GORGIAS: I suppose so.

SOCRATES: So a rhetorician will never deliberately do wrong.

GORGIAS: Apparently not.

SOCRATES: Well, I'd like to remind you of something d you said not long ago. You said that communities shouldn't hold trainers responsible and banish them for what a boxer does with his boxing—that is, for any wrongs he commits—and that by the same token it isn't the teacher who should be blamed or banned if a rhetorician uses his rhetoric for immoral purposes, but the person who is actually using rhetoric wrongly and incorrectly. Isn't that what you said?

GORGIAS: Yes, it is.

SOCRATES: But now it turns out that a rhetorician—the e very person you were talking about—can *never* do wrong. Is that right?

GORGIAS: I suppose so.

SOCRATES: In fact, Gorgias, you know when you said earlier that the province of rhetoric was the spoken word in the field of right and wrong, rather than things like numerical oddness and evenness?

GORGIAS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Well, even then I took the implication of what you were saying to be that rhetoric could never be an immoral business, since morality is all it ever talks about. That was why I was astonished at the suggestion you made a little later that a rhetorician might 461a actually put his rhetoric to immoral use; I thought you were being inconsistent and so I said what I said about how our discussion would be worth while if you were like me and saw the profit in being proved wrong, but that otherwise we should just forget it. And now we've reached a point in our enquiry where you can see for yourself that we've come to the opposite conclusion—that a rhetorician is incapable of putting his rhetoric to immoral use and of deliberately doing wrong. I tell you, Gorgias, it's going to

take quite a lot of discussion to sort out the truth of these matters to our satisfaction. b

Gorgias' pupil Polus now takes over the discussion with Socrates. He complains that Socrates has exploited Gorgias' sense of propriety in order to win the argument and asks Socrates what he himself thinks rhetoric is. Socrates says that it is a kind of empirical knack, like cookery, and doesn't require technical expertise as such. Moreover, both rhetoric and cookery are aspects of 'flattery'—which is to say that they aim solely to give pleasure, rather than any genuine benefit. All branches of flattery are counterfeit imitations of true branches of knowledge. Four branches of flattery are schematically compared with their non-spurious counterparts.

POLUS: Come off it, Socrates. Do you actually believe what you've been saying about rhetoric? Do you think . . . just because Gorgias was too embarrassed not to accept the idea you introduced (that a rhetorical expert knows what is right, moral, and good, and that if a pupil didn't have this knowledge when he came to him, he'd teach him), and just because—as a result of this concession, I suppose*—there then turned out to be a degree of inconsistency in what he was saying, which is a situation you relish, when it c was you yourself who had steered him towards these questions . . . I mean, do you expect *anyone* to deny that he knows what's right and can explain it to other people? It's really rude of you to steer the discussion in that direction.

SOCRATES: My dear Polus, that's exactly why we've got friends and children, so that when we grow old and tottery, you younger ones are there to set our lives straight and correct any mistakes we make in our behaviour and our words. At the moment, you're the one who's here: if Gorgias and I have slipped up in d anything we've said, it's your duty to set us straight. I'll gladly take back anything you like—any of our

conclusions which strikes you as wrong—just so long as you comply with one condition.

POLUS: What's that?

SOCRATES: At the beginning of this discussion,* you showed signs of wanting to express yourself in a long-winded fashion. Please could you restrain yourself on that score.

POLUS: What? Won't you let me speak at any length I choose?

e SOCRATES: Polus, it would certainly be dreadful for you to come here to Athens, where there's greater freedom of speech than anywhere else in Greece, and then to be the only person to be denied that opportunity. 'But look at it from the other point of view':* if you'd rather make long speeches than answer questions, wouldn't *I* be the one in trouble—unless I could just leave and avoid listening to you?

462a No, if you feel anything for the discussion you've just heard and would like to set it straight, you're welcome to take back any part of it, but then please do what Gorgias and I did: test me and let yourself be tested as well, by asking and answering questions. I mean, I imagine you claim to have the same accomplishments as Gorgias, don't you?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: In that case, do you too tell people from time to time to ask you any question they like, on the grounds that you'll know what answer to give?

POLUS: Yes.

b SOCRATES: So now please either ask questions or answer them, whichever you like.

POLUS: All right, here's a question for you, Socrates. According to you, Gorgias is unclear about rhetoric; so why don't you tell us what *you* think it is?

SOCRATES: Are you asking me what kind of expertise I think it is?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: To be perfectly frank, Polus, I don't think there's any expertise involved.

POLUS: Well, what do you think rhetoric is, then?

SOCRATES: Something which, according to an essay of yours I recently read,* is responsible for expertise. c

POLUS: What do you mean?

SOCRATES: I think it's a kind of experiential knack.*

POLUS: So that's what you think rhetoric is, do you?

SOCRATES: I do, unless you tell me otherwise.

POLUS: A knack at what?

SOCRATES: At producing pleasure and gratification.

POLUS: Wouldn't you say that the ability of rhetoric to please people is precisely what makes it so admirable?

SOCRATES: Polus, surely it's a secondary question whether I think rhetoric is admirable. You can only ask me that once you've found out from me what I think d rhetoric is. Have you done that?

POLUS: Yes, because you've told me you think it's a kind of knack.

SOCRATES: Well, since you're so keen on gratification, will you do me a small favour?

POLUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Ask me what kind of expertise I think cookery is.

POLUS: Okay. What kind of expertise is cookery?

SOCRATES: It isn't one at all, Polus. Go on, ask me why.

POLUS: All right, I do.

SOCRATES: It's a kind of knack. Ask me what it's a knack at.

POLUS: Yes, please tell us.

SOCRATES: At producing pleasure and gratification, Polus. e

POLUS: So cookery's the same as rhetoric?

SOCRATES: Of course not. It's just that it's a branch of the same activity.

POLUS: What activity?

SOCRATES: I don't want Gorgias to think I'm mocking what he does, so I'm a bit worried about speaking, in case the truth sounds rather rude. It's true that I'm not sure whether what I'm going to say *does* apply to rhetoric as Gorgias practises it, because in our 463a

recent discussion he didn't actually explain what he thought about rhetoric; but there's nothing admirable about the activity one of whose branches is what *I* call rhetoric.

GORGIAS: What activity is that, Socrates? Go on, you can tell us. You needn't feel embarrassed because of me.

SOCRATES: Well, in my opinion, Gorgias, it doesn't involve expertise; all you need is a mind which is good at guessing, some courage, and a natural talent for interacting with people. The general term I use to b refer to it is 'flattery', and this strikes me as a multifaceted activity, one of whose branches is cookery. And what I'm saying about cookery is that it does seem to be a branch of expertise, but in fact isn't: it's a knack, acquired by habituation. Another branch of the same activity is rhetoric, to my mind—and then there's ornamentation and sophistry as well. Each of these four branches has its own sphere of activity. I'd welcome any questions from Polus about this, c because I haven't yet told him what particular kind of branch of flattery I think rhetoric is—not that it seems to matter to him that I haven't yet answered this question: he's already asking me whether I think rhetoric is an admirable activity. But I refuse to tell him whether I think rhetoric is admirable or contemptible before I've told him what it is. I'd be wrong to do so, Polus. So if you want to hear what I have to say, you'd better ask me what kind of branch of flattery I think rhetoric is.

