Sappho: Select Poems (c. 620-570 BCE)


Square brackets indicate gaps in the text where the papyrus is torn or the citation breaks off. An asterisk [*] indicates the end of a poem or fragment.

Artfully adorned Aphrodite, deathless
close of Zeus and weaver of wiles I beg you
please don’t hurt me, don’t overcome my spirit,
goddess, with longing,

but come here, if ever at other moments
hearing these my words from afar you listened
and responded: leaving your father’s house, all
golden, you came then,

hitching up your chariot: lovely sparrows
drew you quickly over the dark earth, whirling
on fine beating wings from the heights of heaven
down through the sky and

instantly arrived - and then O my blessed
goddess with a smile on your deathless face you
asked me what the matter was this time, what I
called you for this time,

what I now most wanted to happen in my
raving heart: “Whom this time should I persuade to
lead you back again to her love? Who now, oh
Sappho, who wrongs you?

If she flees you now, she will soon pursue you;
if she won’t accept what you give, she’ll give it;
if she doesn’t love you, she’ll love you soon now,
even unwilling.”

Come to me again, and release me from this
want past bearing. All that my heart desires to
happen-make it happen. And stand beside me,
goddess, my ally.

* Wealth without virtue is no harmless neighbor.

* When anger spreads inside your breast
keep watch against an idly barking tongue.

* I don’t expect to touch the sky with my two hands.

* “Sweet Mother, I can’t weave my web
overcome with longing for a boy
because of slender Aphrodite.”

* maidens [
keeping vigil all through the night till morning
used to sing the song of your love and of your
violet-robed bride.

But wake up. March off to the young unmarried
men who shared your childhood and beg their presence
so that we may look on less sleep than does the
clearvoiced nightingale.

* He is dying, Cytherea, Adonis the delicate. What shall we
do?
“Beat your breasts, girls, and tear your clothes.”

* And since you are my friend
get yourself a younger bedmate
for I can’t bear to keep house together
being the elder.

* As a sweet apple reddens
on a high branch
at the tip of the topmost bough:
The apple-pickers missed it.

No, they didn’t miss it:
They couldn’t reach it.

* “Virginity, virginity, where have you gone and left me?”
“Never again will I come to you, never again.”

* I don’t know what to do. I have two thoughts.

* Delicate girl, in the old days
I strayed from you, and now again [

* 

Not one girl, I think, will ever look on the sunlight of another time who has such talent as this one does.

* 

] don’t you remember [
we, too, did such things in our youth

* 

Fool, don’t try to bend a stubborn heart.

* 

I was in love with you, Attis, once, long ago.
To me you seemed a little girl, and not too graceful.

* 

You have forgotten me 
or else you love some other person more than me.

* 

Then love shook my heart like the wind that falls on oaks in the mountains.

* 

] You came, and I was mad to have you; your breath cooled my heart that was burning with desire.

* 

For me neither the honey nor the bee.

* 

I think that someone will remember us in another time.

* 

In my eyes he matches the gods, that man who sits there facing you - any man whatever - listening from close-by to the sweetness of your voice as you talk, the 
sweetness of your laughter: yes, that - I swear it - sets the heart to shaking inside my breast, since once I look at you for a moment, I can’t speak any longer,

but my tongue breaks down, and then all at once a subtle fire races inside my skin, my eyes can’t see a thing and a whirring whistle thrums at my hearing,

cold sweat covers me and a trembling takes ahold of me all over: I’m greener than the grass is and appear to myself to be little short of dying.

But all must be endured, since even a poor [

* 

Some say thronging cavalry, some say foot soldiers, 
others call a fleet the most beautiful of sights the dark earth offers, but I say it’s whatever you love best.

And it’s easy to make this understood by everyone, for she who surpassed all human kind in beauty, Helen, abandoning her husband - that best of men - went sailing off to the shores of Troy and never spent a thought on her child or loving parents: when the goddess seduced her wits and left her to wander,

she forgot them all, she could not remember anything but longing, and lightly straying aside, lost her way. But that reminds me now: Anactoria,

she’s not here, and I’d rather see her lovely step, her sparkling glance and her face than gaze on all the troops in Lydia in their chariots and glittering armor.

*
Four Key Pre-Socratic Concepts,
from the introduction by Jonathan Barnes

First, there is the concept of the universe or the world itself. The Greek word is kosmos, whence our ‘cosmos’ and ‘cosmology’. […]

It is remarkable enough that these thinkers should have felt the need for a word to designate the universe — everything, the whole world. Normal conversation and normal business do not require us to talk about everything, or to form the concept of a totality or universe of all things. Far more noteworthy, however, is the choice of the word kosmos to designate the universe. The noun kosmos derives from a verb which means ‘to order’, ‘to arrange’, ‘to marshal’ — it is used by Homer of the Greek generals marshalling their troops for battle. Thus a kosmos is an orderly arrangement. Moreover, it is a beautiful arrangement: the word kosmos in ordinary Greek meant not only an ordering but also an adornment (hence the English word ‘cosmetic’), something which beautifies and is pleasant to contemplate.

The cosmos is the universe, the totality of things. But it is also the ordered universe, and it is the elegant universe. The concept of the cosmos has an aesthetic aspect. […] But also, and from our point of view more importantly, it has an essentially scientific aspect: the cosmos is, necessarily, ordered — and hence it must be in principle explicable.

The second term is phusis or ‘nature’. […] The word derives from a verb meaning ‘to grow’. The importance of the concept of nature lies partly in the fact that it introduces a clear distinction between the natural and the artificial world, between things which have ‘grown’ and things which have been made. Tables and carts and ploughs (and perhaps societies and laws and justice) are artefacts: they have been made by designers […] and they are not natural. They have no nature, for they do not grow. Trees and plants and snakes (and perhaps also rain and clouds and mountains), on the other hand, have not been made: they are not artefacts but natural objects — they grew, they have a nature.

But the distinction between the natural and the artificial (in Greek, between phusis and techne) does not exhaust the significance of the notion of nature. In one sense the word ‘nature’ designates the sum of natural objects and natural events […] But in another, and more important, sense the word serves to denote something within each natural object: […] a principle within each natural part of the cosmos. When the Presocratics inquired into ‘nature’, they were inquiring into ‘the nature of things’.

Any natural object — anything that grows and is not made — has, it was assumed, a nature of its own. Its nature is an intrinsic feature of it, and it is an essential feature — not an accidental or chance fact about it. Moreover, it is an explanatory feature: the nature of an object explains why it behaves in the ways it does, why it has the various accidental properties it does.

All scientists are interested, in this sense, in the phusis of things. A chemist, investigating some stuff — say, gold — is concerned to find out the underlying or basic properties of gold, in terms of which its other properties can be explained. Perhaps the basic properties of gold are those associated with its atomic weight. These properties will then explain why gold is, say, malleable and ductile, why it is soft and yellow, why it dissolves in sulphuric acid, and so on. The chemist is looking for the ‘fundamental properties’ of gold, for its ‘essence’ — for its ‘nature’ or phusis. This indispensable scientific concept was first established by the Presocratics.

Nature is a principle and origin of growth. The notions of principle and origin introduce us to a third Presocratic term: arche. […] Its cognate verb can mean either ‘to begin’, ‘to commence’, or else ‘to rule’, ‘to govern’. An arche is thus a beginning or origin; and it is also a rule or a ruling principle. […] Writers on ancient philosophy often use the word ‘principle’ or the phrase ‘first principle’ […]

The inquiry into the natures of things leads easily to a search for principles. Nature is growth: what, then, does growth start from? […]

The inquiry into archai was in this way closely associated with cosmology, and also with abstract physics or chemistry. The ‘principles’ of the universe will include its basic stuff or stuffs. But evidently everything must be made out of the basic stuff or stuffs of the universe. Hence inquiring into the principles of the cosmos means inquiring into the fundamental constituents of all natural objects. […]

The fourth of my illustrative examples is the concept of logos. […] To give a logos or an account of something is to explain it, to say why it is so; so that a logos is often a reason. When Plato says that an intelligent man can give a logos of things, he means not that an intelligent man can describe things, but rather that he can explain or give the reason for things. […]

It cannot be said that the Presocratics established a single clear sense for the term logos or that they invented the concept of reason or of rationality. But their use of the term logos constitutes the first step towards the establishment of a notion which is central to science and philosophy.
Thales, 625-545 BCE, from Miletus

[Thales was one of the Seven Sages,] according to Plato, and he was the first to be called [...]one of the Seven Sages. [...] After his political activities he turned to scientific speculation. [...] He is thought by some to have been the first to study astronomy and to have predicted eclipses of the sun and solstices. [...] that souls are immortal [...] that the size of the sun is a seven hundred and twentieth part <of the solar orbit, just as the size of the moon is a seven hundred and twentieth> of the lunar orbit. He was the first to call the last day of the month the thirtieth. And he was the first, according to some, to discourse about nature.

Aristotle and Hippias say that he ascribed souls to lifeless things too, taking the magnet and amber as his evidence.

Pamphila says that he learned geometry from the Egyptians and was the first to inscribe a right-angled triangle inside a circle [...].

He is also thought to have given excellent advice in political affairs. [...] He lived a solitary life as a private citizen. Some say that he married and had a son, Cybis – thus, others that he remained a bachelor but adopted his sister’s son – so that when he was asked why he had no children he replied, ‘Because I love children’. And they say that when his mother pressed him to marry he said, ‘It’s too early’, and that then, when he had passed his prime and she insisted again, he said ‘It’s too late’. [...]

He supposed that water was the first principle of all things, and that the world has a soul and is full of spirits. They say he discovered the seasons of the year and divided it into three hundred and sixty-five days.

No-one taught him, although he went to Egypt and spent time with the priests there. Hieronymus says that he actually measured the pyramids from their shadows, having observed the time when <our shadows> are the same size as we are. [...]

He is said to have been taken from his house by an old woman to look at the stars, and to have fallen into a ditch: when he cried out, the old woman said: ‘Do you think, Thales, that you will learn what is in the heavens when you cannot see what is in front of your feet?’ [...] The following aphorisms are ascribed to him. Of existing things, god is the oldest – for he is ungenerated. The world is the most beautiful – for it is god’s creation. Space is the greatest – for it includes everything. Mind is the swiftest – for it runs through everything. Necessity is the strongest – for it controls everything. Time is the wisest – for it discovers everything. He said that death is no different from life. ‘Then why don’t you die?’ someone asked him. ‘Because it makes no difference,’ he replied. When someone asked him which came first, day or night, he answered, ‘Night came first – by a day.’

When someone asked him whether a man can escape the notice of the gods if he does wrong, he replied: ‘Not even if he thinks of doing wrong.’ An adulterer asked him if he should swear that he had not committed adultery: he replied, ‘Perjury is no worse than adultery.’ When asked what is difficult, he said, ‘To know yourself’; what is easy, ‘To give advice to someone else’; what most pleasant, ‘Success’; what divine, ‘What has neither beginning nor end’. When asked what was the strangest thing he had seen, he said: ‘An old tyrant’. How can we bear misfortune most easily? – If we see our enemies faring worse. How can we live best and most justly? – If we do not ourselves do the things we blame others for doing. Who is happy? – One who has a healthy body, a well-stocked soul, and an educable nature. He says that we should remember our friends both present and absent, and that we should not beautify our faces but be beautiful in our practices. ‘Do not be rich by evil means,’ he says, ‘and let not words estrange you from those who have shared your trust.’ ‘Expect from your children the same benefits that you gave to your parents.’ [...]

The Sage died of heat and thirst and weakness while watching a gymnastic contest. He was by then an old man. On his tomb is inscribed:

*His tomb is small, his fame is heaven-high: behold the grave of the wise and ingenious Thales.*

The motto ‘Know Thyself’ is his, though Antisthenes in his *Successions* says that it was Pheonoe’s and that Chilon appropriated it.

Anaximander, 610-540 BCE, from Miletus

The leading ideas of Anaximander’s work On Nature are summarized by a late doxographer as follows:

Anaximander was a pupil of Thales – Anaximander, son of Praxiades, a Miletian. He said that a certain infinite nature is first principle of the things that exist. From it come the heavens and the worlds in them. It is eternal and ageless, and it contains all the worlds. He speaks of time, since generation and existence and destruction are determinate.

Anaximander said that the infinite is principle and element of the things that exist, being the first to call it by the name of principle. In addition, there is an eternal motion in which the heavens come into being. The earth is aloft, not supported by anything but resting where it is because of its equal distance from everything. Its shape is rounded, circular, like a stone pillar. Of its surfaces, we stand on one while the other is opposite. [...] Animals come into being <from moisture> evaporated by the sun. Humans originally resembled another type of animal, namely fish.

Winds come into being when the finest vapours of air are separated off, collect together and move. Rain comes from vapour sent up by the things beneath the sun. Lightning occurs when wind breaks out and parts the clouds.

(Hippolytus; Refutation of All Heresies I vi 1-7)

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1 Seven Sages: (of Greece) or Seven Wise Men (c. 582 – 580 BC) was the title given by ancient Greek tradition to seven early-6th-century BC philosophers and statesmen renowned for their wisdom.
A second doxographical report contains some supplementary material:

Anaximander, an associate of Thales, says that the infinite is the universal cause of the generation and destruction of the universe. From it, he says, the heavens were separated off and in general all the worlds, infinite in number. He asserted that destruction and, much earlier, generation occur from time immemorial, all the same things being renewed. […]

He says that at the generation of this world that which is productive from the eternal of hot and cold separated off and from it a ball of flame grew round the air about the earth, like bark on a tree. When the ball burst and was enclosed in certain circles, the sun and the moon and the stars came into being.

Further, he says that originally humans were born from animals of a different kind, because the other animals can soon look after themselves while humans alone require a long period of nursing; that is why if they had been like this originally they would not have survived.

([Plutarch], Miscellanea fragment 179.2, in Eusebius, Preparation for the Gospel 1 vii 16)

Anaximander’s most striking thoughts concern biology, astronomy and the conception of ‘the infinite’. In biology, the remarks of Hippolytus and pseudo-Plutarch can be eked out by three further texts:

Anaximander says that the first animals were born in moisture, surrounded by prickly barks. As they grew older they emerged on to drier parts, the bark burst, and for a short time they lived a different kind of life.

([Plutarch], On the Scientific Beliefs of the Philosophers 9080)

Anaximander of Miletus says he thinks that from hot water and earth there arose fish, or animals very like fish, that humans grew in them, and that the embryos were retained inside up to puberty whereupon the fish-like animals burst and men and women emerged already able to look after themselves.

(Censorinus, On Birthdays IV 7)

As for the infinite principle or element of all things, we have a few words from Anaximander’s book preserved in a passage of Simplicius. These are the earliest surviving words of western philosophy. Unfortunately, it is uncertain – and a matter of vigorous scholarly controversy – exactly how extensive Simplicius’ citation is.

Of those who hold that the first principle is one, moving, and infinite, Anaximander, son of Praxiades, a Milesian, who was a successor and pupil of Thales, said that the infinite is principle and element of the things that exist. He was the first to introduce this word ‘principle’. He says that it is neither water nor any other of the so-called elements but some different infinite nature, from which all the heavens and the worlds in them come into being. And the things from which existing things come into being are also the things into which they are destroyed, in accordance with what must be. For they give justice and reparation to one another for their injustice in accordance with the arrangement of time […] It is clear that he observed the change of the four elements into one another and was unwilling to make any one of them the underlying stuff but rather chose something else apart from them. He accounts for coming into being not by the alteration of the element but by the separating off of the opposites by the eternal motion.

(Simplicius, Commentary on the Physics 24. 1 3—25)

Simplicius explains why Anaximander’s ‘element’ was different from the four traditional elemental stuffs (earth, air, fire, water). He does not explain why it was unlimited or infinite. A passage in Aristotle’s Physics alludes to Anaximander and lists some reasons for belief in infinitude: it is possible that one or more of those reasons originally came from Anaximander.

It is with reason that they all make [the infinite] a principle; for it can neither exist to no purpose nor have any power except that of a principle. For everything is either a principle or derived from a principle. But the infinite has no principle – for then it would have a limit. Again, it is ungenerated and indestructible and so is a principle. For what comes into being must have an end, and there is an end to every destruction. Hence, as I say, it has no principle but itself is thought to be a principle for everything else and to govern everything. . . And it is also the divine; for it is deathless and unperishing, as Anaximander and most of the natural scientists say.

Belief in the existence of something infinite comes mainly from five considerations: from time (since this is infinite), from the division of magnitudes (mathematicians actually use the infinite); again, because generation and destruction will give out unless there is something infinite from which what comes into being is subtracted; again, because what is finite is always limited by something, so that there cannot be an [ultimate] limit if one thing must always be limited by another; last and most importantly, there is something which raises a puzzle for everyone alike: because they do not give out in thought, numbers seem to be infinite, and so do mathematical magnitudes and the region outside the heavens. But if the region outside is infinite, then body and worlds also seem to be infinite – for why should they be here rather than there in the void? Hence if body is anywhere, it is everywhere. Again, if void and space are infinite, body too must be infinite – for with eternal things there is no difference between being possible and being actual.

(Aristotle, Physics 203b6-1 i, 13-30)
Heraclitus, c. 540-480 BCE, from Ephesus

The first [...] passage comes from the Refutation of All Heresies. In it Hippolytus presents what is supposed to be a rounded summary of Heraclitus' main ideas.

Heraclitus says that the universe is divisible and indivisible, generated and ungenerated, mortal and immortal, Word and Eternity, Father and Son, God and Justice.

Listening not to me but to the account, it is wise to agree that all things are one. [B 50] says Heraclitus. [...] Heraclitus says that dark and light, bad and good, are not different but one and the same. [...] And up and down are one and the same:

The path up and down is one and the same. [B 60]

And he says that the polluted and the pure are one and the same, and that the drinkable and the undrinkable are one and the same:

The sea, he says is most pure and most polluted water: for fish, drinkable and life-preserving: for men, undrinkable and death-dealing. [B 61]

And he explicitly says that the immortal is mortal and the mortal immortal in the following words:

Immortals are mortals, mortals immortals: living their death, dying their life. [B 62]

 [...] And he says that a judgement of the world and of everything in it comes about through fire; for fire, he says, will come and judge and convict all things. [B 66]

He says that this fire is intelligent and the cause of the management of the universe, expressing it thus:

The thunderbolt steers all things [B 64]

 [...] In the following passage he has set down all of his own thought — [...]:

God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, satiety and famine (all the opposites - that is his meaning); but he changes like olive oil which, when it is mixed with perfumes, gets its name from the scent of each. [B 67]

(Hippolytus, Refutation of All Heresies IX ix i—x 9)

Diogenes Laertius’ Life also offers a summary account [...] of Heraclitus’ thought:

Heraclitus [...] was uncommonly arrogant and contemptuous, as indeed is clear from his treatise itself, in which he says:

Much learning does not teach sense — otherwise it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, and again Xenophanes and Hecataeus. [B 40]

For he says that the wise is one, grasping the knowledge how all things are steered through all [641].

 [...] In the end [of his life] he became a misanthrope[loose], leaving the city and living in the mountains where he fed on plants and herbs. Because of this he contracted dropsy[1] and returned to the town. He asked the doctors in his riddling fashion if they could change a rainstorm into a drought. When they failed to understand him, he buried himself in a byre[cowshed] hoping that the dropsy would be vaporized by the heat of the dung. But he met with no success even by this means and died at the age of sixty . . . He was remarkable from an early age: as a young man, he used to say that he knew nothing, and when he had become adult that he had learned everything. He was no-one’s pupil, but said that he had inquired into himself [cf B 101] and learned everything from himself. [...] His views, in general, were the following. All things are constituted from fire and resolve into fire. All things come about in accordance with fate, and the things that exist are fitted together by the transformation of opposites. All things are full of souls and spirits. [...] He also said:

If you travel every path you will not find the limits of the soul, so deep is its account. [B 45]

He said that conceit is a sort of epilepsy[2], and that sight is fallacious[3] [mistaken] [B 46]. Sometimes in his treatise he expresses himself brilliantly and clearly, so that even the most stupid easily understand him and gain an enlargement of soul; and the brevity and weight of his style are incomparable.

In detail, his doctrines are these. Fire is an element, and all things are an exchange for fire [cf B 90], coming about by rarefaction and condensation. (But he expresses nothing clearly.) All things come about through opposition, and the universe flows like a river [cf B 12]. The universe is finite, and there is one world [cf B 30]. It is generated from fire and it is consumed in fire again, alternating in fixed periods throughout the whole of time. And this happens by fate.

