

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 wickedness for as long as possible.

b 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 concedes 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. Sociates, may I ask you a question? Are we to take it 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. 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 Pnylamps.* 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 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 Pnylamps'. 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

views you've just heard from me, and she's far less fickle than my other love. I mean, Alcibiades says different things at different times, but philosophy's views never change, and what you're finding puzzling at the moment is typical of what she says. You were here throughout the discussion, however, so it's up to you either to prove her wrong by showing, as I said a short while ago, that wrongdoing—particularly unpunished wrongdoing—is *not* absolutely the worst thing that can happen, or to leave this notion unrefuted. But if you leave it unrefuted, then I swear to you by the divine dog of the Egyptians* that it'll cause friction between you and Callicles, Callicles: there'll be discord within you your whole life. And yet, my friend, in my opinion it's preferable for me to be a musician with an out-of-tune lyre or a choir-leader with a cacophonous choir, and it's preferable for almost everyone in the world to find my beliefs misguided and wrong, rather than for just one person—me—to contradict and clash with myself.

CALLICLES: Spoken like a true popular orator, I'd say, Socrates! All that passion! But it's only because what's happened to Polus is exactly what happened to Gorgias—and Polus told Gorgias off for letting you manipulate him into that situation. You asked Gorgias whether he'd teach morality to a hypothetical pupil of his who had come to learn rhetoric and didn't already know what was right and what was wrong; and Gorgias, according to Polus, was embarrassed into saying that he would, because people would typically be offended if *anyone* said that he couldn't teach it. It was as a result of this concession that he was forced to contradict himself, and Polus went on to point out that this is exactly the situation you relish.* He was mocking you then, and I think he was right to do so, but now it's his turn: exactly the same thing has happened to him!

To be specific, where I think Polus was at fault was in agreeing with you that doing wrong is more

contemptible than suffering wrong. It was this admission of his which enabled you to tie him up in e logical knots and muzzle him; he was just too embarrassed to voice his convictions. You pretend that truth is your goal, Socrates, but in actual fact you steer discussions towards this kind of ethical idea—ideas which are unsophisticated enough to have popular appeal, and which depend entirely on convention, not on nature.* They're invariably opposed to each other, you know—nature and convention, I mean—and consequently if someone is too embarrassed to go right ahead and voice his convictions, he's bound to contradict himself. This in fact is the source of the clever, but unfair, argumentative trick you've devised: if a person is talking from a conventional standpoint, you slip in a question which presupposes a natural point of view, and if he's talking about nature, you substitute convention. On this matter of doing and suffering wrong, for instance—to take the case at hand—Polus was talking about what was more contemptible from a conventional standpoint, but you adopted the standpoint of nature in following up what he said, because in nature everything is more contemptible if it is also worse (as suffering wrong is), whereas convention ordains that doing wrong is more contemptible. In fact, this thing—being wronged—isn't within a real man's experience; it's something which happens to slaves, who'd be better off dead, because they're incapable of defending themselves or anyone else they care for against unjust treatment and abuse.

In my opinion it's the weaklings who constitute the majority of the human race* who make the rules. In making these rules, they look after themselves and their own interest, and that's also the criterion they use when they dispense praise and criticism. They try to cow the stronger ones—which is to say, the ones who are capable of increasing their share of things—and to stop them getting an increased share, by say-

ing that to do so is wrong and contemptible and by defining injustice in precisely those terms, as the attempt to have more than others. In my opinion, it's because they're second-rate that they're happy for things to be distributed equally. Anyway, that's why convention states that the attempt to have a larger share than most people is immoral and contemptible; that's why people call it doing wrong. But I think we only have to look at nature to find evidence that it is *right* for better to have a greater share than worse, more capable than less capable. The evidence for this is widespread. Other creatures show, as do human communities and nations, that right has been determined as follows: the superior person shall dominate the inferior person and have more than him. By what right, for instance, did Xerxes make war on Greece or his father on Scythia,* not to mention countless further cases of the same kind of behaviour? These people act, surely, in conformity with the natural essence of right and, yes, I'd even go so far as to say that they act in conformity with natural *law*, even though they presumably contravene our man-made laws.

What do we do with the best and strongest among us? We capture them young, like lions, mould them, and turn them into slaves by chanting spells and incantations over them which insist that they have to be equal to others and that equality is admirable and right. But I'm sure that if a man is born in whom nature is strong enough, he'll shake off all these limitations, shatter them to pieces, and win his freedom; he'll trample all our regulations, charms, spells, and unnatural laws into the dust; this slave will rise up and reveal himself as our master; and then natural right will blaze forth. I think Pindar is making the same point as me in the poem where he says, * 'Law, lord of all, both gods and men ...' And law, he continues, 'instigates extreme violence with a high hand and calls it right. Heracles' deeds are proof of

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this, since without paying for them ...? Something like that—I don't know the actual words, but he says that Heracles drove off Geryon's cattle without paying for them and without Geryon giving them to him, presumably because it was natural justice for him to do so, in the sense that all the belongings of worse, inferior people—not just their cattle—are the c property of a man who is better and superior.