POLUS: All right. Tell us what kind it is.

d SOCRATES: I wonder if you'll understand the implications of my answer, though. In my opinion, you see, rhetoric is a phantom of a branch of statesmanship.

POLUS: Good. Now, do you think it's admirable or contemptible?

SOCRATES: Anything bad is contemptible, so in my opinion rhetoric is contemptible. But this answer of mine assumes that you understand what I'm getting at.

GORGIAS: Well, I have to tell you, Socrates, that *I* certainly don't understand what you're getting at.

SOCRATES: Why should you, Gorgias? I haven't yet made e my meaning plain. But our friend Polus here is young and impatient.*

GORGIAS: Well, never mind him. Why don't you tell *me* what you mean by saying that rhetoric is a phantom of a branch of statesmanship?

SOCRATES: All right. I'll try to explain what I think rhetoric is, and then Polus here will prove me wrong if my ideas turn out to be misguided. There's something you call 'body', isn't there, and something else you call 'mind'?

GORGIAS: Naturally. 464a

SOCRATES: And in the case of both the body and the mind, there's a state which is a state of health, wouldn't you say?

GORGIAS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Do you also think there's a state which only appears to be healthy, but isn't really? Here's the kind of situation I'm thinking of. It's quite common for people to seem to be physically healthy, and for no one except a doctor or a trainer to see that they actually aren't.

GORGIAS: You're right.

SOCRATES: In my opinion, this is a mental phenomenon as well. I think the mind as well as the body can be in the kind of condition which makes it seem to be in a good state when it really isn't at all.

GORGIAS: True. b

SOCRATES: All right, now I'll explain my position better, if I can. In my opinion, there are two areas of expertise, corresponding to these two domains. I call the area of expertise whose province is the mind 'statesmanship'; I can't quite find a single term to apply to the one whose province is the body, but I'd say that looking after the body is a single area of expertise and that it has two branches, exercise and medicine. Within statesmanship, the legislative

process corresponds to exercise and the administration of justice to medicine.* Because they're concerned [c] with the same province, there's some overlap between them—between medicine and exercise on the one hand, and the administration of justice and the legislative process on the other—but there are also differences.

There are these four branches of expertise, then, and all they ever aim for is what's best for the body or the mind, whichever it is they look after. Flattery noticed them—guessed their natures, I should say, rather than understood them—and divided herself into four. She can impersonate each of the four branches of expertise and make herself out to be any of them, whichever one's persona she takes on. She [d] isn't interested in the slightest in the best course of action, but she traps and deceives foolish people with the promise of maximizing immediate pleasure, which makes her seem better than any alternative. Cookery impersonates medicine, for instance, and pretends to know what food is best for the body;* so if children (or adults with as little intelligence as children) were judging a contest between a cook and a doctor as to which of them—the doctor or the cook—was the [e] expert on the subject of good and bad food, they'd sentence the doctor to death by starvation!*

I call cookery a kind of flattery, then, and I maintain [465a] that it's contemptible—this point is addressed to you, Polus—because its aim is pleasure rather than welfare. But I don't think it's an area of expertise: I think it's a knack, because it lacks rational understanding either of the object of its attentions or of the nature of the things it dispenses (and so it can't explain the reason why anything happens), and it's inconceivable to me that anything irrational involves expertise. If you dispute any of this, I'd be happy to submit it to a reasoned argument.

[b] So cookery, as I say, is the counterpart within flattery of medicine. By the same token, ornamentation

is the counterpart of exercise, in the sense that it is fraudulent, deceitful, petty, and servile. It misleadingly alters a person's shape and complexion; it makes his skin all smooth and dresses him up. And so it enables people to take on a beauty which is not their own and to disregard their own innate attractions, which can be developed through exercise. To help me to be brief, and because I think you'll understand me now, I want to say (at the risk of sounding like a mathematician) that as ornamentation is to exer- [c] cise, so cookery is to medicine—or rather, as ornamentation is to exercise, so sophistry is to the legislative process, and as cookery is to medicine, so rhetoric is to the administration of justice.

Although sophistry and rhetoric are essentially different, in the way I've described, there are, as I say,* enough similarities for their practitioners to find themselves all jumbled together in the same province and with the same concerns, until they don't know what to make of one another and no one else does either. In fact, if the body were self-regulating and didn't have the mind to control it (in other words, if [d] the mind didn't take a good look at cookery and medicine and conclude that they're different, but the body drew its own conclusions on the basis of its own feelings of pleasure), then the situation Anaxagoras describes—I'm sure you know what I'm talking about, my dear Polus—would be rife:* everything would be jumbled up together, with no differentiation between the practices of medicine and healing and those of cookery.

So now you know what I think about rhetoric. It corresponds to cookery: as cookery is to the body, [e] so rhetoric is to the mind. You might think that my behaviour has been ridiculous: first I stopped you making long speeches and now I've gone on for so long myself. Well, I think you should forgive me, because when I kept my answers brief, you didn't understand me and completely failed to cope with

466a what I was saying. If I can't cope with your answers either, *you* can develop what you want to say at length as well; if I can, though, you mustn't stop me doing so. That's fair for both of us. So if there's any response you want to make now to the position I've stated, please go ahead.

Polus is surprised at Socrates' belittlement of rhetoric, because political speakers surely have power. Astonishingly, and boldly, Socrates denies this. In an argument which is perhaps too subtle for its own good, he claims that the ability to do what seems best *does not necessarily imply the ability to do what you actually* want, *since what you actually want at any time is what is good for you, and although like everyone else politicians always aim for their own good, they may fail to realize where their own good lies, and so not do what they want. Politicians, Socrates implies, are more likely than others to decide to follow others' whims—to pander to the populace, for instance—rather than pursue their own good, and therefore, paradoxically, those who apparently have the most power have the least.*

POLUS: So, in your opinion, to be a rhetorician is to be a flatterer, is it? Is that what you're saying?

SOCRATES: Well, what I actually said was that rhetoric was a *branch* of flattery.* So young, and yet so forgetful, Polus! It makes me wonder what you'll be like before long.

POLUS: So you think people have a low opinion of good rhetoricians, do you? Their fellow citizens consider them flatterers, you say?

b SOCRATES: Is this a genuine question or the beginning of a speech?

POLUS: A genuine question.

SOCRATES: I myself don't think people have any opinion at all about them.

POLUS: But of course they do! Rhetoricians are the most powerful members of their communities, aren't they?*

SOCRATES: No, not if you believe that power is a good thing for its possessor.

POLUS: I most certainly do believe that.

