

Plato's *Republic*

Book V

Translated by David Horan

Persons in the dialogue: Socrates, Glaucon, Adeimantus, Polemarchus, Cephalus, Thrasymachus, Cleitophon, and others

^{449A} “Well, a city like this and such a form of government, and a man of this sort too, I call good and right. And if this is indeed right I call the others bad, and wide of the mark in relation to the management of cities, and provision for the type of soul of their private citizens. There are four forms of degeneracy in cities.”

“What are they?” he asked.

And as I was about to speak of these four in turn, and how in my view they each ^{449B} evolve from one another,¹ Polemarchus, who was seated further from Adeimantus, reached out his hand, grabbed his garment from above around the shoulder, drew the man toward him, stretched forward, leaned towards him and said a few things, none of which we could hear except,

“Well, shall we let this go,” said he, “or what shall we do?”

“Not in the least,” said Adeimantus, speaking loudly at this stage.

“And,” I said, “what precisely are you ‘not letting go’?”

“You,” said he.

^{449C} “Because of what, precisely?” said I.

“We think,” said he, “that you are taking the easy way, and cheating us out of a whole section of the argument, an important one at that, so that you do not have to go through it in detail. And you think you will get away with saying glibly, that of course in the case of women and children it is obvious to everyone that ‘friends will have all things in common’.”²

“Is that not right, Adeimantus?” said I.

“Yes,” said he. “But ‘right’, like everything else, requires explanation – common in what sense? Indeed, it could be meant in many ways. ^{449D} So do not just pass on. Tell us what sense you intend, since we have been waiting for some time, expecting you somehow to mention the procreation of children – how this will happen, and how they will be reared once

¹ This task is undertaken in Book 8.

² See 423e–424a.

they have been born – and explain this whole issue of women and children being in common that you are speaking of. For we believe that arranging this correctly or incorrectly is of enormous significance, on the whole, to a system of government. So now, since you are in the process of tackling another form of government before dealing properly with these issues, we are resolved, as you heard, ^{450A} not to let you proceed until you have gone through all these details, just as you did with the others.”

“And you can include me in that vote too,” said Glaucon.

“Indeed, Socrates,” said Thrasymachus, “you may regard this as a resolution of us all.”

“What have you done,” said I, “tackling me like this? What an enormous argument you are setting in train. It is like starting all over again from the beginning about the form of government, when I was pleased that this had been dealt with already, being satisfied if someone would allow all this, and accept ^{450B} what was said at the time. Now, when you call these matters into question, you do not realise what a swarm of arguments you are stirring up. I saw this earlier, and I passed on for fear of raising too much difficulty.”

“What is this?” said Thrasymachus. “Do you think these people have come here on some gold-rush, and not to hear arguments?”

“Yes,” said I, “arguments, in measure.”

“Yes, Socrates,” said Glaucon. “But for reasonable people, their whole life hearing arguments like these is the measure. But do not be concerned about us, and for your own part, do not tire at all ^{450C} of expanding upon your views about what will be the manner of this sharing of children, and of women, among our guardians, and the rearing of the young ones in the intervening years, after they are born and before their education. A troublesome period, it seems. So, try to describe the manner in which this should happen.”

“Blessed man,” said I, “this is not easy to explain, since it involves a great deal that is difficult to accept, even more than what we dealt with previously. Indeed, it may be hard to believe that what is said is possible, and even if it were somehow or other to become a reality, it may be hard to accept that these would be the best arrangements. That is why, dear friend, there is some reluctance ^{450D} to touch them at all, in case the argument looks like a vain hope.”

“Let there be no hesitation,” said he, “for your hearers will be neither unsympathetic, nor incredulous, nor negative.”

“And,” I said, “best of men, I presume you wish to encourage me by saying this?”

“I do,” said he.

“Well you are doing the exact opposite,” said I. “If I believed I knew what I was talking about, your encouragement would be well placed. For to speak the truth when you know it, among reasonable people ^{450E} and friends, on matters of great importance that are dear to your heart, is safe and encouraging. But to construct arguments when you are still in doubt and still seeking, which is what I am doing, is a frightening ^{451A} and perilous undertaking.

Not for fear of being laughed at – that is a trivial concern – but that I shall stumble from the truth, and bring down not just myself but my friends too, on issues we should not stumble from at all. And I prostrate myself before Adrasteia,³ Glaucon, for what I am about to say. For I expect that it is a lesser error to become a murderer by mistake, than to deceive noble and good people about what is just and lawful. Now, it is better to run this risk among enemies rather than friends, so you do well to encourage me.”

^{451B} Glaucon laughed, and said, “But, Socrates, if we experience any disquiet over your argument, we shall acquit you as if you had been charged with murder. To us you are pure and not a deceiver, so take heart and speak.”

“Well then,” said I, “according to the law, someone acquitted in court is pure, so that is likely to be so in this situation too.”

“Then speak,” said he, “now that this is resolved.”

“In that case,” said I, “we need to go back over this once more, and say now, in due order, whatever we probably should ^{451C} have said at the time. And perhaps this would be the correct way: after the male drama has been described thoroughly, let us go on and conclude the female drama, especially since that is what you are asking me to do. Indeed in my opinion, for people whose nature and education is as we have described it, there is not another correct way of possessing and dealing with children and women, besides proceeding in the direction in which we first sent them. In our account we attempted, I believe, to establish the men as guardians of a herd.”

“Yes.”

^{451D} “Well, let us follow this up by assigning them the relevant birth and upbringing, and consider whether that is appropriate for our purposes or not.”

“In what way?” said he.

“As follows. Do we think female guard-dogs should guard whatever the males guard along with them, and hunt, and share in the other duties too? Or should they be kept at home indoors, unable to do all this because they bear the puppies and rear them, while the males go out to work, and have total responsibility for the flock?”

“They should share in everything,” said he, “except that we should employ the females as weaker, and the males as stronger.”

^{451E} “Now is it possible,” said I, “to employ any creature in the same roles as any other creature, if they have not received the same upbringing and education?”

“That is not possible.”

“So if we are to employ women in the same roles as men, they also should be taught the same things.”

³ Adrasteia was a name for Nemesis, the goddess of vengeance in Greek mythology, who exacts retribution against those who succumb to hubris.

452A “Yes.”

“Music and gymnastics were given to the men.”

“Yes.”

“In that case, these two skills should be given to the women too, along with anything related to warfare, and they should be employed in the same ways.”

“That is likely,” said he, “from what you are saying.”

“Perhaps then,” said I, “compared to what we are used to, a lot of what we are now describing might appear comical, if practised in the way it is being described.”

“Very much so,” said he.

“What,” said I, “do you regard as the most comical aspect of all this? Or is it of course the prospect of the women exercising naked in the Palaestra alongside the men, ^{452B} not just the young women but the older ones too, just like the old men in the gymnasium when they are wrinkled and not a pleasant sight, who love their gymnastics nevertheless.”

“Yes, by Zeus,” said he. “That would look comical, by present day standards at least.”

“Well,” said I, “since our discussion is under way, we should not be afraid of whatever jokes, of whatever kind, the witty folk might make about such a transformation taking place in the realms of gymnastics or music, ^{452C} especially in relation to women bearing arms or riding horses.”

“Quite right,” said he.

“And since we have begun to discuss this, we should proceed to the rough terrain of the law, and implore these wits not to do what belongs to themselves but to be serious, and we shall remind them that it is not long since the Greeks thought it disgraceful, and comical too, as do most other races today, for men to be seen naked. And when the practice of exercising naked first started among the Cretans, and then among the Spartans, ^{452D} the polite folk of that era got away with making a mockery of all this. Do you not think so?”

“I do.”

“However, I think once it became evident, to those who adopted the practice, that it is better to undress for any activities of this sort rather than covering up, then what is comical to the eyes vanished in the face of what reason proclaimed to be best. And this demonstrated that it is futile to regard anything as comical, except what is bad. And that someone who tries to raise a laugh by regarding any other spectacle, apart from stupidity and evil, as comical, will also in all seriousness be setting up another ^{452E} standard of nobility, apart from what is good.”

“Entirely so,” said he.

“Well now, should we not first come to agreement on whether all this is possible or not, and grant a right of reply in case someone wishes to argue, in jest or seriously, over whether

human nature, in the case of the female, is able ^{453A} to share in all the tasks of the male, or in none of them, or in some but not in others, and over which of these two categories this military role belongs to? Would this not be the best way to start the process, to ensure that we are likely to finish in the best way too?”

“Very much so,” said he.

“In that case,” said I, “would you like us to take up the dispute ourselves on their behalf, in case the arguments of the other side go undefended against our repeated attacks?”

