Laws

BOOK I

persons in the dialogue: *ATHENIAN STRANGER*
CLINIAS *of Cnossus, Crete*
MEGILLUS *of Sparta*
scene: *ascending from Cnossus to the cave of Zeus*

624 a ATHENIAN: Well, my friends, was it a god or some human who was responsible for establishing your laws?

CLINIAS: A god, stranger. Yes, that is the fairest answer. Among ourselves in Crete it was Zeus, while among the Spartans, where this man comes from, I think they say it was Apollo. Is this so?

MEGILLUS: Yes.

624 b ATHENIAN: Don't you say, as Homer does, that Minos used to make regular visits every ninth year to be with his father, Zeus, and he set down the laws for your cities based upon his pronouncements?[1]

CLINIAS: Yes, that is what we say. And, indeed, we also say that his brother, Rhadamanthus – you
625 a have heard the name I am sure – was exceedingly just. And we Cretans would maintain that he won this reputation, deservedly, based on the way he dealt with the legal issues of the time.

ATHENIAN: A good reputation indeed, and most befitting to a son of Zeus. And since yourself and this man have been brought up under such lawful customs as these, I presume that spending time now, listening to one another speak about civic affairs and laws, would not be an
625 b unpleasant prospect as we proceed on our journey. The road from Cnossus to the cave and sanctuary of Zeus is quite a long one I am told, but there are it seems resting places, shaded from this extreme heat, along the way, among the tall trees. At our age it would be appropriate that we take a rest often among them, relax and exchange stories with one another, and thus complete the entire journey with ease.

CLINIAS: Yes indeed, my friend, and as we proceed there are tall cypress trees of wonderful beauty
625 c in the groves, and there are meadows too in which we may take a rest and converse.

ATHENIAN: You are right to suggest this.

CLINIAS: Yes, indeed, and we will say so all the more when we see them. So let us proceed, and may good fortune attend us.

ATHENIAN: So be it. But tell me this. Why is it that the law regulates your common meals, physical exercise, and the nature of your military equipment?

CLINIAS: Well, my friend, I think that our arrangements are easy for anyone to understand. Indeed,
625 d the entire Cretan countryside is not, as you see, flat like Thessaly, and so they make more

use of horses; while we are runners, since our territory is rugged and more suited to exercise that involves running. In a country like this then, it is necessary to wear light armour rather than trying to run in heavy armour, and the lightness of bows and arrows seems to fit in with this. All these arrangements equip us for war, and, as I see it, the lawmaker had this in mind when he made all the regulations. And that is probably why he got people together 625 e
for common meals, seeing that all those who are ever on military campaign necessarily have meals together for their own protection, for the duration, because of the circumstances. Here, I believe, he is demeaning of the stupidity of the broad mass of people who do not understand that there is always constant warfare going on against all of the cities throughout one's life. Now, if it is necessary when there is a war on to have meals together for purposes of protection, and for some rulers and some subjects to act in turn as their guards, the same 626 a
thing should be done in time of peace. For what most of the people call peace is so in name only, while in fact all the cities are, by nature, always involved in undeclared warfare against all other cities. And if you look at it in this way, you will surely find that the Cretan lawgiver had an eye to warfare when he instituted all these regulations of ours, be they public or private. And he gave us the task of protecting the laws based on these principles, because noth- 626 b
ing else at all, no possessions or pursuits, are of any use unless we prevail in war, since all the goods of the defeated city go to the victorious one.

ATHENIAN: Well, stranger, when it comes to the thorough understanding of Cretan law, you seem to me to have been very well trained. But explain something to me more clearly. The definition you gave of a well-governed city seems to me to be saying that it should be organised 626 c
and managed so that it is victorious in war against other cities. Is this so?

CLINIAS: Yes, indeed. And I believe that this man here agrees with this.

MEGILLUS: Heavens! How could any Spartan say otherwise?

ATHENIAN: Now, although this is true of a city in relation to another city, does something different apply to a village in relation to another village?

CLINIAS: Not at all.

ATHENIAN: Is it the same?

CLINIAS: Yes.

ATHENIAN: What about one household in the village in relation to another, and one man against another? Is it the same?

CLINIAS: The same.

ATHENIAN: And what about the man himself, in relation to himself? Should he think of himself as 626 d
an enemy? Or what do we say in this case?

CLINIAS: O Athenian stranger! I am not prepared to refer to you as a mere inhabitant of Attica, for I think you really deserve to be named after the goddess,[2] since you have correctly brought the argument back to its source and made it clearer. As a result, you will easily discover that we were right to say just now that all are enemies to all, at the level of the community or of the individual, and each individual is an enemy of himself.

ATHENIAN: That is surprising! What do you mean? 626 e

CLINIAS: That is to say he himself, winning a victory over himself, my friend, is the first and the best of all victories, while he himself, being defeated by himself, is the worst and most shameful defeat of all. Indeed, these statements are indicating that there is a war going on in each of us, against our own selves.

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1 *Odyssey* xix.178-179. Minos was the legendary king of Crete, son of Zeus and Europa, who, every nine years, made King Aegeus select fourteen children (seven girls and seven boys) to be devoured by the Minotaur.

2 The goddess referred to here is Athena, the goddess of wisdom and foundress of the city of Athens.

ATHENIAN: Well, let us turn the argument around again. For since each one of us is both better than
627 a himself and worse than himself, should we maintain that the same holds for a household, a village and a city, or not?

CLINIAS: Are you asking about being better than itself and worse than itself?

ATHENIAN: Yes.

CLINIAS: And you are right to ask, for this certainly is the case, very much so, especially in cities. For in any cities, where the superior people win a victory over the majority, who are inferior, the city may rightly be said to be better than itself, and the city may quite justly be praised for such a victory. And the opposite applies under the opposite circumstances.

627 b ATHENIAN: Let us set aside the possibility that the inferior might somehow be better than the superior, since that would involve a longer argument. But as I now understand you, you are saying that unjust citizens, of the same stock, born in the same city, will sometimes get together in large numbers and forcibly enslave just citizens who are fewer in number. Whenever they prevail, the city itself may rightly be said to be worse than itself and bad, and whenever they are defeated, the city itself may be said to be better than itself and good.

627 c CLINIAS: What you are describing is most unusual, stranger. Nevertheless, we have to agree that this is most necessarily so.

ATHENIAN: Hold there. Let us consider this once more. Many brothers may presumably be born, sons of one father and one mother, and it would not of course be a surprise if more of them turned out to be unjust, and less of them to be just.

CLINIAS: It would not.

ATHENIAN: And it would not be appropriate for you and me to pursue the point that the entire household, and the family, would be referred to as worse than itself if the evildoers were
627 d victorious, and as better than itself if they were defeated. For what we are now considering, in relation to the argument of the majority, is not concerned with the appropriateness or inappropriateness of verbal expressions, but with laws, and the precise nature of correctness and freedom from error in them.

CLINIAS: Very true, my friend.

MEGILLUS: Yes, I agree. This has been very well expressed so far.

