

# Socrates on Justice

## from Plato's Republic

### by Sanderson Beck

Characters:

Socrates

Servant of Polemarchus

Glaucon

Thrasymachus

Adeimantus

Cephalus

Polemarchus

Cleitophon

Scene: On a summer morning SOCRATES and GLAUCON are walking along a road from the harbor to Athens. A short distance behind them is a small group of men including ADEIMANTUS, POLEMARCHUS, and his SERVANT.

ADEIMANTUS: Look, Polemarchus, up ahead of us is Socrates and my brother Glaucon.

POLEMARCHUS: Boy, run ahead and tell them to wait for us.

The servant runs toward Socrates and Glaucon.

GLAUCON: Socrates, how did you like the new festival in honor of the goddess?

SOCRATES: It was very beautiful, Glaucon, very beautiful.

Catching up to them from behind, the servant tugs on the clothes of Socrates.

SERVANT: Polemarchus asks you to wait.

SOCRATES: Where is he?

SERVANT: There behind you, coming this way; but wait.

GLAUCON: We'll wait.

Polemarchus speaks as his group approaches.

POLEMARCHUS: Socrates, it seems to me you're heading for town and

away from us.

SOCRATES: Not a bad guess.

POLEMARCHUS: So do you see how many there are of us?

SOCRATES: Why not?

POLEMARCHUS: Then you must be stronger or stay.

SOCRATES: Isn't the alternative left us to persuade you that you should let us go?

POLEMARCHUS: Could you persuade us if we don't listen?

GLAUCON: Not at all.

POLEMARCHUS: Then we won't listen; so make up your mind.

ADEIMANTUS: Don't you know that there will be a torch race on horses for the goddess?

SOCRATES: On horses? That's new. Do they pass torches to each other while racing on the horses, or what?

ADEIMANTUS: They do; and there's a night festival worth seeing. After dinner we're going up to see it and we'll meet and converse with many youths there. But stay, and don't do anything else.

GLAUCON: Probably we'll have to stay.

SOCRATES: If it seems we must, let's do it.

POLEMARCHUS: Good. Come to my house, and we'll talk.

The scene dissolves.

The new scene is inside the house of Polemarchus and his father CEPHALUS. The group is joining the aged Cephalus, CLEITOPHON, the sophist THRASYMACHUS, and others. Cephalus welcomes Socrates.

CEPHALUS: Socrates, you don't come down to visit us at the harbor, as you should; for if I could travel easily to town, you wouldn't need to come here, but we'd go to you. Now you should come more often, for as the pleasures of the body fade, I want the pleasures of discussion to increase. So don't do anything else, but join the youths and come to us as friends and family.

SOCRATES: Cephalus, I'm glad to converse with the aged; for I think I should learn from them as from someone who has traveled on the road which maybe I'll have to travel too. I'd like to learn if it's hard or easy. Since you are now aged, give us your report.

CEPHALUS: By God I'll tell you, Socrates. Often some of us elders get together; many complain of having lost youthful pleasures, such as drinking and lovemaking and eating, and some complain of bad treatment from

relatives. But I don't think they blame the cause, for I remember Sophocles saying he was glad to escape from lovemaking as from a crude master. I thought he was right then and even more now, since these complaints come not from age but from people's characters. For the orderly and contented, old age is moderate, but for those who aren't, even youth is hard.

SOCRATES: Cephalus, I imagine when you say this, many might believe it's not because of your character that you age easily but because of your possessions, for they claim wealth is much consolation.

CEPHALUS: True. Poverty is hard to bear even for the reasonable; yet wealth doesn't bring contentment to the unreasonable.

SOCRATES: Did you inherit your wealth or earn it yourself?

CEPHALUS: I inherited, but less than my father, and I hope to pass on more to my son.

SOCRATES: I ask, because you don't seem to love money, like those who have earned it themselves.

CEPHALUS: What you say is true.

SOCRATES: Certainly, but tell me, what is the greatest good you've gained from having much property?

CEPHALUS: What perhaps many don't believe. For you know, Socrates, when one is near death certain thoughts come to one not known before. The stories about Hades and penalties for wrong there torture one's soul that they may be true. So one recounts if one has wronged anyone, and sleep for the bad may be disturbed; but those conscious of no wrong have sweet hope as a kind companion in old age. So I value wealth for the good so that they can pay their debts to people and sacrifice to the gods.