SOCRATES: Well, I think rhetoricians are the *least* powerful members of a community.

POLUS: What? Don't they resemble dictators in that they can execute anyone they want, and confiscate a person's property and then banish that person from their c community if it seems best?

SOCRATES: Honestly, Polus, I just can't make up my mind whether you really mean anything you say and are expressing your own opinion, or are simply asking me for my views about it.

POLUS: Well, I'm certainly asking you what you think.

SOCRATES: All right, my friend. In that case, you're asking me two questions at the same time, aren't you?

POLUS: What do you mean?

SOCRATES: Didn't you just say, 'Don't rhetoricians resemble dictators in that they can execute anyone they d want, and can confiscate a person's property and then drive that person out of their communities if it seems best?'?

POLUS: I did.

SOCRATES: Well, I'd say there are two questions here. Here's my response to them both. In my opinion, Polus—and this is to repeat what I said a moment ago—rhetoricians and dictators are the least powerful members of their communities, because they almost never do what they want, rather than what e they think it's best for them to do.

POLUS: But isn't this what it is to have a great deal of power?

SOCRATES: No, not according to Polus.

POLUS: Not according to me? But I *do* think so.

SOCRATES: I assure you that . . . No, you don't, since you claim that a great deal of power is a good thing for its possessor.

POLUS: Yes, I do claim that.

SOCRATES: Well, suppose an unintelligent person does

what he thinks it's best for him to do—is that a good thing, do you think? Would you describe this as an instance of great power?

POLUS: No, I wouldn't.

SOCRATES: So why don't you prove me wrong by demonstrating that rhetoricians aren't unintelligent—in 467a other words, that rhetoric is an area of expertise, not a kind of flattery?* As long as this claim of mine remains in place, any rhetoricians who do what they think it's best for them to do in their communities won't benefit at all from this, and the same goes for dictators too. Power is a good thing, according to you, but you agree with me that action based on unwise decisions is a bad thing. Yes?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Why should we suppose, then, that rhetoricians or dictators have a great deal of power in their communities? Polus would have to prove Socrates wrong and demonstrate that rhetoricians and dictators do what they *want*.

b POLUS: Just listen to him! He . . .

SOCRATES: I'm denying that they do what they want. Can you prove me wrong?

POLUS: Didn't you concede a short while ago that they do what they think it's best for them to do?

SOCRATES: Yes, I agree with that.

POLUS: Aren't they doing what they want, then?

SOCRATES: No, I don't think so.

POLUS: Even though they're doing what they think it's best to do?

SOCRATES: Yes.

POLUS: You're really being extraordinarily obstinate, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Please don't be rude, peerless Polus—look, this salutation of mine sounds like something you c might have said!* Either prove me wrong, if you've got any questions to ask me, or else let me ask you some questions.

POLUS: I don't mind if you ask the questions,

because it'll help me understand what you're getting at.

SOCRATES: Tell me, then, do you think people want whatever it is they're doing on any given occasion, or do they want whatever it is that what they're doing is a means towards? For example, when people drink medicine which a doctor has given them, do you think their objective is what they're doing—that is, drinking the medicine and suffering*—or that thing (in this case health) which the drinking of the medicine is a means towards?

POLUS: Obviously it's health.

SOCRATES: What about businessmen, then, when they d make a sea voyage or whatever? Again, they don't want what they're doing at the time—who could possibly *want* all the risks of a sea voyage and all the bother that commerce brings? What they want is what the voyage is a means towards, in this case wealth. Wealth is the reason they make sea voyages.

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: In fact, isn't it a universal principle that whenever someone does one thing for the sake of another thing, what he wants is not what he's actually doing, but whatever it is that what he's doing is a means towards?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Now, isn't everything in the world either e good, bad, or indifferent (which is to say, neither good nor bad)?

POLUS: That's absolutely inevitable, Socrates.

SOCRATES: And would you count knowledge, health, wealth, and so on as good, and their opposites as bad?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: What about 'neither good nor bad'? Do you think this description fits things which sometimes take on the quality of being good and sometimes that of being bad, and at other times are neutral? I mean things like sitting, walking, running, and sailing, for 468a

instance, or again things like stones, sticks, and so on. What do you think? Are these the kinds of things you'd describe as neither good nor bad, or would you keep that description for other things?

POLUS: No, I'd apply it to the things you've mentioned.

SOCRATES: Now, do people invariably use these neutral activities as a way of getting good things, or do they use good things as a way of getting indifferent things?

POLUS: They use neutral activities as a way of getting good things, of course.

b SOCRATES: Walking, then, is something we do because we want good* and we think walking is better on that occasion than not walking. Conversely we stay where we are, when we do so, in pursuit of the same thing—that is, good. Yes?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Suppose we execute somebody, then, or exile him or confiscate his property. Is this another class of actions we perform because it seems better for us to do them than not to do them?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: People do all the things I've mentioned, then, in pursuit of good.

POLUS: I agree.

SOCRATES: And haven't we agreed that whenever we do one thing for the sake of another thing, what we want is not what we're actually doing, but whatever c it is that what we're doing is a means towards?

POLUS: We certainly have.

SOCRATES: We don't, then, in an unqualified sense, *want* to slaughter people or exile them from their communities or confiscate their property. We *want* to do these things only if they're in our interest, but if they're not we don't want to do them because, as you admit, we want good things, but don't want things which are either indifferent or bad. Yes? . . . Do you think I'm right or not, Polus? . . . Why aren't you replying?

POLUS: Yes, you're right.

d SOCRATES: Well, bearing in mind this conclusion of ours,

let's consider the case of someone—he may be a dictator or a rhetorician—who executes another person or banishes him or confiscates his property, in the belief that it's better for him to do so, when in fact it's worse. He's doing what he thinks it's best for him to do, isn't he?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Well, given that what he's doing is in fact bad for him, is he also doing what he wants? . . . Why aren't you answering my question?

POLUS: All right. I agree that he isn't doing what he wants.*

SOCRATES: How can a person in this position possibly have a great deal of power in his community, then, e given that according to you a great deal of power is a good thing?

POLUS: He can't.

SOCRATES: I was right, then, when I said that someone might do what he thinks it's best for him to do in his community, but still fail to have a great deal of power and fail to do what he wants.*

In response to Polus' ad hominem *retort that Socrates must find holding others' lives in one's hands enviable, Socrates not only denies this, but pulls the rug out from under Polus' feet by adding that it is better to suffer wrong than to do it. Wrongdoing is always pitiable; true profit and happiness lie in being morally good. Polus regards this as nonsense and cites the case of Archelaus, an autocrat who was commonly held to be happy, but Socrates is unimpressed. He requires sound argument, not rhetoric, to convince him, especially about issues as important as the nature of happiness.*

POLUS: As if you wouldn't prefer to be able to do whatever you felt like doing in your community rather than the opposite, Socrates! You make it sound as though the sight of someone executing people when he thinks it's best, or confiscating their property, or throwing them into prison, doesn't make you envious.