ATHENIAN: Then let us look at the following question too. The brothers that were spoken of just now would, presumably, have a judge?

CLINIAS: Yes, indeed.

ATHENIAN: Now, which of these two would be superior, a judge who destroyed the bad people
627 e among them, and directed the better people to rule over themselves, or one who made the good people rule, while allowing the inferior types to live on as their willing subjects? And there is perhaps a third judge we should mention in terms of excellence – if such a person
628 a exists – one who takes a single quarrelling family in hand, does not destroy anyone, but reconciles them for the future, and would be able to ensure that they are on friendly terms with one another by giving them laws.

CLINIAS: This sort of judge, who is also a lawgiver, would be far superior.

ATHENIAN: And yet, he would not be enacting laws for them with a view to war. The very opposite would be the case.

CLINIAS: That is true.

ATHENIAN: What about the one who brings the city together in harmony? Does he order the life of
628 b the city with a view to external warfare, rather than looking out for warfare that arises from time to time within the city, which is called faction? And this is something that no one ever wants in his own city, and when it arises he wants it to be eliminated as quickly as possible.

CLINIAS: He will look out for faction, of course.

ATHENIAN: What if faction were to come to a peaceful end because some people had been destroyed while others had been victorious? Would that be preferable to reconciliation of the faction and having to turn their thoughts then to external enemies, in friendship and peace with one another? 628 c

CLINIAS: In the case of their own city, the reconciliation is what everyone would prefer.

ATHENIAN: Doesn't the same apply to the lawgiver?

CLINIAS: Of course.

ATHENIAN: And wouldn't every lawgiver institute all the regulations for the sake of what is best?

CLINIAS: How could he do otherwise?

ATHENIAN: And what is best is neither warfare nor faction. It would be terrible if we needed these. What is best is peace and a friendly disposition towards one another at the same time. What is more, it seems the city itself, winning a victory over itself, is not to be counted among the best outcomes, but among those that are necessary. It is as if someone were to think that a sick body, which had undergone medical purgation, was then in the best possible condition and did not pay any attention to a body that did not need any treatment at all. In like manner, no one would ever become a true statesman by focusing exclusively and primarily upon external warfare as a means of ensuring the happiness of the city and of the individual. Nor would he ever be a lawgiver in the strict sense of the word, unless he instituted laws relating to warfare for the sake of peace, rather than instituting laws relating to peace for the sake of warfare. 628 d 628 e

CLINIAS: It appears somehow that this argument of yours, my friend, has been formulated correctly. And, yet, I wonder if the regulations here, and those in Sparta too, have not been enacted, in all seriousness, for the sake of warfare.

ATHENIAN: Perhaps so. Yet we should not do battle with them aggressively, but question them gently about the issues, since we are most serious about all this, and so are they. Follow along with my argument then. At any rate, let us introduce Tyrtaeus,[3] an Athenian by birth, who later became a citizen of Sparta. He, of all men, was particularly interested in these matters, and he said that 629 a

> *I would make no mention of a man or take account of him,* 629 b
> *even if he were the wealthiest of men even if he possessed goods aplenty...*

and here he lists almost all of them

> *...unless he turned out to be consistently excellent in warfare.*

I presume that you have heard these poems too, while I am sure that our friend here has had his fill of them.

MEGILLUS: I certainly have.

CLINIAS: Yes, indeed, and they have reached us here too, imported from Sparta.

ATHENIAN: Come on, then. Let us question this poet together in some such manner as this: "O Tyrtaeus, you are surely the most divine of poets, for you seem to us to be wise and good indeed, because you have sung the praises of those who excel in war, and you have excelled in doing so. Now, I myself, and this man, and Clinias of Cnossus, are already in full agreement with you on this matter, or so we think, but we would like to know for certain whether or not we are both talking about the same people. So tell us, do you think, for certain, as we do, that there are two kinds of warfare? Or what do you think?" 629 c

In response to this, I believe, even a far lesser man than Tyrtaeus would state the truth, that there are two, one which all of us call faction, which is the most bitter of all kinds 629 d

[3] Tyrtaeus was an elegiac poet who lived in Sparta. He was noted for his poetry, which exhorted the Spartans to fight courageously in defence of their city. The Athenian stranger quotes the first line of the poem and paraphrases the subsequent nine lines.

of warfare, as we ourselves said just now. And we shall all propose, I believe, that the other kind of warfare is what we engage in when quarrelling with other peoples externally, and this is much milder than internal faction.

CLINIAS: Of course.

ATHENIAN: "Come on then, which warfare were you praising? And which men did you praise so highly, or criticise? It seems it was the men involved in external warfare, for you say in
629 e your poems that you simply cannot stand the sort of men who shrink at the sight of blood-drenched slaughter, and will not grapple with the enemy at close quarters." And after all this, shouldn't we also say, "It seems, Tyrtaeus, that you lavish most praise on those who achieve fame in external warfare against foreigners." I presume he would agree with this, and accept the point.

CLINIAS: Of course.

630 a ATHENIAN: But although these men are good, we maintain that those who excel conspicuously in the greatest warfare are better by far. And we have a poet as witness to this too, Theognis,[4] a citizen of Megara in Sicily, who says, "In a bitter contest, a faithful man is worth his weight in silver and gold, Cyrnus." We maintain then that this man turns out to be altogether better than that other man in more bitter warfare. He is better to much the same extent as
630 b justice, sound-mindedness and wisdom, combined with courage, are better than courage just by itself. For faith and soundness in the midst of faction would never arise in the absence of overall excellence. But in the external warfare that Tyrtaeus speaks of, there are vast numbers of mercenaries ready and willing to stand their ground and die fighting, almost all of whom turn out to be reckless, unjust, arrogant and devoid of intelligence, with some few exceptions.

630 c Well, where will this present argument of ours finally lead? And what precise point is it trying to make by saying all this? Obviously it is this. The god-inspired lawgiver of this country, and any lawgiver who confers even a little benefit, always institutes laws while looking, above all, to nothing else except the very greatest excellence. This, according to Theognis, is "faithfulness in the midst of danger", which may be called 'perfect justice'. But what Tyrtaeus for his part has praised most – although it is noble, and has been appropriately glorified by the poet – should nevertheless, properly speaking, be placed fourth in
630 d terms of its status and the respect it commands.

CLINIAS: My friend, we are relegating our own lawgiver to the lowest rank.

ATHENIAN: No, my friend, we are not doing it to him. We are relegating ourselves whenever we believe that Lycurgus and Minos instituted all the regulations,[5] here and in Sparta, mainly with a view to warfare.

CLINIAS: How should we have spoken of this?