These are the facts of the matter, and you'd appreciate the truth of what I've been saying if only you'd forget about philosophy at last and turn to more important things. The point is, Socrates, it's fine for a person to dabble in philosophy when he's the right age for it, but it ruins him if he devotes too much of his life to it.* Even a naturally gifted person who continues to study philosophy far into life is bound to end up without the experience to have gained the accomplishments he ought to have if he's to be a d gentleman with some standing in society. In actual fact, philosophers don't understand their community's legal system, or how to address either political or private meetings, or what kinds of things people enjoy and desire. In short, they're completely out of touch with human nature. When they do turn to practical activity, then, in either a private or a political capacity, they make ridiculous fools of themselves—just as, I imagine, politicians make fools of themselves e when they're faced with your lot's discussions and ideas. In other words, Euripides was right when he said, 'A person shines at, and expends his energy on, and devotes most of his waking hours to, the activity at which he happens to excel.*' He shuns and reviles anything he's no good at, and sings the praises of his own speciality in a self-regarding way, because he thinks this will increase his own prestige.

It seems to me that the optimum course is to have a foot in both camps. A certain amount of philosophy helps one to become a cultured person, and it's fine to take it that far; there's nothing wrong with

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studying philosophy in one's teens. But it's a ridiculous thing for a person still to be studying philosophy even later in life, Socrates. I feel the same way about doing philosophy as I do about stammering and playfulness. I enjoy seeing a child stammer and play games when he's still young enough for this kind of behaviour to be expected from him; it's pleasantly unaffected, I think, and appropriate to the child's age. When I hear a young child coming out with fluent sentences, however, it seems harsh, grates on my ears, and strikes me as degrading somehow. On the other hand, the phenomenon of a grown man stammering or playing childish games seems ridiculous and immature, and you want to give him a good thrashing.

That's how I feel about people who do philosophy as well. I don't mind seeing a young lad take up philosophy: it seems perfectly appropriate. It shows an open mind, I think, whereas neglect of philosophy at this age signifies pettiness and condemns a man to a low estimation of his own worth and potential. On the other hand, when I see an older man who hasn't dropped philosophy, but is still practising it, Socrates, I think it is he who deserves a thrashing. You see, as I said a moment ago, under these circumstances even a naturally gifted person isn't going to develop into a real man, because he's avoiding the heart of his community and the thick of the agora, which are the places where, as Homer tells us, a man 'earns distinction'.* Instead he spends the rest of his life sunk out of sight, whispering in a corner with three or four young men, rather than giving open expression to important and significant ideas.

I'm quite fond of you, Socrates, and that's why I react to you in the same way, as it happens, that Euripides had Zethus (whose words I quoted a moment ago) react to Amphion. I'm moved to copy Zethus talking to his brother, and say: * Socrates, you're neglecting matters you shouldn't neglect. Look

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at the noble temperament with which nature has endowed you! Yet what you're famous for is behaving like a teenager. You couldn't deliver a proper speech to the councils which administer justice, or make a plausible and persuasive appeal, or put passion into a proposal designed to help someone else.' And yet, my dear Socrates—now, please don't get cross: it's because I'm fond of you that I'm going to say this—isn't this state an embarrassment for you and anyone else who keeps going deeper and deeper into philosophy? The point is that if you or any of your sort were seized and taken away to prison, unjustly accused of some crime, you'd be incapable—as I'm sure you're well aware—of doing anything for yourself. With your head spinning and mouth gaping open, you wouldn't know what to say. And if, when you appeared in court, you were faced with a corrupt and unprincipled prosecutor, you'd end up dead, if it was the death penalty he wanted. Oh, Socrates, 'What a clever discovery this is! It enables you to take a naturally gifted person and ruin him.'* It makes a person incapable of defending himself or of rescuing himself or anyone else from terrible danger; the best he can hope for is that his enemies will steal all his property and let him live on in his community with no status whatsoever, which would make his situation such that anyone could smash him in the face (if you'll pardon the extravagant expression) and not be punished for it.

No, Socrates, 'please take my advice and stop' your cross-examinations; 'practise the culture' of worldly affairs instead, and take up the kind of occupation which 'will make your wisdom famous, and leave to others the subtle route' of spouting drivel or rubbish—these are the right kinds of terms for it—'which leaves you living in a deserted house'.* Don't model your behaviour on these quibblers, but on people who make a living and earn a great many benefits for themselves, not the least of which is prestige.

Socrates professes to be delighted to have found someone with the characteristics which will enable him to test the truth of his beliefs. He first begins to undermine Callicles' Nietzschean individualism by arguing that it is better to obey the stronger party, then nature decrees that it is better to obey the masses, since they are naturally stronger than any individual. Callicles protests, rightly, that by 'stronger' he does not mean 'more capable of enforcement', and under Socrates' guidance says that the people he has in mind are the cleverer (or more astute) ones. Some crude prodding from Socrates makes him narrow this down further to those who have applied their intelligence to political matters and have the courage to ensure that their will is carried out. These are the people who should dominate others and have the lion's share of wealth and so on.