SOCRATES: You're entirely right, Cephalus. But is justice telling the truth absolutely and paying back what was received, or are these sometimes just and sometimes wrong? For example, if someone received weapons from a friend who later came back for them while mad, by returning them or saying truthfully where they are that person would not be acting justly.

CEPHALUS: You're correct.

SOCRATES: Then to tell the truth and return what was received is not a definition of justice.

POLEMARCHUS: It certainly is, Socrates, if Simonides may be trusted.

CEPHALUS: I give the argument over to you, Polemarchus, for already I should be taking care of the sacrifices.

SOCRATES: Isn't Polemarchus your heir?

CEPHALUS: (Laughing) Certainly.

Cephalus goes out.

SOCRATES: Now what does the heir claim Simonides correctly says about justice?

POLEMARCHUS: That it's just to give back to each what is owed; I think he's right about this.

SOCRATES: But what about the case just mentioned? Certainly one shouldn't give weapons back to one mad.

POLEMARCHUS: True.

SOCRATES: Then he must mean something else.

POLEMARCHUS: Yes by God, that friends owe what is good to friends.

SOCRATES: What about to enemies?

POLEMARCHUS: What is owed to enemies is some evil.

SOCRATES: Then does justice mean doing good to friends and bad to enemies?

POLEMARCHUS: I think so.

SOCRATES: By friends do you mean those who seem good even if they're not, and the same with enemies?

POLEMARCHUS: Probably one will like those one believes are good and hate those who seem bad.

SOCRATES: So don't people make mistakes about this so that many seeming good aren't, and the reverse?

POLEMARCHUS: They do make mistakes.

SOCRATES: Then for them aren't the good enemies and the bad friends?

POLEMARCHUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Then would the just benefit the bad and harm the good?

POLEMARCHUS: Apparently, Socrates, but probably the logic is bad.

SOCRATES: Then is it just to harm the wrong and benefit the just?

POLEMARCHUS: That appears better.

SOCRATES: Then many will harm their friends, if they have bad ones, and benefit enemies who are good, and thus we find the opposite of what Simonides claimed.

POLEMARCHUS: That does follow, but let's change it now so that not those who only seem good are friends but those who really are good, and the same assumption concerning enemies.

SOCRATES: By this logic the good are friends and the bad enemies.

POLEMARCHUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Then will the just benefit friends who are good and harm enemies who are bad?

POLEMARCHUS: Certainly, that's right.

SOCRATES: Then is it just to harm any person?

POLEMARCHUS: Certainly, one should harm the bad and enemies.  
SOCRATES: When horses are harmed, do they become better or worse?  
POLEMARCHUS: Worse.  
SOCRATES: My friend, when people are harmed, do they become worse?  
POLEMARCHUS: Certainly.  
SOCRATES: Then people who are harmed must become more unjust.  
POLEMARCHUS: Probably.  
SOCRATES: So can musicians with music make people unmusical?  
POLEMARCHUS: Impossible.  
SOCRATES: But by justice do the just make them unjust? Or by virtue do the good make them bad?  
POLEMARCHUS: But that's impossible.  
SOCRATES: For heat, I think, doesn't make something cold, but the opposite.  
POLEMARCHUS: Yes.  
SOCRATES: Nor does the dry moisten, but the opposite.  
POLEMARCHUS: Certainly.  
SOCRATES: Nor does the good harm, but the opposite.  
POLEMARCHUS: Apparently.  
SOCRATES: And are the just good?  
POLEMARCHUS: Certainly.  
SOCRATES: Then it's not the work of the just to harm, Polemarchus, neither a friend nor anyone else, but that's the work of the opposite, the unjust.  
POLEMARCHUS: What you say seems entirely true to me, Socrates.  
SOCRATES: Then since it's not true to say that justice is to benefit one's friends and harm one's enemies, what else does anyone claim that the just is?

Thrasymachus has been becoming more and more upset during the recent discussion and was ready to interrupt, but he was gently restrained by Glaucon sitting next to him. Now his fury is finally unleashed all at once.