“There is no reason not to,” said he.

^{453B} “Then let us say on their behalf, ‘Socrates and Glaucon, there is no need for you to dispute with anyone else, since you yourselves, when you began founding this city of yours, agreed that each individual should engage in the one function that is his own by nature.’”

“I believe we agreed this. Why would we not?”

“‘Must there not be an enormous difference in nature between a woman and a man?’”

“Yes, they must be different.”

“‘In that case, is it not appropriate to assign a different function to each, the one that is their own by nature?’”

“Of course.”

^{453C} “‘So how can you avoid falling into error now, and saying the opposite of what you yourselves said before, by maintaining that although men and women are vastly different in nature, they should perform the same functions?’ Well, my wonderful friend, what defence will you be able to offer in response to this?”

“It is not very easy,” said he, “to respond so suddenly. But I shall ask you, and I am asking you, to elaborate the case on our behalf, whatever that is.”

“These, dear Glaucon, and many others like them, are the issues that I was afraid of when I foresaw them a while ago, and so I was reluctant to deal with ^{453D} the law concerning the possession and upbringing of women and children.”

“It does not seem to be an easy subject to deal with,” said he. “Not at all, by Zeus.”

“Indeed not,” said I. “But the fact of the matter is that regardless of whether someone falls into a little bathing pool, or the middle of a vast sea, nonetheless he swims.”

“Very much so.”

“Should we not swim too, and attempt to save ourselves from the argument, hoping that some dolphin, or some other more unusual saviour, would pick us up?⁴”

⁴ This is a reference to the mythical story of the poet Arion who was fabled to have been kidnapped by pirates and rescued by a dolphin.

“Quite likely,” said he.

^{453E} “Come on then,” said I. “Let us find some way out of this. Although we agree of course that a different nature should engage in a different activity, and that women and men differ in nature, we are now maintaining that these different natures should engage in the same activities. Are these the accusations against us?”

“Yes, precisely.”

^{454A} “Dear Glaucon,” said I, “how noble is the power of the skill of contradiction.”

“Why?”

“Because,” said I, “it seems to me that many people fall into this unintentionally, and believe they are not arguing, but engaging in discussion. This is because they are unable to consider what is being said by making distinctions on the basis of forms, so they pursue their opposition to what is being said based just upon a word, employing argumentation rather than dialectic towards one another.”

“Yes indeed,” said he, “that is what happens to a lot of people. But surely this does not apply to us at the moment?”

^{454B} “It certainly does,” said I, “since we are in danger of engaging, unintentionally, in contradiction.”

“How?”

“On the basis only of the word, we are very vigorously and argumentatively pursuing the point that different natures should have different pursuits, but we did not consider, in any way, what kind of different nature we were distinguishing when we assigned different pursuits to a different nature, and the same to the same.”

“No indeed,” said he. “We did not consider this.”

^{454C} “In that case,” said I, “we may, it seems, ask ourselves if the nature of bald men and long-haired men is the same or the opposite. And should we agree that it is opposite, and bald men engage in shoemaking, we would not allow hairy men to do so, and again if hairy men did so, we would not let the others do so.”

“That would be ridiculous indeed,” said he.

“Yes,” said I, “but for what reason? Is it not because, at the time, we were not speaking of a nature that was the same or different in every respect? Rather, we were paying attention ^{454D} only to that form of difference or sameness that applies to the pursuits themselves. We meant, for instance, that a man and a woman with the soul of a physician have the same nature. Do you not think so?”

“I do.”

“But a physician and a builder have a different nature?”

“Completely different, I suppose.”

“Well,” said I, “if it turns out that the male sex and the female sex excel at some skill, or in any pursuit, should we not then declare that this should be assigned to them? But if it merely turns out that they differ in that the female bears the offspring while the male begets ^{454E} them, and in this respect alone, then we shall maintain that nothing more has yet been presented that is relevant to what we are saying, about how a woman differs from a man, and we shall go on thinking that our guardians and their women should engage in the same pursuits.”

“And rightly so,” said he.

“Now after this, should we not ask anyone who says the opposite to explain precisely ^{455A} this to us: in relation to what skill or pursuit, relevant to the condition of our city, is the nature of a woman and a man not the same, but different?”

“Well, that is fair enough.”

“But perhaps someone else might also say what you said a little earlier, that although it is not easy to respond adequately there and then, given time to consider the matter it is not difficult.”

“Yes, they might say that.”

“So, do you want us to ask the person who raises such objections as these to follow ^{455B} us, in case we may somehow demonstrate to him that there is no pursuit, related to the administration of a city, that is particular to a woman?”

“Entirely so.”

“‘Come on then,’ we will say to him, ‘answer us. In what way do you mean that one person has a natural gift for something, while another person does not? Is it that one person learns it easily, while the other has difficulty? Would the one, with minimal instruction, discover a lot for himself about the subject he has been taught, while the other, despite a great deal of instruction and study, would not even retain what he has been taught? And is whatever belongs to the body ^{455C} adequately subservient to thought in one case, and opposed to it in the other? Are these the criteria by which you distinguish the naturally gifted person from the one who is not, or are there others?’”

“No one,” said he, “will maintain there are others.”

“Now, do you know anything that is practised by humanity in which the male sex does not excel over the female, in all these respects? Or are we to go on at length about weaving, and attending to pancakes and stews, in which the female sex does have a reputation, ^{455D} and where it is utterly laughable for them to lose out to a man?”

“That is true,” said he. “You could say that one sex is much surpassed by the other in everything, and although many women are better than many men in many respects, the situation is on the whole as you describe it.”

“So, my friend, in the case of those who manage a city, there is no pursuit that belongs to a woman because she is a woman, or to a man because he is a man. The natures are distributed

in like manner among both creatures, and a woman by nature shares in all the pursuits, and so does a man, ^{455E} although a woman is weaker than a man in every case.”

“Entirely so.”

“Well then, shall we allocate them all to the men and none to the women?”

“How could we?”

“On the contrary, we shall maintain I presume, that one woman is by nature inclined to be a physician while another is not, one is musical while another is unmusical.”

“Of course.”

^{456A} “Is not one woman inclined towards gymnastics and warfare, while another has an aversion to warfare and is no lover of gymnastics?”

“Yes, I think so.”

“What about this? Will one be a lover of wisdom, while another hates it? Will one be spirited, while another is devoid of it?”

“This is the case too.”

“So one woman also has the qualities of a guardian, while another does not, since this was the sort of nature we selected in the case of our male guardians too, was it not?”

“This sort, indeed.”

“So in the guardianship of a city, the nature of a man and of a woman is the same, except insofar as one is weaker and the other stronger.”

“Apparently.”

“In that case, women of this sort should be selected ^{456B} to live with and exercise guardianship with men of this sort, if they are indeed up to the task and akin to them in nature.”

“Entirely so.”

“And should not the same pursuits be allocated to the same natures?”

“The same.”

“So after all that, we have come back to our previous considerations, and we accept that it is not contrary to nature to prescribe music and gymnastics to our women guardians.”

“Entirely so.”

^{456C} “In that case we were not passing impossible laws, like vain hopes, since we proposed a law in accordance with nature. Rather, our present-day practices that run counter to this are, it seems, more opposed to nature.”

“So it seems.”

“Was not our inquiry concerned with whether our proposals might be possible, and for the best?”

“It was indeed.”

“And have we agreed that they are actually possible?”

“Yes.”

“Then do we need to agree next that they are for the best?”

“Of course.”

“Well, when it comes to creating a woman guardian, we will not need one education to produce the men and a different one to produce the women, will we, especially ^{456D} since it is taking charge of the same nature?”

“No, not a different one.”

“Now, what view do you hold on the following issue?”

“What issue?”

“Do you presume that some men are better while others are worse? Or do you think they are all alike?”

“Not at all.”

“Now, in the city we were founding, who do you think turned out to be our better men, the guardians who received the education we described, or the shoemakers who have been educated in shoemaking?”

“What a funny question to ask,” said he.

“I understand,” said I. “And what about the other citizens? Are not these guardians the best of them?”

“Very much so.”

^{456E} “And what about these guardian women? Will they not be the best of the women?”

“This is also the case,” said he. “Very much so.”

“And is there anything better for a city than the presence of the very best women and men?”

“There is not.”

“And will music and gymnastics, applied in the way we have ^{457A} described them, bring this about?”

“Of course.”

“So, not only is the regulation we proposed possible, but it is also best for the city.”

“Quite so.”