SOCRATES: If my mind was made of gold, Callicles, don't you think I'd be delighted to find one of those stones which are used to test gold, especially if it was a really good one? I could touch my mind to it* to see whether it confirmed that my mind had been properly looked after, and then at last I'd know that I was all right and that any further testing was superfluous.

e CALLICLES: What's the point of this question of yours, Socrates?

SOCRATES: I'll tell you. I think in meeting you I've met with just such a godsend.

CALLICLES: Why?

SOCRATES: If you confirm the beliefs I have in my mind, then I can be sure these beliefs are true,* because it occurs to me that for anyone to be able to test whether or not a person's life is as it should be, he has to have three qualities. These are knowledge, affection, and candour, and you have the complete set. I come across a lot of people, you see, who can't test me because they don't have your knowledge, and then there's another lot who are knowledgeable enough,

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but refuse to tell me the truth because they don't care for me as you do. Then there are our two visitors here, Gorgias and Polus, who have the knowledge and are fond of me, but are too easily embarrassed to speak their minds. It's indisputable, surely, that they're riddled with inhibitions. In fact, their sense of propriety is so acute that they had the gall to contradict themselves in front of a large number of witnesses, and to do so on the most important matters in the world.

You're the only one with the complete set of qualities, however. You've had what many Athenians would call an adequate education, and you're fond of me. What makes me think so? I'll tell you. I'm aware, Callicles, that the four of you—Teisander of Aphidnae, Andron the son of Androtion, Nausicydes of Cholargos, and yourself—tell one another your ideas, and I once overheard you discussing the question of how far intellectual studies should be taken. I know the conclusion you reached was that detailed knowledge was undesirable, and you advised one another to be alive to the danger of being subtly corrupted by excessive knowledge. And now you're giving me the same advice you gave your closest friends! That's good enough evidence for me: I'm sure you really are fond of me. Finally, it's clear that you're not the kind of person to let any sense of propriety stand in the way of your speaking your mind; it's not just that you yourself have said you're not, but also that your earlier words confirm the truth of this claim.

So it's obvious how things now stand. Any idea of mine with which you agree during the course of our discussion will by that token have been adequately tested by us and won't require the application of further tests, because it won't have been lack of knowledge or an over-developed sense of propriety that made you agree with it, and since you're fond of me (as you yourself admit), you won't have done so

deceitfully either. In actual fact, then, our agreement about a point will be what conclusively demonstrates its truth.

What sort of person should one be? What should a person do with his life and how thoroughly should he devote himself to his chosen occupation? What should he be doing when he's young, and what should he be doing when he's older? The attempt to find answers to these questions is the finest work in the world, Callicles. You accused me of being misguided about these matters, but if I'm going wrong anywhere in my own life, the mistake isn't deliberate, I assure you; it's merely the result of stupidity on my part. So please don't stop the kind of criticism you began, but let me hear a convincing argument about what I ought to do with my life, and how to achieve that objective. And if at any time in the future you catch me acting in a way which conflicts with any point on which I agree with you today, you can regard me as a total dimwit and as so completely hopeless that you needn't criticize me ever again.

Would you go back to the beginning, though, and tell me again what you and Pindar mean by natural right? Am I right in remembering that according to you it's the forcible seizure of property belonging to inferior people by anyone who is superior, it's the dominance of the worse by the better, and it's the unequal distribution of goods, so that the élite have more than second-rate people?

CALLICLES: That's the view I expressed earlier, and you'd hear the same from me now.

SOCRATES: Do you distinguish between 'better' and 'superior'? I wasn't clear about this before either. Are you describing stronger people as superior and saying that weaker people should be subject to someone who's stronger? I think that was the point of your earlier claim that it's in keeping with natural right for big countries to attack small ones, because they're superior and stronger. If so, you're counting

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'superior', 'stronger', and 'better' as synonyms. Or is it possible for a better person to be inferior and comparatively weak, and for a superior person to be relatively bad? Or do 'better', and 'superior' mean the same? Please can you define your terms more precisely and tell me whether or not 'superior', 'better', and 'stronger' are synonyms?

CALLICLES: All right. I state unequivocally that they're synonymous.

SOCRATES: Well, isn't it natural for the general populace to be superior to a single individual? After all, as you yourself said a short while ago, it's the masses who make the laws under which an individual lives.

CALLICLES: Of course they're superior to a single person. SOCRATES: Doesn't it follow that any regulation prescribed by the masses is being prescribed by the superior group?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: It's being prescribed by better people, then, isn't it? You said that to be superior is to be better, didn't you?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: From the standpoint of nature, then, their regulations are good, since the people who prescribe them are the superior ones. Agreed?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Well, to cite another of your recent statements, the general populace rules that equal distribution of good is right and that doing wrong is more contemptible than suffering wrong, doesn't it? Is that so or not? Be careful now: we wouldn't want it to be your turn to fall prey to a sense of propriety at this point. Do they, or do they not, hold that equal rather than unequal distribution is right, and that doing wrong is more contemptible than suffering wrong?