Of the opposites, that which leads to generation is called war and strife [cf B 80], and that which leads to conflagration[4] is called agreement and peace. The change is a path up and down [cf B 60], and the world is generated in accordance with it. [...] (Diogenes Laertius, Lives of the Philosophers IX 1-3,5—12,15)

The rest of the chapter assembles the remaining fragments, together with some paraphrastic texts. [...] Thus the prophet’s remark, ‘If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established’ [Isaiah 7:9], is proved abundantly true. And Heraclitus of Ephesus was paraphrasing it when he observed:

If you do not expect the unexpected you will not discover it; for it cannot be tracked down and offers no passage. [B 18]

(Clement, Miscellanies II iv 17.8)

1 dropsy: a condition characterized by an excess of watery fluid collecting in the cavities or tissues of the body
But the circumference of a circle as a whole no longer has a direction; for whatever point on it you think of is both a beginning and an end — for
beginning and end are common
on the circumference of a circle [B 103], according to Heraclitus.
(Porphyry, Notes on Homer, on Iliad XIV 200)

They say it is indecent if the sight of warfare pleases the gods. But it is not indecent; for the noble deeds please the gods. Again, wars and battles seem terrible to us, but to god not even they are terrible. For god makes all things contribute to the harmony of the universe, managing it commodiously — so Heraclitus says that to god all things are fair and just but men have supposed some things unjust others just [B 102].
(Porphyry, Notes on Homer, on Iliad IV 4)

Don’t you realize the truth of Heraclitus’ remark that the most beautiful ape is ugly when compared with another species . . .? [B 82] Doesn’t Heraclitus say the same thing, that the wisest of men, when compared to a god, will seem an ape in wisdom and beauty and everything else? [B 83]
(Plato, Hippias Major 289AB)

It seems that each animal has its own pleasure . . . The pleasures of horses, dogs, and men are different — so Heraclitus says that donkeys would prefer rubbish to gold [B 9] (for food is more pleasing to donkeys than gold).
(Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics I 17633, 5-8)

On the subject of the soul, Cleanthes sets out the doctrines of Zeno [the Stoic] in order to compare them to those of the other natural scientists. He says that Zeno, like Heraclitus, holds the soul to be a percipient[insightful] exhalation. For, wanting to show that souls as they are exhaled always become new, he likened them to rivers, saying:

On those who enter the same rivers, ever
different waters flow — and souls are
exhaled from the moist things. [B 12]
(Arius Didymus, fragment 39 Diels, quoted by Eusebius, Preparation for the Gospel XV xx 2)

For it is not possible to step twice into the same river, according to Heraclitus, nor to touch mortal substance twice in any condition: by the swiftness and speed of its change, it scatters and collects itself again — or rather, it is not again and later but simultaneously that it comes together and departs, approaches and retires [B 91].
(Plutarch, On the E at Delphi 3926)

Things which have a natural circular motion are preserved and stay together because of it — if indeed, as Heraclitus says, the barley-drink separates if it is not moving [B 125].
(Theophrastus, On Vertigo 9)

Heraclitus, who urges us to inquire […] , posits necessary exchanges from the opposites and talks of a path up and down [cf B 60], and […] he leaves us to conjecture and omits to make his argument clear to us, no doubt because we should inquire for ourselves as he himself inquired and found [cf B 101].
(Plotinus, Enneads IV viii i)

Democritus, c. 460-370 BCE, from Abdera

Democritus was born in Abdera in the north of Greece. He was the most prolific, and ultimately the most influential, of the Presocratic philosophers: his atomic theory may be regarded from a certain point of view as the culmination of early Greek thought. Although Plato fails, remarkably, to mention his name, he was highly regarded by Aristotle, and his fundamental ideas were taken up and developed by Epicurus in the fourth century BC. None of Democritus’ writings has survived intact, and there are, moreover, very few fragments bearing on what we now think of as the central and most important part of his thought. Much of Epicurus’ work, however, was preserved, so that by way of Epicureanism Democritus has had a lasting effect on western science and philosophy.

Little is known of his life. He is said to have travelled to Egypt, to Persia, and to the Red Sea. He is supposed to have learned from Leucippus and from Anaxagoras and from Philolaus. In a fragment of uncertain authenticity he allegedly writes:

I came to Athens and no-one knew me.
(Diogenes Laertius, Lives of the Philosophers II 16 = 68B116)

For Democritus’ most celebrated doctrine, his atomism, we are obliged to rely on second-hand reports.

If the same atoms endure, being impassive, it is clear that [the Democriteans] too will say that the worlds are altered rather than destroyed — just as Empedocles and Heraclitus seem to think. An extract from Aristotle’s work On Democritus will show what the view of these men was:

Democritus thinks that the nature of eternal things consists in small substances, infinite in quantity, and for them he posits[suggests] a place, distinct from them and infinite in extent. He calls place by the names ‘void’, ‘nothing’ and ‘infinite’; and each of the substances he calls ‘thing’, ‘solid’ and ‘being’. He thinks that the substances are so small that they escape our senses, and that they possess all sorts of forms and all sorts of shapes and differences in magnitude. From them, as from elements, he was able to generate and compound visible and perceptible bodies. The atoms struggle and are carried about in the void because of their dissimilarities and the other differences mentioned, and as they are carried about they collide and are bound together in a binding which makes them touch and be contiguous with one another but
which does not genuinely produce any other single nature whatever from them; for it is utterly silly to think that two or more things could ever become one. He explains how the substances remain together in terms of the ways in which the bodies entangle with and grasp hold of one another; for some of them are uneven, some hooked, some concave, some convex, and others have innumerable other differences. So he thinks that they hold on to one another and remain together up to the time when some stronger force reaches them from their environment and shakes them and scatters them apart. He speaks of generation and of its contrary, dissolution, not only in connection with animals but also in connection with plants and worlds – and in general with all perceptible bodies.

[Aristotle, fragment 208] (Simplicius, Commentary on On the Heavens 294.30-295*22)

The excerpt from Aristotle’s lost essay on Democritus can be supplemented from his extant Metaphysics:

Leucippus and his colleague Democritus say that the full and the void are elements, calling the one ‘being’ and the other ‘non-being’; and of these the full and solid is being, the void non-being (that is why they say that being no more exists than non-being – because void no more exists than body), and these are the material causes of the things that exist. And just as those who make the underlying substance single generate other things by its properties, making the rare and the dense origins of the properties, so these men say that the differences among the atoms are the causes of the other things. They say that the differences are three in number – shape, order, and position. For they say that beings differ only by ‘rhythm’, ‘contact’ and ‘mode’ - where rhythm is shape, contact is order and mode is position. The letter A differs from N in shape; AN differs from NA in order; and N differs from Z in position. As for motion (whence and how existing things acquire it), they too, like the others, negligently omitted to inquire into it.

(Aristotle, Metaphysics g85b4-20)

Aristotle’s final remark is echoed by Simplicius:

Democritus too, when he says that a whirl of every kind of forms was separated off from the whole [B 167] but does not say how and by what cause, seems to generate it spontaneously and by chance.

(Simplicius, Commentary on the Physics 327.23-26)

The most important text is found in Sextus Empiricus. It contains most of the fragments which bear on the issue.

Democritus sometimes does away with what appears to the senses and says that nothing of this sort appears in truth but only in opinion, truth among the things that exist lying in the fact that there are atoms and void. For he says:

By convention sweet and by convention bitter, by convention hot, by convention cold, by convention colour: in reality atoms and void. [cf B 125]

That is to say, objects of perception are thought and believed to exist but they do not exist in truth – only atoms and void do.

In his Buttresses, although he undertakes to ascribe reliable power to the senses, he is found nonetheless condemning them. For he says:

We in reality know nothing firmly but only as it changes in accordance with the condition of the body and of the things which enter it and of the things which resist it. [B 9]

And again he says:

That in reality we do not know how each thing is or is not has been shown in many ways. [B 10]

And in On Ideas he says:

And a man must recognize by this rule that he is removed from reality; [B 6]

and again:

This argument too shows that in reality we know nothing about anything, but our belief in each case is a changing of shape; [B 7]

and again:

Yet it will be clear that to know how each thing is in reality is a puzzle. [B 8]

Now in these passages he does away in effect with all knowledge, even if it is only the senses which he explicitly attacks. But in the Rules he says that there are two forms of knowledge, one by way of the senses and the other by way of the understanding. The one by way of the understanding he calls genuine, ascribing reliability to it with regard to the discrimination of truth; the one by way of the senses he names dark, denying that it is unerring with regard to the discernment of what is true. These are his words:

There are two forms of knowledge, one genuine and the other dark. To the dark belong all these: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch. The dark, separated from this <...>. [B 11a]

[…] So according to Democritus, reason, which he calls genuine knowledge, is the standard of truth.

(Sextus Empiricus, Against the Mathematicians VII 135-140)

Diogenes Laertius expresses the same sequence of thoughts more briefly:

According to some, Xenophanes and Zeno of Elea and Democritus were sceptics . . . Democritus, who does away with qualities where he says:

By convention hot, by convention cold: in reality atoms and void [cf B125]

And again:

In reality we know nothing – for truth is in the depths. [B 117]

(Diogenes Laertius, Lives of the Philosophers IX 72)
Euthyphro (c. 380 BCE)

PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE:
SOCRATES
EUTHYPHRO

SCENE: The Porch of the King Archon

[Plato] Why have you left the Lyceum, Socrates? and what are you doing in the Porch of the King Archon? Surely you cannot be concerned in a suit before the King, like myself?

[Socrates] Not in a suit, Euthyphro; impeachment is the word which the Athenians use.

[Euth.] Then some one else has been prosecuting you?

[Socrates] Yes.

[Euth.] What is the charge which he brings against you?

[Socrates] He says he knows how the youth are corrupted and who are their corruptors. . . . He must be a wise man, and seeing that I am the reverse of a wise man, he has found me out, and is going to accuse me of corrupting his young friends. And of this our mother the state is to be the judge. . . .

[Euth.] In what way does he say that you corrupt the young?

[Socrates] He brings a wonderful accusation against me, which at first hearing excites surprise: he says that I am a . . . maker of gods, and that I invent new gods and deny the existence of old ones . . .

[Euth.] I understand . . . He knows that such a charge is readily received by the world, as I myself know too well; for when I speak in the assembly about divine things, and foretell the future to them, they laugh at me and think me a madman. Yet every word that I say is true. But they are jealous of us all; and we must be brave and go at them. . . .

[Socrates] And what is your suit, Euthyphro? are you the pursuer or the defendant?

[Euth.] I am the pursuer. . . . [Of] my father.

[Socrates] Your father! my good man? . . . Of what is he accused?

[Euth.] Of murder, Socrates.

[Socrates] By the powers, Euthyphro! . . . I suppose that the man whom your father murdered was one of your relatives—clearly he was; for if he had been a stranger you would never have thought of prosecuting him.

[Euth.] I am amused, Socrates, at your making a distinction between one who is a relation and one who is not a relation; for surely the pollution is the same in either case, if you knowingly associate with the murderer when you ought to clear yourself and him by proceeding against him. The real question is whether the murdered man has been justly slain. If justly, then your duty is to let the matter alone; but if unjustly, then even if the murderer lives under the same roof with you and eats at the same table, proceed against him. Now the man who is dead was a poor dependent of mine who worked for us as a field labourer on our farm . . . and one day in a fit of drunken passion he got into a quarrel with one of our domestic servants and slew him. My father bound him hand and foot and threw him into a ditch, and then sent to Athens to ask of a diviner what he should do with him. Meanwhile he never attended to him and took no care about him, for he regarded him as a murderer; and thought that no great harm would be done even if he did die. Now this was just what happened. For such was the effect of cold and hunger and chains upon him, that before the messenger returned from the diviner, he was dead. And my father and family are angry with me for taking the part of the murderer and prosecuting my father. They say that he did not kill him, and that if he did, dead man was but a murderer, and I ought not to take any notice, for that a son is impious who prosecutes a father. Which shows, Socrates, how little they know what the gods think about piety and impiety.

[Socrates] Good heavens, Euthyphro! and is your knowledge of religion and of things pious and impious so very exact, that, supposing the circumstances to be as you state them, you are not afraid lest you too may be doing an impious thing in bringing an action against your father?

[Euth.] The best of Euthyphro, and that which distinguishes him, Socrates, from other men, is his exact knowledge of all such matters. What should I be good for without it?

1 Lyceum: the garden at Athens in which Aristotle taught philosophy.
[Soc.] Rare friend! I think that I cannot do better than be your disciple. Then before the trial with Meletus comes on I shall challenge him. You, Meletus, as I shall say to him, acknowledge Euthyphro to be a great theologian, and sound in his opinions; and if you approve of him you ought to approve of me. Tell me the nature of piety and impiety, which you said that you knew so well, and of murder, and of other offences against the gods. What are they? Is not piety in every action always the same? and impiety, again—is it not always the opposite of piety, and also the same with itself, having, as impiety, one notion which includes whatever is impious?

[Euth.] To be sure, Socrates.

[Soc.] And what is piety, and what is impiety?

[Euth.] Piety is doing as I am doing; that is to say, prosecuting any one who is guilty of murder, sacrilege, or of any similar crime—whether he be your father or mother, or whoever he may be—that makes no difference; and not to prosecute them is impiety. And please to consider, Socrates, what a notable proof I will give you of the truth of my words, a proof which I have already given to others:—of the principle, I mean, that the impious, whoever he may be, ought not to go unpunished. For do not men regard Zeus as the best and most righteous of the gods?—and yet they admit that he bound his father (Cronos) because he wickedly devoured his sons, and that he too had punished his own father (Uranus) for a similar reason, in a nameless manner.

[Soc.] I cannot do better than assent to your superior wisdom. What else can I say, confessing as I do, that I know nothing about them? Do you really believe that the gods, fought with one another, and had dire quarrels, battles, and the like? Are all these tales of the gods true, Euthyphro?

[Euth.] Yes, Socrates; and many other things about the gods which would quite amaze you.

[Soc.] I dare say; I would rather hear from you a more precise answer, which you have not as yet given, my friend, to the question, What is “piety”? When asked, you only replied, Doing as you do, charging your father with murder.

[Euth.] And what I said was true, Socrates.

[Soc.] No doubt, Euthyphro; but you would admit that there are many other pious acts?

[Euth.] There are.

[Soc.] Remember that I did not ask you to give me two or three examples of piety, but to explain the general idea which makes all pious things to be pious. Do you not recollect that there was one idea which made the impious impious, and the pious pious?

[Euth.] I was . . .

[Soc.] And further, Euthyphro, the gods were admitted to have enmities and hatreds and differences?

[Euth.] Yes, that was also said.

[Soc.] And what sort of difference creates enmity and anger? Suppose for example that you and I, my good friend, differ about a number; do differences of this sort make us enemies and set us at variance with one another? Do we not go at once to arithmetic, and put an end to them by a sum?

[Euth.] True . . .

[Soc.] But what differences are there which cannot be thus decided, and which therefore make us angry and set us at enmity with one another? I will suggest that these enmities arise when the matters of difference are the just and unjust, good and evil, honourable and dishonourable. Are not these the points about which men differ . . .?

[Euth.] Yes, Socrates, the nature of the differences about which we quarrel is such as you describe.

[Soc.] And the quarrels of the gods, noble Euthyphro, when they occur, are of a like nature?

[Euth.] Certainly they are.

[Soc.] They have differences of opinion, as you say, about good and evil, just and unjust, honourable and dishonourable: there would have been no quarrels among them, if there had been no such differences—would there now? Then the same things are hated by the gods and loved by the gods, and are both hateful and dear to them?

[Euth.] True.

[Soc.] And upon this view the same things, Euthyphro, will be pious and also impious?

[Euth.] So I should suppose. But I believe, Socrates, that all the gods would be agreed . . . of punishing a

Euthypho 109
murderer: there would be no difference of opinion about that.

[Soc.] Well, but speaking of men, Euthyphro, did you ever hear any one arguing that a murderer or any sort of evil-doer ought to be let off? . . . Do they admit their guilt, Euthyphro, and yet say that they ought not to be punished?

[Euth.] No; they do not.

[Soc.] Then there are some things which they do not venture to say and do: for they do not venture to argue that the guilty are to be unpunished, but they deny their guilt, do they not?

[Euth.] Yes.

[Soc.] Then they do not argue that the evil-doer should not be punished, but they argue about the fact of who the evil-doer is, and what he did and when?

[Euth.] True.

[Soc.] And the gods are in the same case, if as you assert they quarrel about just and unjust, and some of them say while others deny that injustice is done among them. For surely neither God nor man will ever venture to say that the doer of injustice is not to be punished?

[Euth.] That is true, Socrates, in the main.

[Soc.] But they join issue about the particulars—gods and men alike; and, if they dispute at all, they dispute about some act which is called in question, and which by some is affirmed to be just, by others to be unjust. Is not that true?

[Euth.] Quite true.

[Soc.] Well then, . . . what proof have you that in the opinion of all the gods a servant who is guilty of murder, and is put in chains by the master of the dead man, and dies because he is put in chains before he who bound him can learn from the interpreters of the gods what he ought to do with him, dies unjustly; and that on behalf of such an one a son ought to proceed against his father and accuse him of murder. How would you show that all the gods absolutely agree in approving of his act? . . .

[Euth.] It will be a difficult task; but I could make the matter very dear indeed to you. . . .

[Soc.] There was a notion that came into my mind while you were speaking; I said to myself: "Well, and what if Euthyphro does prove to me that all the gods regarded the death of the servile slave as unjust, how do I know anything more of the nature of piety and impiety? for granting that this action may be hateful to the gods, still piety and impiety are not adequately defined by these distinctions, for that which is hateful to the gods has been shown to be also pleasing and dear to them." And therefore, Euthyphro, I do not ask you to prove this; I will suppose, if you like, that all the gods condemn and abominate such an action. But I will amend the definition so far as to say that what all the gods hate is impious, and what they love pious or holy; and what some of them love and others hate is both or neither. Shall this be our definition of piety and impiety?


[Soc.] The point which I should first wish to understand is whether the pious or holy is beloved by the gods because it is holy, or holy because it is beloved of the gods.

[Euth.] I do not understand your meaning, Socrates.

[Soc.] I will endeavour to explain . . . Is not piety, according to your definition, loved by all the gods?

[Euth.] Yes.

[Soc.] Because it is pious or holy, or for some other reason?

[Euth.] No, that is the reason.

[Soc.] It is loved because it is holy, not holy because it is loved?

[Euth.] Yes.

[Soc.] And that which is dear to the gods is loved by them, and is in a state to be loved of them because it is loved of them?

[Euth.] Certainly.

[Soc.] Then that which is dear to the gods, Euthyphro, is not holy, nor is that which is holy loved of God, as you affirm; but they are two different things.

[Euth.] How do you mean, Socrates?

[Soc.] I mean to say that the holy has been acknowledge by us to be loved of God because it is holy, not to be holy because it is loved.

[Euth.] Yes.

[Soc.] But that which is dear to the gods is dear to them because it is loved by them, not loved by them because it is dear to them.

[Euth.] True.

[Soc.] But, friend Euthyphro, if that which is holy is the same with that which is dear to God, and is loved because it is holy, then that which is dear to God would have been
loved as being dear to God; but if that which dear to God
is dear to him because loved by him, then that which is
holy would have been holy because loved by him. But
now you see that the reverse is the case, and that they are
quite different from one another. For one is of a kind to be
loved cause it is loved, and the other is loved because it is
of a kind to be loved. Thus you appear to me, Euthyphro,
when I ask you what is the essence of holiness, to offer an
attribute only, and not the essence—the attribute of being
loved by all the gods. But you still refuse to explain to me
the nature of holiness. And therefore, if you please, I will
ask you not to hide your treasure, but to tell me once more
what holiness or piety really is. . .

[Euth.] I really do not know, Socrates, how to express
what I mean. For somehow or other our arguments, on
whatever ground we rest them, seem to turn round and
walk away from us. . .

[Soc.] As I perceive that you are lazy, I will myself
endeavor to show you how you might instruct me in the
nature of piety; and I hope that you will not grudge your
labour. Tell me, then—Is not that which is pious
necessarily just?

[Euth.] Yes.

[Soc.] And is, then, all which is just pious? or, is that
which is pious all just, but that which is just, only in part
and not all, pious?

[Euth.] I do not understand you, Socrates. . .

[Soc.] I asked whether the just is always the pious, or the
pious always the just; and whether there may not be
justice where there is not piety; for justice is the more
extended notion of which piety is only a part. Do you
dissent? . . .

[Euth.] Piety or holiness, Socrates, appears to me to be
that part of justice which attends to the gods, as there is
the other part of justice which attends to men.

[Soc.] That is good, Euthyphro; yet still there is a little
point about which I should like to have further
information, What is the meaning of "attention"? . . . Is not
attention always designed for the good or benefit of that
to which the attention is given? As in the case of horses,
you may observe that when attended to by the horseman's
art they are benefited and improved, are they not?

[Euth.] True. . .

[Soc.] And does piety or holiness, which has been defined
to be the art of attending to the gods, benefit or improve
them? Would you say that when you do a holy act you
make any of the gods better?

[Euth.] No, no; that was certainly not what I meant. . .

[Soc.] Good: but I must still ask what is this attention to
the gods which is called piety?

[Euth.] It is such, Socrates, as servants show to their masters.

[Soc.] I understand—a sort of ministration to the gods.

[Euth.] Exactly.

[Soc.] Medicine is also a sort of ministration or service,
having in view the attainment of some object—would you
not say of health?

[Euth.] I should. . .

[Soc.] And now tell me, my good friend, about the art
which ministers to the gods: what work does that help to
accomplish? . . .

[Euth.] Many and fair . . . are the works which they do. . .

[Soc.] And of the many and fair things done by the gods,
which is the chief or principal one?

[Euth.] I have told you already, Socrates, that to learn all
these things accurately will be very tiresome. Let me
simply say that piety or holiness is learning, how to please
the gods in word and deed, by prayers and sacrifices.
Such piety, is the salvation of families and states, just as
the impious, which is unpleasing to the gods, is their ruin
and destruction. . . .

[Soc.] What is the pious, and what is piety? Do you mean
that they are a sort of science of praying and sacrificing?