“Then the women guardians must undress, since they will be clothed in excellence rather than garments. And they must share the military role and the other duties of a guardian of the city, and not engage in anything else, although in the exercise of these the lighter duties should be assigned to the women, rather than the men, because of the weakness of their sex. But the man ^{457B} who laughs at naked women exercising with the best of intentions, ‘plucks the fruit of laughter, unmaturing by wisdom’,⁵ and does not know what he is laughing at, it seems, or even what he is doing. Indeed, this is surely expressed most beautifully, and always will be, by the saying ‘what is beneficial is beautiful, and what is harmful is ugly’.”

“Entirely so.”

“May we then claim that we are escaping this first wave, so to speak, without being swept away completely by describing the law relating to women’s affairs? We proposed that our male and ^{457C} female guardians should share in all pursuits, but does the argument somehow or other agree with itself, since it describes what is possible, and beneficial too?”

“Yes indeed,” said he. “It is no small wave that we are escaping.”

“You will not say that this one is big,” said I, “when you see the next one.”

“Keep talking,” said he. “Let us see.”

“There is, in my opinion,” said I, “a law that follows from this, and from whatever else has been said before.”

“What is it?”

“These women are all shared ^{457D} among all these men, and no woman is to live together in private with any man. And the children too are shared, and no parent is to know its own offspring, or any child its parent.”

“This,” said he, “presents a much greater credibility issue than the previous one, in terms of its possibility, and also of its benefit.”

“I do not think,” said I, “there would be dispute over the benefit, since there is great good, is there not, in women being shared and children too, if it can be done. But I think there would be much dispute over whether this is possible or not.”

^{457E} “Both issues,” said he, “would be disputed, well and truly.”

“You mean,” said I, “that there is an alliance of arguments against me. I thought I had escaped the first one, provided you would accept that the arrangement would be beneficial, and I would then be left with the question of whether it is possible or not.”

“Well, your escape did not go unnoticed,” said he, “so give an account of both.”

“Then I must pay the penalty,” said I. “But gratify me to this extent. ^{458A} Allow me a holiday, just as people who are mentally lazy are in the habit of indulging themselves when they proceed on their own. In fact people like this, before discovering how something they desire

⁵ This is a variation on a line from Pindar, “plucking the unripe fruit of wisdom,” frg. 209 (Snell).

will come into existence, somehow set that question aside so that they will not tire themselves out by deliberating over whether it is possible or not. They assume that what they want exists already, and set about arranging everything else, and they delight in working out the sort of things they will do now that this has come into existence, ^{458B} thus making an already lazy soul even lazier.”

“Well, I too am getting soft at this stage, and I wish to postpone those issues, and investigate how they are possible later on. Just now, on the assumption that they are possible I shall, if you let me, consider how the rulers will arrange all this in detail once the system is in place, and whether their implementation would be more advantageous than anything else for the city and its guardians. These, if you let me, are the issues I shall first attempt to consider in detail with you. We shall consider those others later.”

“I am letting you,” said he. “Go ahead, and consider this.”

“Well I think,” said I, “that if our guardians are to be really worthy of this ^{458C} name, and their auxiliaries likewise, the latter should be willing to follow orders and the former to issue them, in some cases obeying our laws themselves, and in other cases, those in which we transfer responsibility to them, they will imitate our laws when giving their orders.”

“Quite likely,” said he.

“Then you, their lawgiver,” said I, “just as you selected the men, should also select the women, to bestow upon them women who are as similar to them in nature as possible. And these people, since they have shared dwelling places and meal tables, and no one possesses anything of this sort privately, will be together. ^{458D} And having mingled with one another in the gymnasium, and throughout their general upbringing, they will necessarily be drawn by innate nature, to intercourse with one another. Or do you think this lacks the force of necessity?”

“Well, not the necessities of geometry at any rate, but those of love, which are surely more potent at persuading and drawing most people.”

“Very much so,” said I. “But besides all this, Glaucon, to have intercourse, or do anything else at all in a random manner, is unholy ^{458E} in a city of happy people, and the rulers will not allow it.”

“No,” said he, “that would not be just.”

“Then it is obvious,” said I, “that we should next make marriages sacred, to the best of our ability, and those that are most beneficial would be sacred.”

“Entirely so.”

^{459A} “Well in that case, how shall they be most beneficial? Tell me this, Glaucon. I notice that you have dogs for hunting, and quite a number of well-bred birds, at home. Now, by Zeus, have you noticed anything about their unions and their production of offspring?”

“What sort of thing?” he asked.

“Firstly, although they are all well-bred, are there not some that are, or turn out to be, the very best?”

“There are.”

“Now, do you breed from all of them in like manner, or are you careful to do so, as much as possible, from the best of them?”

“From the best.”

^{459B} “And do you breed from the youngest, or from the oldest, or as much as possible from those in their prime?”

“From those in their prime.”

“And if they are not bred in this way, do you believe your stock of birds and hounds will be much worse?”

“I do,” said he.

“And in the case of horses and other animals,” I asked, “is the situation any different?”

“It would be strange,” said he, “if it were different.”

“Well, well, my dear friend,” said I, “our rulers will need to be at their very best if the situation is the same in the case of the ^{459C} human race.”

“But the situation is the same,” said he. “What of it?”

“Because they will need to make use of many medicines,” said I. “And presumably, in cases where bodies do not need medicine because they are responsive to a particular lifestyle, we regard even an ordinary physician as sufficient. But whenever it is necessary to make use of medicines, we know that a bolder physician is required.”

“That is true. But what are you referring to?”

“To the following,” said I. “It is likely ^{459D} that our rulers will have to resort to falsehood on a large scale, and deception too, for the benefit of their subjects. And we maintained, I believe, that everything of this sort is useful as a form of medicine.”⁶

“And rightly so,” said he.

“And the fact that it is right turns out to be most significant in the case of marriages, and in the production of offspring.”

“How so?”

“Based upon what has already been agreed, the best should have intercourse with the best, as often as possible, and the worst with the worst as seldom as possible, and the offspring of the former should be reared, while those of the latter should not, ^{459E} if the flock is to be at its

⁶ See 382c and 414b.

pinnacle. And all this should take place without anyone knowing about it except the rulers themselves, if our herd of guardians, for its part, is to be as free of faction as possible.”

“Quite right,” said he.

“In that case, should there not be some festivals, instituted by law, at which we shall bring together the brides and the bridegrooms? And should there not be sacrifices too, and should not our poets ^{460A} compose hymns appropriate to the marriages that are taking place? We shall make the rulers responsible for the number of marriages so that they may, as best they can, maintain the population at the same level, taking war, disease, and anything else like this into consideration, and as far as possible neither allow our city to become too big or too small.”

“Right,” said he.

“Then I think certain ingenious lotteries should be devised, so that the ordinary person will blame chance, rather than the rulers, for each union.”

“Yes, indeed,” said he.

^{460B} “And to those young men who are somehow best in war, or I presume in anything else, honours and prizes should be given, and in particular more generous opportunity for intercourse with the women, so that as many children as possible may be begotten by men like these, while affording an excuse for this at the same time.”

“Right.”

“And any offspring that are born will be taken over by the officials responsible for these matters, who may be men or women or both, since official posts too are presumably shared between women and men.”

“Yes.”

^{460C} “Then I think having taken the offspring of the good, they will transfer them into the fold, to special nurses who dwell apart in some precinct of the city, while the offspring of the inferior, or of any of the others that are born with deformities, they will hide away in a secret, undisclosed place as appropriate.”

“Yes,” said he, “if the race of guardians is to be kept pure.”

“Would not these officials also take responsibilities for the nursing, bringing the mothers to the fold when they are full of milk, while ensuring by every possible means ^{460D} that none recognises her own child, and providing other women who have milk if ever the mothers do not have enough? They will also be responsible for the mothers themselves, so that they do not spend too much time in feeding, and will hand over the sleepless nights and the rest of the hardship to wet-nurses and carers.”

“By your account,” said he, “childbearing will be very easy for the women of the guardians.”

“As it should be,” said I. “But we should proceed to the next suggestion we made, for we said that the offspring should be bred from parents in their prime.”

“True.”

^{460E} “Now, are you also of the view that for a woman her prime lasts about twenty years, and for a man about thirty years?”

“Which years?” he asked.

“A woman,” said I, “is to bear children for the city beginning from her twentieth year until her fortieth, while a man, once he has passed the age at which he can run most swiftly, begets children for the city until the age of fifty-five.”

^{461A} “Well in both cases,” said he, “this is the prime of body and of mind.”