ATHENIAN: In a way that is true and just, I believe, since we are conversing on behalf of a divine
630 e personage. We should not say that he instituted laws with a view to a portion of excellence, and the most commonplace portion at that, but with a view to excellence in its entirety. And we should say that he sought to institute the laws kind by kind, but not the kinds proposed by those who institute laws nowadays. For at present each seeks to propose whatever kind he needs, so one person is concerned with inheritances and heiresses, another with assaults,
631 a others with countless other cases like these. But we maintain that the search for laws, when properly conducted, proceeds just as we have now begun. And I thoroughly admire your attempt to explain the laws, for beginning with excellence, and saying that the lawgiver instituted the laws for the sake of this, is correct. But when you went on to maintain that he institutes laws by referring everything to a mere portion of excellence, and the smallest portion at that, I thought you were clearly mistaken, and that is why the latter part of our dis-

cussion was needed. Well then, what sort of distinction would I have liked to hear you making as you spoke? Would you like me to tell you? 631 b

CLINIAS: Yes, certainly.

ATHENIAN: You should have said: "Stranger, it is not for nothing that the laws of Crete are held in exceptionally high regard among all Greeks. They are correct laws that bring about happiness in those who use them, for they provide everything that is good. Now, goods are of two kinds – human and divine – and the human goods depend upon the divine. And if a city receives the greater it also acquires the lesser, but if it receives not the greater it is 631 c deprived of both. Of the lesser goods, health is the leader, beauty comes second, third comes strength in running and the other activities of the body, fourth comes wealth – not blind,[6] but keen-sighted, provided it follows wisdom. Now, the first of the divine goods, and their leader, is wisdom; second is a sound-minded disposition of the soul, imbued with reason; and third, from the combination of these two with courage, comes justice; while courage 631 d itself is fourth. All of these have a natural priority over the human goods, and that indeed is how the lawgiver must rank them. After all this, the citizens must be told that the other civic regulations have these goods in view; the human look to the divine, and the divine all look together to their leader, reason.

"In their connections through marriage, and afterwards in the birth of their children and their nurture, be they male or female, when they are young or when they get older and 631 e into old age, it is necessary to care for them by bestowing honour or dishonour in the right way. And in all their interactions, in their pleasures, pains, desires and intense passions, 632 a they should be watched and supervised, and censure or praise should be bestowed in the right way, through the laws themselves. In anger too, and in fear, and amidst any tribulations that arise in their souls because of bad fortune – and the escape from such tribulations in good fortune – and amidst the effects that disease, war, poverty and their opposites have upon people when they occur, under all such circumstances, what is good and what is bad about the situation should be defined and taught in each case. 633 b

"Besides this, it is necessary for the lawgiver to watch over the acquisition and disposition of property by the citizens, regardless of how they do it, and to oversee their joint ventures in furtherance of this, and the dissolution of these, be they voluntary or involuntary, noting the way in which they behave towards one another in each of these ventures, and which are just, and which are not. He should assign honours to those who are obedient to the laws, and impose legally prescribed penalties upon those who disobey them. When he 632 c reaches the end of the entire constitution, he would look to the manner in which the dead should be buried in each case, and what honours should be assigned to them. Having surveyed this, the one who instituted the laws will, over all these, appoint guardians, some who proceed through wisdom, some who work through true opinion, so that reason may bind them all together and declare that they are following sound-mindedness and justice, rather than wealth and ambition." 632 d

So, my friends, that is how I at least wanted, and still wish even now, to hear you describe how all these are present in the laws that are said to come from Zeus, or in the laws of Pythian Apollo, which Minos and Lycurgus instituted. And I also want you to

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4 Theognis was a lyric poet. Despite what the Athenian stranger says here, he is likely to have hailed from the Megara near Athens rather than the Megara in Sicily. His poetry was lively, and provided practical advice about life and commentary on civic matters.

5 According to tradition, Lycurgus and Minos established the Spartan and Cretan constitutions.

6 Plutus, the god and personification of wealth, was, in some contexts, depicted as being blind so that he could distribute his benefits without prejudice.

explain how the order they have acquired is evident to someone experienced in the laws, either technically or practically, while it is not at all apparent to the rest of us.

CLINIAS: Well, my friend, what should we say next?

ATHENIAN: In my opinion we should go through this again from the beginning, starting, as we did
632 e at the outset, with activities conducive to courage, and then if you wish we shall go through another kind of excellence, and another one after that. Once we have described the first one, we should try to set this up as a model, and pass the journey nicely by discussing the others in the same way. Later, god willing, we shall demonstrate that what we have described just now has excellence in its entirety in view.

633 a MEGILLUS: That is a good suggestion. Let us try to put our friend here, who praises Zeus, to the test first.

ATHENIAN: I shall also try to test yourself and myself, since the argument is common to us all. So tell me, do we maintain that the common meals and physical training were devised by the lawgiver for the purposes of warfare?

MEGILLUS: Yes.

ATHENIAN: And what comes third and fourth? For it may perhaps be necessary, in the case of the rest of excellence, to rank the parts, or whatever they should be called, in this way, as long as our meaning is clear.

633 b MEGILLUS: Well I myself, and anyone from Sparta, would say that he devised hunting third.

ATHENIAN: We should try to say what comes fourth or fifth if we can.

MEGILLUS: In fourth place, I would still try to argue, lies the endurance of pain, which is so important to us both in our boxing matches and in the robberies we devise, in which there is always a lot of physical violence. Then there is our so-called 'secret service',[7] which
633 c involves a lot of pain, but teaches endurance wonderfully. They go without shoes in winter, sleeping on the ground, wandering through the entire countryside by day and by night, looking after themselves without any attendants. Our naked games too are formidable tests of endurance, battling against the raging heat of summer. And there are so many other examples that someone who tried to recite them all would almost never stop.

ATHENIAN: Well said, Spartan stranger. But come now, what should we propose courage is? Is it
633 d simply, as you say, doing battle only against fears and pains, or is it set against desires and pleasures too, and against certain formidable corrupting flatteries, that soften the hearts even of those who think they are above this sort of thing?

MEGILLUS: Yes, that is what I think. It is set against them all.

ATHENIAN: Well, if we recall the earlier arguments, this man here spoke of a city that is worse than itself, and of such a man too. Is this so, stranger from Cnossus?

CLINIAS: Very much so.

633 e ATHENIAN: And are we now saying that the man who is worse than the pains is bad, or is the man who is worse than the pleasures bad too?

CLINIAS: In my opinion, the one who is worse than the pleasures is more so. Indeed, we all say, presumably, that someone who is ruled by pleasures is worse than himself, shamefully so, rather than someone who is ruled by pains.

634 a ATHENIAN: Now, surely Zeus' lawgiver and the Pythian one did not institute a crippled courage capable of resisting only the things on its left-hand side, but unable to resist the allurements and flatteries on its right? Or can it resist on both sides?

CLINIAS: On both sides, I would say.

ATHENIAN: Shall we say then, once more, what formal activities of both our cities involve tasting the pleasures rather than avoiding them, just as the other activities did not avoid pains but immersed people in them, and used honour to compel or persuade people to rule over the

pains? Where then, in the laws, is the same arrangement in relation to pleasures? 634 b

Let us say what this arrangement of yours is that makes the same people courageous, in like manner, in the face of pains and in the face of pleasures, winning victories over what they should, and never coming off worst against their own closest and harshest enemies.