SOCRATES: Do you mean when these actions of his are justified or when they're unjustified?

469a POLUS: It doesn't make any difference. Isn't it enviable anyway?

SOCRATES: That's a terrible thing to say, Polus.

POLUS: Why?

SOCRATES: Because pity, not envy, is the appropriate response to people who are either unenviable or unhappy.

POLUS: Do you really think these descriptions fit the people I've been talking about?

SOCRATES: Of course they do.

POLUS: Well, if a person decides to execute someone, and does so, and is *right* to have done so, is he unhappy or in a pitiful state, do you think?

SOCRATES: No, I don't, but he's certainly not in an enviable position.

POLUS: But didn't you just claim that he was unhappy?

b SOCRATES: No, Polus, I meant that anyone who executes a person *un*justly is in an unhappy state, and deserves our pity as well; to do so justly is merely unenviable.

POLUS: Well, at least it's certain that the person who's being wrongly executed is in a pitiful and unhappy state!

SOCRATES: But less so than his executioner, Polus, and less so than a person whose execution is just.

POLUS: What do you mean, Socrates?

SOCRATES: I mean that in actual fact there's nothing worse than doing wrong.

POLUS: Really? *Nothing* worse? Isn't it worse to suffer wrong?

SOCRATES: No, not at all.

POLUS: So you'd rather have wrong done to you than do wrong?

c SOCRATES: I'd rather avoid them both, but if I had to choose between doing wrong and having wrong done to me, I'd prefer the latter to the former.

POLUS: So you wouldn't opt for being a dictator?

SOCRATES: No, if dictatorship means the same to you as it does to me.

POLUS: What I mean by it is what I said a moment ago, the licence to do whatever you think it's best for you to do in your community—the licence to execute people and banish them, and to go to any lengths to see your personal predilections fulfilled.

SOCRATES: Well, Polus, here are some thoughts of *mine* for you to criticize. Imagine I'm in the agora when d it's chock-full, and I've got a dagger tucked in my armpit.* I tell you, 'Polus, I've recently gained an incredible amount of power, as much as any dictator. Look at all these people. If I decide one of them has to die, he's dead, just like that; if I decide one of them should have his head split open, it'll be split open on the spot; if I decide someone's cloak needs shredding, shredded it is. So you can see that I have e a great deal of power in this community.' And suppose you don't believe me, so I show you my dagger. I bet you'd say, 'Socrates, in that case everyone has a great deal of power, since by the same token you could also burn down any houses you decide to burn down—and then there are Athens' dockyards and warships and the whole merchant fleet in public and private ownership.' So the ability to do what you feel like doing isn't a sign of a great deal of power. What do you think?

POLUS: I agree, it isn't. Not that kind of power, anyway.

SOCRATES: Can you tell us what's wrong with that sort 470a of power, to your mind?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: What is it? Do please tell us.

POLUS: It's that anyone who does the kinds of things you were describing is bound to be punished.

SOCRATES: By which you mean that punishment is bad?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: So you've again come round to the view, my friend, that doing what it seems best to do is a good thing if it turns out to be in one's interest to do it.

That, I suppose, is what it is to have a great deal of power. If it isn't in one's interest, however, it's a bad thing, and signifies little power. And here's another b point for us to consider. Are we agreed that the actions we were talking about a while back (the execution and banishment of people and the confiscation of property) may be better or worse, depending on the circumstances?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Here's something we apparently both agree on, then!

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Well, what are the circumstances under which they become better, do you think? Can you tell me what makes the difference, in your opinion?

POLUS: I'd like to hear your response to that question, Socrates.

c SOCRATES: You'd rather hear what I have to say? All right, Polus. My view is that if they're morally right, they're better, but if they're wrong, they're worse.

POLUS: Do you want to know how unassailable a position you're in, Socrates? Even a child could prove this idea of yours wrong.

SOCRATES: Then I'd be very grateful to the child. But I'll be no less grateful to you if you prove me wrong and free me from the snares of absurdity. You should never tire of doing friends favours, so go on: prove me wrong.

POLUS: Well, I don't need ancient history to help me prove you wrong, Socrates: there's enough counter- d evidence from the very recent past for me to show that happiness and wrongdoing do commonly go together.

SOCRATES: What is this evidence?

POLUS: You know that man Archelaus, Perdiccas' son, the one who rules Macedonia?*

SOCRATES: Not exactly, but I've heard of him.

POLUS: Does he strike you as being happy or unhappy?

SOCRATES: I don't know, Polus. I've never met the man.

POLUS: Would you really have to meet him before ap- e preciating how happy he is? Can't you tell already?

SOCRATES: No, I certainly can't.

POLUS: It goes without saying that you won't admit that the king of Persia is happy either,* Socrates.

SOCRATES: No, and I'm right not to, since I don't know whether or not he's an educated, moral person.

POLUS: Does happiness really depend entirely on that?

SOCRATES: Yes, I think so, Polus. In my opinion, it takes true goodness to make a man or a woman happy,* and an immoral, wicked person is unhappy.

POLUS: My man Archelaus is unhappy, then, according 471a to you.

SOCRATES: Yes, if he does wrong, Polus.

POLUS: But of course he does.* He didn't have the slightest claim to the throne he currently occupies. His mother was a slave of Perdiccas' brother Alcetas, so by rights he should have been Alcetas' slave too. If he'd wanted to behave morally, he'd have been Alcetas' slave and that would have made him happy, according to you. As it is, though, he's become incredibly unhappy as a result of the awful crimes he's committed! In the first place, he sent a message to Alcetas, who was his uncle as well as his master,* in b which he invited him to stay on the grounds that he would restore the kingdom which Perdiccas had stolen from him. So he welcomed Alcetas and his son Alexander, his own cousin (who was more or less the same age as him), into his house; then he got them drunk, bundled them into a cart, took them away under cover of darkness, murdered them both, and disposed of the bodies. He didn't realize how terribly unhappy these crimes had made him and he showed no sign of regret either, but a little later made his next victim his brother, a lad aged about c seven, who was Perdiccas' legitimate son and the rightful heir to the throne. Instead of choosing happiness by following the moral course of looking after the lad until he had grown up and then handing

the kingdom over to him, he threw him into a well and drowned him—and then told the boy's mother Cleopatra that he'd fallen in and died while chasing a goose. There's no one in Macedonia, then, who has committed worse crimes than him, and that's why he's the most miserable Macedonian alive today, not the happiest. And that also explains why everyone in Athens would presumably follow your lead: Archelaus d would be the last Macedonian they'd swap places with!

SOCRATES: I want to repeat a point I made early in our conversation,* Polus, when I complimented you on what I'm sure is an excellent training in rhetoric—but was disappointed to find that you've taken no interest in how to carry on a rational argument. Is the argument you've just come up with the one by means of which 'even a child' would expose my errors? Do you really think that with this argument you've disproved my claim that a criminal isn't happy? How on earth could you think that, my friend? I have to tell you that I disagree with absolutely everything you're saying.

e POLUS: You mean you're not prepared to admit it; you do actually agree with me.