“Now if those who take to begetting for the community are older or younger than this, we shall maintain that their error is neither holy nor just, as a child has been born to the city who, if this goes unnoticed, will have been born without the sacrifices and prayers offered at every marriage by priests and priestesses, and by all of the city; that better offspring, of greater benefit to the city, may always be born from the good people and from the city’s benefactors. But this child will have been born of darkness, accompanied ^{461B} by a shocking lack of restraint.”

“Quite right,” said he.

“And the same law applies,” said I, “if any man, still at the right age to beget children, has a relationship with any women of that age without the ruler bringing them together. For we shall state that he is imposing an illegitimate, unauthorised, and unsanctified child upon the city.”

“And rightly so,” said he.

“But presumably, once the women and the men have passed the age for reproduction, we shall set them free to form relationships with anyone they wish, except daughter or mother, or the children of daughters, ^{461C} or the mothers of a mother, in the case of men; or in the case of women, a son, a father, or the descendants and ancestors of them. And we shall allow all this, only after we have directed them to take particular care that no child sees the light of day if any is conceived. And if any child forces its way into the light, this should be dealt with on the basis that such offspring are not to be reared.”

“Yes, that all sounds quite reasonable,” said he. “But how will they recognise one another’s fathers and daughters, and the other relatives you mentioned?”

^{461D} “They will not,” said I, “not at all. But any offspring born in the tenth month, and indeed the seventh month, after he became a bridegroom, all these he shall address as his son if they are male, and as his daughter if they are female. And they, in turn, shall address these men as their father, and similarly, he shall call their offspring his grandchildren. And these, for their part, shall call his age group grandfathers and grandmothers. Those born during the time when their mothers and fathers were begetting children shall call each other brothers and sisters, ^{461E} so that as we were saying just now, they will not have intercourse with one

another. But the law will grant that brothers and sisters may dwell together if the lot falls accordingly, and the Pythia adds a favourable response.”

“Absolutely correct,” said he.

“Well, Glaucon, this, or something like this, is the sharing of women and children among the guardians of the city. But we should next confirm, from the argument, that this fits in with the rest of our system of government, and is by far the best arrangement. Or how should we proceed?”

^{462A} “In this way, by Zeus,” said he.

“Now, is not our first step towards agreement to ask ourselves what precisely we can say is the greatest good for the fabric of our city – a good that the lawgiver should aim at when instituting the laws – and what is the greatest evil? And then investigate whether everything we described in detail just now matches the footprint of the good, and not the footprint of the evil?”

“Most of all,” said he.

“Well, do we know any greater evil for a city than that which tears it asunder, ^{462B} and makes it many rather than one? And do we know any greater good than that which binds it together, and makes it one?”

“We do not.”

“Does not the sharing of pleasure and pain bind it together whenever, to the greatest extent possible, all the citizens are pleased and pained to the same extent by the same successes or failures?”

“Entirely so,” said he.

“And do not personal responses on occasions like these break the city apart, whenever some people are troubled while others are delighted, when the very same things are happening to the city or its inhabitants?”

^{462C} “Of course.”

“Now, does not something like this arise because expressions like ‘mine’ and ‘not mine’ are not uttered in our city at the same time? And the same applies to the word ‘alien’?”

“Yes, precisely.”

“Then the city in which the most people say ‘mine’ and ‘not mine’ about the same things, in the same respect, is the best managed city.”

“Very much so.”

“Is it also the one that bears the closest resemblance to a single human being? For instance, imagine one of us injures his finger. The entire community, extending from the body to the soul, in a single arrangement under the ruling element, perceives this in itself, ^{462D} and all of it experiences the pain together, simultaneously, as a whole, even though only a part suffered

the injury. And so we say, accordingly, that the person has pain in his finger. And the same argument applies to any other part of the person at all, whether there is pain because the part suffers, or pleasure because it finds relief.”

“The same indeed,” said he. “And in answer to your question, the best administered city is closest to such an arrangement.”

“So I imagine, when anything good or bad ^{462E} happens to any one of its citizens, a city like this is most inclined to say that the victim is her own, and the entire city will share in the pleasure or the pain.”

“Necessarily,” said he, “if it is well regulated at any rate.”

“Now would be the time,” said I, “for us to revisit our own city, and observe therein the principles agreed in the argument, and see if this city embodies them more than any other.”

“Should we not do so then?” said he.

^{463A} “Well what about this? In other cities there are, I presume, rulers and the populace, and they are present in this city of ours too.”

“They are.”

“And do all of these people refer to one another as fellow citizens?”

“Of course.”

“But what else besides fellow citizens do the people in other cities call the rulers?”

“In most cities they call them masters, but in those governed democratically, they call them just this, rulers.”

“What about the populace in our city? What do they call the rulers, besides fellow citizens?”

“Saviours and helpers,” said he.

^{463B} “And what do our rulers call the populace?”

“Pay masters who give them sustenance.”

“And in the other cities, the rulers call the populace ...”

“Slaves,” he said.

“And what do their rulers call one another?”

“Fellow rulers,” said he.

“And ours ...”

“Fellow guardians.”

“Now, can you tell me whether any of the rulers in the other cities can refer to one fellow ruler as kindred, and to another as not kindred?”

“Very much so.”

“Does he not regard the kindred as his own, and the non-kindred as not his own, and speak accordingly?”

“So he does.”

^{463C} “And what about your guardians? Would any of them be able to regard any of their fellow guardians as non-kindred, or speak of them as such?”

“Not at all,” said he, “since in the case of anyone he meets, he will think he is meeting a brother or sister, a father or mother, a son or daughter, or their offspring, or their forbears.”

“Excellent,” said I, “but tell me this too. Will your laws merely ordain that they should use these names of kinship, or will you also ^{463D} ordain that they should act in accordance with these names in all their activities. In the case of fathers, should they do whatever the law relating to fathers ordains in terms of respect and care, and the obedience that is due to parents, without which they will not fare well with the gods or their fellow men, because their actions would be neither holy nor just if they were to act in any other way? Shall these proclamations ring from the very outset in the ears of the children, sung by all of the citizens about the fathers, ^{463E} that anyone might point out to them, and about their other relatives too?”

“These are the ones,” said he, “for it would be laughable if the names were to be on their lips, without the deeds to back them up.”

“So, in this city most of all, whenever any one citizen fares well or fares badly, all the citizens together will pronounce the words we used just now, and say that ‘what is mine fares well’, or ‘what is mine fares badly’.”

“Very true,” said he.

^{464A} “And did we not also say that with this belief and these words there came a sharing of pleasures and pains?”

“And we were right to say so.”

“Will not our citizens, most of all, share in the same thing which they will all call ‘mine’? And by sharing this in this way, will they not, most of all, have shared pleasure and pain?”

“Very much so.”

“Now, is not the cause of all this, besides the general constitution of the city, the sharing of women and children among the guardians?”

“Yes,” said he, “much more than anything else.”

^{464B} “And we did agree that this was the greatest good for the city, comparing a well-managed city to a human body, in terms of its response to pleasure or pain in a part of itself.”

“And we were right to agree,” said he.

“So, the sharing of children and of women among the auxiliaries has turned out to be the cause of the city’s greatest good.”

“Yes, indeed,” said he.

“In that case, we are also being consistent with what went before. For we said, I believe, that they should have no private households, or land, or any other possession.⁷ ^{464C} They should rather receive sustenance from everyone else as their guardians’ pay, and should all spend it together if they really are to be guardians.”

“Yes, precisely,” said he.

“So is it not the case, as I say, that whatever was said before, and is being said now, turns them into true guardians to an even greater extent, and prevents them from tearing the city asunder by using the word ‘mine’, to refer not to the same thing but to something different; one man dragging whatever he is able to acquire on his own off to his own house, while another fellow drags things to a different house, also his own, ^{464D} with a separate wife and children, thus introducing the private pleasures and pains of private persons? Rather, with a single belief concerning what is private, all striving as best they can for the same objective, they have the same experience of pain and pleasure.”

“Precisely,” said he.

“What about this? Will not lawsuits and accusations against one another almost vanish from their midst because they have no private property, apart from their body, while everything else is shared? And thus they ^{464E} will be free from any factions that people develop because of the acquisition of wealth, children, or family connections.”

“Yes,” said he, “they will be free of all that. They really must.”

“And indeed, there would be no justification for legal action for assault or violence among them, for we shall presumably maintain that self-defence against people of the same age is noble and just, and impose upon them the requirement to look after their bodies.”

“And rightly so,” said he.

^{465A} “And this law,” said I, “is right in the following way too. If someone was provoked by someone else he might satisfy his rage through a personal encounter of this sort, and be less inclined to keep going until there were more serious conflicts.”