Come on, Callicles, please answer. Your agreement would count as confirmation of what I'm saying, because it would be the agreement of someone with insight.*

CALLICLES: Yes, all right, this is what the general populace rules.

b SOCRATES: It isn't only convention, then, which states that doing wrong is more contemptible than suffering wrong, or that equality is right: nature endorses these views too.* So it looks as though you were wrong in what you were saying before, and also shouldn't have used the claim that convention and nature are opposites to cast aspersions at me and accuse me of arguing unfairly, in the sense that I know perfectly well that they're opposed, and so if a person is talking from the standpoint of nature, I steer the argument towards convention, and if he's talking from a conventional standpoint, I steer it towards nature.

c CALLICLES: Won't he ever stop talking rubbish? Tell me, Socrates, doesn't it embarrass you to pick on people's mere words at your age* and to count it a godsend if someone uses the wrong expression by mistake? Of course I mean that superior people are better. Haven't I been telling you all along that 'better' and 'superior' are the same, in my opinion? What else do you think I've been saying? That law consists of the statements made by an assembly of slaves and assorted other forms of human debris who could be completely discounted if it weren't for the fact that they do have physical strength at their disposal?*

SOCRATES: Oh, I see, Callicles. How very clever of you. So that's what you mean?

CALLICLES: Yes.

d SOCRATES: Actually, my friend, I've had a vague suspicion all along myself that this or something like it was what you meant by 'superior', and the reason I've been asking you all these questions is because I'm so keen to turn my vague ideas into a proper understanding of your meaning. Presumably you don't think that two people are better than one, or that your slaves are better than you, just because they're

stronger than you. Would you start all over again, then, and tell me what you mean when you call people 'better', since you don't mean 'stronger'? And please use a gentler form of instruction, my friend, otherwise I'll have to leave your school.

CALLICLES: You're not being altogether sincere, e Socrates.

SOCRATES: Yes I am, Callicles. I swear to you by . . . by Zethus, whom you invoked during your extended assault on me, when it was you who were keeping something back.* Anyway, please tell me now: who are the better people, according to you?

CALLICLES: I mean the élite.

SOCRATES: But that doesn't explain anything. Can't you see that it's you who are stuck at the level of mere words? Tell me, what is it that makes people better and superior? Is it greater cleverness, or what?

CALLICLES: Yes, that's it, definitely. It's greater cleverness, of course.

SOCRATES: Here's your position, then: a single clever 490a person is almost bound to be superior to ten thousand fools; political power should be his and they should be his subjects; and it is appropriate for someone with political power to have more than his subjects. Now, I'm not picking on the form of words you used, but that, I take it, is the implication of what you're saying—of a single individual being superior to ten thousand others.

CALLICLES: Yes, that's what I mean. In my opinion, that's what natural right is—for an individual who is better (that is, more clever) to rule over second-rate people and to have more than them.

SOCRATES: Stop right there! Let's think about this assertion of yours. Imagine lots of us together in one place (just as we are now!) with plenty of food and drink available; and imagine that we're a miscellaneous bunch, in the sense that we cover the whole range from strong to weak. Now, among us is a doctor, let's suppose—in other words, someone who's

more clever than the rest of us about food and drink—and it's perfectly plausible to suggest that he'd be stronger than some of us and weaker than others. Since he's cleverer than the rest of us, won't he be a better, superior dietitian?

CALLICLES: I'd say so.

c SOCRATES: Is he to have more of this food than the rest of us, then, because he's better than us? Wouldn't it be more appropriate for him to use his position of authority to distribute all the food, rather than squandering it on himself? It's true that if he wasted it on feeding his own body, he'd have the greater share, but he'd also suffer for it. No, he should have more than some and less than others, shouldn't he? Unless he was actually the weakest of us, in which case he should have the smallest share, shouldn't he, Callicles, despite being the best? Isn't that so, my friend?

d CALLICLES: You babble on about food and drink and doctors and so on, but you're missing the point.

SOCRATES: Isn't your point that a cleverer person is a better person? Well, is it or isn't it?

CALLICLES: It is.

SOCRATES: And that a better person ought to have more?

CALLICLES: Yes, but not more food and drink.

SOCRATES: I see. More coats, perhaps? The best weaver should have a larger coat than anyone else, and should go around dressed in more and more gorgeous coats than anyone else. Yes?

e CALLICLES: What on earth have coats got to do with it? SOCRATES: When it comes to shoes, though, it stands to reason that the larger share has to go to the best person—which is to say, the cleverest person in the field. A shoe-maker presumably has to walk around wearing larger shoes than anyone else, and more of them too.

CALLICLES: What have shoes got to do with anything? You keep coming out with this absurd nonsense.

SOCRATES: Well, if that kind of case is irrelevant,

perhaps you're thinking of someone like a farmer, for instance. He's a fine, clever farmer and good at his job, so I suppose he has to have more grain than anyone else and keep as much grain as possible for his own exclusive use.

CALLICLES: You're just repeating yourself, Socrates—saying the same things over and over again.

SOCRATES: Yes, and that's not all, Callicles: I keep saying the same things about the same issues as well.

CALLICLES: God, yes, I agree. You simply never stop going on and on about cobblers and fullers and cooks and doctors, as if they had the slightest relevance to our discussion.

SOCRATES: Why don't you tell us what is relevant? What is it right for a better, cleverer person to have more of? In what respect is it fair for him to be up on others? Are you going to refuse to tell us, as well as rejecting my suggestions?