SOCRATES: The trouble is, Polus, that you're trying to use on me the kind of rhetorical refutation which people in lawcourts think is successful. There too, you see, people think they're proving the other side wrong if they produce a large number of eminent witnesses in support of the points they're making, but their opponent comes up with only a single witness or none at all. This kind of refutation, however, is completely worthless in the context of the 472a truth, since it's perfectly possible for someone to be defeated in court by a horde of witnesses with no more than apparent respectability who all testify falsely against him. In the present dispute, if you feel like calling witnesses to claim that what I'm saying is

wrong, you can count on your position being supported by almost everyone in Athens, whether they were born and bred here or elsewhere. You'd have the support of Nicias the son of Niceratus, if you wanted, along with his brothers, who between them have a whole row of tripods standing in the precinct of Dionysus.* You'd have the support of Aristocrates the son of Scellias as well, who has also made a b votive offering, in this case that wonderful one in the precinct of Pythian Apollo.* You could call on the whole of Pericles' household, if you felt like it, or any other Athenian family you care to choose.

Nevertheless, there's still a dissenting voice, albeit a single one—mine. You're producing no compelling reason why I should agree with you; all you're doing is calling up a horde of false witnesses against me to support your attempt to dislodge me from my inheritance, the truth.* To my mind, however, I won't have accomplished anything important with regard to the issues we've been discussing, unless I get you yourself to act as my witness—albeit a single one!—to testify to the truth of my position; and I'm sure c you won't think you've accomplished anything important either unless I testify for your position. It doesn't matter that there's only one of me; you'd let all the others go if you could get me as your witness.

So although there's the kind of refutation whose validity you take for granted (and you're far from being alone), there's also another kind, the kind I have in mind. Let's compare them and see how they differ. You see, the issues we're disagreeing about are in fact hardly trivial: I'd almost go so far as to say that in their case there's nothing more admirable than knowledge and nothing more contemptible than ignorance, since that would amount to knowledge or ignorance about what it is to be happy and what it is to be unhappy.

Socrates states his two propositions: that a criminal is bound to be unhappy, and that he will be more unhappy if he is not caught and punished. Polus is initially scornful, but Socrates gains his crucial admission that wrongdoing is more contemptible than suffering wrong, and uses this admission to gain his further admission that wrongdoing is actually disadvantageous to the wrongdoer. He leaves implicit the conclusion that a criminal is therefore bound to be unhappy.

d SOCRATES: Let's start with the question facing us, which is the crux of our present discussion. You think it's possible for someone to be happy in spite of the fact that he does wrong and is an immoral person, and you cite the case of Archelaus who is, in your opinion, an immoral, but happy, person. Is that a fair representation of your view?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: On the other hand, I claim that this is impossible. So here's one point on which we disagree. Now then, this happy criminal . . . will he be happy if he pays the penalty for his actions and is punished?

POLUS: Definitely not. That would make his condition very unhappy.

e SOCRATES: So is it your view that a criminal is happy as long as he doesn't get punished?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: My view, however, Polus, is that although an unjust person, a criminal, is in a thoroughly wretched state, he's worse off if he doesn't pay the penalty and continues to do wrong without getting punished than if he does pay the penalty and has punishment meted out to him by gods and men.

473a POLUS: That's an extraordinary position to take, Socrates.

SOCRATES: And it's exactly the one I'm going to try to convert you to as well, my friend—I do count you as a friend, you see. Now, as things stand at the moment, the difference between us is this. Please see

whether I've got this right. I maintained earlier* that doing wrong was worse than suffering wrong.

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: While you claimed that suffering wrong was worse.

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And then my claim about the unhappiness of criminals was refuted by you . . .

POLUS: It certainly was.

SOCRATES: Or so you think, Polus. b

POLUS: And I'm right.

SOCRATES: Maybe, maybe not. Anyway, you then said that criminals were happy as long as they avoided punishment.

POLUS: That's right.

SOCRATES: Whereas my position is that this makes their condition completely wretched, and that punishment alleviates their condition somewhat. Do you want to refute this as well?

POLUS: It's going to be really hard to disprove this claim, Socrates—even harder than it was to refute the earlier one.*

SOCRATES: It's not just hard, Polus—it's impossible. The truth can never be proved wrong.*

POLUS: What do you mean? Imagine someone who's been caught in a criminal conspiracy against a dictatorship. After having been captured, he's stretched c on the rack, bits of his body are cut off, his eyes are burned out, and he's terribly mutilated in a great many and a wide variety of other ways; in addition to being mutilated himself, he watches his wife and children being tortured as well; finally he's crucified or covered with boiling pitch. Is this a happier state for him to be in than if he'd avoided being caught, had become dictator, and had spent the rest of his life ruling over his community and doing whatever he wanted, with everyone from home and abroad regarding him with envy and congratulating him for d his happiness? Is this your 'irrefutable' position?

SOCRATES: My dear Polus, first it was witnesses, now it's scare tactics. You're not doing anything to prove me wrong. Still, please refresh my memory a bit. The man in your scenario was involved in a criminal conspiracy against a dictatorship?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Well then, neither situation will make him happier—whether he succeeds in making himself dictator by criminal means or pays the penalty—because you can't compare any two miserable people and say that one is happier than the other. Neverthe- e less, if he avoids being caught and becomes dictator, his stock of misery will increase. What's this, Polus? You're laughing? Is this yet another kind of refutation, which has you laughing at ideas rather than proving them wrong?

POLUS: Don't you think the sheer eccentricity of what you're saying is enough of a refutation, Socrates? Why don't you ask anyone here whether they agree with you?

SOCRATES: I'm no politician, Polus. In fact, last year I was on the Council, thanks to the lottery, and when it was the turn of my tribe to form the executive committee* and I had to put an issue to the vote, I 474a made a fool of myself by not knowing the procedure for this. So please don't tell me to ask the present company to vote now either. No, if this is your best shot at a refutation, why don't you do what I suggested a short while ago* and let me have a go at one? Then you'll see what I think a refutation should be like. My expertise is restricted to producing just a single witness in support of my ideas—the person with whom I'm carrying on the discussion—and I pay no attention to large numbers of people; I only know how to ask for a single person's vote, and I can't even begin to address people in large groups. b What I'm wondering, then, is whether you'll be prepared to submit to an attempt at refutation by answering questions. You see, I think that both of

us—and everyone else as well, in fact—believe that doing wrong is worse than suffering wrong, and that for a wrongdoer not paying the penalty is worse than doing so.

POLUS: And I say that no one—not me, and not anyone else either—believes that. Would *you* prefer to have wrong done to you than to do wrong?

SOCRATES: Yes, and so would you and everyone else.