“Yes, certainly.”

“What is more, an older man will be given the task of ruling over and restraining all of the younger ones.”

“Of course.”

“And indeed a younger person will not, unless the rulers command it, use force against someone older, nor is he likely to strike him, nor, I believe, will he show disrespect in any

⁷ See 416d.

other way either. ^{465B} For the twin guardians, fear and shame, prevent this. Shame prevents him from laying hands upon a possible parent, and he fears the help others will give to the victim, either as his sons, brothers or fathers.”

“Yes, that follows,” said he.

“Under these laws then, the men will enjoy great peace towards one another, in every respect.”

“Great indeed.”

“And in the absence of any conflict among themselves there would be no danger of any faction between them and the rest of the city, or one another.”

“No, there would not.”

^{465C} “I am reluctant to mention the most trivial difficulties, which they will be quit of, because they are so unseemly: the flattery of the rich by the poor, the troubles and pains involved in rearing children, and making money to provide for the needs of the household members by borrowing from some people, failing to repay others, using every possible means to provide resources, that they then hand over to the women and household members to manage. All that they suffer over these matters, and what it is like, is self-evident, and it is ^{465D} ignoble and unworthy of mention.”

“Yes, it is evident,” said he, “even to a blind man.”

“Quit of all this, our guardians will live a life more blessed than the life of Olympic victors.”

“In what way?”

“These victors are made happy by a small portion of what those guardians get. For their victory is more beautiful, and their popular support is more comprehensive. Indeed, the victory they win is the safety of the entire city, and they are crowned with support, and everything else that human life requires, ^{465E} they and their children too. They receive honours from their own city during their lives, and are granted a worthy burial when they die.”

“Yes, that is all very beautiful,” said he.

“Now,” said I, “do you remember that in our earlier discussions, an argument ^{466A} – I do not know whose – took us to task by maintaining that we were not making our guardians happy, because even though it is possible for them to own everything belonging to their fellow citizens, they have nothing? And I think we said that we would look at this again if it turned out to be the case, but at the moment we are making our guardians into guardians, and making our city as happy as possible, without focussing upon one group within the city and working on its happiness.”⁸

“I remember,” said he.

⁸ See 419a.

“Well then, since the life of our auxiliaries now turns out to be far better and more beautiful than the life of Olympic victors, is there any way it ^{466B} compares to the life of shoemakers, or other artificers or to the life of farmers?”

“I do not think so,” said he.

“In that case, what I said there may rightly be repeated here. If a guardian attempts to attain happiness in a way that makes him a guardian no longer, and if such a measured and stable life – which according to us is the best life – is not enough for him, but some mindless, immature opinion about happiness takes over, it will impel him, because he has the power, to appropriate everything in the city, and he will realise ^{466C} that Hesiod was indeed wise when he said that

half is somehow more than the whole.”⁹

“If he takes my advice,” said he, “he will abide by this life.”

“So do you accept,” said I, “this sharing of the women with the men in relation to education, children, and their guardianship of the rest of the citizens, as we have elaborated it? Whether remaining in the city, or going to war, should they guard and hunt together like dogs, and to the best of their ability share everything in every way? And by doing all this, ^{466D} do you accept that they will be doing what is best, and not acting contrary to the nature of the female towards the male, and their natural tendency to share with one another?”

“I agree,” said he.

“Do we not still have to decide,” said I, “if it is possible for this sharing to be engendered among human beings, just as it is among other creatures, and how this is possible?”

“You have anticipated the point I was just about to raise,” said he.

^{466E} “Indeed, when it comes to warfare,” said I, “I presume that the way in which they will do battle is obvious.”

“How?” he asked.

“They will march out together, and what is more they will bring their children, the stronger ones, with them to the battle, so that like the children of other artificers they may see the work they will have to engage in ^{467A} when they are grown up. And as well as looking on, they will assist and serve in everything related to the battle and will care for their fathers and mothers. Or have you not noticed what goes on in the various crafts? Potters’ children, for instance, spend a long time looking on as assistants, before they ever put their hands to the task itself.”

“Very much so.”

“Well, should these people show more care than our guardians in educating their children through experience and observation of what is appropriate to them?”

⁹ *Works and Days* 40.

“That would be ridiculous,” said he.

^{467B} “Then again, every creature fights especially well when their own offspring are present.”

“This is so, Socrates. But if they lose, as is prone to happen in war, there is no small danger that having lost their children as well as themselves, they will also make it impossible for the rest of the city to recover.”

“True,” said I, “but do you think that we should arrange, firstly, that there will be no danger?”

“Not at all.”

“Well then, if there is somehow to be danger, should not this be in a situation where they will be better if they are successful?”

“Yes, of course.”

^{467C} “But, do you think it makes little difference whether or not those who are to be military men watch the proceedings of the battlefield when they are children? Is the risk not worth taking?”

“No, it does make a difference for the purpose you mention.”

“So this must be arranged. The children must be made spectators of warfare, and once their safety is assured, all will be well. Is this so?”

“Yes.”

“And will not their fathers,” said I, “as far as humanly possible, be knowledgeable people, able to recognise which campaigns are dangerous and which are not?”

“Quite likely,” said he.

^{467D} “So they will bring them on some campaigns, and be wary of bringing them on others.”

“And rightly so.”

“And presumably,” said I, “they will not appoint ordinary fellows as their leaders, but those who are competent by age and experience to be guides and tutors.”

“Yes, that is appropriate.”

“Yes, but as we shall declare, lots of unexpected things also happen to lots of people.”

“Very much so.”

“Well, in the light of such possibilities, my friend, they should be equipped with wings from earliest childhood, so that if the need arises they may take flight and be gone.”

^{467E} “What do you mean?” he asked.

“They should go on horseback,” said I, “from the youngest possible age. And having learned to ride, they should be brought to view the battle mounted on horses, not spirited or warlike animals but those that are most swift-footed and responsive to the rein, since in this way they

will have the best view of their own future function, and should the need arise, they could get away safely, following the lead of their older guides.”

^{468A} “Yes,” said he. “This sounds right to me.”

“And what about the events of the battlefield?” said I. “How should your soldiers behave towards themselves and towards the enemy? I am looking at this correctly or not?”

“Tell me,” he said, “in what sense.”

“Among themselves, someone who deserts his post, or throws away his weapons, or does anything else like that through cowardice, should he not be reduced in status to an artificer or farmer?”

“Yes, certainly.”

“And should not someone who is captured alive by the enemy be given to his captors as a gift, for them to use their captive as they wish?”

^{468B} “Precisely.”

“But someone who excels and wins fame, do you not think he should first be crowned on campaign by his comrades in arms, youths, and children in turn? Or do you not think so?”

“I do.”

“Shall they shake his hand?”

“That too.”

“But this, I suppose you would not accept ...”

“What?”

“That he kisses and is kissed by each.”

“This most of all,” he said. “And I would make an addition to the law that as long as they are involved ^{468C} in this campaign, no one whom he wishes to kiss is allowed to refuse, so that if someone happened to be in love with someone else, male or female, he would also be more eager to carry off the prize for valour.”

“Very good,” said I. “And we have already said that a good person will have more opportunity for union than the others, and will be selected for such purposes more often than the others, so that as many children as possible may be born from a person like this.”

“Yes, we said that,” said he.

“And indeed, according to Homer, it is right to honour young ^{468D} folk who are good, through arrangements of this sort. For he says that when Ajax had won fame in battle, he was rewarded ‘with the choicest cuts of meat’,¹⁰ as this is the appropriate honour for someone in

¹⁰ *Iliad* vii.321.

the prime of youth and courage, as it honours him and increases his strength at the same time.”

“Quite right,” said he.

“So,” said I, “we shall be persuaded by Homer on these matters at any rate. And indeed, during sacrifices and everything of this sort, we shall honour the good people, insofar as they prove themselves to be so, with hymns and whatever we have mentioned ^{468E} just now, and to this we shall add ‘seats of honour, meat, and goblets full to the brim’,¹¹ so that we may train these good men and women at the same time as we honour them.”

“Excellent,” said he.

“Very well. And in the case of those who die on campaign, should we not first say that someone who wins fame in death belongs to the golden race?”

“Most of all.”

“And shall we believe Hesiod, that when anyone who belongs to such a race dies, they become

^{469A} Hallowed spirits dwelling on earth, averters of evil,
Guardians watchful and good of articulate speaking mortals?”¹²

“We shall believe him indeed.”

“So, having found out from the god how demi-gods and divine beings should be buried, and what the difference is, shall we bury these men according to the mode and manner he expounds?”