THRASYMACHUS: What nonsense is this of yours, Socrates? And why do you give in to each other? If you truly wish to know what the just is, don't ask questions nor refute, when you know it's easier to ask than to answer. Say, instead, what you claim the just is; and don't tell me it's what ought to be or the beneficial, the advantageous or the profitable, but tell us clearly what you mean.  
SOCRATES: Thrasymachus, don't be hard on us; if we made a mistake in the argument, you know that we did it unwillingly.  
THRASYMACHUS: Heracles, this is the well known irony of Socrates. I predicted you wouldn't answer a question.

SOCRATES: Wise Thrasymachus, if you asked how much is twelve, and warned, "Don't say it's twice six or three times four, since I won't accept that nonsense," must one say something other than the truth?

THRASYMACHUS: Well, as if that is the same! If I give you a better answer than those I mentioned, what would you deserve to suffer?

SOCRATES: What else should the ignorant suffer but to learn from the one who knows?

THRASYMACHUS: You're innocent, but you should pay as well.

SOCRATES: When it comes to me.

GLAUCON: If it's a question of money, Thrasymachus, we'll all contribute for Socrates.

THRASYMACHUS: Certainly, so that Socrates can manage not to answer, but refute the answer of another.

SOCRATES: How can I answer if I don't know or claim to know, or if I'm told by no trivial man not to say what I believe? Probably you should speak, since you claim to know. Please answer and teach us.

THRASYMACHUS: That's the wisdom of Socrates, not willing to teach, but going around learning from others and not giving back any thanks.

SOCRATES: It's true I learn from others, but that I don't pay thanks is a lie. For I pay what I can, in praise, since I have no money. That I praise you'll soon know when you answer, since I think you'll speak well.

THRASYMACHUS: Then listen, for I claim the just is nothing else but the advantage of the stronger. Why don't you praise? But you're unwilling.

SOCRATES: First let me learn what you mean; for now I don't understand it. What do you mean by the stronger, Thrasymachus? Polydamas the wrestler?

THRASYMACHUS: You're disgusting, Socrates, to take it that way.

SOCRATES: Not at all, sir, but make your meaning clearer.

THRASYMACHUS: Don't you know that the power of the government, whether a dictatorship or a democracy, makes the laws for their own advantage, and they punish those who break these laws? Thus the just is the advantage of the stronger.

SOCRATES: You did forbid the answer advantage, but you've added the stronger to it.

THRASYMACHUS: Maybe it's a small addition.

SOCRATES: I don't know, but I agree the just is advantageous. Do you claim it's right to obey the government?

THRASYMACHUS: I do.

SOCRATES: Do those governing ever make mistakes?

THRASYMACHUS: Surely they could make mistakes.

SOCRATES: Then in attempting to make laws, are some correct and some not

correct?

THRASYMACHUS: I imagine.

SOCRATES: Then are the correct ones to their advantage or what?

THRASYMACHUS: That's so.

SOCRATES: Then the mistakes are not to their advantage.

THRASYMACHUS: What do you mean?

POLEMARCHUS: By God, Socrates, it's very evident.

CLEITOPHON: Perhaps Thrasymachus meant what the stronger thought was to their advantage.

POLEMARCHUS: That's not what he said, Cleitophon.

SOCRATES: It doesn't matter, Polemarchus, if that's what Thrasymachus means now. Is that what you wanted to say, Thrasymachus?

THRASYMACHUS: Not at all, do you think I call those making mistakes stronger when they're making mistakes?

SOCRATES: That's what I thought, when you agreed those governing make mistakes.

THRASYMACHUS: You slander with words, Socrates. Do you call one a physician when one is mistaken. No one is skilled when they're making a mistake; so they're not stronger when making a mistake.

SOCRATES: Did I slander you, Thrasymachus? Do you think I'm malicious with words?

THRASYMACHUS: I know it, for you can't hide it, and you could never force me by logic.

SOCRATES: I'd never attempt it, my friend. Do you think I'm mad enough to try to shave a lion?

THRASYMACHUS: You just tried, but failed.

SOCRATES: That's enough of that. But tell me, isn't the purpose of the medical art to benefit the body of the patients?

THRASYMACHUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Isn't the art of the pilot to benefit travelers?

THRASYMACHUS: It is.

SOCRATES: Then each art is for the benefit of its subjects. Yet aren't the practitioners of the arts stronger than those they serve?

THRASYMACHUS: Well, I suppose.

SOCRATES: Then the purpose of each art as an art is not for the advantage of the stronger but for the advantage of the weaker governed by it.

THRASYMACHUS: I'm not so sure; maybe.