[Euth.] Yes, I do.

[Soc.] And sacrificing is giving to the gods, and prayer is
asking of the gods?

[Euth.] Yes, Socrates.

[Soc.] Upon this view, then piety is a science of asking
and giving?

[Euth.] You understand me capitally, Socrates. . .

[Soc.] Is not the right way of asking to ask of them what
we want?

[Euth.] Certainly.

[Soc.] And the right way of giving is to give to them in
return what they want of us. There would be no, in an art
which gives to any one that which he does not want.

[Euth.] Very true, Socrates.
[Soc.] Then piety, Euthyphro, is an art which gods and men have of doing business with one another?

[Euth.] That is an expression which you may use, if you like.

[Soc.] But I have no particular liking for anything but the truth. I wish, however, that you would tell me what benefit accrues to the gods from our gifts. There is no doubt about what they give to us; for there is no good thing which they do not give; but how we can give any good thing to them in return is far from being equally clear. If they give everything and we give nothing, that must be an affair of business in which we have very greatly the advantage of them.

[Euth.] And do you imagine, Socrates, that any benefit accrues to the gods from our gifts?

[Soc.] But if not, Euthyphro, what is the meaning of gifts which are conferred by us upon the gods?

[Euth.] What else, but tributes of honour; and, as I was just now saying, what pleases them?

[Soc.] Piety, then, is pleasing to the gods, but not beneficial or dear to them?

[Euth.] I should say that nothing could be dearer.

[Soc.] Then once more the assertion is repeated that piety is dear to the gods? . . . Were we not saying that the holy or pious was not the same with that which is loved of the gods? Have you forgotten?

[Euth.] I quite remember.

[Soc.] And are you not saying that what is loved of the gods is holy; and is not this the same as what is dear to them—do you see?

[Euth.] True.

[Soc.] Then either we were wrong in former assertion; or, if we were right then, we are wrong now.

[Euth.] One of the two must be true.

[Soc.] Then we must begin again and ask, What is piety? That is an enquiry which I shall never be weary of pursuing as far as in me lies; and I entreat you not to scorn me, but to apply your mind to the utmost, and tell me the truth. For, if any man knows, you are he; and therefore I must detain you, like Proteus, until you tell. If you had not certainly known the nature of piety and impiety, I am confident that you would never, on behalf of a serf, have charged your aged father with murder. . . . Speak out then, my dear Euthyphro, and do not hide your knowledge.

[Euth.] Another time, Socrates; for I am in a hurry, and must go now. . . .
Apology (c. 380 BCE)


PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE:

SOCRATES

MELETUS

SCENE: The Trial of Socrates.

How you have felt, O men of Athens, at hearing the speeches of my accusers, I cannot tell; but I know that their persuasive words almost made me forget who I was ... and yet they have hardly spoken a word of truth. But many as their falsehoods were ... when they told you to be upon your guard, and not to let yourselves be deceived by the force of my eloquence. They ought to have been ashamed of saying this, because they were sure to be detected as soon as I opened my lips and displayed my deficiency; ... You shall hear from me the whole truth: not, however, delivered after their manner, in a set oration speech duly ornamented decorated with words and phrases. No indeed! but I shall use the words and arguments which occur to me at the moment; ... I am more than seventy years of age, and this is the first time that I have ever appeared in a court of law, and I am quite a stranger to the ways of the place ... Never mind the manner, ... let the judge decide justly and the speaker speak truly.

And first, I have to reply to the older charges and to my first accusers, and then I will go to the later ones. ... Far more dangerous are these, who began when you were children, and took possession of your minds with their falsehoods, telling of one Socrates, a wise man, who speculated about the heaven above, and searched into the earth beneath, and made the worse appear the better cause. These are the accusers whom I dread; for they are the circulators of this rumor, ... and their charges against me are of ancient date, and they made them in days when you were impressed - in childhood, or perhaps in youth - ... all these, I say, are most difficult to deal with; for I cannot have them up here, and examine them, and therefore I must simply fight with shadows ... I will ask you then to assume with me, as I was saying, that my opponents are of two kinds - one recent, the other ancient; and I hope that you will see the propriety polite[ness] of my answering the latter second, first, for these accusations you heard long before the others, and much oftener...

I will begin at the beginning, and ask what the accusation is which has given rise to this slander of me, and which has encouraged Meletus to proceed against me. What do the slanderers say? They shall be my prosecutors, and I will sum up their words in an affidavit statement. "Socrates is an evil-doer, and a curious person, who searches into things under the earth and in heaven, and he makes the worse appear the better cause; and he teaches the aforesaid doctrines to others." That is the nature of the accusation, and that is what you have seen yourselves in the comedy of Aristophanes;1 who has introduced a man whom he calls Socrates, going about and saying that he can walk in the air, and talking a deal of nonsense concerning matters of which I do not pretend to know either much or little - not that I mean to say anything disparaging of anyone who is a student of natural philosophy. I should be very sorry if Meletus could lay that to my charge. But the simple truth is, O Athenians, that I have nothing to do with these studies. Very many of those here present are witnesses to the truth of this, and to them I appeal. Speak then, you who have heard me, and tell your neighbors whether any of you have ever known me hold forth in few words or in many upon matters of this sort. ... You hear their answer. And from what they say of this you will be able to judge of the truth of the rest ...

I dare say, Athenians, that someone among you will reply, "Why is this, Socrates, and what is the origin of these accusations of you: for there must have been something strange which you have been doing? All this great fame and talk about you would never have arisen if you had been like other men: tell us, then, why this is, as we should be sorry to judge hastily of you." ... Men of Athens, this reputation of mine has come of a certain sort of wisdom which I possess. If you ask me what kind of wisdom, I reply, such wisdom as is attainable by man, for to that extent I am inclined to believe that I am wise; whereas the persons of whom I was speaking have a superhuman wisdom, which I may fail to describe, because I have it not myself; ... I will refer you to a witness who is worthy of credit, and will tell you about my wisdom - whether I have any, and of what sort - and that witness shall be the god of Delphi. You must have known Chaerephon; he was early a friend of mine, and also a friend of yours, ... and he went to Delphi and boldly asked ... the oracle to tell him whether there was anyone wiser than I was, and the Pythian prophetess answered that there was no man wiser. ...

When I heard the answer, I said to myself, What can the god mean? and what is the interpretation of this riddle? for I know that I have no wisdom, small or great. What can he mean when he says that I am the wisest of men? And yet he is a god and cannot lie; that would be against his nature. After a long consideration, I at last thought of a method of trying the question. I reflected that if I could only find a man wiser than myself, then I might go to the god with a refutation in my hand. I should say to him, "Here is a man who is wiser than I am; but you said

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1 referencing Aristophanes’ play The Clouds, a satire on Socrates’ inquires into the things in the heavens.
that I was the wisest." Accordingly I went to one who had the reputation of wisdom, and observed to him - his name I need not mention; he was a politician whom I selected for examination - and the result was as follows: When I began to talk with him, I could not help thinking that he was not really wise, although he was thought wise by many, and wiser still by himself; and I went and tried to explain to him that he thought himself wise, but was not really wise; and the consequence was that he hated me, and his enmity was shared by several who were present and heard me. So I left him, saying to myself, as I went away: Well, although I do not suppose that either of us knows anything really beautiful and good, I am better off than he is - for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows. I neither know nor think that I know. In this latter particular, then, I seem to have slightly the advantage of him. Then I went to another, who had still higher philosophical pretensions, and my conclusion was exactly the same. I made another enemy of him, and of many others besides him.

After this I went to one man after another, being not unconscious of the enmity which I provoked, and I lamented and feared this: but necessity was laid upon me - the word of God, I thought, ought to be considered first. And I said to myself, Go I must to all who appear to know, and find out the meaning of the oracle. And I swear to you, Athenians, by the dog I swear! - for I must tell you the truth - the result of my mission was just this: I found that the men most in repute were all but the most foolish; and that some inferior men were really wiser and better.

This investigation has led to my having many enemies of the worst and most dangerous kind, and has given occasion also to many calumnies, and I am called wise, for my hearers always imagine that I myself possess the wisdom which I find wanting in others: but the truth is, O men of Athens, that God only is wise; and in this oracle he means to say that the wisdom of men is little or nothing; he is not speaking of Socrates, he is only using my name as an illustration, as if he said, He, O men, is the wisest, who, like Socrates, knows that his wisdom is in truth worth nothing. And so I go my way, obedient to the god, and make inquisition into the wisdom of anyone, whether citizen or stranger, who appears to be wise; and if he is not wise, then in vindication of the oracle I show him that he is not wise; and this occupation quite absorbs me, and I have no time to give either to any public matter of interest or to any concern of my own, but I am in utter poverty by reason of my devotion to the god.

There is another thing: - young men of the richer classes, who have not much to do, come about me of their own accord; they like to hear the pretenders examined, and they often imitate me, and examine others themselves; there are plenty of persons, as they soon enough discover, who think that they know something, but really know little or nothing: and then those who are examined by them instead of being angry with themselves are angry with me: This confounded Socrates, they say; this villainous misleader of youth! - and then if somebody asks them, Why, what evil does he practise or teach? they do not know, and cannot tell; but in order that they may not appear to be at a loss, they repeat the ready-made charges which are used against all philosophers about teaching things up in the clouds and under the earth, and having no gods, and making the worse appear the better cause; for they do not like to confess that their pretence of knowledge has been detected - which is the truth: and as they are numerous and ambitious and energetic, and are all in battle array and have persuasive tongues, they have filled your ears with their loud and inveterate calumnies . . . .

I have said enough in my defence against the first class of my accusers; I turn to the second class, who are headed by Meletus, that good and patriotic man, as he calls himself. And now I will try to defend myself against them: these new accusers must also have their affidavit read. What do they say? Something of this sort: - That Socrates is a doer of evil, and corrupter of the youth, and he does not believe in the gods of the state, and has other new divinities of his own. That is the sort of charge; and now let us examine the particular counts. He says that I am a doer of evil, who corrupt the youth . . .

Meletus, and let me ask a question of you. . . .

Which is better, to live among bad citizens, or among good ones? Answer, friend, I say; for that is a question which may be easily answered. Do not the good do their neighbors good, and the bad do them evil?

[Meletus] Certainly.

[Socrates] And is there anyone who would rather be injured than benefited by those who live with him? . . . Does anyone like to be injured?

[Meletus] Certainly not.

[Socrates] And when you accuse me of corrupting and deteriorating the youth, do you allege that I corrupt them intentionally or unintentionally?

[Meletus] Intentionally, I say.

[Socrates] But you have just admitted that the good do their neighbors good, and the evil do them evil. Now is that a truth which your superior wisdom has recognized thus early in life, and am I, at my age, in such darkness and ignorance as not to know that if a man with whom I have to live is corrupted by me, I am very likely to be harmed by him, and yet I corrupt him, and intentionally, too; - that is what you are saying, and of that you will never persuade me or any other human being. But either I do not corrupt them, or I corrupt them unintentionally, so that on either view of the case you lie, . . .

But still I should like to know, Meletus, in what I am affirmed to corrupt the young. I suppose you mean, as I infer from your indictment, that I teach them not to
acknowledge the gods which the state acknowledges, but some other new divinities[gods] or spiritual agencies in their stead[place]. These are the lessons which corrupt the youth, as you say.

[Meletus] Yes, that I say emphatically. . . .

[Socrates] I do not as yet understand whether you affirm[claim] that I teach others to acknowledge some gods, and therefore do believe in gods and am not an entire atheist - this you do not lay to my charge; but only that they are not the same gods which the city recognizes - the charge is that they are different gods. Or, do you mean to say that I am an atheist simply, and a teacher of atheism?

[Meletus] I mean the latter—that you are a complete atheist. . . .

[Socrates] Can a man believe in spiritual and divine agencies, and not in spirits or demigods?

[Meletus] He cannot. . . .

[Socrates] You swear in the indictment that I teach and believe in divine or spiritual agencies (new or old, no matter for that); at any rate, I believe in spiritual agencies, as you say and swear in the affidavit; but if I believe in divine beings, I must believe in spirits or demigods; - is not that true? . . . you say first that I don't believe in gods, and then again that I do believe in gods; . . . Such nonsense, Meletus, could only have been intended by you as a trial of me. You have put this into the indictment because you had nothing real of which to accuse me. . . .

I have said enough in answer to the charge of Meletus: any elaborate defence is unnecessary; but as I was saying before, I certainly have many enemies, and this is what will be my destruction if I am destroyed; of that I am certain; - not Meletus, nor yet Anytus, but the envy and detraction of the world, which has been the death of many good men, and will probably be the death of many more. . . .

Someone will say: And are you not ashamed, Socrates, of a course of life which is likely to bring you to an untimely end? To him I may fairly answer: There you are mistaken: a man who is good for anything ought not to calculate the chance of living or dying; he ought only to consider whether in doing anything he is doing right or wrong - acting the part of a good man or of a bad. . . . Had Achilles any thought of death and danger? For whatever a man's place is, whether the place which he has chosen or that in which he has been placed by a commander, there he ought to remain in the hour of danger; he should not think of death or of anything, but of disgrace. And this, O men of Athens, is a true saying.

Strange, indeed, would be my conduct[behavior]. O men of Athens, if I who, when I was ordered by the generals whom you chose to command me at Potidaea and Amphipolis and Delium, remained where they placed me, like any other man, facing death; if, I say, now, when, as I conceive and imagine, God orders me to fulfil the philosopher's mission of searching into myself and other men, I were to desert my post through fear of death, or any other fear; that would indeed be strange, and I might justly be arraigned in court for denying the existence of the gods, if I disobeyed the oracle because I was afraid of death: then I should be fancying that I was wise when I was not wise. For this fear of death is indeed the pretence[false claim] of wisdom, and not real wisdom, being the appearance of knowing the unknown; since no one knows whether death, which they in their fear apprehend[grasp] to be the greatest evil, may not be the greatest good. Is there not here conceit[vanity] of knowledge, which is a disgraceful sort of ignorance? And this is the point in which, as I think, I am superior to men in general, and in which I might perhaps fancy myself wiser than other men, - that whereas I know but little of the world below, I do not suppose that I know: but I do know that injustice and disobedience to a better, whether God or man, is evil and dishonorable, and I will never fear or avoid a possible good rather than a certain evil. And therefore if you let me go now, and . . . say to me, Socrates, this time we will . . . let you off, but upon one condition, that you are not to inquire and speculate in this way any more, and that if you are caught doing this again you shall die; - if this was the condition on which you let me go, I should reply: Men of Athens, I honor and love you; but I shall obey God rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease[stop] from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting[dress] anyone whom I meet after my manner, and convincing him, saying: O my friend, why do you who are a citizen of the great and mighty and wise city of Athens, care so much about laying up the greatest amount of money and honor and reputation, and so little about wisdom and truth and the greatest improvement of the soul, which you never regard or heed at all? Are you not ashamed of this? And if the person with whom I am arguing says: Yes, but I do care; I do not depart or let him go at once; I interrogate and examine and cross-examine him, and if I think that he has no virtue, but only says that he has, I reproach[accuse] him with undervaluing the greater, and overvaluing the less. And this I should say to everyone whom I meet, young and old, citizen and alien, but especially to the citizens, inasmuch as they are my brethren[brothers]. For this is the command of God, as I would have you know; and I believe that to this day no greater good has ever happened in the state than my service to the God. For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons[body] and your properties[wealth] but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul. I tell you that virtue[goodness] is not given by money, but that from virtue come money and every other good of man, public as well as private. . . . Wherefore[Therefore], O men of Athens, I say to you, do as Anytus bids or not as Anytus bids, and either acquit me or not; but whatever you do, know that I shall never alter my ways, not even if I have to die many times. . . .
If you kill such a one as I am, you will injure yourselves more than you will injure me. Meletus and Anytus will not injure me: they cannot; for it is not in the nature of things that a bad man should injure a better than himself. . . . For if you kill me you will not easily find another like me . . . I am that gadfly which God has given the state and all day long and in all places am always fastening upon you, arousing and persuading and reproaching you. And as you will not easily find another like me, I would advise you to spare me. . . .

[The jury finds Socrates guilty by 281 votes to 220.]

There are many reasons why I am not grieved, O men of Athens, at the vote of condemnation. I expected it, and am only surprised that the votes are so nearly equal; . . .

And so he proposes death as the penalty. And what shall I propose on my part, O men of Athens? . . .

Shall I say imprisonment? And why should I live in prison, and be the slave . . . ? Or shall the penalty be a fine, . . . for money I have none, and I cannot pay. And if I say exile . . . , I must indeed be blinded . . . if I were to consider that when you, who are my own citizens, cannot endure my discourses and words, and have found them so grievous and odious that you would fain have done with them, others are likely to endure me. No, indeed, men of Athens, that is not very likely. And what a life should I lead, at my age, wandering from city to city, living in ever-changing exile, and always being driven out! For I am quite sure that into whatever place I go, as here so also there, the young men will come to me; and if I drive them away, their elders will drive me out at their desire: and if I let them come, their fathers and friends will drive me out for their sakes.

Someone will say: Yes, Socrates, but cannot you hold your tongue, and then you may go into a foreign city, and no one will interfere with you? . . . This would be a disobedience to a divine command, and . . . the greatest good of man is daily to converse about virtue, and all that concerning which you hear me examining myself and others, and that the unexamined life is not worth living...

[The jury condemns Socrates to death.]

Not much time will be gained, O Athenians, in return for the evil name which you will get from the detractors of the city, who will say that you killed Socrates, a wise man; for they will call me wise even although I am not wise when they want to reproach you. If you had waited a little while, your desire would have been fulfilled in the course of nature. For I am far advanced in years, as you may perceive, and not far from death. I am speaking now only to those of you who have condemned me to death. . . . I had not the boldness or impudence or inclination to address you as you would have liked me to address you, weeping and wailing and lamenting, and saying and doing many things which you have been accustomed to hear from others, and which, as I say, are unworthy of me. . . . I would rather die having spoken after my manner, than speak in your manner and live. For neither in war nor yet at law ought any man to use every way of escaping death. For often in battle there is no doubt that if a man will throw away his arms, and fall on his knees before his pursuers, he may escape death; and in other dangers there are other ways of escaping death, if a man is willing to say and do anything. The difficulty, my friends, is not in avoiding death, but in avoiding unrighteousness; for that runs faster than death. . . . And now I depart hence condemned by you to suffer the penalty of death, and they, too, go their ways condemned by the truth to suffer the penalty of villainy and wrong; . . . And now, O men who have condemned me, I would fain prophesy to you; . . . that immediately after my death punishment far heavier than you have inflicted on me will surely await you. . . . For I say that there will be more accusers of you than there are now; accusers whom hitherto I have restrained: and as they are younger they will be more severe with you, and you will be more offended at them. For if you think that by killing men you can avoid the accuser cursing your lives, you are mistaken; that is not a way of escape which is either possible or honorable; the easiest and noblest way is not to be crushing others, but to be improving yourselves. This is the prophecy which I utter before my departure, to the judges who have condemned me.

Friends, who would have acquitted me, I would like also to talk with you about this thing which has happened, while the magistrates are busy, and before I go to the place at which I must die. Stay then awhile, for we may as well talk with one another while there is time. You are my friends, and I should like to show you the meaning of this event which has happened to me. . . . What has happened to me is a good, and that those of us who think that death is an evil are in error. . . .

Let us reflect . . . we shall see that there is great reason to hope that death is a good, for one of two things: - either death is a state of nothingness and utter unconsciousness, or, as men say, there is a change and migration of the soul from this world to another. Now if you suppose that there is no consciousness, but a sleep like the sleep of him who is undisturbed even by the sight of dreams, death will be an unspeakable gain. . . . But if death is the journey to another place, and there, as men say, all the dead are, what good, O my friends and judges, can be greater than this? If indeed when the pilgrim arrives in the world below, he is delivered from the professors of justice in this world, and finds the true judges . . . . What would not a man give if he might converse with . . . heroes of old . . . . Above all, I shall be able to continue my search into true and false knowledge; as in this world, so also in that; I shall find out who is wise, and who pretends to be wise, and is not. . . . Wherefore, O judges, be of good cheer about death, and know this of a truth - that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death. . . .

The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways - I to die, and you to live. Which is better God only knows.
Crito (c. 360 BCE)


PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE:

SOCRATES
CRITO

SCENE: The Prison of Socrates.

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Socrates: Why have you come at this hour, Crito? it must be quite early.

Crito: Yes, certainly. . . . The dawn is breaking.

Socrates: I wonder that the keeper of the prison would let you in.

Crito: He knows me because I often come, Socrates; moreover. I have done him a kindness[i.e. bribe] . . . I came some time ago. . . . I have been watching with amazement your peaceful slumbers; and for that reason I did not awake you, because I wished to minimize the pain. I have always thought you to be of a happy disposition; but never did I see anything like the very calm manner in which you bear this calamity[tragedy] . . .

Socrates: You have not told me why you come at this early hour.

Crito: I come to bring you a message which is sad and painful; not, as I believe, to yourself, but to all of us who are your friends, and saddest of all to me.

Socrates: What? Has the ship come from Delos, on the arrival of which I am to die?

Crito: No, the ship has not actually arrived, but she will probably be here to-day . . . ; and therefore to-morrow, Socrates, will be the last day of your life.

Socrates: Very well, Crito; if such is the will of God . . .