POLUS: You're quite wrong. I wouldn't, you wouldn't, and nobody else would either.

SOCRATES: Why don't you answer my questions, then? c

POLUS: All right. I'm certainly longing to hear what you're going to say.

SOCRATES: You'll find out; you only have to answer my questions. I'll pretend that we're starting afresh. Which do you think is worse, Polus, doing wrong or having wrong done to you?

POLUS: Having wrong done to you, I'd say.

SOCRATES: And which is more contemptible, doing wrong or having wrong done to you? Can you tell me what you think?

POLUS: Doing wrong.

SOCRATES: Well, isn't it also worse, given that it's more contemptible?*

POLUS: Certainly not.

SOCRATES: I see. You don't identify 'admirable' with 'good', and 'contemptible' with 'bad', apparently. d

POLUS: No, I don't.

SOCRATES: But what about this? Isn't there always a standard to which you refer before calling things admirable? It doesn't matter what the object is; it could be a body, a colour, a figure, a sound or an activity. Take an admirable physique, for instance. Don't you call it admirable either on account of its utility (by considering the particular purpose it is useful for), or on account of a certain kind of pleasure (if it gives people pleasure to look at it)? Can you think of anything else which might make one admire a person's physique?

e POLUS: No, I can't.

SOCRATES: And doesn't the same go for everything else as well? Don't you call figures and colours admirable either because they give a certain kind of pleasure, or because they're beneficial, or for both reasons at once?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And isn't that also the case with sounds and all musical phenomena?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And these criteria are surely relevant to the whole sphere of people's customs and activities as well. I mean, provided they're admirable, they're either beneficial or pleasant or both.

475a POLUS: I agree.

SOCRATES: And does the same go for admirable fields of study too?

POLUS: Yes. In fact, Socrates, in defining what is admirable in terms of pleasure and goodness, as you are at the moment, you've come up with an admirable definition!*

SOCRATES: And also if I define what is contemptible in the opposite way, in terms of unpleasantness and harmfulness?

POLUS: Yes, of course.

SOCRATES: So when one of a pair of admirable things is more admirable than the other, this is because it exceeds the other in one of these two respects or in both—either in pleasantness or in benefit or in both at once.

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And when one of a pair of contemptible things b is more contemptible than the other, this is because it exceeds the other either in unpleasantness or in harmfulness. Isn't that bound to be so?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Now, what was the position we reached a moment ago as regards doing and suffering wrong? Didn't you maintain that although suffering wrong was worse, doing it was more contemptible?

POLUS: Yes, I did.

SOCRATES: So if doing wrong is more contemptible than suffering wrong, then either it's more unpleasant and it's more contemptible because it exceeds the alternative in unpleasantness, or it's more contemptible because it exceeds the alternative in harmfulness or in both qualities at once. Isn't that bound to be the case?

POLUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: So the first point for us to consider is whether c doing wrong is more unpleasant than suffering wrong, and whether people who do wrong are more distressed than those who have it done to them.

POLUS: No, of course that's not the case, Socrates.

SOCRATES: So it doesn't exceed the alternative in unpleasantness.

POLUS: No.

SOCRATES: And if that's the case, it doesn't exceed the alternative in *both* respects either.

POLUS: That seems right.

SOCRATES: The only remaining possibility, then, is that it exceeds the alternative in the other respect.

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: In harmfulness.

POLUS: I suppose so.

SOCRATES: Well, if doing wrong exceeds suffering wrong in harmfulness, it must be worse than suffering wrong.

POLUS: Obviously.

SOCRATES: Now, isn't it invariably accepted, and wasn't d it admitted by you earlier, that doing wrong is more contemptible than suffering wrong?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And now we've found that it's worse as well.

POLUS: So it seems.

SOCRATES: Well, if *you* were faced with a choice between two things, and one of them was worse and more contemptible than the other, would you prefer it to the alternative?* . . . Don't you feel like answering?

You needn't worry: you won't come to any harm. Imagine that the argument is a doctor who demands sincerity from you, and tell us what you think. Do you say yes or no to my question?

e POLUS: No, I wouldn't prefer it, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Would anyone?

POLUS: I don't think so: the argument doesn't make it seem possible.

SOCRATES: I was right, then, when I suggested that doing wrong is held by everyone, including you and me, to be less preferable than suffering wrong, and the reason I was right is that doing wrong is in fact worse than having it done to you.

POLUS: I suppose so.

SOCRATES: Now that we've compared our techniques of refutation, Polus, you can see how completely different they are. You rely on the fact that everyone in the world agrees with you except for me, while I'm satisfied if I gain the assent of just one person—you.

476a I'm content if *you* testify to the validity of my argument, and I canvass only for your vote, without caring about what everyone else thinks.

Having proved to his satisfaction that doing wrong is universally held to be worse than suffering wrong, Socrates argues that it is better for an immoral person to be punished than to remain unpunished, just as it is better for a sick person to undergo medical treatment.

SOCRATES: So much for that issue. Next we need to look into the second point of disagreement between us. You claim that nothing could be worse for a criminal than paying the penalty for his crimes, whereas I claim that he's worse off if he doesn't pay the penalty. Which of us if right? Here's a way into the question: would you agree that there's no difference between a criminal paying the penalty for his crimes and being justly punished for them?

POLUS: Yes.

b SOCRATES: Now, wouldn't you describe any instance of

justice as admirable, in so far as it is just? Think about it. What's your view?

POLUS: I think it has to be admirable, Socrates.

SOCRATES: What about this, then? If a person does something, doesn't there also have to be something which undergoes what that person is doing?

POLUS: I think so.

SOCRATES: And isn't the object which is undergoing the action also bound to be affected by the *way* the agent acts? For instance, if a person hits, there must be something which is hit.

POLUS: Of course there must.

SOCRATES: And if the hitter hits hard or fast, it also follows that the object which is hit is hit in that way. c

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: The effect on the object which is hit, then, is qualified by the way in which the hitter performs the action.

POLUS: Agreed.

SOCRATES: Then again, if a person cauterizes, there must be something which is cauterized, mustn't there?

POLUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: And if the process of cautery is intense or painful, the cauterized object is inevitably cauterized in the way in which the cautery is performed. Yes?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And the same goes for when someone makes a cut, doesn't it? That is, something is cut.

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And if the incision is large or deep or painful, then isn't the cut object cut in a way which d reflects the kind of cut the cutter is making?

POLUS: Obviously.

SOCRATES: To sum up, then, do you agree with what I said a moment ago—that in all cases the affected object is affected in a way which reflects the way in which the agent acts?

POLUS: Yes, I agree.

SOCRATES: Please bear these conclusions in mind. I want

to ask next whether to be punished is to do something or to have something done to you.

POLUS: It's to have something done to you, of course, Socrates.

SOCRATES: And this something is done by an agent, presumably.

POLUS: Naturally. By the person who implements the punishment.