SOCRATES: Then physicians consider the advantage of the patients and pilots of those sailing with them and leaders of the people they govern, or don't they?

THRASYMACHUS: Tell me, Socrates, do you have a nurse?

SOCRATES: Why do you ask, rather than answer the question?

THRASYMACHUS: Because you snivel on, and she doesn't wipe your nose; and she hasn't helped you to know the difference between the shepherd and the sheep.

SOCRATES: Why do you say that?

THRASYMACHUS: Because the shepherds fatten the sheep for their own good and for their masters, just as leaders use the governed for their own profit. You're so far from justice that you don't know that the just is for the good of another, for the advantage of the strong and leaders, but an injury to those obeying and serving. Consider this, simple-minded Socrates, that everywhere the just man has less than the unjust: in business and contracts the wrong show a profit; the unjust pay less taxes and receive more benefits; while the just serving the state sacrifice themselves, the wrong use offices to gain more for themselves. The most obvious example is how a dictator can take everything for his own advantage. For people condemn injustice not out of fear of doing wrong but of suffering it.

Thrasymachus stands up as though he is going to leave, but the listeners try to prevent him by reaching to restrain him or saying, "Don't go yet, Thrasymachus" and other such things.

SOCRATES: I'm surprised, Thrasymachus, that you would leave before teaching us properly about this. Do you think it's a small matter how we should live?

THRASYMACHUS: Not I.

SOCRATES: Then don't you care whether we'll live better or worse in our ignorance of what you claim to know. For I'm not convinced that wrong is more profitable than justice, even if one is able to do so without being caught or can maintain the power with violence. So persuade us, my friend, that we are ill advised about justice.

THRASYMACHUS: How can I, if you're not convinced by what I just said? What should I do? Put it in your soul?

SOCRATES: Don't, by God. But stay with what you say; and if you change, don't deceive us.

Thrasymachus sits down again.

SOCRATES: Now the art of the shepherd is surely to take care of and benefit the sheep, even though the owner may have another motive; and so the art of governing is to take care of people. Aren't those governing paid for their



services, just like physicians, pilots, and shepherds?

THRASYMACHUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Thus each art or office benefits those being served, and the practitioners are paid because otherwise they wouldn't be directly benefited.

THRASYMACHUS: Then why do some serve in office without pay?

SOCRATES: Some are ambitious and are motivated by the honor, but I think the best serve in order to avoid the penalty of being governed by those worse if they don't. Now let's consider Thrasymachus' point that the life of the unjust is better than that of the just. Which do you choose, Glaucon?

GLAUCON: I'd say the just is a more profitable life.

SOCRATES: Did you hear how many goods of the unjust Thrasymachus described?

GLAUCON: I did, but I'm not convinced.

SOCRATES: Then shall we list the goods of the just, and then we'll need judges to decide for us, or shall we discuss and see if we can agree together?

GLAUCON: The latter.

SOCRATES: Thrasymachus, is justice a virtue and injustice evil?

THRASYMACHUS: Is that likely, you innocent, when I say injustice is advantageous and justice isn't?

SOCRATES: Then what?

THRASYMACHUS: The opposite.

SOCRATES: Is justice evil?

THRASYMACHUS: No, but a noble simplicity.

SOCRATES: Then do you call wrong malicious?

THRASYMACHUS: No, it's well advised.

SOCRATES: Do you think the unjust are thoughtful and good?

THRASYMACHUS: The perfectly unjust are, who can make themselves powerful in the state. Maybe you're thinking of thieves; they profit too, if they get away with it.

SOCRATES: I understand, but I'm surprised you put injustice with virtue and wisdom. That's tougher, my friend, since it's clear you'll claim it's fine and strong and all the other qualities we put with justice.

THRASYMACHUS: You are a very true prophet.

SOCRATES: Do you think the just intend to have more than the just?

THRASYMACHUS: Not at all, or they wouldn't be innocent.

SOCRATES: How about the unjust, do they claim more than the just?

THRASYMACHUS: Why not? They deserve it.

SOCRATES: Then will the unjust also claim more than the unjust and compete to take most of everything?

THRASYMACHUS: That's so.

SOCRATES: In tuning an instrument would an intelligent musician compete to do it more than another?

THRASYMACHUS: No.

SOCRATES: Would a physician prescribe more food than needed?

