupt saying that "Plato" here invalidly substitutes "pleasure" for "good," but within the particular conversation between Socrates and Callicles, for Callicles to call something good only means he approves of it. The actual purpose of Socrates's introduction of "presence" in the present argument now comes to the surface. For Callicles to call something good because he approves of it, which I have called name-calling above, is a property of Callicles and not, *eo ipso*, a property the thing.

95 Socrates now inserts his admonition about the importance of the topic, as he had with Gorgias (458A-B) and with Polus (472C-D), in each case effecting a transition from a more or less aleatory dialogical sequence to something more orderly and syllogistic.

96 Socrates frames the question in a way that invites a negative evaluation of the art of tragedy in Athens. Commentators feel they must explain how "Plato" could believe such a thing, but his estimation of tragedy is not here at play, only Socrates's need to gain Callicles's acquiescence in this next step. Predictably, he assumes the motives of the tragedians are like his own, and would measure their work by the pleasure it would provide; he likewise will readily dismiss the sophists who take the trouble to teach virtue.

97 Again Socrates takes a controversial position, and again we have no warrant to father it upon Plato. Instead he is creating an opportunity to submit common opinion to scrutiny by theorizing the criterion for good politics and oratory.

98 And thereby to counter what Callicles had quoted from Amphion's brother, Zethus, at 485-6.

99 It is striking that Socrates can refer without reference or explanation to "geometrical equality" (A/B = C/D) as opposed to "arithmetical" (A = B). The sense is that Callicles's pleonexy ("having more") cannot countenance four terms but only two (himself and anybody else).

100 Socrates begs leave for his own striking metaphor, to match Callicles's "slap in the face" at 486C. He calls the arguments adamant not because he thinks them objectively irrefragable but because as long as they stand unrefuted he is bound and confined by them, in his conscience and regarding his choice of life. As we hear in the *Crito*, Socrates will die by the best argument he has, though still aware that it does not constitute knowledge. Simultaneous uncertainty and certainty are the truth of the human condition, the tension between them mitigated by nothing less than myth, as at the end of this dialogue (as well as the speech of the Laws in the *Crito*), after which Socrates bears witness again to the tension under which he lives (527A-B).

101 Referring of course to all the chips Callicles put on the table in his opening speech in defense of his own choice of life, which chips Socrates is removing, one by one.

102 No matter how tight or true the argument, Callicles consciously decides to acknowledge only what he will, even at the expense of feigning to join the multitude he so despises.

103 The egagogic curve already indicated, we are moving on in the usual way from material possessions to health and then to soul but the place of soul is now taken by politics: that politics has to do with soul is however the hypothesis of the whole argument.

104 For the term Socrates reaches back to 503B, "you've never seen oratory practiced *that* way."

105 Notoriously lavish: cf. *Rep*.404D1, Athen. 12.518C.

106 The mention of then-famous but since-forgotten exponents of these "arts" adds a vividness to the induction that is lost on us.

107 Here Socrates inserts a warning to counter Callicles's warnings that his philosophical naivete will lead to his demise: another chip removed.

108 Callicles is now guilty of requiring Socrates to do what he falsely criticized him for doing at the beginning, *ipsissimis verbis* (*dēmēgorein*, 482C).

109 Indeed we may instance his activity in the agora earlier today as "practicing politics in the true sense," which made him late for a meeting that at least at the time must have seemed to him less important.

110 Callicles's ironic manner has baffled the editors and translators: he means to emphasize his certainty by countenancing and then rejecting a "perhaps," in ironic litotes.

111 It is of course highly paradoxical that the aspects of body singled out for censure as obscurant are the very organs of sense, but surely Zeus knows! Naturally the "line of sight" is from the judge's soul to the soul of the judged, and so the impediments on the side of the judge are from the inside out (his body blocking his prospect) and on the side of the judged from the outside in (body or clothes blocking what is beyond them and within from being seen). A Platonic prejudice against bodily perception plays no role; indeed, Plato seldom if ever foists platonism upon his characters, even upon Socrates. Irwin's citing *I Samuel* 16:7 (*Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth*) is much more to the point.