Crito: But, oh! my beloved Socrates, let me entreat[beg] you once more to take my advice and escape. For if you die I shall not only lose a friend who can never be replaced, but there is another evil: people who do not know you and me will believe that I might have saved you if I had been willing to give money, but that I did not care. Now, can there be a worse disgrace than this--that I should be thought to value money more than the life of a friend? For the many will not be persuaded that I wanted you to escape, and that you refused.

Socrates: But why, my dear Crito, should we care about the opinion of the many? Good men, and they are the only persons who are worth considering, will think of these things truly as they occurred.

Crito: But you see, Socrates, that the opinion of the many must be regarded, for what is now happening shows that they can do the greatest evil to any one who has lost their good opinion.

Socrates: I only wish it were so, Crito; and that the many could do the greatest evil; for then they would also be able to do the greatest good--and what a fine thing this would be! But in reality they can do neither; for they cannot make a man either wise or foolish; and whatever they do is the result of chance.

Crito: Well, I will not dispute with you; but please to tell me, Socrates, whether you are not acting out of regard to me and your other friends: are you not afraid that if you escape from prison we may get into trouble . . ., and lose either the whole or a great part of our property . . .

Socrates: Yes, Crito, that is one fear which you mention, but by no means the only one.

Crito: Fear not--there are persons who are willing to get you out of prison at no great cost; and as for the informers they are far from being exorbitant in their demands--a little money will satisfy them. My means, which are certainly ample, are at your service. . . . and many others are prepared to spend their money in helping you to escape. I say, therefore, do not hesitate on our account, and do not say, as you did in the court, that you will have a difficulty in knowing what to do with yourself anywhere else. For men will love you in other places to which you may go, and not in Athens only; there are friends of mine. . . . who will value and protect you. . . . Nor can I think that you are at all justified, Socrates, in betraying your own life when you might be saved; in acting thus you are playing into the hands of your enemies, who are hurrying on your destruction. And further I should say that you are deserting your own children . . . . But you appear to be choosing the easier part, not the better and manlier, which would have been more becoming in one who professes to care for virtue in all his actions, like yourself. And indeed, I am ashamed not only of you, but of us who are your friends . . .

Socrates: Dear Crito, your zeal[passion] is invaluable, if a right one; but if wrong, the greater the zeal the greater the danger; and therefore we ought to consider whether I shall or shall not do as you say. For I am and always have been one of those natures who must be guided by reason, whatever the reason may be which upon reflection
appears to me to be the best... What will be the fairest way of considering the question? Shall I return to your old argument about the opinions of men?--we were saying that... the opinions of some men are to be regarded, and of other men not to be regarded. ... Tell me then, whether I am right in saying that some opinions, and the opinions of some men only, are to be valued, and that other opinions, and the opinions of other men, are not to be valued. I ask you whether I was right in maintaining this?

Crito: Certainly.

Socrates: The good are to be regarded, and not the bad?
Crito: Yes.

Socrates: And the opinions of the wise are good, and the opinions of the unwise are evil?
Crito: Certainly.

Socrates: And what was said about another matter? Is the pupil who devotes himself to the practice of gymnastics supposed to attend to the praise and blame and opinion of every man, or of one man only--his physician or trainer, whoever he may be?
Crito: Of one man only... .

Socrates: Very good; and is not this true, Crito, of other things which we need not separately enumerate? In questions of just and unjust, fair and foul, good and evil, which are the subjects of our present consultation, ought we to follow the opinion of the many and to fear them; or the opinion of the one man who has understanding? ought we not to fear and reverence him more than all the rest of the world: and if we desert him shall we not destroy and injure that principle in us which may be assumed to be improved by justice and deteriorated by injustice;--there is such a principle?

Crito: Certainly there is, Socrates.

Socrates: Take a parallel instance:--if, acting under the advice of those who have no understanding, we destroy that which is improved by health and is deteriorated by disease, would life be worth having? And that which has been destroyed is--the body? . . . Could we live, having an evil and corrupted body?

Crito: Certainly not.

Socrates: And will life be worth having, if that higher part of man be destroyed, which is improved by justice and depraved by injustice? Do we suppose that principle, whatever it may be in man, which has to do with justice and injustice, to be inferior to the body?

Crito: Certainly not.

Socrates: More honourable than the body?
Crito: Far more.

Socrates: Then, my friend, we must not regard what the many say of us: but what he, the one man who has understanding of just and unjust, will say, and what the truth will say. And therefore you begin in error when you advise that we should regard the opinion of the many about just and unjust, good and evil, honorable and dishonorable.--"Well," some one will say, "but the many can kill us."

Crito: Yes, Socrates; that will clearly be the answer.

Socrates: And it is true; but still I find with surprise that the old argument is unshaken as ever. And I should like to know whether I may say the same of another proposition--that not life, but a good life, is to be chiefly valued?

Crito: Yes, that also remains unshaken.

Socrates: And a good life is equivalent to a just and honorable one--that holds also?
Crito: Yes, it does.

Socrates: From these premisses I proceed to argue the question whether I ought or ought not to try and escape without the consent of the Athenians: and if I am clearly right in escaping, then I will make the attempt; but if not, I will abstain. . . .

Crito: You are right, Socrates; how then shall we proceed?

Socrates: Let us consider the matter together. . . . Shall we insist . . . that injustice is always an evil and dishonour to him who acts unjustly? . . .

Crito: Yes.

Socrates: Then we must do no wrong?
Crito: Certainly not.

Socrates: Nor when injured injure in return, as the many imagine; for we must injure no one at all?
Crito: Clearly not. . . .

Socrates: For doing evil to another is the same as injuring him?
Crito: Very true. . . .

Socrates: Then I will go on to the next point, which may be put in the form of a question:--Ought a man to do what he admits to be right, or ought he to betray the right?
Crito: He ought to do what he thinks right.

Socrates: But if this is true, what is the application? In leaving the prison against the will of the Athenians, do I wrong any? or rather do I not wrong those whom I ought least to wrong? Do I not desert the principles which were acknowledged by us to be just--what do you say?

Crito: I cannot tell, Socrates, for I do not know.

Socrates: Then consider the matter in this way:--Imagine that I [was preparing to run away] . . . and the government come and interrogate me: "Tell us, Socrates," they say; "what are you about? are you not going by an act of yours to overturn us--the laws, and the whole state, as far as in you lies? Do you imagine that a state can subsist[exist] and not be overthrown, in which the decisions of law have no power, but are set aside and trampled upon by individuals?" . . . He will argue that this law should not be set aside; and shall we reply, "Yes; but the state has injured us and given an unjust sentence." Suppose I say that?

Crito: Very good, Socrates.

Socrates: "And was that our agreement with you?" the law would answer; "or were you to abid[accept] by the sentence of the state?" And if I were to express my astonishment at their words, the law would probably add: "Answer, Socrates, . . . what complaint have you to make against us which justifies you in attempting to destroy us and the state? In the first place did we not bring you into existence? Your father married your mother by our aid and begat[born] you. Say whether you have any objection to urge against those of us who regulate marriage?" None, I should reply. "Or against those of us who after birth regulate the nurture and education of children, in which you also were trained? Were not the laws, which have the charge of education, right in commanding your father to train you in music and gymnastic?" Right, I should reply. "Well then, since you were brought into the world and nurtured and educated by us, can you deny in the first place that you are our child and slave, as your fathers were before you? And if this is true you are not on equal terms with us; nor can you think that you have a right to do to us what we are doing to you. Would you have any right to strike or revile[insult] or do any other evil to your father or your master, if you had one, because you have been struck or reviled by him, or received some other evil at his hands?--you would not say this? And because we think right to destroy you, do you think that you have any right to destroy us in return . . . ? Has a philosopher like you failed to discover that our country is more to be valued and higher and holier far than mother or father . . . ? And when we are punished by her, whether with imprisonment or stripes, the punishment is to be endured in silence; . . . he must do what his city and his country order him; or he must change their view of what is just: and if he may do no violence to his father or mother, much less may he do violence to his country." What answer shall we make to this, Crito? Do the laws speak truly, or do they not?

Crito: I think that they do.

Socrates: Then the laws will say: "Consider, Socrates, if we are speaking truly that in your present attempt you are going to do us an injury. For, having brought you into the world, and nurtured and educated you, and given you and every other citizen a share in every good which we had to give, we further proclaim to any Athenian by the liberty which we allow him, that if he does not like us when he has become of age and has seen the ways of the city, and made our acquaintance, he may go where he pleases and take his goods with him. None of us laws will forbid him or interfere with him. Any one who does not like us and the city, and who wants to emigrate to a colony or to any other city, may go where he likes, retaining his property. But he who has experience of the manner in which we order justice and administer the state, and still remains, has entered into an implied contract that he will do as we command him. . . . Are we right in saying that you agreed to be governed according to us in deed, and not in word only? Is that true or not?" How shall we answer, Crito? Must we not assent[agree]?

Crito: We cannot help it, Socrates.

Socrates: Then will they not say: "You, Socrates, are breaking the covenants and agreements which you made with us . . . after you have had seventy years to think of them, during which time you were at liberty to leave the city, if we were not to your mind, or if our covenants appeared to you to be unfair. . . . Socrates, if you will take our advice; do not make yourself ridiculous by escaping out of the city."

"For just consider, if you transgress[dissipate] and err in this sort of way, what good will you do either to yourself or to your friends? That your friends will be driven into exile and deprived of citizenship, or will lose their property, is tolerably certain; and you yourself, if you fly to one of the neighbouring cities . . . will come to them as an enemy, Socrates, and their government will be against you, and all patriotic citizens will cast an evil eye upon you as a subverter[corrupter] of the laws, and you will confirm in the minds of the judges the justice of their own condemnation of you. . . .

This, dear Crito, is the voice which I seem to hear . . . and prevents me from hearing any other. And I know that anything more which you may say will be vain. Yet speak, if you have anything to say.

Crito: I have nothing to say, Socrates.

Socrates: Leave me then, Crito, to fulfil the will of God, and to follow whither he leads.
**Phaedo** (c. 380 BCE)

<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/>.

PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE:

- **PHAEDO**, who is the narrator of the dialogue to  
- **ECHECRATES** of Phlius;  
- **SOCRATES**;  
- **APOLLODORUS**;  
- **SIMMIAS**;  
- **CEBES**;  
- **CRITO**;  
- **ATTENDANT OF THE PRISON**;

SCENE: The Prison of Socrates.

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[Echecrates] Were you yourself, Phaedo, in the prison with Socrates on the day when he drank the poison?

[Phaedo] Yes, Echecrates, I was.

[Ech.] I wish that you would tell me about his death. . .

[Phaed.] I will begin at the beginning, and endeavor to repeat the entire conversation. . .

Why do you say, inquired Cebes, that a man ought not to take his own life, but that the philosopher will be ready to follow the dying? . . . Why is suicide held not to be right? . . . and why, when a man is better dead, he is not permitted to be his own benefactor, but must wait for the hand of another. . . .

I admit the appearance of inconsistency, replied Socrates . . . . There is a doctrine uttered in secret that man is a prisoner who has no right to open the door of his prison and run away; this is a great mystery which I do not quite understand. Yet I, too, believe that the gods are our guardians, and that we are a possession of theirs. Do you not agree?

Yes, I agree to that, said Cebes. . . .

Then there may be reason in saying that a man should wait, and not take his own life until God summons him, as he is now summoning me.

Yes, Socrates, said Cebes, there is surely reason in that. And yet how can you reconcile this seemingly true belief that God is our guardian and we his possessions, with that willingness to die which we were attributing to the philosopher? . . . The wise man will want to be ever with him who is better than himself. Now this, Socrates, is the reverse of what was just now said . . .

Then I must try to make a better impression upon you than I did when defending myself before the judges. For I am quite ready to acknowledge, Simmias and Cebes, that I ought to be grieved at death, if I were not persuaded that I am going to other gods who are wise and good (of this I am as certain as I can be of anything of the sort) . . .; and therefore I do not grieve as I might have done, for I have good hope that there is yet something remaining for the dead, and, as has been said of old, some far better thing for the good than for the evil. . . .

**Should the Philosopher Look Forward to Death?**

He who has lived as a true philosopher has reason to be of good cheer when he is about to die, and that after death he may hope to receive the greatest good in the other world. And how this may be, Simmias and Cebes, I will endeavor to explain. For I deem that the true disciple of philosophy is likely to be misunderstood by other men; they do not perceive that he is ever pursuing death and dying; and if this is true, why, having had the desire of death all his life long, should he repine[mony] at the arrival of that which he has been always pursuing and desiring? . . . Do we believe that there is such a thing as death?

To be sure, replied Simmias.

And is this anything but the separation of soul and body? . . .

Exactly: that and nothing else, he replied. . . .

Do you think that the philosopher ought to care about the pleasures—if they are to be called pleasures—of eating and drinking?

Certainly not, answered Simmias.

And what do you say of the pleasures of love—should he care about them?

By no means.

And will he think much of the other ways of indulging the body? . . .

I should say the true philosopher would despise them.

Would you not say that he is entirely concerned with the soul and not with the body? He would like, as far as he can, to be quit[nd] of the body and turn to the soul.

That is true. . . .

Whereas, Simmias, the rest of the world are of opinion that a life which has no bodily pleasures and no part in them is not worth having; but that he who thinks nothing of bodily pleasures is almost as though he were dead.

That is quite true.

What again shall we say of the actual acquirement of knowledge?—is the body, if invited to share in the inquiry, a hinderer or a helper? I mean to say, have sight and hearing any truth in them? Are they not . . . inaccurate
Are not all things which have opposites generated out of their opposites? I mean such things as good and evil, just and unjust—and there are innumerable other opposites which are generated out of opposites. And I want to show that this holds universally of all opposites; I mean to say, for example, that anything which becomes greater must become greater after being less.

True.

And this holds of all opposites, even though not always expressed in words—they are generated out of one another, and there is a passing or process from one to the other of them?

Very true, he replied.

Well, and is there not an opposite of life, as sleep is the opposite of waking?

True, he said.

And what is that?

Death, he answered.

And these, then, are generated, if they are opposites, the one from the other . . . ?

Of course.

Then the inference is, that our souls are in the world below?

That is true.

Is the Soul Immortal? Opposites Out of Their Opposites

Cebes answered: I agree, Socrates, in the greater part of what you say. But in what relates to the soul, men are apt to be incredulous, they fear that when she leaves the body her place may be nowhere, and that on the very day of death she may be destroyed and perish immediately on her release from the body, vanishing away into nothingness. But much persuasion and many arguments are required in order to prove that when the man is dead the soul yet exists, and has any force of intelligence.

True, Cebes, said Socrates; and shall I suggest that we talk a little of the probabilities of these things?

I am sure, said Cebes, that I should gladly like to know your opinion about them.

Whether the souls of men after death are or are not in the world below, is a question which may be argued in this manner: The ancient doctrine of life and immortality of the soul which I have been speaking affirms that they go from this into the other world, and return here, and are born from the dead. Now if this be true, and the living come from the dead, then our souls must be in the other world, for if not, how could they be born again? And this would be conclusive, if there were any real evidence that the living are only born from the dead; but if there is no evidence of this, then other arguments will have to be adduced.

That is very true, replied Cebes.

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Then the inference is, that our souls are in the world below?

That is true.
Then . . . the living come from the dead, just as the dead come from the living; and if this is true, then the souls of the dead must be in some place out of which they come again. And this, as I think, has been satisfactorily proved.

Yes, Socrates, he said; all this seems to flow necessarily out of our previous admissions.

And . . . If generation were in a straight line only, and there were no . . . circle in nature, no turn or return into one another, then . . . there would be no more generation of them. . . . If all things which partook of life were to die, and after they were dead remained in the form of death, and did not come to life again, all would at last die, and nothing would be alive—how could this be otherwise? . . .

There is no escape from that, Socrates, said Cebes; and I think that what you say is entirely true.

**Does the Soul Exist Prior to Life? Knowledge as Recollection**

Cebes added: Your favorite doctrine, Socrates, that knowledge is simply recollection, if true, also necessarily implies a previous time in which we learned that which we now recollect. But this would be impossible unless our soul was in some place before existing in the human form; here, then, is another argument of the soul's immortality.

But tell me, Cebes, said Simmias, interposing, what proofs are given of this doctrine of recollection? I am not very sure at this moment that I remember them.

One excellent proof, said Cebes, is afforded by questions. If you put a question to a person in a right way, he will give a true answer of himself; but how could he do this unless there were knowledge and right reason already in him? And this is most clearly shown when he is taken to a diagram or to anything of that sort.

But if, said Socrates, you are still incredulous, Simmias, I would ask you whether you may not agree with me when you look at the matter in another way; . . . We should agree, if I am not mistaken, that what a man recollects he must have known at some previous time.

Very true.

And what is the nature of this recollection? And, in asking this, I mean to ask whether, when a person has already seen or heard or in any way perceived anything, and he knows not only that, but something else of which he has not the same, but another knowledge, we may not fairly say that he recollects that which comes into his mind. Are we agreed about that?

What do you mean?

I mean what I may illustrate by the following instance: The knowledge of a lyre is not the same as the knowledge of a man?

True.

And yet what is the feeling of lovers when they recognize a lyre, or a garment, or anything else which the beloved has been in the habit of using? Do not they, from knowing the lyre, form in the mind's eye an image of the youth to whom the lyre belongs? And this is recollection: and in the same way anyone who sees Simmias may remember Cebes; and there are endless other things of the same nature.

Yes, indeed, there are-endless, replied Simmias.

And this sort of thing, he said, is recollection, and is most commonly a process of recovering that which has been forgotten through time and inattention.

Very true, he said. . .

And in all these cases, the recollection may be derived from things either like or unlike?

That is true. . .

And shall we proceed a step further, and affirm that there is such a thing as equality, not of wood with wood, or of stone with stone, but that, over and above this, there is equality in the abstract? Shall we affirm this?

Affirm, yes, and swear to it, replied Simmias, with all the confidence in life.

And do we know the nature of this abstract essence? To be sure, he said.

And whence did we obtain this knowledge? . . . Do not the same pieces of wood or stone appear at one time equal, and at another time unequal?

That is certain.

But are real equals ever unequal? or is the idea of equality ever inequality?

That surely was never yet known, Socrates.

Then these (so-called) equals are not the same with the idea of equality?

I should say, clearly not, Socrates.

And yet from these equals, although differing from the idea of equality, you conceived and attained that idea? Very true, he said. . .

But that makes no difference; whenever from seeing one thing you conceived another, whether like or unlike, there must surely have been an act of recollection?

Very true. . .

But what would you say of equal portions of wood and stone, or other material equals? and what is the impression produced by them? Are they equals in the same sense as absolute equality? or do they fall short of this in a measure?

Yes, he said, in a very great measure, too.

And must we not allow that when I or anyone look at any object, and perceive that the object aims at being some other thing, but falls short of, and cannot attain to it—he who makes this observation must have had previous knowledge of that to which, as he says, the other, although similar, was inferior?

Certainly. . .

Then we must have known absolute equality previously to the time when we first saw the material equals, and reflected that all these apparent equals aim at this absolute equality, but fall short of it?

Then before we began to see or hear or perceive in any way, we must have had a knowledge of absolute equality . . .?

That, Socrates, is certainly to be inferred from the previous statements.

And did we not see and hear and acquire our other
Does the Soul Exist Beyond Death? The Essence of Life

Well, but is Cebes equally satisfied? . . .
I think, said Simmias, that Cebes . . . is convinced of the existence of the soul before birth. But that after death the soul will continue to exist is not yet proven even to my own satisfaction. I cannot get rid of the feeling of the many to which Cebes was referring—the feeling that when the man dies the soul may be scattered, and that this may be the end of her . . .

Must we not, said Socrates, ask ourselves some question of this sort?—What is that which, as we imagine, is liable[likely] to be scattered away, and about which we fear? and what again is that about which we have no fear? And then we may proceed to inquire whether that which suffers dispersion is or is not of the nature of soul . . .

That is true, he said.

Now the compound . . . may be supposed to be naturally capable of being dissolved in like manner as of being compounded; but that which is uncompounded, and that only, must be, if anything is, indissoluble.

Yes; that is what I should imagine, said Cebes.

And the uncompounded may be assumed to be the same and unchanging, where the compound is always changing and never the same?

That I also think, he said.

Then now let us return to the previous discussion. Is that idea or essence, which in the dialectical process we define as essence of true existence—whether essence of equality, beauty, or anything else: are . . . unchanging forms, and not admitting of variation at all, or in any way, or at any time?

They must be always the same, Socrates, replied Cebes.

And what would you say of the many beautiful—whether men or horses or garments or any other things which may be called equal or beautiful—are they . . . almost always changing and hardly ever the same either with themselves or with one another? . . .

They are always in a state of change.

And these you can touch and see and perceive with the senses, but the unchanging things you can only perceive with the mind—they are invisible and are not seen?

That is very true, he said.

Well, then, he added, let us suppose that there are two sorts of existences, one seen, the other unseen. . . . The seen is the changing, and the unseen is the unchanging.

That may be also supposed.

And, further, is not one part of us body, and the rest of us soul?

To be sure. . . .

Then the soul is more like to the unseen, and the body to the seen?

That is most certain, Socrates. . . .

When the soul and the body are united, then nature orders the soul to rule and govern, and the body to obey and serve. Now which of these two functions is akin to the divine? and which to the mortal? . . .