SOCRATES: And when a person is right to carry out a punishment, is he justified in doing so?

e POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Is he acting justly, then, or not?

POLUS: He is.

SOCRATES: So to be punished by paying a fair penalty for your crimes is to have justice done to you?

POLUS: Obviously.

SOCRATES: But we've agreed that anything just is admirable, haven't we?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: So the agent is carrying out an admirable deed, while the one who's being punished is having an admirable deed done to him.

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Now, if he's having an admirable deed done 477a to him, he must be having a good deed done to him, in the sense that it's either pleasant or beneficial.

POLUS: Yes, he must be.

SOCRATES: Anyone who pays a fair penalty for his crimes, then, is having good done to him. Agreed?

POLUS: I suppose so.

SOCRATES: He's being benefited, then, isn't he?*

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: I imagine that the kind of benefit he receives if his punishment is just is that his mind is made better. Do you think I'm right?

POLUS: It sounds plausible.

SOCRATES: If so, then a person who pays a fair penalty for his crimes is escaping a bad psychological state, isn't he?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: In which case, he's escaping the worst state there is, isn't he? Look at it this way: can you think b of anything other than poverty which constitutes a bad state for one's financial condition?

POLUS: No, that's it.

SOCRATES: What about a person's physical condition? Wouldn't you say that in this case it's weakness, sickliness, ugliness, and so on which constitute badness?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Well, do you think there's also such a thing as psychological badness?

POLUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: Which consists, wouldn't you say, in injustice, ignorance, cowardice and so on?*

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: So it's your opinion that there's a pernicious state for each of the three—for property, body, and c mind*—and that these are respectively poverty, sickliness, and immorality. Yes?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Well, which of these three kinds of iniquity is the most contemptible? Isn't it immorality and psychological iniquity in general?

POLUS: Yes, that's by far the most contemptible.

SOCRATES: And if it's the most contemptible, it's the worst too, isn't it?

POLUS: Why should you think that, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Because it follows from our earlier conclusions that in any situation it's the thing which causes the maximum amount of unpleasantness or harm or both that is the most contemptible.

POLUS: That's very true.

SOCRATES: And didn't we just agree that immorality—that is, psychological iniquity in general—is particularly contemptible?

POLUS: Yes, we did. d

SOCRATES: Either it's exceptionally unpleasant, then, and it's particularly contemptible because it exceeds the

others in its unpleasantness, or it's particularly contemptible because it exceeds the others in harmfulness or in both qualities at once. Yes?

POLUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: Well, are injustice, lack of self-discipline, cowardice, and ignorance more unpleasant than hunger and exhaustion?

POLUS: I don't think we've found any reason to say that, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Why, then, is psychological iniquity more contemptible than anything else? If, as you say, it isn't because it causes more distress than other kinds of badness, it must be because it exceeds the alternatives in harmfulness. In some sense, then, it causes an incredible amount of harm and is unbelievably bad. e

POLUS: I suppose so.

SOCRATES: Well, if something causes more harm than anything else, isn't it the worst thing in the world?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Doesn't it follow that psychological iniquity—injustice, self-indulgence, and so on—is the worst thing in the world?

POLUS: It does seem to.

SOCRATES: Now, which is the branch of expertise that rescues people from poverty? Isn't it commercial business?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And which one relieves us of illness? Isn't it medicine?

478a POLUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: And which one saves us from iniquity and injustice? Is that too hard a question for you? Look at it this way. When people have a physical ailment, where do we take them? Who do we take them to?

POLUS: Doctors, Socrates.

SOCRATES: And where do we take people who do wrong and lack self-discipline?

POLUS: To appear before judges. Is that what you're getting at?

SOCRATES: And don't we take them there so that they can pay a fair penalty for their crimes?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Now, it takes justice to punish and discipline someone correctly, doesn't it?

POLUS: Obviously.

SOCRATES: So commerce relieves us of poverty, medicine relieves us of illness, and the administration of justice relieves us of self-indulgence and injustice.* b

POLUS: That seems to make sense.

SOCRATES: Well, which of them is the most admirable?

POLUS: Which of what?

SOCRATES: Of commerce, medicine, and the administration of justice.

POLUS: The administration of justice, Socrates, by a long way.

SOCRATES: In that case, it must confer either more pleasure than the others, or more benefit, or both. Otherwise it wouldn't be the most admirable of these three areas of expertise. Do you agree?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Well, is medical treatment pleasant? Do patients enjoy themselves?

POLUS: I don't think so.

SOCRATES: But it is beneficial, isn't it?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: The point is that medical treatment saves us from a terrible state, and so it is worth our while to put up with the pain and get well. c

POLUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: Now, which is the happier state to be in, as far as one's body is concerned—to receive medical treatment, or actually to avoid being ill in the first place?

POLUS: To avoid being ill, obviously.

SOCRATES: Yes, it does seem to be true that happiness consists not in losing any badness you have, but in not having it in the first place.

POLUS: Exactly.

d SOCRATES: Now, imagine two people both of whom are physically or psychologically in a bad state. One of them is receiving treatment and is being freed from his badness, while the other isn't, and so still has it. Which of these two people is worse off?

POLUS: I should say it's the one who isn't being treated.

SOCRATES: Well, we found that paying the penalty for one's crimes saves one from the worst kind of badness—iniquity.

POLUS: We did.

SOCRATES: The reason being, I suppose, that the administration of justice makes people self-controlled, increases their morality, and cures them of iniquity.

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Since psychological badness is the worst kind there is, it follows that the height of happiness is not to have it at all . . .

e POLUS: Obviously.

SOCRATES: . . . and the next best thing is to be saved from it, I suppose.

POLUS: That makes sense.

SOCRATES: Which we found to be a result of censure, criticism, and punishment.

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: The worst state of all, then, is to have it and not to be saved from it.

POLUS: I suppose so.

SOCRATES: And isn't this precisely the state of an arch-criminal, with his utter immorality, who successfully avoids being criticized and disciplined and punished

479a —in other words, exactly what, according to you, Archelaus and his fellow dictators, rhetoricians, and political leaders have managed to do?

POLUS: I suppose so.

SOCRATES: Their achievement, then, Polus, is not so very different from that of someone in the grip of an extremely severe illness who successfully avoids having the doctors exact the penalty for his body's crimes—that is, who avoids medical treatment—because he's

childishly frightened of the pain of cautery and surgery. Don't you agree? b

POLUS: Yes, I do.

SOCRATES: And he's afraid, I suppose, because he doesn't understand health and doesn't know what a good physical state is like.* I mean, the position we've reached in our discussion makes it seem likely that this is what people who evade punishment are up to as well, Polus. They can see that punishment is painful, but they have a blind spot about how beneficial it is, and they fail to appreciate that life with an unhealthy mind—a mind which is unsound, immoral, and unjust—is infinitely more wretched than life with c an unhealthy body. This also explains why they go to such lengths to avoid being punished—that is, to avoid being saved from the worst kind of badness. Instead they equip themselves with money and friends, and make sure that they're as persuasive as they can be at speaking. Now, if this position of ours is right, Polus, are you aware of the consequences, or shall we summarize them?