THRASYMACHUS: I don't think so.

SOCRATES: Would ignorant musicians or physicians do these things?

THRASYMACHUS: They might.

SOCRATES: Then the wise don't claim more, but the ignorant do.

THRASYMACHUS: Maybe.

SOCRATES: Are the wise good?

THRASYMACHUS: I think so.

SOCRATES: Then the just are like the wise and good, and the unjust are like the bad and ignorant.

THRASYMACHUS: Could be.

SOCRATES: Well, that is established.

THRASYMACHUS: I don't agree, but I'll answer so as to please you.

SOCRATES: I'd rather you answer what you really think; but if you won't, we'll just have to go on. Now if justice is wisdom and virtue, it's easy to show it's stronger than wrong, since wrong is ignorance. May an unjust state take over other states unjustly?

THRASYMACHUS: Why not? That's what the best state whose wrong is most perfect does.

SOCRATES: Could a state do that without any justice at all?

THRASYMACHUS: If justice is wisdom, as you just said, with justice; but if it's as I said, then with injustice.

SOCRATES: Could a state or even any band of thieves do anything in common if they wronged each other?

THRASYMACHUS: Of course not.

SOCRATES: For factions come from wrong and hatred and fighting, but justice brings harmony and friendship. Then won't injustice create hatred and fighting which make action in common impossible?

THRASYMACHUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: So the unjust will be enemies with each other as well as with the just.

THRASYMACHUS: They will.

SOCRATES: And will wrong within an individual make one an enemy to oneself and the just and unable to accomplish because of inner conflict?

THRASYMACHUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And, my friend, the gods are also just. Won't the unjust also be enemies of the gods, and won't the just be their friends?

THRASYMACHUS: Enjoy your logic, for I won't oppose you, so as not to offend.

SOCRATES: Thus the unjust who appear successful can only be so, because some justice in them enables combined action. Therefore they are only partly corrupted by injustice, for the perfectly wrong are incapable of action. Now just as the virtue of the eyes is to see well and of the ears is to hear well, is there a virtue of the soul in its deliberating and managing life?

THRASYMACHUS: There must be.

SOCRATES: Didn't we agree the virtue of the soul is justice?

THRASYMACHUS: We did.

SOCRATES: Then the just soul will live well and the unjust badly.

THRASYMACHUS: Apparently, according to your logic.

SOCRATES: And those who live well are happy, and the opposite. Then the just are happy, and the unjust miserable.

THRASYMACHUS: Have your festival entertainment, Socrates.

SOCRATES: It was provided by you, since you've become gentle. However, we still haven't defined justice, but went on to consider if it's virtue or not; from this discussion I still don't know what justice is, and so I really don't know if justice is a virtue or if one having it is happy.

GLAUCON: But Socrates, we have plenty of time. Why don't we inquire into the nature of justice to see if we can discover what kind of virtue it is, if it is a virtue?

ADEIMANTUS: Also, Socrates, if justice is as good as you say, and it brings about friendship and happiness, then what is the origin of injustice, and why does it seem to be so prevalent?

SOCRATES: Well, you fine brothers ask no small questions, and it will take sharp vision to observe and understand what are probably the greatest human concerns. I think we need to see this in a large picture, for can't justice be found not only in individuals but also in states as well?

ADEIMANTUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: If we examined the origin of a state, could we also see the origin of justice and injustice?

ADEIMANTUS: Probably.

SOCRATES: So do you think it's useful to try this?

ADEIMANTUS: I think so.

SOCRATES: Then the state is born, I think, when each of us cannot by ourselves meet our many needs. So we gather together with others to help each other by giving and receiving, thinking this is better.

ADEIMANTUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Come, let's make a state from the beginning, which is made,

probably, by our needs. The first and greatest need is to provide food for life.

ADEIMANTUS: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: Second is housing, third clothes and such. Tell me how the state will provide these things. Won't there be a farmer, a builder, and a weaver? Shall we add a shoemaker and others who will serve the needs of the body?

ADEIMANTUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Most essential to the state would be four or five.

ADEIMANTUS: Apparently.

SOCRATES: But would each contribute their work to all in common so that the farmers would provide food for four more, or should they use most of their time to build a house and make clothes too?

ADEIMANTUS: The first would be easier, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Since natures are different, they each may be fitted to their tasks, or don't you think so?

ADEIMANTUS: I do.