“How could we do otherwise?”

“And ever after, shall we care for and revere their tombs ^{469B} as though they were the tombs of demi-gods? And should we observe the same customs whenever someone, who is judged to have been exceptionally good whilst alive, dies of old age or in some other way?”

“It would be right to do so,” said he.

“What about this? How should our soldiers behave towards the enemy soldiers?”

“In what sense?”

“Firstly, concerning enslavement, does it seem right that Greek cities should enslave fellow Greeks? Or should they, as best they can, not even allow another city to do so, and accustom them to sparing ^{469C} their fellow Greeks for fear of enslavement by the barbarian races?”

“Sparing them,” said he, “is completely better in every way.”

¹¹ *Iliad* viii.162.

¹² *Works and Days* 122, Shorey translation.

“Then they are not to own a Greek slave themselves, and they are to advise their fellow Greeks to do likewise.”

“Yes, certainly,” said he. “And so in this way, they would turn their attention more towards the barbarians, and show restraint towards themselves.”

“And what about stripping and despoiling the dead after a victory?” said I. “Besides removing their weapons, is this the right thing to do? Or does it not give cowards an excuse for not engaging with another combatant, because they are doing something needful ^{469D} when they are poking about among the dead? Has not many an army already been lost because of this sort of plundering?”

“Very much so.”

“Does it not seem like a slavish and mercenary act to strip the armour from a corpse? And is it not the mark of an unmanly and petty mind to regard the body of the dead man as the enemy, when the real foe has fled, leaving only the instrument with which he fought? Or do you think those who do this are doing anything different from dogs ^{469E} who get angry with the stones that struck them, and do not touch the person throwing them?”

“Not in the least,” said he.

“So should we abandon the stripping of corpses, and hindering the enemy from removing their fallen comrades?”

“We should abandon this indeed, by Zeus,” said he.

“Nor indeed shall we carry weapons off to our temples as dedicatory offerings, especially those belonging to our fellow Greeks, if we have any interest ^{470A} in fostering good relations towards them. Rather, we shall be afraid that it might be a defilement to bring this sort of thing from our own kin to a temple, unless of course the god says otherwise.”

“Quite right,” said he.

“And when it comes to ravaging Greek land, or the burning of houses, how will your soldiers behave towards their enemies?”

“I would like to hear you expressing your opinion on that,” said he.

“Well,” said I, “I do not think they would do either of these. No, they ^{470B} should just deprive them of their annual harvest. Do you want me to tell you why?”

“Very much so.”

“As I see it, just as we make use of these two words, ‘war’ and ‘faction’, so they are indeed two, being applied to two disputes between two different parties. I mean that the disputant is their own kindred in one case, but alien and foreign in the other case. The hostility of their own is called faction, while the hostility of the alien is called war.”

“Yes,” said he. “There is nothing strange in what you are saying.”

^{470C} “Then decide whether this is strange or not. I maintain that the Greek race, to itself, is its own kindred, but is alien and foreign to the barbarian race.”

“Well said,” he replied.

“So, when Greeks do battle against barbarians or barbarians against Greeks, we shall maintain that they are at war, and are enemies by nature, and we should refer to this hostility as ‘war’. But when Greeks do this sort of thing to Greeks, we shall maintain that although they are friends by nature, the Greek state is sick ^{470D} in this case, and has fallen into faction, and we should refer to such hostility as ‘faction’.”

“Yes,” said he, “we should consider it in this way. I agree.”

“Then,” said I, “take note that in faction, as it is understood nowadays, wherever something like this arises and a city is divided, and one side devastates the land of the other and burns their homes, such faction is regarded as an abomination, and neither party is thought to have any love for their city, or they would not have dared to ravage their nurse and mother. But it does seem reasonable for the victors ^{470E} to deprive the vanquished of their harvest, and to bear in mind that they are going to be reconciled, and not be at war forever.”

“Yes,” said he, “this way of thinking is much gentler than the other.”

“What about this then?” I asked. “Will not the city you are founding be a Greek city?”

“It must be,” said he.

“In that case, will not the people be good and gentle?”

“Absolutely.”

“And will they not love their fellow Greeks, and will they not regard Greece as their own, enjoying the sacred places in common with their fellows?”

“Yes, absolutely.”

^{471A} “In that case, will they regard a dispute with Greeks, their own people, as faction, and not refer to it as war?”

“No, indeed.”

“And will they conduct the dispute with a view to reconciliation?”

“Very much so.”

“Then they will correct their adversaries out of goodwill, not punishing them to make slaves of them, or indeed to destroy them, since they are correctors, after all, not enemies.”

“Quite so,” said he.

“And so being Greeks, they will not ravage Greece or burn down its homes, nor will they accept that all the people in a particular city are their enemies, men, women and children ^{471B} alike. They will accept rather that a few enemies are always responsible for the dispute, and for all these reasons they will not be prepared to ravage their land, or pull down their houses,

since most of them are their friends. They will, rather, pursue the dispute to the point where those who are responsible are forced into a just response by the suffering of their innocent fellow citizens.”

“I agree,” said he, “that our citizens should behave like this towards their Greek opponents, while treating the barbarians as the Greeks, nowadays, treat us Greeks.”

^{471C} “Shall we set down this law for our guardians, that they neither lay waste to the land, nor burn down houses?”

“Let us set it down,” said he, “and accept that this is all good, and so is what was said previously. But, Socrates, it seems to me that if someone leaves it to you to speak on such issues, you will never remember the question you pushed aside in order to say all this, namely the question of whether it is ever possible for this civic arrangement to come about, and in what way is it possible at all. I agree that if it were to come about it would be really good for that city. And I will add what you omitted ^{471D} to say, namely that they would fight best against their enemies, since they would be least likely to desert one another, because they recognise themselves as brothers, fathers and sons, and use these very names. And if the female sex is to campaign with them, either in the same rank or assigned to the rear-guard to strike fear into the enemy, and to provide assistance if needed, I know full well that with all this they would be invincible. And I see also all the domestic advantages they would have, which you omitted to mention. Now, you may assume that I agree ^{471E} that there would be all these advantages, and thousands more, if this civic arrangement were to arise, so do not say any more about it. Let us try rather, at this stage, to convince ourselves that this is possible, and how it is possible, and bid farewell to everything else.”

^{472A} “Well,” I said, “you have made quite a sudden onslaught upon this proposition of mine, without any allowance for my hesitation. For perhaps you do not appreciate that you are bringing a third huge and most troublesome wave upon me, when I have barely escaped the first two. Once you see and hear this you will have more sympathy, and will understand that my reluctance was reasonable, and so was my fear of recounting such a paradoxical argument and attempting to scrutinise it.”

“The more you go on like this,” he said, “the less likely we ^{472B} are to release you from describing how this civic arrangement could arise. So speak, and do not delay.”

“In that case,” I said, “should we first be reminded that we got to this point by inquiring into what justice and injustice are like?”

“We should,” he said. “But why do you say this?”

“No reason, but if we do find what justice is like, shall we also insist that the just man must not be different at all from justice, and that such a man is ^{472C} like justice in every respect? Or shall we be satisfied if he gets as close as possible to it, and partakes of it to a greater extent than most people?”

“Yes,” he said. “We shall be satisfied with that.”

“Then,” said I, “we have been seeking justice itself, the sort of thing it is, and the perfectly just man, if there be such a man, and the sort of person he would be if he ever did come into existence to use as a model. The same considerations also apply to injustice and the utterly unjust man. The intention was to look to these standards, and apply whatever became evident about their happiness or unhappiness, and be compelled to accept that in our own situation, whoever is most like ^{472D} one of those standards will have the like portion of happiness. However, it was never the intention that we would demonstrate that such persons could come into existence.”

“Yes, what you say is true,” he said.

“Now, would you maintain that a painter was not really a good painter if he painted an exquisitely beautiful person as a standard, rendered it in consummate detail, but was unable to demonstrate that such a person could ever come into existence?”

“By Zeus, I would not,” he replied.

“Well then, have we not, so we say, been making a standard in words of a good city?”

“Very much so.” ^{472E}

“Then, do you maintain that our words lack merit, on account of the fact that we may be unable to demonstrate that the city could be established in the manner in which we have described it?”

“I certainly do not,” he said.

“Then that is the truth of the matter,” said I. “But if, for your sake, we must endeavour to demonstrate how exactly and upon what basis this is at all possible, I must ask you again to concede the same points regarding such a demonstration.”

“What points?”

^{473A} “Is it possible for anything to be enacted as spoken, or must action by nature involve less truth than speech, in spite of what some people think? Well do you agree that this is the case or not?”