MEGILLUS: Well, stranger, although I was able to describe, as I did, many laws that are set against pains, I would probably not be so well provided with significant or obvious instances if I had to speak about pleasures. But I might come up with some minor instances. 634 c

CLINIAS: Nor could I myself point to an obvious instance of this sort in the laws of Crete.

ATHENIAN: Best of strangers, that is no surprise. But if any one of us is going to censure anything about each other's own domestic laws because he wishes to discern the truth, and what is best too, we should accept one another's censures submissively, and not make difficulties.

CLINIAS: Rightly said, Athenian stranger. We should heed that.

ATHENIAN: Yes, Clinias. It would not be appropriate for men of our age to make difficulties. 634 d

CLINIAS: Indeed, it would not.

ATHENIAN: Whether or not someone is right to criticise the constitution of Crete or Sparta is another matter. However, when it comes to the views expressed by most people, I am probably better able to state them than either of you. If your laws have indeed been arranged properly, one of the best laws would be that no young person may conduct an enquiry as to which laws are worthy and which are not, but all must declare together, with one voice, from a 634 e single mouth, that all is well with what the gods have ordained. If anyone says otherwise, he is not given a hearing at all. Yet if any old person has some issue on his mind about your laws, he presents arguments of this sort to someone in authority, someone of his own age, with no young person present.

CLINIAS: What you are saying is quite correct, stranger. And although you are far removed in time 635 a from whoever instituted them, it seems you have now guessed his thinking on the matter quite well, like a prophet, and you really are speaking the truth.

ATHENIAN: Well, there are no young people among us just now. So if the lawgiver permits us, on account of our old age, to discuss these matters just by ourselves, we would be doing no great harm, would we?

CLINIAS: This is so. And do not hold yourself back from criticising our laws, since recognising something that is not good is not disrespectful. In fact, a remedy can be a consequence of this, provided that what is said is received without resentment, in a good spirit. 635 b

ATHENIAN: Very well, but I shall not speak critically of your laws just yet, not until I have investigated them to the best of my ability, and am more certain about them. Instead, I shall tell you of my difficulties. As far as we can discover, your lawgiver is the only one, among Greeks or non-Greeks, who gave directions to refrain from the greatest pleasures and amusements, and not to taste of them at all. Yet when it came to pains and fears, as we explained earlier, he believed that if someone flees from these from his earliest years, in 635 c the end whenever he meets with unavoidable hardships, fears and pains, he is going to flee from people who are trained and practised in these, and he will be enslaved by them. I am of the view then that the same lawgiver should have thought the very same thing about pleasures, saying to himself, "If our citizens grow up from their very childhood with no experience of the greatest pleasures, and become totally unpractised in enduring in the face of pleasures, and in resisting the urge to perform shameful acts, their weakness of spirit when it comes to pleasures will place them in the same predicament as those who 635 d are overcome by fears. They will be enslaved, in a different and even more shameful way,

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[7] An official group of young Spartan citizens who were tasked with ensuring the compliance of the slaves (helots).

by people who are able to practise endurance in the face of pleasures, and who have mastered the realm of pleasure, people who are sometimes thoroughly bad. The state of their own soul will be partly slave, partly free, and they will not be worthy of being hailed as courageous and free without reservation." So think about whether anything that has been said is of any particular relevance.

635 e CLINIAS: Well, although the argument somehow seems to us to make sense, it might well be both naïve and foolish to be persuaded, so quickly and easily, about matters of such significance.

ATHENIAN: But if we turn to the next topic we proposed to discuss after courage, which was sound-mindedness, then, Clinias and my friend from Sparta, we should ask a question. What characteristic difference shall we find between these systems of government and systems that
636 a are managed in a more random manner? In the case of courage, the difference related to warfare. Where does it lie in the case of sound-mindedness?

MEGILLUS: Hardly an easy question, but it does seem that the common meals and physical training have been well devised to promote both virtues.

ATHENIAN: It does, of course, seem hard, strangers, for anything relating to constitutions to be as uncontroversial in practice as it is in theory. Indeed, it is probably like the human body, for which it is not possible to prescribe a single activity for a single body, which would not
636 b turn out to be harmful to our bodies in some respects, but beneficial in other respects. So too these physical exercises and common meals, although they benefit the cities in lots of other ways, give rise to the problem of faction, as the young people of Miletus, Boeotia and Thurii demonstrate. What is more, this practice seems to have corrupted an ancient law that also accords with nature, concerning the sexual pleasures not just of humans, but also of
636 c animals. And your cities might be held primarily responsible for these, along with any other cities that place most emphasis upon physical training. And whether such matters are taken lightly or seriously, we should note that when the female and male natures combine for procreation, the associated pleasure seems to have been bestowed naturally. But combining male with male, or female with female, seems contrary to nature, and the daring of those
636 d who first did this seems to have arisen from uncontrolled desire. And, indeed, we all accuse the Cretans of making up the story about Ganymede.[8] Since their laws are believed to have come from Zeus, they added this story about Zeus so that they could still enjoy this harvest of pleasure while following their god.

But let us bid farewell to the story. Yet, when human beings are considering laws, almost the entire enquiry is about pleasures and pains, either in the city, or in the behaviour
636 e of individuals. For pleasure and pain are two springs sent forth by nature. Drawing from the right one at the right time and in the right quantity leads to happiness in like manner for a city, an individual, or any living being. But whoever draws in ignorance and at the wrong time lives a life that is the very opposite.

MEGILLUS: What has been said, stranger, is in a sense all very well, and it leaves us speechless as to what to say in response. Nevertheless, I still think that the Spartan lawgiver was right to exhort us to flee from pleasures. As for the laws of Cnossus, our friend here can defend
637 a them if he wants to. But it seems to me that the regulations in Sparta relating to pleasure are the best in the world. For our law has cast out, from the entire country, the practice that is most inclined to plunge people into extremes of pleasure, arrogance and utter mindlessness. Neither in the countryside nor in the cities that are under Spartan control would you ever see drinking parties, and all the pleasures that are set in train with such force by whatever goes on there. There is no man among us who would not impose a severe penalty, there
637 b and then, upon any drunken reveller he came across, and the feast of Dionysus would not serve as an excuse to get him off. I saw this sort of thing once on the festival wagons in

your country. And among our own colonies, in Tarentum, I saw the entire city drunk at a festival of Dionysus.[9] There is nothing like this among us.