SOCRATES: So more will be accomplished when people work on one thing each according to their nature.

ADEIMANTUS: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: Then, Adeimantus, more than four citizens are needed to provide what we said, for the farmer will need a plow and other implements; the builder needs many tools, and so on with the rest. We'll need carpenters, smiths, and other crafts.

ADEIMANTUS: True.

SOCRATES: Farmers need oxen to plow and weavers wool and hides; so we'll have shepherds. The state will probably want to import items, and to trade we'll need more goods and merchants, plus ships and sailors.

ADEIMANTUS: The state is getting larger.

SOCRATES: How will the products of labor be exchanged? Won't we need a marketplace and money? There those weaker in body may wait and attend to the buying and selling as shopkeepers. Some will offer their labor for wages. Now has our state grown so that it's complete?

ADEIMANTUS: Perhaps.

SOCRATES: Then where are justice and injustice?

ADEIMANTUS: I don't know, Socrates, unless it's in some need they have of each other.

SOCRATES: Perhaps you're right. Let's consider the manner of life provided so far. Won't they make bread, wine, clothes, shoes, and houses, and in summer wear little and in winter enough garments? Won't they eat barley meal and wheat flour cooked in loaves and cakes served on reeds and leaves, feasting with their children and singing hymns to the gods in pleasant communion, not

producing extra children, watching out for poverty or war?

GLAUCON: You make them feast without meat.

SOCRATES: True. I forgot the relishes---salt, olives, cheese, onions, greens, and boiled vegetables, and for dessert figs, beans, berries and roasted nuts.

Living in peace and health they'll likely die of old age and pass this life on to their offspring.

GLAUCON: But if this was a state of pigs, Socrates, what else would you provide for them?

SOCRATES: But what would you need, Glaucon?

GLAUCON: What's customary---couches, tables, dishes, and the sweetmeats we have now.

SOCRATES: I understand; we're not to consider merely a state but the origin of a luxurious state. Perhaps by observing such a state we could discover the origin of justice and injustice. I think the true state is what I've described, as it is a healthy one; but if you want us to observe a feverish state, nothing prevents it. For some are not content with this way of life, but couches, tables and other furniture must be added, and meat and incense and flute-girls and sweets. The basic necessities will no longer be adequate, but we must embellish and procure gold and ivory. Then won't it be necessary to enlarge the state again?

GLAUCON: Yes.

SOCRATES: For if a healthy state is not sufficient, the state will swell with hunters, artists, manufacturers of female adornments, more servants, tutors, nurses wet and dry, cosmeticians, barbers, and even more cooks and chefs.

This state, unlike the other, will need swineherds and many more cattle if they're to be eaten; and with this diet won't more doctors be needed?

GLAUCON: Many more.

SOCRATES: The territory before adequate for food, will now be too small, won't it?

GLAUCON: That's so.

SOCRATES: Then a portion of the neighbor's land must be cut out if we are to have enough pasture, and they'll want ours if they too have gone off after endless acquisition of property, going beyond the limit of necessities.

GLAUCON: That's most necessary, Socrates.

SOCRATES: After this, will we go to war, Glaucon, or what?

GLAUCON: That's so.

SOCRATES: Then have we discovered the origin of war in those things from which come the greatest disasters, both private and public?

GLAUCON: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Then that state would have to be enlarged by no small amount,

but by an entire army, which would march out and fight in defense of all the wealth and luxuries we described.

GLAUCON: That's probably true.

SOCRATES: Then in the large picture have we discovered the origin of injustice in two luxurious states which go to war against each other?

GLAUCON: I think so.

SOCRATES: And can the origin of justice be found in the healthy state where no one has too much?

GLAUCON: Clearly.

SOCRATES: Then in a state where the people are virtuous and share fairly with each other, would it matter whether they were governed by one person or a few or all the citizens together?

GLAUCON: Not really.

SOCRATES: The important thing would be that they were being ruled by wisdom and justice.

GLAUCON: Yes, that's true.

SOCRATES: Then the just state will be governed by those who are wisest and know the value of justice, and will they not be the true philosophers?

GLAUCON: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Then we can turn to the question of Adeimantus concerning the origin of injustice, and see if we can explain why most states aren't just; at the same time we can examine the individuals who correspond to those states. For I think in addition to the virtuous state and person there are four other kinds of states and people.