CALLICLES: But I can only repeat what I've been saying all along. The superior people I mean aren't shoemakers or cooks: above all, I'm thinking of people who've applied their cleverness to politics and thought about how to run their community well. But cleverness is only part of it; they also have courage, which enables them to see their policies through to the finish without losing their nerve and giving up.

SOCRATES: My dear Callicles, there's a very obvious difference between the charges we're bringing against each other, isn't there? Your complaint about me is that, in your opinion, I'm constantly saying the same things, whereas I find the opposite fault in you—I think you never say the same things about the same issues. At one time you claimed that it was extra strength which determined which people were better and superior, then later you said it was extra cleverness, and now you've come up with something else again: your present idea is that the superior and better ones are the ones with extra courage. Please, Callicles, let's get this over with: just tell us what is it that

makes people better and superior, in your opinion, and what they're better and superior at.

CALLICLES: I've already said that they're clever at politics and they're brave. Political power within communities should be in the hands of people with these characteristics, and right consists in them, the rulers, having more than the others, who are their subjects.

Socrates raises the question whether Callicles' superior people are in control of themselves as well as of their communities. Callicles has rejected conventional morality, which commends self-control: he thinks that happiness involves self-indulgence. The superior man is precisely the one who has worked his way into a position where he can satisfy any and all of his desires. Socrates states the opposite view at some length and with considerable power, but Callicles continues to maintain his hedonistic position. Socrates therefore produces two arguments against the equation of pleasure and good.

SOCRATES: But what are they to themselves, Callicles?

CALLICLES: What on earth are you getting at?

SOCRATES: Are they rulers or subjects?

CALLICLES: What do you mean?

SOCRATES: I'm talking about each one of them ruling himself. Or is there no need for him to rule himself, but only others?*

CALLICLES: What do you mean, 'ruling himself'?

SOCRATES: Nothing complicated, just what people usually mean by it. That is, being self-disciplined and in control of oneself, and mastering the pleasures and desires which arise within oneself.*

CALLICLES: What a naïve thing to say! By 'self-discipline' you mean 'folly'.

SOCRATES: I can't believe you said that. I don't see how anyone could fail to appreciate that I mean no such thing.

CALLICLES: No, Socrates, that's *exactly* what you mean, because human happiness is incompatible with

enslavement to anyone.* What nature approves and sanctions, on the other hand—I'm going to speak bluntly to you now—is this: the only authentic way of life is to do nothing to hinder or restrain the expansion of one's desires, until they can grow no larger,* at which point one should be capable of putting courage and cleverness at their service and satisfying every passing whim. Now, I don't think most people can do this, and that's why they condemn those who can; they're ashamed, and they try to disguise their failings by claiming that self-indulgence is contemptible, which, as I explained earlier,* is an attempt to enslave those who are naturally better than them. And why do they praise self-discipline and justice? Because their own timidity makes them incapable of winning satisfaction for their pleasures. b

Imagine someone born to inherit a kingdom, or someone who lacks this initial advantage, but has been equipped by nature with the resources for gaining some position of power—for becoming a dictator, for example,* or a political leader. In all honesty, could anything be more shameful, could anything be worse for these kinds of people than self-discipline and justice? They would exchange the freedom to enjoy the good things of life without interference from anyone for the voluntary acceptance of a master—namely, the conventions, opinions, and strictures of the majority. Under this wonderful regime of justice c and self-discipline, how could they possibly be happy, when even if they did have political power they wouldn't be able to use it to their friends' advantage and their enemies' disadvantage? No, Socrates, if you want to hear the truth (and you do claim that truth is your goal), it is that if a person has the means to live a life of sensual, self-indulgent freedom, there's no better or happier state of existence; all the rest of it—the pretty words, the unnatural, man-made conventions—they're all just pointless trumpery.

SOCRATES: Thank you, Callicles, for this generous and d

frank elaboration of your position. You see, what you're doing here is giving a clear account of things which other people think, but are reluctant to voice out loud. Please, I beg you, do all you can to sustain the momentum, until there's really no chance of our mistaking the right way to live. I have a question for you. We shouldn't restrain our desires, you say, if we're going to fulfil our potential, but should let them grow as large as possible and then do whatever it takes to satisfy them; and this, you claim, is a good state of existence. Is that right?

CALLICLES: Yes, that's my position.

SOCRATES: So the idea that people who need nothing are happy is wrong?

CALLICLES: Yes, because otherwise there'd be nothing happier than a stone or a corpse.

SOCRATES: But the people *you* are calling happy have a terrifying life as well. The point is, you see, that it wouldn't surprise me if Euripides' words were true: 'Who's to say whether life might not be death and death life?'

Perhaps we really are corpses! In fact, I did once also hear a wise man claim that we *are* dead and that the body is a tomb,* and that the part of the mind which contains the desires is in fact characterized by its susceptibility and its instability. It was this part of the mind, it seems, which a clever story-teller (from Sicily, perhaps, or Italy) called a 'jar', although he derived the name from the fact that it is plausible and persuasive;* he also identified fools with non-initiates and said about the part of the mind where the desires are located that in fools (which is to say, when this part is in an unrestrained and uncapped state)* it is a leaky jar—this is his analogy for its insatiability. His position is the opposite of yours, Callicles: he produces evidence to suggest that there's no one in Hades (by which he means all that is unseen)* worse off than these non-initiates, who go about trying to fill one leaky jar with water they bring to it in another equally leaky vessel, a sieve.