The soul resembles the divine and the body the mortal—there can be no doubt of that, Socrates.

Then reflect, Cebes: is not . . . the soul is in the very likeness of the divine, and immortal, and intelligible, and uniform, and indissoluble, and unchangeable; and the body is in the very likeness of the human, and mortal, and unintelligible, and multiform, and dissoluble, and changeable. Can this, my dear Cebes, be denied?

No, indeed.

But if this is true, then is not the body liable to speedy dissolution? and is not the soul almost or altogether indissoluble?

Certainly. . . .

That soul, I say, herself invisible, departs to the invisible world to the divine and immortal and rational: thither arriving, she lives in bliss and is released from the error and folly of men, their fears and wild passions and all other human ills, and forever dwells, as they say of
the initiated, in company with the gods. Is not this true, Cebes?

Yes, said Cebes, beyond a doubt.

But the soul which has been polluted, and is impure at the time of her departure, and is the companion and servant of the body always, and is in love with and fascinated by the body and by the desires and pleasures of the body, until she is led to believe that the truth only exists in a bodily form, which a man may touch and see and taste and use for the purposes of his lusts . . . —do you suppose that such a soul as this will depart pure and unalloyed?

That is impossible, he replied. . . .

These must be the souls, not of the good, but of the evil, who are compelled to wander about such places in payment of the penalty of their former evil way of life; and they continue to wander until the desire which haunts them is satisfied and they are imprisoned in another body. And they may be supposed to be fixed in the same natures which they had in their former life. . . . But he who is a philosopher or lover of learning, and is entirely pure at departing, is alone permitted to reach the gods. And this is the reason, Simmias and Cebes, why the true votaries of philosophy abstain from all fleshly lusts, and endure and refuse to give themselves up to them . . .

No, Socrates, that would not become them, said Cebes. . . .

The lovers of knowledge are conscious that their souls, when philosophy receives them, are simply fastened and glued to their bodies: the soul is only able to view existence through the bars of a prison, and not in her own nature; she is wallowing in all ignorance, and philosophy shows her that this is visible and tangible, but that what she sees in her own nature is intellectual and invisible. And the soul of the true philosopher thinks that she ought not to resist this deliverance, and therefore abstains from pleasures and desires and pains and fears, as far as she is able . . .

How is that?

Why, because each pleasure and pain is a sort of nail which nails and rivets the soul to the body, and engrosses her and makes her believe that to be true which the body affirms to be true; and from agreeing with the body and having the same delights she is obliged to have the same habits and ways, and is not likely ever to be pure at her departure to the world below, . . . and has therefore no part in the communion of the divine and pure and simple.

That is most true, Socrates, answered Cebes.

And this, Cebes, is the reason why the true lovers of knowledge are temperate and brave; and not for the reason which the world gives.

Certainly not. . . .

Never fear, Simmias and Cebes, that a soul which has been thus nurtured and has had these pursuits, will at her departure from the body be scattered and blown away by the winds and be nowhere and nothing.

The Soul as Harmony

When Socrates had done speaking, for a considerable time there was silence; he himself and most of us appeared to be meditating on what had been said; only Cebes and Simmias spoke a few words to one another. And Socrates observing this asked them what they thought of the argument . . .

Well, Socrates, said Simmias, then I will tell you my difficulty, and Cebes will tell you his. For I dare say that you, Socrates, feel, as I do, how very hard or almost impossible is the attainment of any certainty about questions such as these in the present life. And yet I should deem him a coward who did not prove what is said about them to the uttermost, or whose heart failed him before he had examined them on every side. For he should persevere until he has attained one of two things: either he should discover or learn the truth about them; or, if this is impossible, I would have him take the best and most irrefragable of human notions, and let this be the raft upon which he sails through life . . . And now, as you bid me, I will venture to question you, . . . Might not a person use the same argument about harmony and the lyre—might he not say that harmony is a thing invisible, incorporeal, fair, divine, abiding in the lyre which is harmonized, but that the lyre and the strings are matter and material, composite, earthy, and akin to mortality? And when someone breaks the lyre, or cuts and rends the strings, then he who takes this view would argue as you do, . . . that the harmony survives and has not perished; . . . For I suspect, Socrates, that the notion of the soul . . . is the harmony or due proportionate admixture of them. And, if this is true, the inference clearly is that when the strings of the body are unduly loosened or overstrained through disorder or other injury, then the soul, though most divine, like other harmonies . . ., of course perishes at once, although the material remains of the body may last for a considerable time, until they are either decayed or burnt. Now if anyone maintained that the soul, being the harmony of the elements of the body, first perishes in that which is called death, how shall we answer him?

Socrates looked round at us as his manner was, and said, with a smile: Simmias has reason on his side; and why does not some one of you who is ableer than myself answer him? for there is force in his attack upon me. But perhaps, before we answer him, we had better also hear what Cebes has to say against the argument . . .

The Soul as a Weaver

Cebes said: . . . The existence of the soul after death is still, in my judgment, unproven . . . The parallel which I will suppose is that of an old weaver, who dies, and after his death somebody says: He is not dead; he must be alive; and he appeals to the coat which he himself wove and wore, and which is still whole and undecayed. . . .
Everyone sees that he who talks thus is talking nonsense. For the truth is that this weaver, having worn and woven many such coats, though he outlived several of them, was himself outlived by the last; but this is surely very far from proving that a man is slighter and weaker than a coat. Now the relation of the body to the soul may be expressed in a similar figure; for you may say with reason that the soul is lasting, and the body weak and short-lived in comparison. And every soul may be said to wear out many bodies, especially in the course of a long life. For if while the man is alive the body deliquesces and decays, and yet the soul always weaves her garment anew and repairs the waste, then of course, when the soul perishes, she must have on her last garment, and this only will survive her; but then again when the soul is dead the body will at last show its native weakness, and soon pass into decay. And therefore this is an argument on which I would rather not rely as proving that the soul exists after death. . . .

Socrates on The Soul as Harmony

And now let us proceed, [Socrates] said. And first of all let me be sure that I have in my mind what you were saying. Simmias, if I remember rightly, has fears and misgivings whether the soul, being in the form of harmony, although a fairer and diviner thing than the body, may not perish first. On the other hand, Cebes appeared to grant that the soul was more lasting than the body, but he said that no one could know whether the soul, after having worn out many bodies, might not perish herself and leave her last body behind her; and that this is death, which is the destruction not of the body but of the soul, for in the body the work of destruction is ever going on. Are not these, Simmias and Cebes, the points which we have to consider?

They both agreed to this statement of them.

He proceeded: . . . what did you think, he said, of that part of the argument in which we said that knowledge was recollection only, and inferred from this that the soul must have previously existed somewhere else before she was enclosed in the body? Cebes said that he had been wonderfully impressed by that part of the argument, and that his conviction remained unshaken. Simmias agreed, and added that he himself could hardly imagine the possibility of his ever thinking differently about that.

But, rejoined Socrates, you will have to think differently, my Theban friend, if you still maintain that harmony is a compound, and that the soul is a harmony which is made out of strings set in the frame of the body; for you will surely never allow yourself to say that a harmony is prior to the elements which compose the harmony.

No, Socrates, that is impossible.

But do you not see that you are saying this when you say that the soul existed before she took the form and body of man, and was made up of elements which as yet had no existence? For harmony is not a sort of thing like the soul, as you suppose; but first the lyre, and the strings, and the sounds exist in a state of discord, and then harmony is made last of all, and perishes first. And how can such a notion of the soul as this agree with the other?

Not at all, replied Simmias. . . . I must, as I suppose, cease to argue or allow others to argue that the soul is a harmony.

Let me put the matter, Simmias, he said, in another point of view: . . . harmony admits of degrees, and is more of a harmony, and more completely a harmony, when more completely harmonized, if that be possible; and less of a harmony, and less completely a harmony, when less harmonized.

True.

But does the soul admit of degrees? or is one soul in the very least degree more or less, or more or less completely, a soul than another?

Not in the least. . . .

And having neither more nor less of harmony or of discord, one soul has no more vice or virtue than another, if vice be discord and virtue harmony?

Not at all more.

Or speaking more correctly, Simmias, the soul, if she is a harmony, will never have any vice; because a harmony, being absolutely a harmony, has no part in the inharmonical?

No. . . .

And can all this be true, think you? . . .

Certainly not, he said. . . .

Then, my friend, we can never be right in saying that the soul is a harmony, for that would clearly contradict the divine Homer as well as ourselves.

True, he said. . . .

Is the Soul Immortal? Opposites Will Not Receive Opposites

Briefly, the sum of your objection is as follows: You want to have proven to you that the soul is imperishable and immortal, and you think that the philosopher who is confident in death has but a vain and foolish confidence, if he thinks that he will fare better than one who has led another sort of life, in the world below, unless he can prove this . . . . That is what . . . you to say, Cebes . . .

Said Cebes, . . . you have expressed my meaning. . . .

When I was young, Cebes, I had a prodigious[125] desire to know that department of philosophy which is called Natural Science; this appeared to me to have lofty aims, as being the science which has to do with the causes of things, and which teaches why a thing is, and is created and destroyed . . . . And then I went on to examine the decay of them, and then to the things of heaven and earth, and at last I concluded that I was wholly incapable of these inquiries . . . . I should be far enough from imagining . . . . that I knew . . . why one or anything else either is generated or destroyed or is at all . . .

Then I heard someone who had a book of Anaxagoras, as he said, out of which he read that mind
was the disposer and cause of all, and I was quite delighted at the notion of this, which appeared admirable, and I said to myself: If mind is the disposer, mind will dispose all for the best, and put each particular in the best place; and I argued that if anyone desired to find out the cause of the generation or destruction or existence of anything, he must find out what state of being or suffering or doing was best for that thing, and therefore a man had only to consider the best for himself and others, and then he would also know the worse, for that the same science comprised both. And I rejoiced to think that I had found in Anaxagoras a teacher of the causes of existence such as I desired . . .

What hopes I had formed, and how grievously was I disappointed! As I proceeded, I found my philosopher altogether forsaking[abandoning] mind or any other principle of order, but having recourse to air, and ether, and water, and other eccentricities. I might compare him to a person who began by maintaining generally that mind is the cause of the actions of Socrates, but who, when he endeavored to explain the causes of my several actions in detail, went on to show that I sat here because my body is made up of bones and muscles; and the bones, as he would say, are hard and have ligaments which divide them, and the muscles are elastic, and they cover the bones, which have also a covering or environment of flesh and skin which contains them; and as the bones are lifted at their joints by the contraction or relaxation of the muscles, I am able to bend my limbs . . . . It may be said, indeed, that without bones and muscles and the other parts of the body I cannot execute my purposes. But to say that I do as I do because of them, and that this is the way in which mind acts, and not from the choice of the best, is a very careless and idle mode of speaking. I wonder that they cannot distinguish the cause from the condition, which the many, feeling about in the dark, are always mistaking and misnaming. . . . Yet this is the principle which I would fain[willingly] learn if anyone would teach me. But as I have failed either to discover myself or to learn of anyone else, the nature of the best, I will exhibit to you, if you like, what I have found to be the second best mode of inquiring into the cause.

I should very much like to hear that, he replied.

Socrates proceeded: I thought that as I had failed in the contemplation of true existence, I ought to be careful that I did not lose the eye of my soul; as people may injure their bodily eye by observing and gazing on the sun during an eclipse, unless they take the precaution of only looking at the image reflected in the water, or in some similar medium. That occurred to me, and I was afraid that my soul might be blinded altogether if I looked at things with my eyes or tried by the help of the senses to apprehend them. And I thought that I had better have recourse to ideas, and seek in them the truth of existence. I dare say that the simile is not perfect—for I am very far from admitting that he who contemplates existence through the medium of ideas, sees them only "through a glass darkly," any more than he who sees them in their working and effects. However, this was the method which I adopted: I first assumed some principle which I judged to be the strongest, and then I affirmed as true whatever seemed to agree with this, whether relating to the cause or to anything else; and that which disagreed I regarded as untrue. But I should like to explain my meaning clearly, as I do not think that you understand me.

No, indeed, replied Cebes, not very well. . . .

I cannot help thinking that if there be anything beautiful other than absolute beauty, that can only be beautiful in as far as it partakes of absolute beauty—and this I should say of everything. Do you agree in this notion of the cause?

Yes, he said, I agree.

He proceeded: I know nothing and can understand nothing of any other of those wise causes which are alleged; and if a person says to me that the bloom of color, or form, or anything else of that sort is a source of beauty, I leave all that, which is only confusing to me, and simply and singly, and perhaps foolishly, hold and am assured in my own mind that nothing makes a thing beautiful but the presence and participation of beauty in whatever way or manner obtained; for as to the manner I am uncertain, but I stoutly contend that by beauty all beautiful things become beautiful. That appears to me to be the only safe answer that I can give . . . . Do you not agree to that?

Yes, I agree.

And that by greatness only great things become great and greater, and by smallness the less becomes less.

True. . . .

This is your way of speaking; and yet when you say that Simmias is greater than Socrates and less than Phaedo, do you not predicate of Simmias both greatness and smallness?

Yes, I do.

But still you allow that Simmias does not really exceed Socrates, as the words may seem to imply, because he is Simmias, but by reason of the size which he has; just as Simmias does not exceed Socrates because he is Simmias, any more than because Socrates is Socrates, but because he has smallness when compared with the greatness of Simmias?

True.

And if Phaedo exceeds him in size, that is not because Phaedo is Phaedo, but because Phaedo has greatness relatively to Simmias, who is comparatively smaller?

That is true.

And therefore Simmias is said to be great, and is also said to be small, because he is in a mean[average] between them, exceeding the smallness of the one by his greatness, and allowing the greatness of the other to exceed his smallness. . . .

Simmias assented to this.

The reason why I say this is that I want you to agree with me in thinking, not only that absolute greatness will never be great and also small, but that greatness in us or in the concrete will never admit the small or admit of
being exceeded: instead of this, one of two things will happen—either the greater will fly or retire before the opposite, which is the less, or at the advance of the less will cease to exist; but will not, if allowing or admitting smallness, be changed by that; even as I, having received and admitted smallness when compared with Simmias, remain just as I was, and am the same small person. And as the idea of greatness cannot condescend ever to be or become small, in like manner the smallness in us cannot be or become great; nor can any other opposite which remains the same ever be or become its own opposite, but either passes away or perishes in the change.

That, replied Cebes, is quite my notion. . . .

Of the essential opposite which, as is affirmed, neither in us nor in nature can ever be at variance with itself: . . . these essential opposites will never . . . admit of generation into or out of one another. . . .

That was not my feeling, said Cebes . . .

Yet once more let me ask you to consider the question from another point of view, and see whether you agree with me: There is a thing which you term heat, and another thing which you term cold?

Certainly.

But are they the same as fire and snow?

Most assuredly not.

Heat is not the same as fire, nor is cold the same as snow?

No.

And yet you will surely admit that when snow, as before said, is under the influence of heat, they will not remain snow and heat; but at the advance of the heat the snow will either retire or perish?

Very true, he replied.

And the fire too at the advance of the cold will either retire or perish; and when the fire is under the influence of the cold, they will not remain, as before, fire and cold.

That is true, he said.

And in some cases the name of the idea is not confined to the idea; but anything else which, not being the idea, exists only in the form of the idea, may also lay claim to it. I will try to make this clearer by an example: The odd number is always called by the name of odd?

Very true.

But is this the only thing which is called odd? Are there not other things which have their own name, and yet are called odd . . . ? . . . Would you not say, for example, that three may be called by its proper name, and also be called odd, which is not the same with three? and this may be said not only of three but also of five, and every alternate number . . . . Do you admit that?

Yes, he said, how can I deny that?

Then now mark the point at which I am aiming: not only do essential opposites exclude one another, but also concrete things, which, although not in themselves opposed, contain opposites; these . . . also reject the idea which is opposed to that which is contained in them, and at the advance of that they either perish or withdraw. . . .

From these examples . . . you may be able to arrive at the general conclusion that not only opposites will not receive opposites, but also that nothing which brings the opposite will admit the opposite of that which it brings in that to which it is brought. . . .

Yes, he said, I entirely agree . . .

And now, he said, I think that I may begin again: . . .

Tell me, then, what is that the inherence of which will render the body alive?

The soul, he replied. . . .

And is there any opposite to life? . . .

Death.

Then the soul, as has been acknowledged, will never receive the opposite of what she brings. . . . And what do we call the principle which does not admit of death?

The immortal, he said.

And does the soul admit of death?

No.

Then the soul is immortal?

Yes, he said. . . .

Seeing then that the immortal is indestructible, must not the soul, if she is immortal, be also imperishable?

Most certainly.

Then when death attacks a man, the mortal portion of him may be supposed to die, but the immortal goes out of the way of death and is preserved safe and sound?

True.

Then, Cebes, beyond question the soul is immortal and imperishable, and our souls will truly exist in another world!

I am convinced, Socrates, said Cebes . . .

Is the Sould Judged in Death?

But then, O my friends, he said, if the soul is really immortal, what care should be taken of her, not only in respect of the portion of time which is called life, but of eternity! And the danger of neglecting her from this point of view does indeed appear to be awful. If death had only been the end of all, the wicked would have had a good bargain in dying, for they would have been happily quit not only of their body, but of their own evil together with their souls. But now, as the soul plainly appears to be immortal, there is no release or salvation from evil except the attainment of the highest virtue and wisdom. For the soul when on her progress to the world below takes nothing with her but nurture and education; which are indeed said greatly to benefit or greatly to injure the departed, at the very beginning of its pilgrimage in the other world.

For after death, as they say, the genius of each individual, to whom he belonged in life, leads him to a certain place in which the dead are gathered together for judgment . . . and when they have there received their due and remained their time, another guide brings them back again after many revolutions of ages. . . . Those also who are remarkable for having led holy lives are released from this earthly prison, and go to their pure home which is
above, and dwell in the purer earth; and those who have
duly purified themselves with philosophy live henceforth
altogether without the body, in mansions fairer far than
these, which may not be described, and of which the time
would fail me to tell.

Wherefore, Simmias, seeing all these things, what
ought not we to do in order to obtain virtue and wisdom in
this life? Fair is the prize, and the hope great . . .

The Death of Socrates

I say, let a man be of good cheer about his soul, who
has cast away the pleasures and ornaments of the body as
alien to him, and rather hurtful in their effects, and has
followed after the pleasures of knowledge in this life; who
has adorned the soul in her own proper jewels, which are
temperance, and justice, and courage, and nobility, and
truth—in these arrayed she is ready to go on her journey
to the world below, when her time comes. . . . The voice
of fate calls. Soon I must drink the poison . . .

When he had done speaking, Crito said: And have
you any commands for us, Socrates—anything to say
about your children, or any other matter in which we can
serve you?

Nothing particular, he said: only, as I have always
told you, I would have you look to yourselves; . . . and
walk . . . according to the precepts which I have given you
. . .

We will do our best, said Crito. But in what way
would you have us bury you?

In any way that you like; . . . I cannot make Crito
believe that I am the same Socrates who have been talking
and conducting the argument; . . . when I have drunk the
poison I shall leave you and go to the joys of the blessed .
. . . Be of good cheer, then, my dear Crito, and say that
you are burying my body only, and do with that as is
usual, and as you think best. . . . Crito; let the cup be
brought, if the poison is prepared . . .

Crito, when he heard this, made a sign to the servant,
and the servant went in, and remained for some time, and
then returned with the jailer carrying a cup of poison.

Socrates said: You, my good friend, who are
experienced in these matters, shall give me directions how
I am to proceed.

The man answered: You have only to walk about
until your legs are heavy, and then to lie down, and the
poison will act. At the same time he handed the cup to
Socrates, who in the easiest and gentlest manner, without
the least fear or change of color or feature . . . took the
cup . . . Then holding the cup to his lips, quite readily
and cheerfully he drank off the poison . . .

He was beginning to grow cold about the groin, when
he uncovered his face, for he had covered himself up, and
said (they were his last words)—he said: Crito, I owe a
cock to Asclepius; will you remember to pay the debt?
The debt shall be paid, said Crito; is there anything else?
There was no answer to this question; but in a minute or
two a movement was heard, and the attendants uncovered
him; his eyes were set, and Crito closed his eyes and
mouth.

Such was the end, Echecrates, of our friend, whom I
may truly call the wisest, and justest, and best of all the
men whom I have ever known.
The Republic  (c. 360 BCE)


PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE:
SOCRATES, who is the narrator;
Glaucyon;
Adeimantus;
Polemarchus;
Cephalus;
Thrasymachus;
Cleitophon;
And others who are mute auditors.

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BOOK I

Of Wealth, Justice, Moderation, and their Opposites

I went down yesterday to the Piraeus[a port of Athens] with Glaucyon, that I might offer up my prayers to the goddess. When we had finished our prayers, we turned in the direction of the city; and at that instant Polemarchus chance to catch sight of us from a distance as we were starting on our way home.

Accordingly we went with Polemarchus to his house. There was Cephalus the father of Polemarchus, whom I had not seen for a long time, and I thought him very much aged. he said:

You don't come to see me, Socrates, as often as you ought. For let me tell you, that the more the pleasures of the body fade away, the greater to me is the pleasure and charm of conversation.

I replied: There is nothing which for my part I like better, Cephalus, than conversing with aged men; for I regard them as travellers who have gone a journey which I too may have to go, and of whom I ought to enquire, whether the way is smooth and easy, or rugged and difficult. And this is a question which I should like to ask of you. Is life harder towards the end?