GLAUCON: What are they, Socrates?

SOCRATES: I call them timocracy, plutocracy, democracy, and finally the worst, despotism or dictatorship. So are you aware there must be four types of human character related to these governments, or doesn't government result from people's character?

GLAUCON: It couldn't come from anything else.

SOCRATES: We described the best state and the just person. Next let's consider the inferior types in descending order down to the tyrannical which then may be contrasted to the most just so that we'll know whether to pursue the unjust, as Thrasymachus advises us, or justice.

GLAUCON: That's certainly what should be done.

SOCRATES: So let's begin by considering the more visible states, and then the corresponding individuals may be described. Timocracy is the name for when the love of honor rules. It arises when those governing fall into dissension, for oneness and harmony maintain a just state.

GLAUCON: That's so.

SOCRATES: Yet everything which begins must eventually end. Naturally when the wisest govern they are respected, but sometimes people forget that they deserve respect not because they govern, but because they're wise. Wanting to be like them, people begin to covet leading, and thus ambition and contention are born so that decisions as to who shall lead become a contest for power instead of a search for the wise. In education they put more value on athletics and less on music, the humanities and philosophy. Also those who lead naturally think their own children should also rule, but too often they are not as wise as others or they neglect the pursuit of wisdom but strive to maintain the honor of their families. Thus aristocracy which originally means the best govern degenerates into leadership by a hereditary class. In the competition for power the ambitious push aside the wise who are not as aggressive and self-seeking. In a timocracy justice is no longer supreme, but honor and pride lead to competition and wars. Being the best now means winning, not fairness. As a competitive spirit takes over, wisdom is neglected. Strife, conflicts and wars become more prevalent; and those trained for such contests tend to succeed.

GLAUCON: Certainly that state is a mix of good and evil. So what is the individual in this state like?

SOCRATES: As the aggressive side of athletics and war is valued more than the sensitive side of music and philosophy, men dominate women more, whereas in the best state they are equally able to become wise and govern. Men rise to power not by communicating good ideas, but by excelling in war and war preparations. They are zealous in sports and other competitions. When young they look down on wealth, but as they grow older they covet riches as honors. The timocratic person may develop as follows: When a virtuous parent begins to lose honor, the other parent may complain merit is not recognized, and may become disgruntled that their privileges are not defended, lawsuits are not pressed and so on. Thus the youth becomes ambitious for power instead of enthusiastic about wisdom and its subtlety. Seeing that the virtuous are pushed aside, but that the aggressive are valued and praised, the rational part may be supported by one parent, but the passions are nurtured even more by the other. Thus having good qualities but falling into bad company, the inner rule is given over to an intermediate state of pride, ambition, and the love of winning and honors.

GLAUCON: You've described the origin of that person.

SOCRATES: The next state, I believe, would be plutocracy.

GLAUCON: And what kind of a government is plutocracy?

SOCRATES: This state is based on property in which the wealthy lead and the poor don't share it.

GLAUCON: I understand. Then first speak about how timocracy changes into plutocracy.

SOCRATES: Yes. How it changes is clear even to the blind.

GLAUCON: How does it?

SOCRATES: The treasury each fills with gold ruins that state; for first they invent expenses, and they introduce laws for this, but they and their wives disobey them. Then seeing each other striving for this, most go into this money-making.

GLAUCON: That's likely.

SOCRATES: Then as they go farther into money-making, they believe it's more valuable than virtue. Thus when wealth and virtue are weighed, doesn't the balance tip one way or the other?

GLAUCON: Very much.

SOCRATES: So when wealth and the wealthy are valued in the state, the good and virtue are less valued.

GLAUCON: That's clear.

SOCRATES: And what is valued is practiced, and the less valued is neglected.

GLAUCON: That's so.

SOCRATES: Instead of loving winning and honors people become lovers of business and money, and they admire the rich and make them leaders, while the poor are dishonored.

GLAUCON: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Then isn't it customary in the plutocratic state to have a standard of money for office-holding, which is more in an oligarchy where few rule, and no one can participate without that? And such a state is imposed by force unless it has already been established by fear. Or isn't this so?

GLAUCON: It is, but what is the nature of the government, and what do we claim are its mistakes?

SOCRATES: First look at what kind of standard this is. What if pilots of ships were appointed from property, and the poor were not, even if they were better pilots?