POLUS: Summarize them by all means, if you feel like it.

SOCRATES: Well, one consequence is that there's nothing worse than injustice and wrongdoing.

POLUS: So it seems. d

SOCRATES: Didn't we also find that punishment saves one from this bad state?

POLUS: I suppose so.

SOCRATES: Whereas to escape punishment is to perpetuate the bad state?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: It follows that wrongdoing is the second worst thing that can happen; the worst thing in the world, the supreme curse, is to do wrong and not pay the penalty for it.

POLUS: I suppose so.

SOCRATES: Well, wasn't that the point at issue between us, Polus? You were calling Archelaus happy for getting away with terrible crimes without being punished

e for them, whereas I was upholding the contrary view. I was claiming that Archelaus or anyone else who does wrong without paying the penalty is likely to be far worse off than others; that doing wrong always makes people more miserable than suffering wrong does; and that evading punishment always makes people more miserable than paying the penalty does. Wasn't that what I was saying?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And have I been proved right?

POLUS: Apparently.

Socrates concludes his bout with Polus by reintroducing rhetoric and arguing—not without irony—that it should not be used to evade punishment for one's crimes, but on the contrary for getting one's family and friends punished when they have done wrong, and for getting one's enemies acquitted for any crimes they have committed, because that is worse for them than being punished.

480a SOCRATES: All right, then. If what we've been saying is true, Polus, what particular use is rhetoric? What I'm getting at is this. We've reached a point in the discussion where we're bound to say that our chief concern should be to avoid doing wrong, because of all the bad consequences it'll bring for us. Do you agree?

POLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: What if a person does do wrong, however, or if someone he cares for does? He should go of his own free will to where he'll find the swiftest possible punishment. That is, he should appear before a judge, as he would before a doctor, and he should hurry to b make sure that the ailment which is immorality does not become entrenched, rot his mind, and make it incurable. I don't see what else we can say, Polus, as long as our earlier conclusions remain unshaken. If we want what we're saying now to be consistent with what we were saying before, we can't put it any other way, can we?

POLUS: No, of course we can't, Socrates.

SOCRATES: So this rules out using rhetoric to defend wrongs, Polus, whether they're being committed by ourselves, our parents, friends, children, or country. We could only find a use for rhetoric, in fact, on the opposite assumption—that our first priority should c be to *denounce* ourselves and then, secondly, any of our family and friends who happen to be doing wrong at any time, and that we should make any crime they commit public rather than concealing it, so that they can pay the penalty for it and get well again. From this point of view we should require ourselves and everyone else not to flinch, but to put a brave face on it and submit courageously and fearlessly to the cautery and surgery of the doctor, as it were. With our sights set on goodness and morality, we should take no account of the pain. We should submit to the lash, if that's what the crime warrants, or to impris- d onment, if that's what we deserve. If we're fined, we should pay up; if we've earned exile, we must go; if the penalty is death, we should let ourselves be executed. We should be the first to denounce ourselves and the people close to us, and the use to which we should put rhetoric is to expose their crimes and save them from the worst of all conditions, immorality. Shall we commit ourselves to this view, Polus, or not?

POLUS: It sounds extraordinary to me, Socrates, but I e suppose to your mind it fits in with what we were saying earlier.

SOCRATES: The only choice we've got, then, is between undermining those earlier conclusions or accepting this view as their logical consequence. Yes?

POLUS: Yes, that's right.

SOCRATES: Now, taking the converse situation, and assuming that in fact one should harm anyone (an enemy, for instance),* then as long as you aren't having wrong done to you by a given enemy—which is something to watch out for—and he's doing wrong to someone else instead, you have to use all your

481a verbal and practical resources to try to ensure that he does not get punished and does not appear before a judge! And if an enemy of yours does appear there, you have to come up with a way for him to escape and so avoid punishment! If he's stolen a pile of money, you have to make sure he doesn't give it back, but keeps it and spends it in godless immorality on himself and his acquaintances. If death is the penalty for his crime, you have to keep him alive, preferably for ever, so that he never dies and his iniquity goes on and on; but if you can't manage that, you'd better ensure that he lives in his state of b wickedness for as long as possible.

These are the kinds of circumstances in which I think rhetoric has some use,* Polus. I can't see that it's any particular use to a person with no criminal intentions. Maybe it's no use at all in that situation: nothing came up in the previous discussion to make us think it is.

In exasperation, Callicles joins the fray. He cannot believe that Socrates seriously holds these revolutionary views. Socrates replies, in metaphorical language, that he is certainly voicing his inner convictions—and contrasts this with the worldly Callicles' obligation to voice only what accords with the changing whims of the populace. Callicles locates Polus' mistake as conceding that doing wrong is more disgraceful than suffering it. He claims that this view is merely a convention designed by the weak to suppress the strong and argues that might is right, by natural law. Socrates' aberrant views, he claims, are due to overindulgence in intellectual pursuits rather than worldly experience. Callicles ends his long and famous speech with a prophetic warning that if Socrates ever finds himself in court, his impracticality will leave him incapable of defending himself.

CALLICLES: Tell me, Chaerephon, is Socrates serious or is he having us on?

CHAEREPHON: I think he's perfectly serious, but there's nothing like asking the man himself.

CALLICLES: All right, I'd certainly love to do that. Socrates, may I ask you a question? Are we to take it c that you're serious in all this, or are you having us on? You see, if you're serious, and if what you're saying really is the truth, surely human life would be turned upside down, wouldn't it? Everything we do is the opposite of what you imply we should be doing.

SOCRATES: Callicles, if there weren't areas of overlap within all the individual variety of human experience—if a person's experiences were private and couldn't be shared by others—it wouldn't be easy to communicate one's own experience to anyone else. d I say this because I have an idea that you and I do in fact share an experience—that of having two loves each. I love Alcibiades the son of Cleinias, and philosophy, and your two loves are the Athenian populace and Demus the son of Pyrilampes.* Now, you're terribly clever, of course, but all the same I've had occasion to notice that you're incapable of objecting to anything your loved ones say or believe. You chop and change rather than contradict them. If e in the Assembly the Athenian people refuse to accept an idea of yours, you change tack and say what they want to hear, and your behaviour is pretty much the same with that good-looking lad of Pyrilampes'. For instance, you're so incapable of challenging your loved ones' decisions and assertions that if anyone were to express surprise at the extraordinary things they cause you to say once in a while, you'd probably respond—if you were in a truthful mood—by admitting that it's only when someone stops *them* voicing these 482a opinions that you'll stop echoing them.

And that's more or less what you're bound to hear from me as well, you know. So rather than expressing surprise at the things I've been saying, you should stop my darling philosophy voicing these opinions. You see, my friend, she's constantly repeating the