112 Prometheus himself uses the verb "stop" (*pausai*) at Aesch., *Prometheus Bound* 248ff, which is quite enough to suggest that Zeus and Socrates have that passage in mind, announcing not a measure of Zeus but of his own (as this passage is taken by all commentators), for which moreover Zeus is now punishing him. Thus it is Prometheus's announcement (though not his means) that Zeus here reports. Like his gift of fire, the gift was of an ambivalent boon for mankind, since in giving men "blind" hopes that they could avoid their just deserts and proper fate (*moros*) – for instance by distracting their human judges and imagining that "nobody" could know what was going on inside them merely because it was invisible – Zeus must now introduce a supplementary correction whereby the true state of their souls, which men blindly hope will remain invisible, will be seen for what it is, through a disembodied judgment of what cannot be concealed by what cannot be deceived, in the invisible afterlife. By this measure, fate (*moros*) becomes ineluctable all over again; and the eternal divine law of gods over men, imperfectly enforced under the regime of Cronus (523A-B) and partly thwarted by the gift of Prometheus to mankind, is hereby restored.

113 The depiction of the philosopher as a private man not only gainsays the image Callicles had presented of a man whispering in the corner with a couple of lads (485D): it also recalls the description of the "good man living in a well-governed city," at the beginning of the "Decline of the Polis" in *Republic*, Book. VIII: a man who avoids public honors, office, lawsuits, and "all that sort of busybodiness." There, Plato coins the term *philopragmosune* (549C5: "love of activity") to identify the motive for the behavior described by the common term it is meant to oust, namely *polupragmosune* ("lots of activity") the term he uses here. This good man's wife faults him for being willing to lose at court rather than become one of the "rulers," and perceives him as preoccupied with his own things and never hers, all the while neither honoring nor dishonoring her (549D1-5). Thus, *polupragmosune* is a love (and therefore a life) of "outward" action that is incompatible with inward contemplation, a contrast which it is the chief theme of the present dialogue to expose. Such contemplation is plainly not the exclusive province of the philosopher as viewed by Socrates or Plato: in portraying this man in the "third person" – as he is seen by his wife – Plato does everything he can to avoid calling him a philosopher (though he may very well be one!); conversely, Socrates here inserts the philosopher only in passing, simply to express his own point of view (over against that of Callicles).

114 The postponement of Aeacus at the mention of his coadjutor, Rhadymanthus (524E), had enabled Socrates in the short term to focus upon the paradigmatic case of the Great King, (over whom the judge of Asia has jurisdiction), but now it plays a second role. Socrates has held Aeacus in the wings for his arrival as the judge of Callicles (a European), which above all else Socrates means by this myth to bring home to him.

115 Removing two more of Callicles' chips from the table. Cf. 486B and C. Note also his use of "perhaps" (*isōs*) in litotes ("you *might just* get slapped").

116 Socrates feels bound to his thesis by iron chains of argument and steel (cf. n. 100), and since he is certain that the other arguments have so far been refuted though his own has not as of yet, he will rely on his position, so eloquently spelled out in the myth, even despite final certainty. The same constellation of forces is at work in him, here at the close, as was at work at 509A, and here as there it is a matter of *reliance*, expressed in action, not "belief." Indeed, in humility he even admits degrees of truth (though of course there are none), probably inspired by an access of strength and resolve that has been stirred up within him by the myth and his interpretation of it.

117 With this phrase ("the whole of human activity") Socrates is virtually quoting, and indeed correcting, Gorgias's characterization of oratory ("in all contests," 456C), to which he alluded just above.

118 Socrates uses the same term, uncertain of meaning, now against both of them, that Callicles had used against him at the very beginning (*neanieuesthai*, 482C: cf. footnote there).

119 Lack of preparation and understanding (i.e., education: *apaideusia*) brings up the deficiencies in the education of both Polus (461C, 462E, 470E) and Callicles (485A, 510B), and more chips are being removed: both of them had an understanding of acculturation that left them so rude that they did not recognize that good education was a prerequisite to their own positions.