I will tell you, Socrates, he said. I remember the aged poet Sophocles, when in answer to the question, How does love suit with age, he replied; most gladly have I escaped the thing of which you speak; I feel as if I had escaped from a mad and furious master. His words have often occurred to my mind since, and they seem as good to me now as at the time when he uttered them. For certainly old age has a great sense of calm and freedom; when the passions relax their hold, then, as Sophocles says, we are freed from the grasp of one mad master only, but of many.

Yes, Cephalus, I said: but I rather suspect that people in general are not convinced by you when you speak thus; they think that old age sits lightly upon you, not because of your happy disposition, but because you are rich, and wealth is well known to be a great comforter.

You are right, he replied; they are not convinced: and there is something in what they say; not, however, so much as they imagine.

Yes, that is very true, but may I ask another question? What do you consider to be the greatest blessing which you have reaped from your wealth?

One, he said, of which I could not expect easily to convince others. For let me tell you, Socrates, that when a man thinks himself to be near death, fears and cares enter into his mind which he never had before; the tales of a world below and the punishment which is exacted there of deeds done here were once a laughing matter to him, but now he is tormented with the thought that they may be true and he begins to reflect and consider what wrongs he has done to others. And the great blessing of riches, I do not say to every man, but to a good man, is, that he has had no occasion to deceive or to defraud others, either intentionally or unintentionally.

Well said, Cephalus, I replied; but as concerning justice, what is it? —to speak the truth and to pay your debts —no more than this? And even to this are there not exceptions? Suppose that a friend when in his right mind has deposited arms with me and he asks for them when he is not in his right mind, ought I to give them back to him? No one would say that I ought or that I should be right in doing so, any more than they would say that I ought always to speak the truth to one who is in his condition.

You are quite right, he replied.

But then, I said, speaking the truth and paying your debts is not a correct definition of justice.

Quite correct, Socrates, if Simonides is to be believed, said Polemarchus interposing.

I fear, said Cephalus, that I must go now, for I have to look after the sacrifices, and I hand over the argument to Polemarchus and the company.

Is not Polemarchus your heir? I said.

To be sure, he answered, and went away laughing to the sacrifices.

Tell me then, O thou heir of the argument, what did Simonides say, and according to you truly say, about justice?

He said that the repayment of a debt is just, and in saying so he appears to me to be right.

I should be sorry to doubt the word of such a wise and inspired man, but his meaning, though probably clear to you, is the reverse of clear to me. For he certainly does not mean, as we were now saying that I ought to return a return a deposit of arms or of anything else to one who asks for it when he is not in his right sense; and yet a deposit cannot be denied to be a debt.

True.

Then when the person who asks me is not in his right mind I am by no means to make the return.
Certainly not; for he thinks that a friend ought always to do good to a friend and never evil. . .

And are enemies also to receive what we owe to them?

To be sure, he said, they are to receive what we owe them, and an enemy, as I take it, owes to an enemy that which is due or proper to him—that is to say, evil.

Simonides, then, after the manner of poets, would seem to have spoken darkly of the nature of justice; for he really meant to say that justice is the giving to each man what is proper to him, and this he termed a debt.

That must have been his meaning, he said. . .

Well, there is another question: By friends and enemies do we mean those who are so really, or only in seeming?

Surely, he said, a man may be expected to love those whom he thinks good, and to hate those whom he thinks evil.

Yes, but do not persons often err about good and evil: many who are not good seem to be so, and conversely?

That is true.

Then to them the good will be enemies and the evil will be their friends? True.

And in that case they will be right in doing good to the evil and evil to the good?

Clearly.

But the good are just and would not do an injustice?

True.

Then according to your argument it is just to injure those who do no wrong?

Nay, Socrates; the doctrine is immoral.

Then I suppose that we ought to do good to the just and harm to the unjust?

I like that better.

But see the consequence: —Many a man who is ignorant of human nature has friends who are bad friends, and in that case he ought to do harm to them; and he has good enemies whom he ought to benefit; but, if so, we shall be saying the very opposite of that which we affirmed to be the meaning of Simonides.

Very true, he said: . . . We should rather say that he is a friend who is, as well as seems, good; and that he who seems only, and is not good, only seems to be and is not a friend; and of an enemy the same may be said.

You would argue that the good are our friends and the bad our enemies?

Yes.

And instead of saying simply as we did at first, that it is just to do good to our friends and harm to our enemies, we should further say: It is just to do good to our friends when they are good and harm to our enemies when they are evil?

Yes, that appears to me to be the truth.

But ought the just to injure any one at all?

Undoubtedly he ought to injure those who are both wicked and his enemies.

When horses are injured, are they improved or deteriorated?

The latter. . .

And will not men who are injured be deteriorated in that which is the proper virtue of man?

Certainly.

And that human virtue is justice?

To be sure.

Then men who are injured are of necessity made unjust?

That is the result. . .

Then to injure a friend or any one else is not the act of a just man, but of the opposite, who is the unjust?

I think that what you say is quite true, Socrates.

Then if a man says that justice consists in the repayment of debts, and that good is the debt which a man owes to his friends, and evil the debt which he owes to his enemies, —to say this is not wise; for it is not true, if, as has been clearly shown, the injuring of another can be in no case just.

I agree with you, said Polemarchus . . .

Yes, I said; but if this definition of justice also breaks down, what other can be offered?

Thrasymachus: Is Justice the Interest of the Stronger?

Several times in the course of the discussion Thrasymachus had made an attempt to get the argument into his own hands, and had been put down by the rest of the company, who wanted to hear the end. But when Polemarchus and I had done speaking and there was a pause, he could no longer hold his peace; and, gathering himself up, he came at us like a wild beast, seeking to devour us. We were quite panic-stricken at the sight of him. . .

Listen, he said; I proclaim that justice is nothing else than the interest of the stronger. . .

I wish that you would be a little clearer.

Well, he said, have you never heard that forms of government differ; there are tyrannies, and there are democracies, and there are aristocracies?

Yes, I know.

And the government is the ruling power in each state?

Certainly.

And the different forms of government make laws democratical, aristocratical, tyrannical, with a view to their several interests; and these laws, which are made by them for their own interests, are the justice which they deliver to their subjects, and him who transgresses them they punish as a breaker of the law, and unjust. And that is what I mean when I say that in all states there is the same principle of justice, which is the interest of the government; and as the government must be supposed to have power, the only reasonable conclusion is, that everywhere there is one principle of justice, which is the interest of the stronger.

Now I understand you, I said; and whether you are right or not I will try to discover. . .

Proceed. . .
Do you admit that it is just for subjects to obey their rulers? I do.
But are the rulers of states absolutely infallible, or are they sometimes liable to error? To be sure, he replied, they are liable to error. Then in making their laws they may sometimes make them rightly, and sometimes not?
True.
When they make them rightly, they make them agreeably to their interest; when they are mistaken, contrary to their interest; you admit that?
Yes.
And the laws which they make must be obeyed by their subjects,—and that is what you call justice?
Doubtless.
Then justice, according to your argument, is not only obedience to the interest of the stronger but the reverse?
What is that you are saying? he asked.
I am only repeating what you are saying, I believe. But let us consider: Have we not admitted that the rulers may be mistaken about their own interest in what they command, and also that to obey them is justice? Has not that been admitted?
Yes.
Then you must also have acknowledged justice not to be for the interest of the stronger, when the rulers unintentionally command things to be done which are to their own injury. For if, as you say, justice is the obedience which the subject renders to their commands, in that case, O wisest of men, is there any escape from the conclusion that the weaker are commanded to do, not what is for the interest, but what is for the injury of the stronger?
Nothing can be clearer, Socrates, said Polemarchus. But, said Cleitophon, he meant by the interest of the stronger what the stronger thought to be his interest.
Tell me, Thrasymachus, I said, did you mean by justice what the stronger thought to be his interest, whether really so or not?
Certainly not, he said. Do you suppose that I call him who is mistaken the stronger at the time when he is mistaken? To be perfectly accurate, since you are such a lover of accuracy, we should say that the ruler is unerring, and always commands that which is for his own interest; and the subject is required to execute his commands; and therefore, justice is the interest of the stronger.

Is the physician, taken in that strict sense of which you are speaking, a healer of the sick or a maker of money?
A healer of the sick, he replied. Now, I said, every art has an interest. For which the art has to consider and provide?
Yes, that is the aim of art. Suppose you were to ask me whether the body is self-sufficient or has wants, I should reply: Certainly the body has wants; for the body may be ill and require to be cured, and has therefore interests to which the art of medicine ministers; and this is the origin and intention of medicine, as you will acknowledge. Am I not right?

Quite right, he replied.
Then medicine does not consider the interest of medicine, but the interest of the body?
True, he said.
Arts... have no needs; they care only for that which is the subject of their art?
True, he said.
But surely, Thrasymachus, the arts are the superiors and rulers of their own subjects?
To this he assented with a good deal of reluctance.
Then, I said, no science or art considers or enjoins the interest of the stronger or superior, but only the interest of the subject and weaker?
He made an attempt to contest this proposition also, but finally acquiesced.

Then, I continued, no physician, in so far as he is a physician, considers his own good in what he prescribes, but the good of his patient; for the true physician is also a ruler having the human body as a subject, and is not a mere money-maker; that has been admitted?
He gave a reluctant ‘Yes.’
Then, I said, Thrasymachus, there is no one in any rule who, in so far as he is a ruler, considers or enjoins what is for his own interest, but always what is for the interest of his subject or suitable to his art; to that he looks, and that alone he considers in everything which he says and does.

When we had got to this point in the argument, and every one saw that the definition of justice had been completely upset, Thrasymachus, instead of replying to me, said: Tell me, Socrates, have you got a nurse?... she has not even taught you to know the shepherd from the sheep.
What makes you say that? I replied.

Because you fancy that the shepherd... fattens of tends the sheep or oxen with a view to their own good and not to the good of himself or his master; and you further imagine that the rulers of states, if they are true rulers, never think of their subjects as sheep, and that they are not studying their own advantage day and night. Oh, no; and so entirely astray are you in your ideas about the just and unjust...; for the unjust is lord over the truly simple and just: he is the stronger, and his subjects do what is for his interest, and minister to his happiness, which is very far from being their own. Consider further, most foolish Socrates, that the just is always a loser in comparison with the unjust. First of all, in private contracts: wherever the unjust is the partner of the just you will find that, when the partnership is dissolved, the unjust man has always more and the just less. Secondly, in their dealings with the State: when there is an income tax, the just man will pay more and the unjust less on the same amount of income; and when there is anything to be received the one gains nothing and the other much. Observe also what happens when they take an office; there is the just man neglecting his affairs and perhaps suffering other losses, and getting nothing out of the public, because he is just; moreover he is hated by his friends and acquaintance for refusing to serve them in unlawful ways. But all this is reversed in the case of the unjust man. The criminal is the happiest of men, and the sufferers or those who refuse to do injustice are
the most miserable . . . And thus, as I have shown, Socrates, . . . justice is the interest of the stronger, whereas injustice is a man's own profit and interest . . .

Let me ask you a question: Are not the several arts different, by reason of their each having a separate function? And, my dear illustrious friend, do say what you think, that we may make a little progress.

Yes, that is the difference, he replied.

And each art gives us a particular good and not merely a general one—medicine, for example, gives us health; navigation, safety at sea, and so on?

Yes, he said.

And the art of payment has the special function of giving pay: but we do not confuse this with other arts . . . . You would not be inclined to say . . . . that medicine is the art of receiving pay because a man takes fees when he is engaged in healing?

Certainly not.

And we have admitted, I said, that the good of each art is specially confined to the art?

Yes.

And when the artist is benefited by receiving pay the advantage is gained by an additional use of the art of pay, which is not the art professed by him?

He gave a reluctant assent to this.

Then the pay is not derived by the several artists from their respective arts. But the truth is, that while the art of medicine gives health, and the art of the builder builds a house, another art attends them which is the art of pay. The various arts may be doing their own business and benefiting that over which they preside, but would the artist receive any benefit from his art unless he were paid as well?

I suppose not . . .

Then now, Thrasymachus, there is no longer any doubt that neither arts nor governments provide for their own interests; but, as we were before saying, they rule and provide for the interests of their subjects who are the weaker and not the stronger—to their good they attend and not to the good of the superior.

And this is the reason, my dear Thrasymachus, why, as I was just now saying, no one is willing to govern; because no one likes to take in hand the reformation of evils which are not his concern without remuneration. For, in the execution of his work, and in giving his orders to another, the true artist does not regard his own interest, but always that of his subjects; and therefore in order that rulers may be willing to rule, they must be paid in one of three modes of payment: money, or honour, or a penalty for refusing . . .

This . . . question need not be further discussed at present; but when Thrasymachus says that the life of the unjust is more advantageous than that of the just, his new statement appears to me to be of a far more serious character.

. . .

Well, then, Thrasymachus, I said, suppose you begin at the beginning and answer me. You say that perfect injustice is more gainful than perfect justice?

Yes, that is what I say . . .

I suppose that you would call justice virtue and injustice vice? . . .

I affirm injustice to be profitable and justice not . . . And would you call justice vice?

No . . .

And do the unjust appear to you to be wise and good?

Yes, he said . . . I cannot hear without amazement that you class injustice with wisdom and virtue, and justice with the opposite.

Certainly I do so class them . . .

You would not deny that a state may be unjust and may be unjustly attempting to enslave other states, or may have already enslaved them, and may be holding many of them in subjection?

True, he replied; and I will add the best and perfectly unjust state will be most likely to do so.

I know, I said, that such was your position; but what I would further consider is, whether this power which is possessed by the superior state can exist or be exercised without justice.

If you are right in your view, and justice is wisdom, then only with justice; but if I am right, then without justice . . .

Would you have the goodness also to inform me, whether you think that a state, or an army, or a band of robbers and thieves, or any other gang of evil-doers could act at all if they injured one another?

No indeed, he said, they could not.

But if they abstained from injuring one another, then they might act together better?

Yes.

And this is because injustice creates divisions and hatreds and fighting, and justice imparts harmony and friendship; is not that true, Thrasymachus?

I agree, he said . . .

I should like to know also whether injustice . . . will not make them hate one another and set them at variance and render them incapable of common action?

Certainly.

And even if injustice be found in two only, will they not quarrel and fight, and become enemies to one another and to the just?

They will . . .

And is not injustice equally fatal when existing in a single person; in the first place rendering him incapable of action because he is not at unity with himself, and in the second place making him an enemy to himself and the just?

Is not that true, Thrasymachus?

Yes . . .

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------- BOOK II

The Individual, the State, and Education

With these words I was thinking that I had made an end of the discussion; but the end, in truth, proved to be only a beginning. For Glaucon . . . said to me: . . . How would you arrange goods—are there not some which we welcome for
their own sakes, . . . as, for example, harmless pleasures and enjoyments, which delight us at the time, although nothing follows from them?

I agree in thinking that there is such a class, I replied.

Is there not also a second class of goods, such as knowledge, sight, health, which are desirable not only in themselves, but also for their results?

Certainly, I said.

And would you not recognize a third class, such as gymnastic, and . . . money-making—these do us good but we regard them as disagreeable; and no one would choose them for their own sakes, but only for the sake of some reward or result which flows from them?

There is, I said . . .

In which of the three classes you would place justice?

In the highest class, I replied, —among those goods which he who would be happy desires both for their own sake and for the sake of their results.

Then the many are of another mind; they think that justice is to be reckoned in the troublesome class, among goods which are to be pursued for the sake of rewards and of reputation, but in themselves are disagreeable and rather to be avoided.

I know, I said . . .

To my mind the nature of justice and injustice have not yet been made clear. Setting aside their rewards and results, I want to know what they are in themselves, and how they inwardly work in the soul. . . . First I will speak of the nature and origin of justice according to the common view of them. Secondly, I will show that all men who practise justice do so against their will, of necessity, but not as a good. And thirdly, I will argue that there is reason in this view, for the life of the unjust is after all better far than the life of the just . . . . Will you say whether you approve of my proposal?

Indeed I do . . .

Glauc: Is Justice Persued Voluntarily? (The Ring of Gyges)

Now that those who practise justice do so involuntarily and because they have not the power to be unjust will best appear if we imagine something of this kind: having given both to the just and the unjust power to do what they will, let us watch and see whither desire will lead them; then we shall discover in the very act the just and unjust man to be proceeding along the same road, following their interest, which all natures deem to be their good, and are only diverted into the path of justice by the force of law. . . . According to the tradition, Gyges was a shepherd in the service of the king of Lydia; there was a great storm, and an earthquake made an opening in the earth at the place where he was feeding his flock. Amazed at the sight, he descended into the opening, where, among other marvels, he beheld a hollow brazen horse, having doors, at which he stooping and looking in saw a dead body of stature, as appeared to him, more than human, and having nothing on but a gold ring; this he took from the finger of the dead and reascended. Now the shepherds met together, according to custom, that they might send their monthly report about the flocks to the king; into their assembly he came having the ring on his finger, and as he was sitting among them he chanced to turn the collet of the ring inside his hand, when instantly he became invisible to the rest of the company and they began to speak of him as if he were no longer present. He was astonished at this, and again touching the ring he turned the collet outwards and reappeared; he made several trials of the ring, and always with the same result—when he turned the collet inwards he became invisible, when outwards he reappeared. Whereupon he contrived to be chosen one of the messengers who were sent to the court; where as soon as he arrived he seduced the queen, and with her help conspired against the king and slew him, and took the kingdom. Suppose now that there were two such magic rings, and the just put on one of them and the unjust the other; no man can be imagined to be of such an iron nature that he would stand fast in justice. No man would keep his hands off what was not his own when he could safely take what he liked out of the market, or go into houses and lie with any one at his pleasure, or kill or release from prison whom he would, and in all respects be like a God among men. Then the actions of the just would be as the actions of the unjust; they would both come at last to the same point. And this we may truly affirm to be a great proof that a man is just, not willingly or because he thinks that justice is any good to him individually, but of necessity, for wherever any one thinks that he can safely be unjust, there he is unjust. For all men believe in their hearts that injustice is far more profitable to the individual than justice . . .

Glauc: Is Justice Persued Voluntarily? (The Ring of Gyges)

Now, if we are to form a real judgment of the life of the just and unjust, we must isolate them; there is no other way; and how is the isolation to be effected? I answer: Let the unjust man be entirely unjust, and the just man entirely just . . . . First, let the unjust be like other distinguished masters of craft; . . . So let the unjust make his unjust attempts in the
right way, and lie hidden . . . : for the highest reach of injustice is: to be deemed just when you are not. Therefore . . . we must allow him, while doing the most unjust acts, to have acquired the greatest reputation for justice. . . . And at his side let us place the just man in his nobleness and simplicity, wishing . . . to be and not to seem good. There must be no seeming, for if he seem to be just he will be honoured and rewarded, and then we shall not know whether he is just for the sake of justice or for the sake of honours and rewards . . . . Let him be the best of men, and let him be thought the worst; . . . being just and seeming to be unjust. When both have reached the uttermost extreme, the one of justice and the other of injustice, let judgment be given which of them is the happier of the two.

Heavens! my dear Glaucon, I said, how energetically you polish them up for the decision, first one and then the other, as if they were two statues.

I do my best, he said. And now that we know what they are like there is no difficulty in tracing out the sort of life which awaits either of them . . . The just man who is thought unjust will be scourged[tormented], racked, bound — will have his eyes burnt out; and, at last, after suffering every kind of evil, he will be impaled: Then he will understand that he ought to seem only, and not to be, just . . . . For the unjust is pursuing a reality; . . . His mind has a soil deep and fertile, Out of which spring his prudent[wise] counsels. In the first place, he is thought just, and therefore bears rule in the city; he can marry whom he will, and give in marriage to whom he will; also he can trade and deal where he likes, and always to his own advantage, because he has no misgivings about injustice and at every contest, whether in public or private, he gets the better of his antagonists[enemies], and gains at their expense, and is rich, and out of his gains he can benefit his friends, and harm his enemies; moreover, he can offer sacrifices, and dedicate gifts to the gods abundantly and magnificently, and can honour the gods or any man whom he wants to honour in a far better style than the just, and therefore he is likely to be dearer than they are to the gods. And thus, Socrates, gods and men are said to unite in making the life of the unjust better than the life of the just.

Creation of the State

I was going to say something in answer to Glaucon, when Adeimantus, his brother, interposed: . . . On what principle, then, shall we any longer choose justice rather than the worst injustice? when, if we only unite the latter with a deceitful regard to appearances, . . . how can a man who has any superiority of mind or person or rank or wealth, be willing to honour justice; or indeed to refrain from laughing when he hears justice praised? . . . I must frankly confess to you, because I want to hear from you the opposite side; and I would ask you to show not only the superiority which justice has over injustice, but what effect they have on the possessor of them which makes the one to be a good and the other an evil to him. And please, as Glaucon requested of you, to exclude reputations . . .

Glaucan and the rest entreated me by all means not to let the question drop, but to proceed in the investigation. They wanted to arrive at the truth, first, about the nature of justice and injustice, and secondly, about their relative advantages. . . . I will tell you, I replied; justice . . . is . . . sometimes spoken of as the virtue of an individual, and sometimes as the virtue of a State. . . . And is not a State larger than an individual?