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According to my source, the story-teller's 'sieve' is the mind: he used the image of a sieve to imply that the minds of fools are leaky, in the sense that they're too unreliable and forgetful to prevent things spilling out.

This is pretty extraordinary stuff, I suppose, but it does clarify the evidence which I'd like to use to persuade you, if I possibly can, to change your mind—to prefer an orderly life, in which one is perfectly content with whatever is to hand, to a self-indulgent life of insatiable desire. Am I getting through to you at all? Instead of your previous view, do you accept that self-discipline makes for greater happiness than self-indulgence? Or will it make no difference at all to what you think even if I tell you story after story with the same moral?

CALLICLES: Now you're nearer the mark, Socrates.

SOCRATES: All right, here's another analogy from the same school as the one I've just reported. Would you accept something along the following lines as an image for the different ways our self-controlled person and our self-indulgent person live? Imagine that both of them have a number of jars. The jars belonging to one of them are intact and are filled variously with wine, honey, milk, and so on and so forth. And suppose that each of these liquids is rare and hard to come by, and that it takes a great deal of strenuous work to get them. Now, once our first man has filled up his jars, he stops channelling the liquids into his jars and gives them no further thought; as far as they're concerned, he can rest easy. The other character, however, is just as capable of getting the liquids—albeit with the same degree of difficulty—but his vessels are cracked and flawed, and he's forced to work day and night at keeping them full, or else suffer terribly. If this is what the two lives are like, then, would you say that a life of self-indulgence is happier than one of self-restraint? Does this argument of mine make any impression on you or not?

Do you begin to agree that that a life of restraint is better than a life of indulgence?

CALLICLES: No, I'm not convinced, Socrates, because the one with the full jars can no longer feel pleasure,* and that, as I said a moment ago, is the life of a stone—for a person to be fully satisfied and so to stop feeling either pleasure or distress. An enjoyable life, on the contrary, consists in keeping as much pouring in as possible.

b SOCRATES: But if there's a lot of stuff pouring in, there has to be a lot of stuff leaving as well, doesn't there? So the jars must be very leaky to let it all out, mustn't they?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Now you are talking about living like a gully-bird,* rather than a stone or a corpse. Tell me, though: is being hungry, and eating when one's hungry, an example of the kind of thing you're thinking of?

CALLICLES: Yes.

c SOCRATES: And being thirsty and drinking when one's thirsty?

CALLICLES: Yes, and experiencing desire in all its other forms too, and being able to feel pleasure as a result of satisfying it and so to live happily.

SOCRATES: Thank you very much. This is an excellent beginning, and I hope you can carry on in the same vein without embarrassment. Actually, I'd better suppress my sense of propriety too, it seems. The main question I want to ask is whether a lifetime spent scratching, itching and scratching, no end of scratching, is also a life of happiness.

d CALLICLES: It's incredible, Socrates, how your arguments are designed purely for popular appeal.

SOCRATES: Well, Callicles, that may explain my success in shocking Potus and Gorgias and making *them* feel embarrassed, but there's no way to shock or embarrass you—you're too brave for that. So please just answer my question.

CALLICLES: Well, I'd say that a life spent scratching is a pleasant life.

SOCRATES: And a happy life too, then, since it's pleasant?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Is that the case only if his scratching is restricted to his head or...? Shall I continue this line of questioning? What would you say, Callicles, if you were faced with the whole sequence of related questions? At the head of the relevant list is the life of a male prostitute—isn't this a terrible, shocking, miserable life? I can't believe you'd go so far as to claim that the endless satisfaction of his needs will make him happy.

CALLICLES: Doesn't it embarrass you to steer the argument in this distasteful direction, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Is it me who steers it there, Callicles, or is this direction prompted by the reckless assertion that people are happy if they're feeling pleasure, no matter what the source of the pleasure—that is, by the failure to distinguish between good and bad pleasures? Could you tell me once and for all whether in your opinion the pleasant and the good are the same, or whether there's even one pleasure which isn't good?

CALLICLES: I can't say they're different and still be consistent, so I'll say they're the same.

SOCRATES: You're breaking your original promise,* Callicles. If what you say contradicts what you really think, your value as my partner in searching for the truth will be at an end.

CALLICLES: You don't always say what you think either, b Socrates.

SOCRATES: Well, if that's true, it only makes me just as wrong as you. But are you really sure, Callicles, that unrestricted pleasure is good? If it is, all those shocking consequences I hinted at a moment ago will obviously follow, and a lot more besides.

CALLICLES: So you say, Socrates.

SOCRATES: But you're committed to this view, are you, Callicles?

CALLICLES: Yes.

c SOCRATES: So we can set about our discussion on the assumption that you're serious?

CALLICLES: We certainly can.