ATHENIAN: Dear Spartan stranger, everything of this sort is laudable where there is an inherent steadiness of character, but where this is let go, it all becomes quite stupid. Indeed, one of 637 c
our people, in his defence, might perhaps take you to task by pointing to the looseness of your womenfolk. Yet in anything of this sort, in Tarentum, among ourselves or among yourselves, a single response seems to do away with the notion that the behaviour is bad and improper. For everyone will say to a stranger who is amazed at seeing something that is unfamiliar among his own people, "Do not be surprised, stranger. This is the law among us, and perhaps your law about the same things is different." But our present argument is 637 d
not concerned with humanity in general, my dear friends, but with the badness and excellence of the lawgivers themselves. Indeed, we should still say more about drunkenness in general, for it is not a trivial matter, nor can an ordinary lawgiver understand it. And I am not speaking about wine, and partaking of it, or not partaking of it at all, but about drunkenness itself. Should we have recourse to it as the Scythians and Persians do – and the Carthaginians, Celts, Iberians, Thracians too, warrior races all – or should we avoid it totally, 637 e
as you do in Sparta? The Scythians and Thracians, women as well as men, drink completely undiluted wine, pour it all over their garments, and regard this as a lovely, happy activity to engage in. The Persians also indulge in this with great relish, and in the other luxuries that you have banned, but they are more orderly than those other peoples.

MEGILLUS: But, my good man, once we take up arms we put all these people to flight. 638 a

ATHENIAN: Best of men, do not say that. In fact, there have been lots of victories and routs that were unexplained, and there will be many more. Therefore, we should never say that victory or defeat in battle is a decisive indicator of whether practices are good or bad. This is a questionable criterion, since larger cities obviously defeat smaller ones in battle, and so we 638 b
find the Syracusans enslaving the Locrians, who are reputed to have the best laws in that region, the Athenians enslave the Ceians, and you will find countless other examples of this sort. So let us try to persuade ourselves, by speaking of each practice in its own right, excluding victory and defeat from the argument for the moment. We should simply say how a practice of one sort is good, while a practice of another sort is bad. But first, listen to me as I explain how we should investigate what is useful about these practices themselves, and what is not.

MEGILLUS: How do you say it should be done? 638 c

ATHENIAN: It seems to me that those who set about discussing some practice, and propose to criticise it or praise it as soon as it is mentioned, are not proceeding in a proper manner at all. They are acting like someone who has just heard cheese being praised as good food, and immediately criticises it without enquiring as to the effect it has and the manner in which it is administered, by whom, accompanied by what, and to people in what condition.

I think we are now doing the very same thing in these arguments, for at the mere 638 d
mention of drunkenness, as soon as we heard the word, some of us criticised it there and then, while others praised it, most strangely in both cases. We each exalt our own position by recourse to witnesses and praise. Some of us claim we have made a decisive point because we produce so many witnesses, others because we can all see that those who refrain from drunkenness are victorious in battle, and this claim too is a matter of dispute between us.

Now, if we are also going to go through each of the other legal regulations in this

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[8] Ganymede was kidnapped and taken to Olympus to serve as Zeus' cup-bearer, etc. *Iliad* xx.231 ff.

[9] Dionysus was the god of wine and fertility. Festivals in his honour typically involved liberal consumption of wine.

638 e way, that would not seem reasonable to me. But I am willing to describe another approach, a necessary one in my view, in relation to this very practice, drunkenness. I shall try my best to demonstrate the correct method of investigating anything of this sort, since thousands upon thousands of people will enter the fray verbally on these issues, and argue against both your cities.

MEGILLUS: And, indeed, if we have a correct method of investigating such matters, there should
639 a be no reluctance to hear it.

ATHENIAN: Then let us conduct our enquiry along the following lines. Suppose someone were to praise goat-rearing, and the animal itself as a good beast to own, while someone else, having seen goats grazing without a goatherd, and wreaking havoc on farm land, were to criticise them, and also disparage any other unruly animals he saw, or any that had bad minders, do we think that the censure of such a person could ever be sound on any issue at all?

MEGILLUS: No, how could it be?

639 b ATHENIAN: Would someone be useful to us in charge of a ship if he only had navigational knowledge, regardless of whether he suffered from seasickness or not? What would you say?

MEGILLUS: He would not be useful at all if he had the skill, and the sickness you mentioned too.

ATHENIAN: And what about someone in charge of an army? Would he be up to the task if he had military knowledge, despite being a coward in the face of dangers, seasick, and drunk with fear?

MEGILLUS: How could he be?

ATHENIAN: What if he did not have the skill, and was a coward too?

MEGILLUS: Now, you are describing an utterly worthless fellow, who is not a ruler of men at all, but of some thoroughly effeminate types.

639 c ATHENIAN: Consider any community of any sort which has a natural leader, and which is beneficent when that leader is present. What if someone were to praise or criticise this, without ever having seen the community working properly together with its leader in place? What if he had only seen it without a ruler, or with bad rulers? Do we think that an observer of this sort, observing a community of this sort, would ever come up with any useful criticism or praise?

639 d MEGILLUS: How could he when he has never seen, or been involved in, any communities like this when they are operating properly?

ATHENIAN: Hold there. Although there are lots of communities, may we suggest that companions in drink and drinking parties constitute one such gathering?

MEGILLUS: Very much so.

ATHENIAN: Now, has anyone, so far, ever seen such a gathering operating properly? The two of you can easily answer that you have not seen this at all, since these are not the custom of your country, nor are they lawful. But I have come across lots of them in lots of places. And what is more I have made a sort of study of them, and I have hardly seen or heard of
639 e one that was properly conducted in its entirety. And even if a few minor details were somehow right, most of them were almost completely wide of the mark.

CLINIAS: In what sense do you mean this, stranger? Explain this more clearly since we, as you
640 a have acknowledged, have no experience of such gatherings. And even if we came across them, we would probably not immediately recognise what was proper and improper about the way they were being conducted.

ATHENIAN: What you say is quite likely, but try to understand from this explanation of mine. You do understand, don't you, that in all gatherings and communities associated with any activities whatsoever, it is always proper in each case that there be a leader?

CLINIAS: There must be.