“I agree,” he said.

“In that case, do not force me to prove that the sort of thing we have recounted in words, can also come into existence in its entirety in deed. Rather, if we are able to discover how a city that is very close to what we have described might be constituted, you must say that we have found out how this city can ^{473B} come into being, which was the task you set us. Would you be satisfied if that happened? I for one would be satisfied.”

“And so would I,” he said.

“Well then, after this it seems we should try to find, and demonstrate, what precisely is enacted badly in the various cities nowadays, so that they are not constituted like ours. Also, what change would bring a city to this manner of civic arrangement, the smallest change possible – ideally just one, otherwise two, or the fewest in number – with the least impact.”

“I entirely agree,” he said. ^{473C}

“Well,” said I, “there is one change that could effect this transformation, and I think we can show this. However, it is not minor or easy, though it is feasible.”

“What is it?” said he.

“I am now,” said I, “on the verge of what we likened to the most enormous wave. But it must be spoken, even if some wave of hilarity is literally going to deluge me with laughter and ridicule. So pay attention to what I am about to say.”

“Speak on,” he said.

“Unless philosophers exercise kingly rule in the cities,” said I, ^{473D} “or those whom we now call kings and rulers engage in philosophy with dignity and competence, and political power and philosophy coincide in the same person, while the vast majority, whose natures incline them to pursue one rather than the other, are necessarily excluded from both, the cities will have no rest from their evils, my dear Glaucon, and neither, in my view, will the human race. Nor until then will this civic arrangement, which we have described in words, ever grow to its full potential or see the light of day. ^{473E}

“Well, this is what made me reluctant to speak earlier, for I could see this will be directly opposed to popular opinion. For it is hard to see that there is no other way for one to be happy, neither as an individual nor as a society.”

“Well, Socrates,” he said, “you have blurted out an utterance and argument like this, and now that you have said it you should expect a large number of men, no common folk, ^{474A} to rip off their garments, grab the first weapon that comes to their hand, and rush at you, naked, at full stretch, intending unspeakable deeds. If you do not ward them off in argumentation and make your escape, you will pay the penalty of being well and truly ridiculed.”

“Are you not the one who is responsible for all this, in my case?” I said.

“I am doing the right thing,” he said. “However I shall not desert you, but will defend you by whatever means I can, and I can do this through good will and encouragement. And perhaps I may respond ^{474B} to your questions more reasonably than someone else would. But now that you have such assistance, try to prove to the unbelievers that what you are saying is so.”

“Try I must,” I said, “since you are offering such a significant alliance. Now, if we are going to escape from the men you describe, I think it will be necessary to define for them which philosophers we are speaking of, when we dare to maintain that they must rule. Then once that has become evident, we can conduct our defence by demonstrating that it belongs to these men ^{474C} by nature to engage in philosophy, and to lead in the city, while it belongs to the others to have no dealing with philosophy, and to follow their leadership.”

“Now would be the time to define this,” he said.

“Come on then. You will have to be guided by me here if we are to have any chance of explaining this properly.”

“Lead on,” he said.

“Now,” I said, “will it be necessary to remind you, or do you remember already, that anyone who is said to love something must, if the description is correct, show that his affection is total, and he does not love one aspect of that thing while not loving another?”¹³

“It seems you will have to remind me,” he said, “for I do not really understand.”

^{474D} “That response of yours, Glaucon, would be appropriate for another person, but it is hardly appropriate for a man of love to be reminded that all those youths in their prime afflict and stir the amorous lover, and all are deemed worthy of his care and affection. Is this not how you behave towards the fair? If someone is snub-nosed you praise him by calling him charming, and if he is hook-nosed you say he is kingly, while if he is half-way between the two you say his features are perfectly balanced. ^{474E} Those who are dark have a manly aspect, those who are fair are children of gods, and as for the name ‘honey-pale’, who could invent it except a coaxing lover who willingly tolerates a poor complexion, provided it belongs to a pretty youth? And in short, you invent any ^{475A} excuse at all, and resort to any expression at all, to avoid rejecting those who are in the bloom of youth.”

“If you wish to allege that I behave as these lovers do, I shall go along with you for the sake of this discussion,” he replied.

“What about this?” I said. “Do you not see the lovers of wine doing the very same thing, welcoming every sort of wine on any pretext at all?”

“Very much so.”

“And I am sure you observe that those who love honour, if they cannot command an army, will command a lesser cohort. And if they are not honoured by the important and distinguished people, they will be satisfied with the respect of lesser, more ordinary ^{475B} folk, so consummate is their desire for honour.”

“Yes, exactly.”

“So, do you agree or disagree that when anyone is said to desire something, we should say that he desires it all, or one part only and not another?”

“All of it,” he said.

“Therefore, shall we say that the philosopher does not desire one part of wisdom rather than another, but desires it all?”

“True.”

“Then we shall not say that a person who cannot stand study is a lover of learning or a lover of wisdom, especially if he is young ^{475C} and still lacks the reasoning power to distinguish what is useful from what is not, just as someone who makes difficulties about food is said neither to be hungry, nor to want food, and will not be called a food lover but a poor eater.”

¹³ See 438a–b.

“And we shall be right to say so.”

^{475D} “However, anyone with a ready desire to taste all branches of learning, who enters into study gladly and with an insatiable appetite, may properly be called a lover of wisdom. Is this so?”

Glaucon replied, “Then you will have lots of unusual examples of such people. For those who love seeing sights all seem to me, anyway, to be like this because they take a delight in learning. Those who love hearing things are the strangest folk to include among the philosophers, for although they would never willingly engage in serious discussion, or devote their time to anything of that sort, they run around all the festivals of Dionysos in the city or the country, as if they had hired out their ears to listen to them all. Now shall we refer to all these people, and others with knowledge of similar activities, or even ^{475E} the minor crafts, as philosophers?”

“Certainly not,” I said, “but they are similar to philosophers.”

And he said, “Whom do you refer to as true philosophers?”

“Those who love beholding the truth,” I said.

“Yes, that is all very well,” he said, “but what do you mean by this?”

“This would not be at all easy for someone else,” said I, “but I do think that you will agree with me here.”

“About what?”

^{476A} “That since beauty is the opposite of ugliness, they are two.

“How could I disagree?”

“Therefore, since they are two, each is one.”

“I also agree with this.”

“And the same argument applies to just and unjust, good and bad, and to all of the forms. Each itself is one, but since they manifest everywhere in communion with activities, bodies, and with one another, each appears to be multiple.”

“What you are saying is correct,” he said.

“Well,” I said, “this is how I make the distinction, separating the people you referred to as ‘those who love seeing things’ or ‘those who love skills and are practical’, ^{476B} from those we are now discussing, who are the only ones we may properly refer to as philosophers.”

“In what way?” he said.

“Presumably,” I said, “those who love hearing things, and seeing things, delight in beautiful sounds and colours and shapes and everything that is fashioned from these, but their mind is unable to behold the nature of beauty itself, and to delight in that.”

“Yes,” he said, “that is certainly the case.”

“On the other hand, would not those who can have recourse to beauty itself, and behold it just by itself, be quite rare?”

“Very much so.”

^{476C} “Now, do you think that a person is awake or living in a dream, if he recognises beautiful objects but does not recognise beauty itself, and cannot follow someone else if he leads him to the knowledge of this? Think about this. Is not dreaming an activity in which someone, either in sleep or whilst awake, thinks that a likeness is not a likeness, but is itself the very object which the likeness resembles?”

“Yes, I am inclined to say that a person like that is dreaming,” he said.

“Well then, what about someone who by contrast thinks that there is beauty itself and is able to behold it and whatever partakes of it, without thinking that that which partakes ^{476D} is beauty itself, or that beauty itself is that which partakes. Do you think this person is awake, or living in a dream?”

“He is very much awake,” he said.

“Would we not be right to refer to the mental state of this man as knowledge, because he knows, and to the mental state of the other as opinion, because he is forming opinions.”

“Yes, certainly.”

“Now what if this fellow, whom we accuse of forming opinions and of not knowing, gets angry with us, and argues that we are not speaking the truth? Shall we be able to console ^{476E} him and engage in gentle persuasion, whilst concealing the fact that he is not of sound mind?”

“You really should try, anyway,” he said.

“Come on then. Let us consider what we shall say to him. Or if you prefer we could put some questions to him, maintaining that if he does know something, nobody will begrudge him that. Rather, we would be delighted to see that he knew something. So tell us this: does someone who knows, know something or nothing? Now, you should reply on behalf of this fellow.”

“I reply that they know something,” he said.

“Is it something that is, or is not?”