SOCRATES: All right, then. Since that's how you feel, here's something for you to sort out. There's something you call knowledge, presumably?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: And weren't you talking a short while ago* about a situation in which both knowledge and courage were involved at once?

CALLICLES: Yes, I was.

SOCRATES: It's because you think of courage as being different from knowledge that you spoke of them as two separate qualities, surely?*

CALLICLES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Now, do you think pleasure is the same as knowledge or different?

d CALLICLES: What an intelligent question! It's different, of course.

SOCRATES: And is courage different from pleasure as well?

CALLICLES: Of course.

SOCRATES: All right, let's have it on record that Callicles of Acharnae* claims that 'pleasant' and 'good' are identical, but that knowledge and courage are different from each other and from goodness.

e CALLICLES: And what shall we say about Socrates of Alopece? Does he or does he not agree with Callicles? SOCRATES: He does not. What's more, I think that after proper reflection about his own state, Callicles will disagree too. Here's a question for you. Wouldn't you say that people who live well are in the opposite situation from those who live badly?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Now, if these two states are opposed to each other, then the same principle which applies to health and illness is bound to apply to them as well, isn't it?

I mean, it isn't possible for a person to be healthy and ill at the same time, or to get rid of health and sickness at the same time.

CALLICLES: What do you mean?

SOCRATES: Well, any part of the body you want to take should illustrate my point, if you think about it. For instance, you know that a person's eyes can be in a diseased state, and we say he's got an eye infection?

CALLICLES: Of course.

SOCRATES: He hasn't also got healthy eyes at the same time, has he?

CALLICLES: Of course not.

SOCRATES: What about when he gets rid of his eye infection? Is he also at that point getting rid of his eyes' health too? Does he end up losing both at once?

CALLICLES: Certainly not.

SOCRATES: Because that's too incredible and preposterous a thing to happen, isn't it?

CALLICLES: Exactly.

SOCRATES: What he does, surely, is gain and lose each of them alternately, doesn't he?

CALLICLES: Agreed.

SOCRATES: And doesn't the same principle apply to strength and weakness as well?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: And to speed and slowness?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Here are some other opposites—things which are good and things which are bad, the state of happiness and the state of unhappiness. What about them? Does one alternately gain and lose each of these pairs?

CALLICLES: No doubt about it.

SOCRATES: Whenever we find a person losing and keeping things at the same time, then, we'll know that we're not faced with the good and the bad. Do you agree with me about this? Please think carefully before answering.

CALLICLES: Yes, I agree without any reservation at all.

SOCRATES: Now let's return to a point that came up earlier. When you mentioned hunger, were you thinking of it as a pleasant or an unpleasant experience? I mean the actual hunger.

CALLICLES: I'd say it was unpleasant. When a hungry person eats, however, that's pleasant.

SOCRATES: I agree. I see what you mean, but the actual hunger is unpleasant, isn't it?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Thirst too?

CALLICLES: Definitely.

SOCRATES: Shall I go on with these questions, or do you agree that need and desire are unpleasant in all their manifestations?

CALLICLES: Yes, I do. Don't bother with the questions.

SOCRATES: All right. Now, your position is that a thirsty person finds drinking pleasant, isn't it?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: When you say 'thirsty' in this situation, you mean 'feeling distress', I imagine, don't you?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Whereas drinking, which is satisfying a need, is also a pleasure?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Now, your position is that the pleasant component of this situation is due to the drinking, isn't it?

CALLICLES: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: It's pleasant for a thirsty person, anyway.

CALLICLES: Agreed.

SOCRATES: Which is to say, for someone who's feeling distress?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Do you realize what the consequence is? When you say that a thirsty person is drinking, you're saying that someone who's feeling distress is feeling pleasure at the same time.* Don't we find that it's the same aspect of oneself (I don't think it makes any difference whether one thinks of this as the mind or

the body)* that is being affected simultaneously by these two feelings? Am I right or not?

CALLICLES: You are.

SOCRATES: Well now, according to you it's impossible to live well and at the same time to live badly.

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: You've agreed with me, however, that pleasure and distress can coincide.

CALLICLES: Yes, I suppose they do.

SOCRATES: It follows that to feel pleasure is not the same as to live well, and that to feel distress is not the same as to live badly either. And therefore the pleasant and the good are different.

CALLICLES: I don't know what to make of these clever arguments of yours, Socrates.

SOCRATES: You do, Callicles; you're only pretending not to. Now, press on. There's further to go.

CALLICLES: Why do you persist in this nonsense?

SOCRATES: So that when you scold me you can tell how clever you're being. Isn't it the case that one's thirst and the pleasure derived from drinking stop at the same time?

CALLICLES: I don't understand you.

SOCRATES: Don't do that, Callicles. Please answer him. We'd appreciate it too, because without your reply the discussion will be incomplete.

CALLICLES: But all these futile little questions are typical of the way Socrates tries to prove people wrong, Gorgias.

SOCRATES: Why should that matter to you? In any case, it's not up to you to assess their value like that, Callicles. Just let Socrates test your views any way he wants.

CALLICLES: Go on, then. If that's what Gorgias wants, I ask your lowly little questions.