It is.

Then in the larger the quantity of justice is likely to be larger and more easily discernible[visible]. I propose therefore that we enquire into the nature of justice and injustice, first as they appear in the State, and secondly in the individual, proceeding from the greater to the lesser and comparing them.

That, he said, is an excellent proposal.

And if we imagine the State in process of creation, we shall see the justice and injustice of the State in process of creation also.

I dare say.

When the State is completed there may be a hope that the object of our search will be more easily discovered.

Yes, far more easily. . . .

Then, I said, let us begin and create in idea a State . . . Of course, he replied.

Now the first and greatest of necessities is food . . . . The second is a dwelling, and the third cloth and the like. True.

And now let us see how our city will be able to supply this great demand: We may suppose that one man is a husbandman[farmer], another a builder, some one else a weaver—shall we add to them a shoemaker . . . to our bodily wants?

Quite right.

The barest notion of a State must include four or five men. Clearly.

And how will they proceed? Will each bring the result of his labours into a common stock? — the individual husbandman, for example, producing for four, and labouring four times as long and as much as he need in the provision of food with which he supplies others as well as himself; or will he have nothing to do with others and . . . provide for himself alone a fourth of the food in a fourth of the time, and in the remaining three-fourths of his time be employed in making a house or a coat or a pair of shoes . . . ?

Adeimantus thought that he should aim at producing food only and not at producing everything. . . .

And if so, we must infer that all things are produced more plentifully and easily and of a better quality when one man does one thing which is natural to him and does it at the right time, and leaves other things.

Undoubtedly.

Then more than four citizens will be required; for the husbandman will not make his own . . . implements of agriculture, if they are to be good for anything. Neither will the builder make his tools — and he too needs many; and in like manner the weaver and shoemaker.

True.

Then carpenters, and smiths, and many other artisans, will be sharers in our little State, which is already beginning to grow?
True. . . .
Then there must be another class of citizens who will bring the required supply from another city? . . . Not to mention the importers and exporters, who are called merchants? . . . And if merchandise is to be carried over the sea, skilful sailors will also be needed, and in considerable numbers?
Yes, in considerable numbers.
Then, again, within the city, how will they exchange their productions? . . . Then they will need a market-place, . . . he will find people there who, seeing the want, undertake the office of salesmen. In well-ordered States they are commonly those who are the weakest in bodily strength, and therefore of little use for any other purpose; their duty is to be in the market, and to give money in exchange for goods to those who desire to sell and to take money from those who desire to buy. This want, then, creates a class of retail-traders in our State. . . .
Yes, he said.
And there is another class of servants, who are intellectually hardly on the level of companionship; still they have plenty of bodily strength for labour, which accordingly they sell . . .
True.
And now, Adeimantus, is our State matured and perfected?
Why, he said, you should give them the ordinary conveniences of life. People who are to be comfortable are accustomed to lie on sofas, and dine off tables, and they should have sauces and sweets in the modern style.
Yes, I said . . . . For I suspect that many will not be satisfied with the simpler way of life. . . . We must go beyond the necessaries of which I was at first speaking, such as houses, and clothes, and shoes: the arts of the painter and the embroiderer will have to be set in motion, and gold and ivory and all sorts of materials must be procured.
True, he said.
Then we must enlarge our borders; for the original healthy State is no longer sufficient. Now will the city have to fill and swell with a multitude of callings which are not required by any natural want . . .
Certainly. . . .
Then a slice of our neighbours' land will be wanted by us for pasture and tillage, and they will want a slice of ours, if, like ourselves, they exceed the limit of necessity, and give themselves up to the unlimited accumulation of wealth?
That, Socrates, will be inevitable.
And so we shall go to war, Glaucon. Shall we not?
Most certainly, he replied.
Then without determining as yet whether war does good or harm, thus much we may affirm, that now we have discovered war to be derived from causes which are also the causes of almost all the evils in States, private as well as public.
Undoubtedly.
And our State must once more enlarge; and this time the will be nothing short of a whole army, which will have to go out and fight with the invaders for all that we have, as well as for the things and persons whom we were describing above.

Why? he said; are they not capable of defending themselves?
No, I said; not if we were right in the principle which was acknowledged by all of us when we were framing the State: the principle, as you will remember, was that one man cannot practise many arts with success. . . . Is not war an art? . . . And an art requiring as much attention as shoemaking?
Quite true. . . .

**Soldier of the State**

Now nothing can be more important than that the work of a soldier should be well done. . . . And the higher the duties of the guardian, I said, the more time, and skill, and art, and application will be needed by him?

No doubt, he replied.

Will he not also require natural aptitude for his calling?
Certainly.

Then it will be our duty to select, if we can, natures which are fitted for the task of guarding the city?
Is not the noble youth very like a well-bred dog in respect of guarding and watching?
What do you mean?
I mean that both of them ought to be quick to see, and swift to overtake the enemy when they see him; and strong too if, when they have caught him, they have to fight with him.

All these qualities, he replied, will certainly be required by them.

Well, and your guardian must be brave if he is to fight well?
Certainly. . . .
And . . . his soul is to be full of spirit?
Yes . . .
Would not he who is fitted to be a guardian, besides the spirited nature, need to have the qualities of a philosopher?
I do not apprehend your meaning.
The trait of which I am speaking, I replied, may be also seen in the dog, and is remarkable in the animal.
What trait?
Why, a dog, whenever he sees a stranger, is angry; when an acquaintance, he welcomes him, although the one has never done him any harm, nor the other any good. . . .—your dog is a true philosopher.

Why?
Why, because he distinguishes the face of a friend and of an enemy only by the criterion of knowing and not knowing. And must not an animal be a lover of learning who determines what he likes and dislikes by the test of knowledge and ignorance?
Most assuredly.
And is not the love of learning the love of wisdom, which is philosophy?
They are the same, he replied. . . .
Then he who is to be a really good and noble guardian of the State will require to unite in himself philosophy and spirit and swiftness and strength?
Undoubtedly. . . .
And what shall be their education? Can we find a better than the traditional sort? —and this has two divisions, gymnastic for the body, and music for the soul.

True.
Shall we begin education with music, and go on to gymnastic afterwards?
By all means. . . .
When you speak of music, do you include literature . . . ?
I do.
And literature may be either true or false?
Yes.
And the young should be trained in both kinds, and we begin with the false?
I do not understand your meaning, he said.
You know, I said, that we begin by telling children stories which, though not wholly destitute of truth, are in the main fictitious; and these stories are told them when they are not of an age to learn gymnastics.
Very true.
That was my meaning when I said that we must teach music before gymnastics.
Quite right, he said.
You know also that the beginning is the most important part of any work, especially in the case of a young and tender thing: for that is the time at which the character is being formed and the desired impression is more readily taken.
Quite true.
And shall we just carelessly allow children to hear any casual tales . . . , and to receive into their minds ideas . . . opposite of those which we should wish them to have when they are grown up?
We cannot.
Then the first thing will be to establish a censorship of the writers of fiction, and let the censors receive any tale of fiction which is good, and reject the bad . . .
I entirely agree with you, he said; in my opinion those stories are quite unfit to be repeated.
Neither, if we mean our future guardians to regard the habit of quarrelling among themselves . . . , should any word be said to them of the wars in heaven, and of the plots and fightings of the gods against one another, for they are not true. No, . . . we shall be silent about the innumerable quarrels of gods and heroes . . . . Therefore it is most important that the tales which the young first hear should be models of virtuous thoughts. . . .
Very true, he said; but what are these forms of theology which you mean? . . .
God, if he be good, is not the author of all things, as the many assert, but he is the cause of a few things only, and not of most things that occur to men. For few are the goods of human life, and many are the evils, and the good is to be attributed to God alone; of the evils the causes are to be sought elsewhere, and not in him. . . .
I agree with you, he replied, and am ready to give my assent to the law.
Let this then be one of our rules and principles concerning the gods, to which our poets and reciters will be expected to conform —that God is not the author of all things, but of good only . . . .
I entirely agree, he said, in these principles, and promise to make them my laws.

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------- BOOK III

Such then, I said, are our principles of theology—some tales are to be told, and others are not to be told to our disciples from their youth upwards, if we mean them to honour the gods and their parents, and to value friendship with one another.
Yes; and I think that our principles are right, he said.
But if they are to be courageous, must they not learn other lessons besides these, and lessons of such a kind as will take away the fear of death? Can any man be courageous who has the fear of death in him?
Certainly not, he said.
And can he be fearless of death, or will he choose death in battle rather than defeat and slavery, who believes the world below to be real and terrible?
Impossible.
Then we must assume a control over the narrators of this class of tales as well as over the others, and beg them not simply to but rather to commend the world below, intimating to them that their descriptions are untrue, and will do harm to our future warriors.
That will be our duty, he said. . . .
Neither ought our guardians to be given to laughter. For a fit of laughter which has been indulged to excess almost always produces a violent reaction.
So I believe.
Then persons of worth, even if only mortal men, must not be represented as overcome by laughter, and still less must such a representation of the gods be allowed.
Still less of the gods, as you say, he replied. . . .
Again, truth should be highly valued; if, as we were saying, a lie is useless to the gods, and useful only as a medicine to men, then the use of such medicines should be restricted to physicians; private individuals have no business with them.
Clearly not, he said.
Then if any one at all is to have the privilege of lying, the rulers of the State should be the persons; and they, in their dealings either with enemies or with their own citizens, may be allowed to lie for the public good. But nobody else should meddle with anything of the kind. . . . the honourable mind which is to form a healthy judgment should have had no experience or contamination of evil habits when young. And this is the reason why in youth good men often appear to be simple, and are easily practised upon by the dishonest, because they have no examples of what evil is in their own souls.
Yes, he said, they are far too apt to be deceived.
Therefore, I said, the judge should not be young; he should have learned to know evil, not from his own soul, but from late and long observation of the nature of evil in others: knowledge should be his guide, not personal experience. . . .
Guardians of the State

Very good, I said; then what is the next question? Must we not ask who are to be rulers and who subjects?

Certainly.

There can be no doubt that the elder must rule the younger.

Clearly.

And that the best of these must rule.

That is also clear.

Now, are not the best husbandmen those who are most devoted to husbandry?

Yes.

And as we are to have the best of guardians for our city, must they not be those who have most the character of guardians?

Yes.

And to this end they ought to be wise and efficient, and to have a special care of the State?

True.

And a man will be most likely to care about that which he loves?

To be sure.

And he will be most likely to love that which he regards as having the same interests with himself, and that of which the good or evil fortune is supposed by him at any time most to affect his own?

Very true, he replied.

Then there must be a selection. Let us note among the guardians those who in their whole life show the greatest eagerness to do what is for the good of their country, and the greatest repugnance to do what is against her interests.

Those are the right men.

And they will have to be watched at every age, in order that we may see whether they preserve their resolution, and never, under the influence either of force or enchantment, forget or cast off their sense of duty to the State. . . .

And perhaps the word 'guardian' in the fullest sense ought to be applied to this higher class only who preserve us against foreign enemies and maintain peace among our citizens at home, that the one may not have the will, or the others the power, to harm us. The young men whom we before called guardians may be more properly designated auxiliaries and supporters of the principles of the rulers.

I agree with you, he said.

How then may we devise one of those needful falsehoods of which we lately spoke — just one royal lie which may deceive the rulers, if that be possible, and at any rate the rest of the city?

What sort of lie? he said. . . .

They are to be told that their youth was a dream, and the education and training which they received from us, an appearance only; in reality during all that time they were being formed and fed in the womb of the earth, where they themselves and their arms and appurtenances [accessories] were manufactured; when they were completed, the earth, their mother, sent them up; and so, their country being their mother and also their nurse, they are bound to advise for her good, and to defend her against attacks, and her citizens they are to regard as children of the earth and their own brothers.

You had good reason, he said, to be ashamed of the lie which you were going to tell.

True, I replied, but there is more coming; I have only told you half. Citizens, we shall say to them in our tale, you are brothers, yet God has framed you differently. Some of you have the power of command, and in the composition of these he has mingled gold, wherefore also they have the greatest honour; others he has made of silver, to be auxiliaries; others again who are to be husbandmen and craftsmen he has composed of brass and iron; and the species will generally be preserved in the children. But as all are of the same original stock, a golden parent will sometimes have a silver son, or a silver parent a golden son. And God proclaims as a first principle to the rulers, and above all else, that there is nothing which should so anxiously guard, or of which they are to be such good guardians, as of the purity of the race. They should observe what elements mingle in their offspring; for if the son of a golden or silver parent has an admixture of brass and iron, then nature orders a transposition of ranks, and the eye of the ruler must not be pitiful towards the child because he has to descend in the scale and become a husbandman or artisan, just as there may be sons of artisans who having an admixture of gold or silver in them are raised to honour, and become guardians or auxiliaries. For an oracle says that when a man of brass or iron guards the State, it will be destroyed. Such is the tale; is there any possibility of making our citizens believe in it?

Not in the present generation, he replied; there is no way of accomplishing this; but their sons may be made to believe in the tale, and their sons' sons, and posterity after them.

I see the difficulty, I replied; yet the fostering of such a belief will make them care more for the city and for one another. . . .

Then let us consider what will be their way of life, if they are to realize our idea of them. In the first place, none of them should have any property of his own beyond what is absolutely necessary; neither should they have a private house or store closed against any one who has a mind to enter; their provisions should be only such as are required by trained warriors, who are men of temperance and courage; they should agree to receive from the citizens a fixed rate of pay, enough to meet the expenses of the year and no more; and they will go and live together like soldiers in a camp. Gold and silver we will tell them that they have from God; the diviner metal is within them, and they have therefore no need of the dross which is current among men, and ought not to pollute the divine by any such earthly admixture; for that commoner
And surely, said he, this is not a very severe order which we impose upon them.

Jusctice in the State

But where, amid all this, is justice? Now that our city has been made habitable, light a candle and search. Let us see where in it we can discover justice and where injustice, and in what they differ from one another, and which of them the man who would be happy should have for his portion, whether seen or unseen by gods and men. I hope to make the discovery in this way: I mean to begin with the assumption that our State, if rightly ordered, is perfect.

That is most certain. And being perfect, is therefore wise and valiant and temperate and just.

That is likewise clear.

First among the virtues found in the State, wisdom comes into view. The State which we have been describing is said to be wise as being good in counsel?

Very true.

And good counsel is clearly a kind of knowledge, for not by ignorance, but by knowledge, do men counsel well?

Clearly.

Well, I said, and is there any knowledge in our recently founded State among any of the citizens which advises, not about any particular thing in the State, but about the whole, and considers how a State can best deal with itself and with other States?

There certainly is.

And what is knowledge, and among whom is it found?

I asked.

It is the knowledge of the guardians, he replied, and found among those whom we were just now describing as perfect guardians.

And so by reason of the smallest part or class, and of the knowledge which resides in this presiding and ruling part of itself, the whole State, being thus constituted according to nature, will be wise; and this, which has the only knowledge worthy to be called wisdom, has been ordained by nature to be of all classes the least.

Must true.

Again, I said, there is no difficulty in seeing the nature of courage; and in what part that quality resides which gives the name of courageous to the State.

How do you mean?

Why, I said, every one who calls any State courageous or cowardly, will be thinking of the part which fights and goes out to war on the State's behalf.

No one, he replied, would ever think of any other.

The city will be courageous in virtue of a portion of herself which preserves under all circumstances that opinion about the nature of things to be feared and not to be feared in which our legislator educated them; and this is what you term courage.
Two virtues remain to be discovered in the State-first temperance, and then justice which is the end of our search... The virtue of temperance has more of the nature of harmony and symmetry than the preceding.

How so? he asked.

Temperance, I replied, is the ordering or controlling of certain pleasures and desires; this is curiously enough implied in the saying of ‘a man being his own master’... I believe, that in the human soul there is a better and also a worse principle; and when the better has the worse under control, then a man is said to be master of himself...

Yes, there is reason in that... Temperance is unlike courage and wisdom, each of which resides in a part only, the one making the State wise and the other valiant; not so temperance, which extends to the whole, and runs through all the notes of the scale, and produces a harmony of the weaker and the stronger and the middle class, whether you suppose them to be stronger or weaker in wisdom or power or numbers or wealth, or anything else. Most truly then may we deem temperance to be the agreement of the naturally superior and inferior, as to the right to rule of either, both in states and individuals.

I entirely agree with you.

And so, I said, we may consider three out of the four virtues to have been discovered in our State. The last of those qualities which make a state virtuous must be justice, if we only knew what that was.

The inference is obvious... You remember the original principle which we were always laying down at the foundation of the State, that one man should practise one thing only, the thing to which his nature was best adapted; —now justice is this principle or a part of it.

Yes, we often said that one man should do one thing only.

Further, we affirmed that justice was doing one's own business, and not being a busybody...

Yes.

Then on this view also justice will be admitted to be the having and doing what is a man's own, and belongs to him?

Very true.

Think, now, and say whether you agree with me or not. Suppose... the cobbler or any other man whom nature designed to be a trader... attempts to force his way into the class of warriors, or a warrior into that of legislators and guardians, for which he is unfitted, and either to take the implements or the duties of the other; or when one man is trader, legislator, and warrior all in one, then I think you will agree with me in saying that this interchange and this meddling of one with another is the ruin of the State.

Most true.

Seeing then, I said, that there are three distinct classes, any meddling of one with another, or the change of one into another, is the greatest harm to the State, and may be most justly termed evil-doing?

Precisely.

And the greatest degree of evil-doing to one's own city would be termed by you injustice?

Certainly.

This then is injustice; and on the other hand when the trader, the auxiliary, and the guardian each do their own business, that is justice, and will make the city just.

I agree with you.

Justice in the Individual

We will not, I said, be over-positive as yet; but if, on trial, this conception of justice be verified in the individual as well as in the State, there will be no longer any room for doubt... First let us complete the old investigation, which we began, as you remember, under the impression that, if we could previously examine justice on the larger scale, there would be less difficulty in discerning her in the individual. That larger example appeared to be the State, and accordingly we constructed as good a one as we could, knowing well that in the good State justice would be found. Let the discovery which we made be now applied to the individual —if they agree, we shall be satisfied...

That will be in regular course; let us do as you say...

And so of the individual; we may assume that he has the same three principles in his own soul which are found in the State; and he may be rightly described in the same terms, because he is affected in the same manner?

Certainly, he said.

Once more then, O my friend, we have alighted upon an easy question —whether the soul has these three principles or not?

An easy question!...

Must we not acknowledge, I said, that in each of us there are the same principles and habits which there are in the State; and that from the individual they pass into the State? —how else can they come there?...

Exactly so, he said.

But the question is not quite so easy when we proceed to ask whether these principles are three or one; whether, that is to say, we learn with one part of our nature, are angry with another, and with a third part desire the satisfaction of our natural appetites; or whether the whole soul comes into play in each sort of action —to determine that is the difficulty.

Yes, he said; there lies the difficulty.

Then let us now try and determine whether they are the same or different.

How can we? he asked.

I replied as follows: The same thing clearly cannot act or be acted upon in the same part or in relation to the same thing at the same time, in contrary ways; and therefore whenever this contradiction occurs in things apparently the same, we know that they are really not the same, but different.

Good...

Well, I said, would you not allow that assent and dissent, desire and aversion, attraction and repulsion, are all of them opposites, whether they are regarded as active
or passive (for that makes no difference in the fact of their opposition)?

Yes, he said, they are opposites. . . .

Then the soul of the thirsty one, in so far as he is thirsty, desires only drink; for this he yearns and tries to obtain it?

That is plain.

And if you suppose something which pulls a thirsty soul away from drink, that must be different from the thirsty principle which draws him like a beast to drink; for, as we were saying, the same thing cannot at the same time with the same part of itself act in contrary ways about the same.

Impossible. . . .

And might a man be thirsty, and yet unwilling to drink?

Yes, he said, it constantly happens.

And in such a case what is one to say? Would you not say that there was something in the soul bidding a man to drink, and something else forbidding him, which is other and stronger than the principle which bids him?

I should say so. . . .

Then we may fairly assume that they are two, and that they differ from one another; the one with which man reasons, we may call the rational principle of the soul, the other, with which he loves and hungers and thirsts and feels the flutterings of any other desire, may be termed the irrational or appetitive, the ally of sundry pleasures and satisfactions?

Yes, he said, we may fairly assume them to be different.

Then let us finally determine that there are two principles existing in the soul. And what of passion, or spirit? Is it a third, or akin to one of the preceding? . . .

Anger at times goes to war with desire, as though they were two distinct things.

Yes; that is the meaning, he said.

And are there not many other cases in which we observe that when a man's desires violently prevail over his reason, he reviles himself, and is angry at the violence within him, and that in this struggle, which is like the struggle of factions in a State, his spirit is on the side of his reason; . . . the passionate or spirited element . . . is arrayed on the side of the rational principle. . . .

And so, after much tossing, we have reached land, and are fairly agreed that the same principles which exist in the State exist also in the individual, and that they are three in number.

Exactly. . . .

And the individual will be acknowledged by us to be just in the same way in which the State is just?

That follows, of course.

We cannot but remember that the justice of the State consisted in each of the three classes doing the work of its own class?

We are not very likely to have forgotten, he said.

We must recollect that the individual in whom the several qualities of his nature do their own work will be just, and will do his own work?

Yes, he said, we must remember that too.