ATHENIAN: And, indeed, we said just now that the leader of men in battle must be courageous.
CLINIAS: He must.
ATHENIAN: Now, the courageous man is less troubled by fears than the cowards.
CLINIAS: This too must be so. 640 b
ATHENIAN: And if there had been some contrivance for putting an utterly fearless and untroubled general in charge of an army, wouldn't we have done so, by any possible means?
CLINIAS: Definitely.
ATHENIAN: But at the moment we are not talking about a leader of an army of men in time of war, when enemies are set against enemies, but a leader of friends, communing with friends in a spirit of friendship in time of peace.
CLINIAS: Quite right.
ATHENIAN: And yet, a gathering of this sort, since it will be accompanied by drunkenness, is not 640 c without trouble. Is this so?
CLINIAS: On the contrary, I think trouble is inevitable.
ATHENIAN: So in the first place, don't they too need a leader?
CLINIAS: Of course, especially in this situation.
ATHENIAN: Now, if possible, shouldn't we provide the kind of leader who is untroubled?
CLINIAS: Of course.
ATHENIAN: And, indeed, he should be intelligent in relation to social gatherings, since he becomes the guardian of their existing friendship, and responsible for ensuring that this increases 640 d because of the current gathering.
CLINIAS: Very true.
ATHENIAN: Shouldn't a sober and wise ruler be set over those who are drunk, and not the opposite? For someone who was drunk, young, and not wise, would need a lot of good luck to avoid causing harm on a large scale.
CLINIAS: A lot of luck, indeed.
ATHENIAN: Now, if someone were to criticise such gatherings, in cities where they are being properly conducted as best they could, because he finds fault with the activity itself, perhaps he 640 e might be justified in his criticism. But if someone reviles a practice when he has only seen it going wrong in every way possible, it is obvious, firstly, that he is unaware that this is not being properly conducted, and secondly, that any activity at all will look bad under circumstances where it is performed without a sober master or leader. Or don't you realise that when he is drunk, a ship's captain, or any leader of anything, overturns everything, be 641 a it a ship, a chariot, an army, or whatever he happens to be in charge of?
CLINIAS: What you have said, stranger, is true in every respect. But tell us next what possible good would it do us if this regulation about drinking were to operate properly. For instance, we have just explained that if an army is led properly, the result is military victory for the troops, and that is no small benefit. There are other examples too, but what significant benefit would 641 b there be, to people or to a city, from a drinking party that is properly guided?
ATHENIAN: What about this? What great advantage would we say accrues to the city from a single child, or even a single group, being guided in the right way? Or having put the question in this way, would we reply that there might be some slight benefit to the city from a single instance? But if we ask generally what great benefit the city derives from the education of all its educated citizens, it is not difficult to reply that having been well educated they would prove to be good men, and, as such, their general behaviour would be noble, and, what is 641 c more, they would triumph over their enemies on the battlefield. Now, although education also brings victory, victory sometimes undoes the education, for many people, having become arrogant because of military victories, have then been filled up with countless other

vices because of the arrogance. And although education has never proved counter-productive or Cadmeian,[10] humanity has won many such Cadmeian victories, and will do so again.

641 d CLINIAS: You seem to us, my friend, to be saying that time spent drinking wine together, provided it is properly conducted, is a significant contribution to education.

ATHENIAN: Why not?

CLINIAS: Well, could you now provide some justification that what you have said is true?

ATHENIAN: Stranger, with so much dispute as to how these matters stand, it belongs to God to assert the truth with certainty. But if you want me to explain how it appears to me, I shan't begrudge you that, since we have now set about constructing arguments in relation to laws and constitutions.

641 e CLINIAS: That then is what we should try to understand, your opinion on the issues that are now in dispute.

ATHENIAN: That is what we should do then. You should make an effort to understand the argument, while I attempt somehow or other to expound it. But listen to the following point first. The whole Greek world regards our city as fond of words and full of words, and Sparta as sparing
642 a of words, while Crete cultivates thoughtfulness rather than being full of words. Now, I am being careful not to give you the impression that I have a lot to say about something trivial, by enunciating a vast argument about the insignificant matter of drunkenness. But it would not be possible to consider the right treatment of this topic naturally, with sufficient clarity in our discussions, without considering correctness in music; and this would never be possible without considering education in its entirety; and all these involve very lengthy discussions. So what should we do? Let us see. What if we leave those matters for the moment
642 b and move on to some other argument relating to laws?

MEGILLUS: Athenian stranger, perhaps you do not know that our family is the local representative of your city in Sparta. Now, it is probably the case with all children that once they hear that they are the local representatives of some city, straight away, from their earliest years, a certain goodwill towards that city develops in each of them, as if towards a second fatherland, second only to his own city. And that is what has now happened to me. For when the
642 c Spartans were criticising or praising the Athenians for something, I would immediately hear the other children saying, "That city of yours, Megillus," they would say, "has treated us badly" or "has treated us well", and through entering the fray on your behalf, again and again, against those who found fault with your city, I developed unreserved goodwill for it. Even now your accent delights me. And when I hear so many people say that any Athenians who are good are good in a special way, I think they are speaking the complete truth, for Athenians are good by a divine portion, good by their own nature without any compulsion,
642 d truly so, and not artificially so. Speak on then, as much as you like, and have no concerns on my account.

CLINIAS: And, indeed, stranger, once you have heard my account too, and have accepted it, you may speak on boldly and say as much as you wish. Now, you may have heard that Epimenides, that divine man, was born in this country. He was a relative of ours, and ten years before the Persian War he went to Athens, to your people, to comply with an oracle
642 e of the god.[11] He performed some sacrifices that the god had ordained, and what is more, since the Athenians lived in fear of the Persian expeditionary force, he told them, "They will not arrive for another ten years, and when they get here they will depart without achieving anything they had hoped for, having suffered more harm than they inflicted." That is
643 a when our ancestors formed a bond of hospitality with yours, and I myself and my family have been well disposed towards your people ever since.

ATHENIAN: Well then, it seems that you are both ready to play your part and listen. As for myself,

although I am ready and willing, the capacity may be lacking as this is not at all easy, but I must make the effort nevertheless. In the first place then, to develop the argument, we should define what precisely education is, and what power it has. For we maintain that the argument we have taken in hand should proceed along the path of education, until it reaches God.

CLINIAS: Yes, certainly. Let us do that, if it pleases you.

ATHENIAN: Well, what is education? What should we say it is? Let me answer that, and you should 643 b
decide if what I say is to your liking.

CLINIAS: Proceed.

ATHENIAN: What I say is this. I maintain that a man who is to be good at anything at all should practise just that activity from his earliest years, both as a game and seriously, using the particular tools that are appropriate to the activity. Take, for example, a man who is to be a good farmer or house-builder. The builder should play at building toy houses, and the other 643 c
man should play at farming, and whoever is rearing them should provide each of them with little tools, imitations of the real ones. And, indeed, any of the essential subjects should be learned in advance. And so a carpenter should learn to measure and calculate, a military type should learn horse-riding for sport, or do something else like that, and we should endeavour to turn the pleasures and desires of the children, through games, to where they should ultimately be directed.

We are saying then that the essence of education is the correct upbringing which 643 d
most effectively draws the soul of the child, as he plays, to an intense love of the activity in which he will need to be perfect, in terms of its excellence, when he becomes a man. Now, as promised, let us see if what I have said so far is to your liking.

CLINIAS: Of course it is.

ATHENIAN: Unless perhaps our description of education still lacks definition. For we are now criticising and praising various upbringings, and we say that one of us has been educated while another is uneducated, and sometimes we are speaking about people who have been thor- 643 e
oughly well educated in certain trades, or in merchant shipping and other such occupations. But in our present argument we would not, it seems, regard any of these as education. We mean education directed to excellence from earliest childhood, which produces an eager desire to become a perfect citizen who knows how to rule and be ruled justly. This argument of ours, having distinguished this particular upbringing from the others, would in my view 644 a
wish to refer to this alone as education. And it would say that an upbringing whose aim is money, or some sort of strength, or even another kind of wisdom devoid of reason and justice, is base and slavish, and totally unworthy of being called education.