“Something that is, for how could something that is not, be known?”

^{477A} “Well, are we satisfied that no matter how we consider the matter, ‘what entirely is’ is entirely knowable, and ‘what in no way is’ is entirely unknowable?”

“We are completely satisfied.”

“Very well. But if in fact something is characterised in such a way that it both ‘is’ and ‘is not’, would it not lie in between ‘what purely is’ and ‘what in no way is’?”

“Yes, in between.”

“Therefore, since knowledge is directed towards ‘what is’, and ignorance is necessarily directed to ‘what is not’, we must search for ^{477B} something in between ignorance and knowledge, which is directed to that which lies between ‘what is’ and ‘what is not’, if there happens to be such a thing.”

“Yes, certainly.”

“Now, do we say that opinion is something?”

“What else could we say?”

“And is it a different power from knowledge, or the same power?”

“Different.”

“So opinion is directed to one, and knowledge to another, each on the basis of its own power.”

“Just so.”

“Is not knowledge naturally directed towards ‘what is’, to know ‘what is’ as it is? But before we go on, I think we must make a further distinction.”

“How?”

^{477C} “Shall we say that powers are a class of things that are, by which we are able to do whatever we can do, and anything else is able to do whatever it can do. So I say for example that seeing and hearing are powers, if you understand what I am trying to explain.”

“I do understand,” he said.

“Well listen, and I shall tell you my view of them. Indeed, with respect to powers I do not discern any colour, or a shape, or anything of this sort, as I do in many other things, features to which I can look, in order to distinguish for myself ^{477D} between some objects and others. But in the case of a power, I look only to what it is directed to and what it accomplishes, and on this basis I call each of them a power, and whatever is directed to the same object and accomplishes the same thing, I call the same, while anything that is directed to a different object and accomplishes something different, I refer to as different. How about you? What do you do?”

“Just as you do,” he said.

“At this stage,” I said, “I should ask you the question again, my excellent friend. Do you say that knowledge is a power, or in what class do you place it?”

^{477E} “In this one,” he said. “It is the strongest of all powers.”

“And what about opinion? Shall we assign it to power, or to another form?”

“To no other form,” he said, “for opinion is nothing other than the power by which we are able to form opinions.”

“Yes, and you did agree a little earlier that knowledge and opinion are not the same.”

“How could any reasonable person,” he replied, “ever suggest that something that does not make mistakes is the same as something that makes mistakes?”

^{478A} “Well expressed,” I said. “And it is obvious that we agree that opinion is different from knowledge.”

“Yes, different.”

“So is each of them by nature a different power, directed to something different?”

“They must be.”

“Well, is knowledge directed to what is, to know what is as it is?”

“Yes.”

“And we say that opinion forms opinions.”

“Yes.”

“Does it not form opinions about the same things that knowledge knows? And will the objects of knowledge and opinion be the same? Or is that impossible?”

“According to what we have agreed, that is impossible,” he said. “If in fact a different power is naturally directed to something different, and opinion and ^{478B} knowledge are both powers, and each is different, which is what we are saying, then we cannot accept, based on this, that the object of knowledge and the object of opinion are the same.”

“Now if the object of knowledge is ‘what is’, would not the object of opinion be something other than ‘what is’?”

“Yes, something other than that.”

“Well, does it form opinions about ‘what is not’, or is it impossible even to form an opinion about ‘what is not’? Reflect on this. Does not someone who forms an opinion apply the opinion to something? Or again, is it possible to form an opinion which is an opinion about nothing?”

“That is impossible.”

“Rather, the person forming an opinion forms it about some one thing.”

“Yes.”

“However, would it be at all correct to refer ^{478C} to ‘what is not’ as some one thing? Instead, it should be called nothing.”

“Entirely so.”

“Well did we, by necessity, assign ignorance to ‘what is not’ and knowledge to ‘what is’?”

“We did, and rightly so,” he said.

“So opinions are not formed either about ‘what is’ or ‘what is not’.”

“They are not.”

“Then opinion is neither ignorance nor knowledge.”

“It seems not.”

“Well in that case, is it beyond them, exceeding either knowledge in clarity, or ignorance in obscurity?”

“It does neither.”

“Alternatively,” I said, “does opinion appear to you as darker than knowledge, and yet brighter than ignorance?”

“Very much so,” he said.

“Does it lie within these two extremes?” ^{478D}

“Yes.”

“So opinion would be in between knowledge and ignorance.”

“Yes, exactly.”

“But did we not say earlier that if anything were to prove capable of being and of not being at the same time, it would lie in between ‘what purely is’ and ‘what entirely is not’,¹⁴ and that neither knowledge nor ignorance would be directed towards it; but something, which for its part makes its appearance in between knowledge and ignorance, would be directed towards it?”

“Correct.”

“But now the power that we call opinion has made its appearance in between these two.”

“It has.”

^{478E} “Then what remains for us to discover, apparently, is something partaking of both being and non-being, which may not properly be called either pure being or pure non-being. Should that be found, we would be right to call it the object of opinion, thus assigning the powers at the extremes to the objects at the extremes, and the powers that lie in between, to the objects that lie in between. Is this how we should proceed?”

“It is.”

“Now that we have established all this, let this good fellow speak to me and give me an ^{479A} answer, this man who thinks there is no such thing as beauty itself, or a form of beauty itself, which is always just the same as it is, even though he does think that there are many beautiful things. He is someone who loves seeing things, and cannot endure it if someone says that beauty is one, and so too is justice, and that the same goes for the others. I shall say to him,

¹⁴ See 477a.

‘Best of men, tell me this. Are there any of these numerous beautiful things which will not appear to be ugly? Are there any of the many just actions which will not appear unjust, any sacred things which will not appear profane?’”

“No,” said Glaucon, “they must somehow appear ^{479B} to be both beautiful and ugly, and the same applies to your other instances.”

“And what about the many things which are doubles? Do they appear to be halves any less than doubles?”

“No less.”

“And things we say are large or small, light or heavy, will they be called by these names, any more than the opposite names?”

“Yes,” he said, “each of them always has both names.”

“Then, if anyone says that any of these many things is this, is it no more this, than not this?”

“It is like party games involving the double meanings of words,” he replied, “and the children’s ^{479C} riddle about the eunuch striking the bat, in which they also make obscure statements about what it was struck by, and what it was sitting upon.¹⁵ In fact these too are ambiguous, and none of them is capable of being thought definitely to be, or not to be, either both or neither.”

“So, do you know what to do with them,” I said, “or can you put them in any better place than in between being and non-being? Presumably they will not prove to be darker than ‘what is not’, involving more non-being, or brighter than ‘what is’, involving more being.”

“Very true,” he said. ^{479D}

“Well, it seems we have found that the numerous conceptions about beauty, or anything else, which most people hold, are somehow rolling about between ‘what is not’ and ‘what purely is’.”

“That is what we have found.”

“And we agreed previously that if something like this were to turn up, it should be referred to as an object of opinion, rather than an object of knowledge. The wandering object is apprehended by the intermediate power.”

“We agreed on this.”

“So those who see many beautiful things, without beholding ^{479E} beauty itself, and who are unable to follow someone who is leading them towards it, who see many just actions, but not justice itself, or anything like that, we shall say that these people form opinions on all these matters, but know nothing about the matters on which they are opining.”

¹⁵ The riddle, apparently, went as follows: A man who is not a man, saw and did not see a bird that was not a bird in a tree that was not a tree; he hit and did not hit it with a stone that was not a stone. The answer was that a eunuch with poor vision saw a bat on a rafter, threw a pumice stone at it and missed.

“We must,” he said.

“And what about those who, by contrast, behold things themselves, things which are always just the same as they are? Do they not know rather than opine?”

“This must also be so.”

“And will we not say ^{480A} that these people embrace and love the objects of knowledge, while those others embrace and love the objects of opinion? Or do you not remember? We said that the others love and contemplate beautiful sounds, and colours, and the like, but they cannot bear to hear that there is such a thing as beauty itself.”

“We remember.”

“In that case, would it be offensive to call them lovers of opinion or philodoxical,¹⁶ rather than lovers of wisdom or philosophical? Would they get very angry with us if we referred to them in this way?

“Not if they are persuaded by me anyway,” he said, “for it is not appropriate to be angry at the truth.”

“Then should those who embrace what anything actually is be called philosophers, or lovers of wisdom, rather than lovers of opinion?”

“Yes, entirely so.”

End Book V

¹⁶ Plato coins this word using the Greek word for opinion (δόξα). It means ‘opinion loving’ and is a counterpart of ‘wisdom loving’.