SOCRATES: It's all right for you, Callicles, you happy man. You've been initiated into the higher mysteries before the lower ones.* I didn't think it was allowed. Anyway, could you resume from where we left off

and tell me whether one's thirst and one's pleasure stop at the same time?

CALLICLES: Yes, they do.

SOCRATES: And don't hunger and other forms of desire stop at the same time as the pleasure stops too?

CALLICLES: That's right.

SOCRATES: So we lose feelings of distress and feelings of pleasure simultaneously, don't we?

d CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: You've agreed, however, that we don't lose things which are good and things which are bad simultaneously. Have you changed your mind about this?

CALLICLES: No, I haven't. Why?

SOCRATES: Because the upshot is that good things aren't the same as pleasant things, and bad things aren't the same as unpleasant things either. You see, we can lose one pair simultaneously, but not the other, and that means they're different. How could things which are good be the same as things which are pleasant, then? How could bad things and unpleasant things be the same? But I don't think this argument of mine has won your agreement, so here's an alternative approach you might prefer. What do you think about this? You describe people as good-looking if they have good looks, and by the same token isn't it the possession of good qualities that enables you to refer to certain people as 'good'?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Now, do you call fools and cowards 'good'? No, I don't suppose you do, because not long ago you were reserving the term for brave, clever people. Aren't they the ones you call 'good'?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Well, do foolish children enjoy themselves, in your experience?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: And what about foolish adults? Have you ever seen them enjoying themselves?

CALLICLES: I suppose so, but what difference does that make?

SOCRATES: Oh, no difference. Just answer the question.

CALLICLES: All right, yes, I've seen that.

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SOCRATES: And do intelligent people find things pleasing and distressing, in your experience?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Do clever people or thoughtless people experience more pleasure and distress?

CALLICLES: I don't think there's much to tell between them.

SOCRATES: Well, that'll do for me. Now, have you ever come across cowards during a military campaign?

CALLICLES: Of course.

SOCRATES: And which lot struck you as being more pleased when the enemy forces were falling back, the cowards or the brave men?

CALLICLES: I think they were both pleased—the cowards marginally more so, perhaps.

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SOCRATES: That doesn't matter. But cowards feel pleasure too, do they?

CALLICLES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: As do thoughtless people, apparently.

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: And when the enemy was advancing, was it only the cowards who were upset, or were the brave ones too?

CALLICLES: Both lots were.

SOCRATES: To the same degree?

CALLICLES: The cowards suffered more intensely, I suppose.

SOCRATES: And when the enemy was falling back, they were more pleased?

CALLICLES: Maybe.

SOCRATES: So what you're saying is that although thoughtless people and clever people, and cowards and heroes, feel pleasure and distress to almost the same degree, cowards experience these feelings more intensely than heroes. Yes?

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CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: But it's the clever ones and the heroes who are good, whereas the cowards and the fools are bad. Isn't that so?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Doesn't it follow that there's little to tell between good people and bad people in terms of how much pleasure and distress they experience?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Are good people and bad people almost equally good and bad, then—or is it even the case that bad people are more good, in fact?

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CALLICLES: I haven't the faintest idea what you mean. SOCRATES: Haven't you? Didn't you agree that good people are good because they possess good qualities, and bad people are bad because they possess bad qualities? And aren't you also claiming that there's no difference between good and pleasure, or between bad and distress?

CALLICLES: Yes, I am.

SOCRATES: So any pleasant experience is by that token the possession of good (that is, pleasure), isn't it?

CALLICLES: Of course.

SOCRATES: Their possession of this good quality, then, makes people who are feeling pleasure good, doesn't it?*

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: And unpleasant experiences are the possession of bad qualities, or feelings of distress. Yes?

CALLICLES: Yes.

e SOCRATES: And it's the possession of bad qualities which makes bad people bad, isn't it? Or have you changed your mind about this?

CALLICLES: No, I haven't.

SOCRATES: So anyone who feels pleasure is good, and anyone who feels distress is bad?

CALLICLES: That's right.

SOCRATES: And aren't people good and bad to a greater or lesser or roughly equal degree depending on

whether they experience these feelings to a greater or lesser or roughly equal degree?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: And didn't you say that fools and cowards experience roughly the same intensity of pleasure and distress as clever people and heroes, or even that cowards feel more, in fact?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Could you help me work out the consequences of our position? I mean, it's worth repeating and reconsidering valuable points 'two and even three times', as the proverb puts it. We're saying that people with intelligence and courage are good, aren't we?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: And that fools and cowards are bad?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Aren't we also claiming that people who feel pleasure are good?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: And that people suffering distress are bad?

CALLICLES: They're bound to be.

SOCRATES: And that while there's little to tell between good people and bad people in terms of how much pleasure and distress they experience, bad people might experience more?

CALLICLES: Yes.

SOCRATES: This means that there's little to tell between good people and bad people in terms of how good and bad they are, doesn't it? And that, if anything, bad people are better than good people? Apart from what we've already said, doesn't the idea that pleasure and good are the same have these additional consequences? I don't see how we can avoid this conclusion, Callicles, do you?

Callicles shifts from commending mere quantity of pleasure to admitting that there are qualitative differences between pleasures. This allows Socrates to