But let us not quarrel with one another over names. Let us hold to the argument we have just agreed upon: that those who have been properly educated usually become good, and education should be shown no disrespect anywhere, since it is foremost among the 644 b
fairest acquisitions that the best men have. And if it ever goes astray, it is possible to set it right, and this is what everyone should do, unceasingly, to the very best of his ability throughout his entire life.

CLINIAS: That is right. We agree with what you are saying.

ATHENIAN: And, indeed, we agreed some time ago that the good people are those with the ability to rule over themselves, while the bad are those who cannot do so.

CLINIAS: What you are saying is correct.

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[10] A Cadmeian victory is one that comes at a greater loss than the benefit it brings. It is a proverbial saying that references Cadmus, the legendary founder of Thebes. It is comparable to our phrase 'Pyrrhic victory'.

[11] Epimenides was a legendary seer who was granted the power of prophecy after having slept for 57 years in a sacred cave on Crete. Clinias' description puts his birth about a century after its actual date.

644 c ATHENIAN: Well, let us look at this again, more clearly this time, and say what precisely we mean. And if you allow me, I shall explain this to you by means of an image, if I can.

CLINIAS: Proceed.

ATHENIAN: May we assume that each of us is, himself, one?

CLINIAS: Yes.

ATHENIAN: But we each possess, in ourselves, two opposed advisers, devoid of intelligence, which we call pleasure and pain.

CLINIAS: This is so.

ATHENIAN: Besides these two, there are opinions relating to the future. These go by the general
644 d name of 'expectations'. But to be specific, the expectation prior to pain is called fear, while the expectation prior to pleasure is called confidence. Then there is reasoning about all these as to which is better and which is worse, and when reasoning becomes a doctrine that is common to the city, it is given the name 'law'.

CLINIAS: I am following you somehow, but with difficulty. However, assume that I am following you, and tell me what comes next.

MEGILLUS: Yes, I feel the same way.

ATHENIAN: Then let us think about these matters as follows: let us consider each of us living creatures as a puppet of the gods, constructed as their plaything, or for some serious purpose.
644 e This we do not understand, but we do know that these emotions within us, like cords or strings, are drawing us, and because they are opposites they are pulling against one another, towards opposite activities, and here lies the boundary line between excellence and evil. And the argument declares that we should each always follow the lead of one of these pulls, and never forsake that one at all, but pull against the other cords. The cord to follow is the
645 a golden and sacred guidance of reasoning, called the common law of the city. The other cords are hard and of iron, and they occur in endless varieties, but this one is soft because it is made of gold. We should co-operate then with the exalted guidance of the law. For reasoning, although it is noble, is also gentle and not violent, and its guidance needs our support, so that the golden race within us may triumph over all the other kinds.

645 b And so the story about excellence, the story about us being puppets, would be saved, and the meaning of being better than oneself and worse than oneself would somehow become clearer. It would also be more obvious that the individual should take to heart the true account concerning these various pulls, follow this, and live accordingly; while the city, having adopted an argument either from some god, or from this person who understands these matters, should pass a law to govern its dealings with itself and other cities.

645 c In this way too, the distinction between badness and excellence might be clearer to us, and once this has become more evident, perhaps we shall have a better perspective on education and the other practices. And in particular, although the pastime of wine drinking might seem to be commonplace, and an odd topic to discuss at such great length, it may well turn out to be worthy of a lengthy discourse after all.

CLINIAS: Well said. So let us proceed with whatever this discussion requires.

645 d ATHENIAN: Come on, then. If we bring drunkenness to bear upon this puppet of ours, what sort of effect will it have?

CLINIAS: Why do you ask? What's the purpose of this enquiry?

ATHENIAN: Nothing in particular, I am just asking what sort of thing generally happens when this interacts with that. But I shall try to explain what I mean more clearly. Does the consumption of wine make pleasures and pains, anger and passion, more intense?

CLINIAS: Much more intense.

645 e ATHENIAN: But what about sense perception, memory, opinions and intelligence? Do these become

more intense in the same way? Or do they totally forsake a person once someone becomes intensely drunk?

CLINIAS: Yes, they forsake him completely.

ATHENIAN: Doesn't his soul revert to the same state it was in when he was a child?

CLINIAS: Indeed.

ATHENIAN: And that is when he would be least in control of himself?

CLINIAS: Least. 646 a

ATHENIAN: And don't we say that a person like this is thoroughly bad?

CLINIAS: Thoroughly so.

ATHENIAN: So it is not just the old man, it seems, who experiences a 'second childhood', but the drunkard too.

CLINIAS: Excellent, stranger. Well said.

ATHENIAN: In that case, is there any argument that will attempt to persuade us that this is a practice we should indulge in, and not one we should flee from with all the strength we can muster?

CLINIAS: It seems that there is. At any rate, you maintain that there is such an argument, and you were ready to state it a moment ago.

ATHENIAN: Yes, that is true, you remember. And I am now ready to do so, since you have both declared your willingness and eagerness to listen. 646 b

CLINIAS: We shall listen. We simply must, if only because of your surprising and odd assertion that a person should ever plunge himself, willingly, into an utterly depraved state.

ATHENIAN: Are you referring to the state of his soul? Is that what you mean?

CLINIAS: Yes.

ATHENIAN: What about this, stranger? Would we be surprised if someone ever, of his own free will, got into a physical state of emaciation, ugliness and weakness? 646 c

CLINIAS: We would of course.

ATHENIAN: Now, do we imagine that people, who themselves go along to medical centres to be treated with drugs, do not realise that shortly afterwards, and for many days, their body will be in such a state that if they had to live like that for the rest of their lives, they could not bear it? And we know, don't we, that people who go to the gymnasium and do hard exercises become weak at first.

CLINIAS: Yes, we know all this.

ATHENIAN: And don't we also know that we engage in all these willingly, for the sake of the benefits that follow from them?

CLINIAS: Quite so. 646 d

ATHENIAN: Shouldn't we also think about any other practices in the same way?

CLINIAS: Yes, indeed.

ATHENIAN: In that case, we should also think of the pastime of wine drinking in the same way, if it may, indeed, properly be thought of as one of these practices.

CLINIAS: Of course.

ATHENIAN: Now, if it turns out that this practice is beneficial to us, just as beneficial as the practices associated with the body, it would still win out over physical exercise, because that is accompanied by pain in the beginning, while wine drinking is not.

CLINIAS: You are right about that, but I would be surprised if we were able to discover any such benefit in this. 646 e

ATHENIAN: Then this, it seems, is just what we should now attempt to explain. So, tell me. Can we discern two kinds of fear that are almost direct opposites?

CLINIAS: What kind of fears?

ATHENIAN: As follows. Presumably we are afraid of evils when we expect them to occur?

CLINIAS: Yes.

ATHENIAN: And we are often afraid of opinion when we believe that people will form a bad opinion about us, for doing or saying something that is not noble. And we ourselves, and I believe
647 a everyone else too, refer to this fear as shame.

CLINIAS: Of course.

ATHENIAN: These are the two fears I meant. The second of them stands in opposition to pains, and to the other fears, and also to the most numerous and intense pleasures.