And ought not the rational principle, which is wise, and has the care of the whole soul, to rule, and the passionate or spirited principle to be the subject and ally?

Certainly. . . .

And he is to be deemed courageous whose spirit retains in pleasure and in pain the commands of reason about what he ought or ought not to fear?

Right, he replied. . . .

And would you not say that he is temperate who has these same elements in friendly harmony, in whom the one ruling principle of reason, and the two subject ones of spirit and desire are equally agreed that reason ought to rule, and do not rebel?

Certainly, he said . . .

And surely, I said, we have explained again and again how and by virtue of what quality a man will be just.

That is very certain. . . .

On Injustice

And now, I said, injustice has to be considered.

Clearly.

Must not injustice be a strife which arises among the three principles—a meddlesomeness, and interference, and rising up of a part of the soul against the whole, an assertion of unlawful authority, which is made by a rebellious subject against a true prince, of whom he is the natural vassal,—what is all this confusion and delusion but injustice, and intemperance and cowardice and ignorance, and every form of vice? . . .

What do you mean? he said.

Why, I said, they are like disease and health; being in the soul just what disease and health are in the body.

How so? he said.

Why, I said, that which is healthy causes health, and that which is unhealthy causes disease.

Yes.

And just actions cause justice, and unjust actions cause injustice?

That is certain.

And the creation of health is the institution of a natural order and government of one by another in the parts of the body; and the creation of disease is the production of a state of things at variance with this natural order?

True.

And is not the creation of justice the institution of a natural order and government of one by another in the parts of the soul, and the creation of injustice the production of a state of things at variance with the natural order?

Exactly so, he said.

Then virtue is the health and beauty and well-being of the soul, and vice the disease and weakness and deformity of the same?

True.
And do not good practices lead to virtue, and evil practices to vice?

Assuredly.

Still our old question of the comparative advantage of justice and injustice has not been answered: Which is the more profitable, to be just and act justly and practise virtue, whether seen or unseen of gods and men, or to be unjust and act unjustly, if only unpunished and unrefomed?

In my judgment, Socrates, the question has now become ridiculous. We know that, when the bodily constitution is gone, life is no longer endurable, though pampered with all kinds of meats and drinks, and having all wealth and all power; and shall we be told that when the very essence of the vital principle is undermined and corrupted, life is still worth having to aman, if only he be allowed to do whatever he likes with the single exception that he is not to acquire justice and virtue, or to escape from injustice and vice; assuming them both to be such as we have described?

Yes, I said, the question is, as you say, ridiculous. . . .

The Philosopher King

Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils, —nor the human race, as I believe, —and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day. Such was the thought, my dear Glaucon, which I would fain have uttered if it had not seemed too extravagant; for to be convinced that in no other State can there be happiness private or public is indeed a hard thing. . . .

On Shadows and Realities: Analogy of the Divided Line

The soul is like the eye: when resting upon that on which truth and being shine, the soul perceives and understands and is radiant with intelligence; but when turned towards the twilight of becoming and perishing, then she has opinion only, and goes blinking about, and is first of one opinion and then of another, and seems to have no intelligence?

Just so.

Now, that which imparts truth to the known and the power of knowing to the knower is what I would have you term the idea of good, and this you will deem to be the cause of science, and of truth . . . In like manner the good may be said to be not only the author of knowledge to all things known, but of their being and essence, and yet the good is not essence, but far exceeds essence in dignity and power. . . . You have to imagine . . . that there are two ruling powers, and that one of them is set over the intellectual world, the other over the visible. . . .

Now take a line which has been cut into two unequal parts, and divide each of them again in the same proportion, and suppose the two main divisions to answer, one to the visible and the other to the intelligible, and then compare the subdivisions in respect of their clearness and want of clearness, and you will find that the first section in the sphere of the visible consists of . . . shadows, and in the second place, reflections in water and in solid, smooth and polished bodies and the like: Do you understand?

Yes, I understand.

Imagine, now, the other section, of which this is only the resemblance, to include the animals which we see, and everything that grows or is made.

Very good.

Would you not admit that both the sections of this division have different degrees of truth, and that the copy is to the original as the sphere of opinion is to the sphere of knowledge?

Most undoubtedly.

Next proceed to consider the manner in which the sphere of the intellectual is to be divided. . . . In the higher of the two, the soul passes out of hypotheses, and goes up to a principle which is above hypotheses, making no use of images as in the former case, but proceeding only in and through the ideas themselves.

I do not quite understand your meaning, he said.

Then I will try again; you will understand me better when I have made some preliminary remarks. You are aware that students of geometry, arithmetic, and the kindred sciences assume the odd and the even and the figures and three kinds of angles and the like in their several branches of science; these are their hypotheses, which they and everybody are supposed to know, and therefore they do not deign to give any account of them either to themselves or others; but they begin with them, and go on until they arrive at last, and in a consistent manner, at their conclusion?

Yes, he said, I know.

And do you not know also that although they make use of the visible forms and reason about them, they are thinking not of these, but of the ideals which they resemble; not of the figures which they draw, but of the absolute square and the absolute diameter, and so on— the forms which they draw or make, and which have shadows and reflections in water of their own, are converted by them into images, but they are really seeking to behold the things themselves, which can only be seen with the eye of the mind?

That is true.

And of this kind I spoke as the intelligible, although in the search after it the soul is compelled to use hypotheses; not ascending to a first principle, because she is unable to rise above the region of hypothesis, but employing the objects of which the shadows below are resemblances in their turn as images, they having in
relation to the shadows and reflections of them a greater distinctness, and therefore a higher value.

I understand, he said, that you are speaking of the province of geometry and the sister arts.

And when I speak of the other division of the intelligible, you will understand me to speak of that other sort of knowledge which reason herself attains by the power of dialectic, using the hypotheses not as first principles, but only as hypotheses—that is to say, as steps and points of departure into a world which is above hypotheses, in order that she may soar beyond them to the first principle of the whole; and clinging to this and then to that which depends on this, by successive steps she descends again without the aid of any sensible object, from ideas, through ideas, and in ideas she ends. . . .

I understand you, he replied . . .

And now, corresponding to these four divisions, let there be four faculties in the soul—reason answering to the highest, understanding to the second, faith (or conviction) to the third, and perception of shadows to the last—and let there be a scale of them, and let us suppose that the several faculties have clearness in the same degree that their objects have truth.

I understand, he replied . . .

On Shadows and Realities: The Allegory of the Cave

And now, I said, let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened: —Behold! human beings living in a underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets.

I see.

And do you see, I said, men passing along the wall carrying all sorts of vessels, and statues and figures of animals made of wood and stone and various materials, which appear over the wall? Some of them are talking, others silent.

You have shown me a strange image, and they are strange prisoners.

Like ourselves, I replied; and they see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave?

True, he said; how could they see anything but the shadows if they were never allowed to move their heads?

And of the objects which are being carried in like manner they would only see the shadows?

Yes, he said.

And if they were able to converse with one another, would they not suppose that they were naming what was actually before them?

Very true.

And suppose further that the prison had an echo which came from the other side, would they not be sure to fancy when one of the passers-by spoke that the voice which they heard came from the passing shadow?

No question, he replied.

To them, I said, the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images.

That is certain.

And now look again, and see what will naturally follow it' the prisoners are released and disabused of their error. At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows; and then conceive some one saying to him, that what he saw before was an illusion, but that now, when he is approaching nearer to being and his eye is turned towards more real existence, he has a clearer vision, -what will be his reply? And you may further imagine that his instructor is pointing to the objects as they pass and requiring him to name them, -will he not be perplexed? Will he not fancy that the shadows which he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now shown to him?

Far truer.

And if he is compelled to look straight at the light, will he not have a pain in his eyes which will make him turn away to take and take in the objects of vision which he can see, and which he will conceive to be in reality clearer than the things which are now being shown to him?

True, he now

And suppose once more, that he is reluctantly dragged up a steep and rugged ascent, and held fast until he’s forced into the presence of the sun himself, is he not likely to be pained and irritated? When he approaches the light his eyes will be dazzled, and he will not be able to see anything at all of what are now called realities.

Not all in a moment, he said.

He will require to grow accustomed to the sight of the upper world. And first he will see the shadows best, next the reflections of men and other objects in the water, and then the objects themselves; then he will gaze upon the light of the moon and the stars and the spangled heaven; and he will see the sky and the stars by night better than the sun or the light of the sun by day?

Certainly.

Last of he will be able to see the sun, and not mere reflections of him in the water, but he will see him in his own proper place, and not in another; and he will contemplate him as he is.

Certainly.

He will then proceed to argue that this is he who gives the season and the years, and is the guardian of all
that is in the visible world, and in a certain way the cause of all things which he and his fellows have been accustomed to behold?

Clearly, he said, he would first see the sun and then reason about him.

And when he remembered his old habitation, and the wisdom of the den and his fellow-prisoners, do you not suppose that he would felicitate himself on the change, and pity them?

Certainly, he would.

And if they were in the habit of conferring honours among themselves on those who were quickest to observe the passing shadows and to remark which of them went before, and which followed after, and which were together; and who were therefore best able to draw conclusions as to the future, do you think that he would care for such honours and glories, or envy the possessors of them? Would he not say with Homer, Better to be the poor servant of a poor master, and to endure anything, rather than think as they do and live after their manner?

Yes, he said, I think that he would rather suffer anything than entertain these false notions and live in this miserable manner.

Imagine once more, I said, such an one coming suddenly out of the sun to be replaced in his old situation; would he not be certain to have his eyes full of darkness?

To be sure, he said.

And if there were a contest, and he had to compete in measuring the shadows with the prisoners who had never moved out of the den, while his sight was still weak, and before his eyes had become steady (and the time which would be needed to acquire this new habit of sight might be very considerable) would he not be ridiculous? Men would say of him that up he went and down he came without his eyes; and that it was better not even to think of ascending; and if any one tried to loose another and lead him up to the light, let them only catch the offender, and they would put him to death.

No question, he said.

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This entire allegory, I said, you may now append, dear Glaucon, to the previous argument; the prison-house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun, and . . . the journey upwards . . . the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world . . . . The world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort; and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and that this is the power upon which he who would act rationally, either in public or private life must have his eye fixed.

Moreover, I said, you must not wonder that those who attain to this beatific vision are unwilling to descend to human affairs; for their souls are ever hastening into the upper world where they desire to dwell; which desire of theirs is very natural, if our allegory may be trusted.

Yes, very natural. . . .

Any one who has common sense will remember that the bewilderments of the eyes are of two kinds, and arise from two causes, either from coming out of the light or from going into the light, which is true of the mind's eye, quite as much as of the bodily eye; and he who remembers this when he sees any one whose vision is perplexed and weak, will not be too ready to laugh; he will first ask whether that soul of man has come out of the brighter light, and is unable to see because unaccustomed to the dark, or having turned from darkness to the day is dazzled by excess of light. And he will count the one happy in his condition and state of being, and he will pity the other . . .

That, he said, is a very just distinction.

But then, if I am right, certain professors of education must be wrong when they say that they can put a knowledge into the soul which was not there before, like sight into blind eyes.

They undoubtedly say this, he replied.

Whereas, our argument shows that the power and capacity of learning exists in the soul already; and that just as the eye was unable to turn from darkness to light without the whole body, so too the instrument of knowledge can only by the movement of the whole soul be turned from the world of becoming into that of being, and learn by degrees to endure the sight of being, and of the brightest and best of being, or in other words, of the good.

Very true. . . .

Yes, I said; and there is another thing which is likely, or rather a necessary inference from what has preceded, that neither the uneducated and uninformed of the truth, nor yet those who never make an end of their education, will be able ministers of State; not the former, because they have no single aim of duty which is the rule of all their actions, private as well as public; nor the latter, because they will not act at all except upon compulsion, fancying that they are already dwelling apart in the islands of the blest.

Very true, he replied.

Then, I said, the business of us who are the founders of the State will be to compel the best minds to attain that knowledge which we have already shown to be the greatest of all—they must continue to ascend until they arrive at the good; but when they have ascended and seen enough we must not allow them to do as they do now.

What do you mean?

I mean that they remain in the upper world: but this must not be allowed; they must be made to descend again among the prisoners in the den, and partake of their labours and honours, whether they are worth having or not.

But is not this unjust? he said; ought we to give them a worse life, when they might have a better?

You have again forgotten, my friend, I said, the intention of the legislator, who did not aim at making any one class in the State happy above the rest; the happiness
was to be in the whole State, and he held the citizens together by persuasion and necessity, making them benefactors of the State, and therefore benefactors of one another; to this end he created them, not to please themselves, but to be his instruments in binding up the State.

True, he said, I had forgotten.

Observe, Glaucon, that there will be no injustice in compelling our philosophers to have a care and providence of others; we shall explain to them that . . . we have brought you into the world to be rulers of the hive, kings of yourselves and of the other citizens, and have educated you far better and more perfectly than they have been educated, and you are better able to share in the double duty. Wherefore each of you, when his turn comes, must go down to the general underground abode, and get the habit of seeing in the dark. When you have acquired the habit, you will see ten thousand times better than the inhabitants of the den, and you will know what the several images are, and what they represent, because you have seen the beautiful and just and good in their truth. . . .

Education of the Guardians: Arithmatic

Who then are those whom we shall compel to be guardians? Surely they will be the men who are wisest about affairs of State, and by whom the State is best administered, and who at the same time have other honours and another and a better life than that of politics?

They are the men, and I will choose them, he replied. And now shall we consider in what way such guardians will be produced, and how they are to be brought from darkness to light . . . ?

By all means, he replied.

The process, I said, is not the turning over of an oyster-shell, but the turning round of a soul passing from a day which is little better than night to the true day of being, that is, the ascent from below, which we affirm to be true philosophy?

Quite so.

And should we not enquire what sort of knowledge has the power of effecting such a change?

Certainly.

What sort of knowledge is there which would draw the soul from becoming to being? And another consideration has just occurred to me: You will remember that our young men are to be warrior athletes

Yes, that was said.

That is the new kind of knowledge which must have an additional quality?

What quality?

Usefulness in war.

Yes, if possible.

There were two parts in our former scheme of education, were there not? There was gymnastic . . .

But what do you say of music . . . ?

But in music there was nothing which tended to that good which you are now seeking. . . .; and yet if music and gymnastic are excluded, and the arts are also excluded, what remains?

Well, I said, there may be nothing left of our special subjects; and then we shall have to take something which is not special, but of universal application. . . . number and calculation: —do not all arts and sciences necessarily partake of them?

Yes. . . .

Can we deny that a warrior should have a knowledge of arithmetic?

Certainly he should, if he is to have the smallest understanding of military tactics, or indeed, I should rather say, if he is to be a man at all. . . .

It appears to me to be a study of the kind which we are seeking, and which leads naturally to reflection, but never to have been rightly used; for the true use of it is simply to draw the soul towards being.

Will you explain your meaning? he said. . . .

I mean to say that objects of sense are of two kinds; some of them do not invite thought because the sense is an adequate judge of them; while in the case of other objects sense is so untrustworthy that further enquiry is imperatively demanded. . . . —those which are simultaneous with opposite impressions, invite thought; those which are not simultaneous do not.

I understand, he said, and agree with you.

And to which class do unity and number belong?

I do not know, he replied.

Think a little and you will see that what has preceded will . . . involves the conception of plurality, then thought begins to be aroused within us, and the soul perplexed and wanting to arrive at a decision asks 'What is absolute unity?' This is the way in which the study of the one has a power of drawing and converting the mind to the contemplation of true being. . . .

And all arithmetic and calculation have to do with number?

Yes.

And they appear to lead the mind towards truth?

Yes, in a very remarkable manner.

Then this is knowledge of the kind for which we are seeking, having a double use, military and philosophical; for the man of war must learn the art of number or he will not know how to array his troops, and the philosopher also, because he has to rise out of the sea of change and lay hold of true being, and therefore he must be an arithmetician.

That is true.

And our guardian is both warrior and philosopher?

Let this then be made one of our subjects of education.

Education of the Guardians: Geomatry

144 The Republic
And next, shall we enquire whether the kindred science also concerns us?
You mean geometry? . . .
Geometry will draw the soul towards truth, and create the spirit of philosophy, and raise up that which is now unhappily allowed to fall down.
Nothing will be more likely to have such an effect. . . .
There are the military advantages of which you spoke, I said; and in all departments of knowledge, as experience proves, any one who has studied geometry is infinitely quicker of apprehension than one who has not.
Yes indeed, he said, there is an infinite difference between them.
Then shall we propose this as a second branch of knowledge which our youth will study?
Let us do so, he replied. . . .

Education of the Guardians: Dialectic

And so, Glaucon, I said, we have at last arrived at the hymn of dialectic. This is that strain which is of the intellect only . . . . And so with dialectic; when a person starts on the discovery of the absolute by the light of reason only, and without any assistance of sense, and perseveres until by pure intelligence he arrives at the perception of the absolute good, he at last finds himself at the end of the intellectual world, as in the case of sight at the end of the visible. . . .
Say, then, what is the nature and what are the divisions of dialectic, and what are the paths which lead thither; for these paths will also lead to our final rest? . . .
We are satisfied, as before, to have four divisions; two for intellect and two for opinion, and to call the first division science, the second understanding, the third belief, and the fourth perception of shadows, opinion being concerned with becoming, and intellect with being; and so to make a proportion: —As being is to becoming, so is pure intellect to opinion. And as intellect is to opinion, so is science to belief, and understanding to the perception of shadows. But let us defer the further correlation and subdivision of the subjects of opinion and of intellect, for it will be a long enquiry, many times longer than this has been.
As far as I understand, he said, I agree.
And do you also agree, I said, in describing the dialectician as one who attains a conception of the essence of each thing? And he who does not possess and is therefore unable to impart this conception, in whatever degree he fails, may in that degree also be said to fail in intelligence? Will you admit so much?
Yes, he said; how can I deny it?
And you would say the same of the conception of the good?
Until the person is able to abstract and define rationally the idea of good, and unless he can run the gauntlet of all objections, and is ready to disprove them, not by appeals to opinion, but to absolute truth, never faltering at any step of the argument —unless he can do all this, you would say that he knows neither the idea of good nor any other good; he apprehends only a shadow, if anything at all, which is given by opinion and not by science . . . .
In all that I should most certainly agree with you.
Dialectic, then, as you will agree, is the coping-stone of the sciences . . . ; no other science can be placed higher —the nature of knowledge can no further go?
I agree, he said. . . .

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And, therefore, calculation and geometry and all the other elements of instruction, which are a preparation for dialectic, should be presented to the mind in childhood; not, however, under any notion of forcing our system of education.

Why not?
Because a freeman ought not to be a slave in the acquisition of knowledge of any kind . . . . knowledge which is acquired under compulsion obtains no hold on the mind.
Very true.
Then, my good friend, I said, do not use compulsion, but let early education be a sort of amusement; you will then be better able to find out the natural bent.
That is a very rational notion, he said.
Do you remember that the children, too, were to be taken to see the battle on horseback; and that if there were no danger they were to be brought close up and, like young hounds, have a taste of blood given them?
Yes, I remember.
The same practice may be followed, I said, in all these things —labours, lessons, dangers —and he who is most at home in all of them ought to be enrolled in a select number.
At what age?
At the age when the necessary gymnastics are over . . . . After that time those who are selected from the class of twenty years old will be promoted to higher honour, and the sciences which they learned without any order in their early education will now be brought together, and they will be able to see the natural relationship of them to one another and to true being.
Yes, he said, that is the only kind of knowledge which takes lasting root.
Yes, I said; and the capacity for such knowledge is the great criterion of dialectical talent: the comprehensive mind is always the dialectical.
I agree with you, he said. . . .
And those who have most of this comprehension, and who are more steadfast in their learning, and in their military and other appointed duties, when they have arrived at the age of thirty have to be chosen . . . . and elevated to higher honour; and you will have to prove them by the help of dialectic, in order to learn which of them is able to give up the use of sight and the other senses, and in company with truth to attain absolute being . . . . Suppose, I said, the study of philosophy to take . . .
five years . . .; at the end of the time they must be sent down again into the den and compelled to hold any military or other office which young men are qualified to hold: in this way they will get their experience of life, and there will be an opportunity of trying whether, when they are drawn all manner of ways by temptation, they will stand firm or flinch.

And how long is this stage of their lives to last?

Fifteen years, I answered; and when they have reached fifty years of age, then let those who still survive and have distinguished themselves in every action of their lives and in every branch of knowledge come at last to their consummation; the time has now arrived at which they must raise the eye of the soul to the universal light which lightens all things, and behold the absolute good; . . . making philosophy their chief pursuit, but, when their turn comes, toiling also at politics and ruling for the public good, not as though they were performing some heroic action, but simply as a matter of duty . . .

You are a sculptor, Socrates, and have made statues of our governors faultless in beauty.

Yes, I said, Glaucon, and of our governesses too; for you must not suppose that what I have been saying applies to men only and not to women as far as their natures can go.

There you are right, he said, since we have made them to share in all things like the men.

Well, I said, and you would agree (would you not?) that what has been said about the State and the government is not a mere dream, and although difficult not impossible, but only possible in the way which has been supposed; that is to say, when the true philosopher kings are born in a State, . . . despising the honours of this present world which they deem mean and worthless, esteeming above all things right and the honour that springs from right, and regarding justice as the greatest and most necessary of all things, whose ministers they are, and whose principles will be exalted by them when they set in order their own city . . .