CLINIAS: Correct.

ATHENIAN: Now, doesn't the lawgiver, and anyone else who is of any use, show the utmost respect for this fear and refer to it as 'reverence'? The boldness that is opposed to this he calls
647 b 'irreverence', and he regards this as the greatest possible evil, both for a private individual and for a community.

CLINIAS: Correct.

ATHENIAN: Doesn't this fear save us in many other ways, all of them important? And doesn't this, more so than anything else, ensure victory in war, and our safety in every case? For there are two things that ensure victory: boldness in the face of enemies, and fear before our friends of the evil associated with shame.

CLINIAS: Quite so.

647 c ATHENIAN: So each of us should become fearless, and fearful, for the reasons we have distinguished in either case.

CLINIAS: Certainly.

ATHENIAN: And, indeed, when we wish to make each person fearless in the face of many fears, we ensure this by drawing him into fear, legally.

CLINIAS: Apparently so.

ATHENIAN: And what about our attempts to make someone fearful, in a manner that conforms to justice? Shouldn't we make him victorious in the battle against his own pleasures, by pitting him against shamelessness, and training him to oppose it? A person should become perfect
647 d in courage by doing battle against the cowardice in himself and defeating it. And, indeed, anyone who has no experience or training in such struggles would not attain even half of his own potential in terms of excellence. But in the case of sound-mindedness, can he ever attain perfection without putting up a strong fight against the many pleasures and desires that turn him to shamelessness and injustice, and prevailing against them with the aid of reason, action and skill, both in play and seriously, rather than being devoid of experience of this sort of thing?

647 e CLINIAS: That would be quite unlikely.

ATHENIAN: What about this? Is there a drug for fear, that some god has given to humanity, such that the more someone is willing to drink of it, the more he regards himself, with every
648 a drop he drinks, as doomed to misfortune? He gets afraid of everything, present and future alike, and in the end even the most courageous man there is gets consumed with fear. But once he has slept off the potion and is rid of its effects, he always becomes himself once again.

CLINIAS: Is there a potion like this, stranger? Can we claim that such a thing exists?

ATHENIAN: There is no such thing. But if it had existed somewhere, would it have been of any use to the lawgiver in promoting courage? We might well have had a discussion with him about this, somewhat as follows: "Come, lawgiver, whether you are proposing laws for Crete or
648 b for any other people, would you like first to have a test at your disposal to determine the courage and cowardice of the citizens?"

CLINIAS: Every legislator would obviously say, "Yes".

ATHENIAN: What about this? Would you like a test that is safe, and without significant risks, or the opposite?

CLINIAS: The test should be safe. Everyone will agree on this.

ATHENIAN: And would you use the test by inducing these fears, and testing the people under these circumstances, so as to compel them to become fearless by exhorting, warning and rewarding them? Would you dishonour anyone who did not obey you and thus become the sort of person you directed them to be? And wouldn't you let someone go without a penalty if he had completed his training well and courageously, but impose some penalty if he had done badly? Or would you not use the potion at all, even though you had nothing else to say against it? 648 c

CLINIAS: How could he decline to use it, stranger?

ATHENIAN: In any case, my friend, in comparison with what is done nowadays, this training would be wonderfully easy to apply to one person, a few, or to as many people as anyone might ever wish. And what if someone preferred to be alone, in solitude, ashamed at the prospect of being seen until he believed he was in good condition? Suppose he exercised against the fears in this way, equipped only with the potion instead of lots and lots of practices? Wouldn't he be acting correctly? And so too would someone else who, trusting that he himself was properly equipped by nature and by practice, had no reluctance about engaging in the exercise, along with numerous drinking companions, and demonstrating his capacity to transcend this, and retain control in the face of the inevitable disturbance brought on by the potion. And so, because of his excellence, he would not succumb to any serious disgraceful conduct at all, nor would he behave differently. And before the last draught arrived, he would quit the scene, for fear of the defeat that the potion finally inflicts upon everyone. 648 d 648 e

CLINIAS: Yes, stranger. In fact a person like this, acting like this, would be demonstrating soundmindedness.

ATHENIAN: Then, let us speak once more to the lawgiver as follows. "So be it, lawgiver. Although no god has actually given a fear-inducing drug like this to humanity, nor have we devised one ourselves – and I am excluding sorcerers – is there nevertheless a potion to induce excessive courage at the wrong time, where it is not needed?" 649 a

What do we say?

CLINIAS: I presume he will reply that there is such a potion, and he will say that it is wine.

ATHENIAN: Doesn't this have the very opposite effect to the one we described just now? Initially it immediately makes the person who drinks it more cheerful than he was before, and the more of it he imbibes the more he is filled with high hopes and with power too, or so he thinks. And in the end, doesn't a person like this behave like a wise man, and abound in utter frankness, freedom, and complete fearlessness, so that he says anything at all without hesitation, and acts in just the same way? I think everyone would agree with us on all this. 649 b

CLINIAS: Of course.

ATHENIAN: Let us remind ourselves then of the following. We declared that there are two things in our souls that should be cultivated: one so that we may be as confident as possible, and the other, its opposite, so that we may be as fearful as possible. 649 c

CLINIAS: This one we call reverence, I believe.

ATHENIAN: Well remembered. And since courage and fearlessness should be practised in situations of fear, we have to decide whether their opposite would need to be cultivated under opposite circumstances.

CLINIAS: Well, that is likely to be the case.

ATHENIAN: So, there are situations in which we naturally become exceptionally bold and daring. And these are the situations in which we should practise being as free as we possibly can

649 d from shamelessness and audacity, and fearful of ever daring to say, feel, or do anything shameful.

CLINIAS: So it seems.

ATHENIAN: Now, we are like this, aren't we, in anger, passion, insolence, ignorance, avarice, cowardice? And we may also include wealth, beauty, strength, and anything else that makes us drunk with pleasure and drives us out of our minds. And when it comes firstly to providing
649 e an inexpensive and harmless test of these, and for practising with them too, can we think of any pleasure more measured than a playful trial in wine drinking, provided it is conducted carefully? Let us consider this. Should we test for an intractable and wild soul, the source of countless injustices, by entering into business dealings with the person, and run all the
650 a associated risks, or is it safer to get together at a festival of Dionysus? Or should we carry out a trial of a soul that is dominated by sexual desires by turning our own daughters, sons and wives over to that person, thus putting our nearest and dearest in danger, in order to see the condition of his soul? And, indeed, you could give countless examples, and still not show just how superior this safe and secure method of observing people through play actually is.

And, indeed, I do not think the Cretans or any other peoples at all will dispute the
650 b fact that in these matters, this is a fair way of testing one another. And in terms of its low cost, safety and speed, it is superior to other tests.

CLINIAS: Well, that is true.

ATHENIAN: This then, the recognition of the natures and dispositions of souls, would be one of the most useful things for that skill which involves caring for them. And this skill, according to us, is I presume statesmanship. Is this so?

CLINIAS: Entirely so.

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