GLAUCON: They would have bad voyages.

SOCRATES: Then isn't it the same with governing a state?

GLAUCON: I think so.

SOCRATES: This is a mistake of plutocracy.

GLAUCON: Apparently.

SOCRATES: Then another problem is that such a state must be two, one for the rich and another for the poor, both living in it always plotting against each other.

GLAUCON: By Zeus, that is a problem.



SOCRATES: They also are unable to go to war because of the necessity to arm the majority, being more afraid of them than the enemy; or if they don't arm them, they're too few in battle. And further they're not willing to pay the taxes, since they're lovers of money.

GLAUCON: That's true.

SOCRATES: Then there's what we found before when those in the state do too many things, or do you think that's right?

GLAUCON: Not at all.

SOCRATES: Then see if it's the greatest evil to allow people to sell all their possessions so that another may acquire them. Then the one selling goes on living in the state without being either a money-maker or worker or soldier, but only a poor and helpless creature. A plutocracy doesn't prevent that sort of thing; otherwise some would not be too rich, while others are completely poor.

GLAUCON: That's correct.

SOCRATES: Then when such people spend their riches, are they of any use to the state in what we were just discussing? Or do they seem to be leading, while in truth they're neither leading nor serving, but merely consuming goods?

GLAUCON: That's so.

SOCRATES: So may we claim they're like drones in the hive, and so becoming a pest at home and in the state?

GLAUCON: Certainly, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Then didn't God make flying drones without stings, but of the walking drones some have terrible stings; those without stingers end up as beggars, but don't all the criminals come from the stingers?

GLAUCON: That's most true.

SOCRATES: Then clearly in the state in which you see beggars, in it somewhere are lurking thieves and muggers and burglars and all kinds of criminals.

GLAUCON: That's obvious.

SOCRATES: So don't you see beggars in a plutocracy?

GLAUCON: Almost all of them except the few leading.

SOCRATES: So among these aren't there many criminals with stings whom the leaders must take charge of by force?

GLAUCON: I think so.

SOCRATES: Then shall we claim that such bad citizens come from lack of education and bad upbringing and institutions?

GLAUCON: We shall.

SOCRATES: So this is the plutocratic state and the evils it has, and perhaps it has even more.

GLAUCON: Very likely.

SOCRATES: Next let's consider the character of those who are like this and how they come to be that way.

GLAUCON: Certainly. How does the change occur from the timocratic to the plutocratic?

SOCRATES: When a child is born, he first emulates his father and follows in his footsteps; then he sees him put down by the state, like a shipwreck of his possessions and himself, either a general or some other leader dragged into court by harmful sycophants, he is executed or banished or loses all his property.

GLAUCON: That's likely.

SOCRATES: Seeing him suffering and losing his property, being afraid, I think, generally he removes from his soul's throne the love of honor and courage, and humbled by poverty turns greedily to money-making and by gradual saving and work gathers property. Then don't you think he will seat on that throne desire and the love of money and make it king inside himself with crown and scepter?

GLAUCON: I do.

SOCRATES: Logic and courage bowing down as slaves below that, he will calculate and consider nothing else but how to make more money from a little, admiring and valuing nothing but riches and the rich, and taking pride in nothing else but acquiring money and whatever may bring about that.

GLAUCON: No other transformation is as quick and excessive as from the ambitious youth to the avaricious one.

SOCRATES: Then let's consider how the character of the individual is like the plutocratic state.

GLAUCON: Yes, let's.

SOCRATES: Then first aren't they alike in making property most important?

GLAUCON: Why not?

SOCRATES: And in saving and working he only spends money on necessary appetites and desires, but doesn't spend on other desires as frivolous.

GLAUCON: Certainly.

SOCRATES: He is squalid and miserly, making a profit from everything, a treasurer whom the crowd praises, isn't he?

GLAUCON: At least I think so. At any rate property is most valued by that state and by such a person.

SOCRATES: For he never, I think, applies himself to education.

GLAUCON: No, or he wouldn't have appointed a blind leader.

SOCRATES: Yes, but consider this: may we not claim that because of his lack of education, the desires of the drone occur, beggarly and criminal, but they're restrained by the force of attention?

GLAUCON: Definitely.

SOCRATES: So do you know what to look at to discern his crimes?

GLAUCON: What?

SOCRATES: To being a guardian of orphans and any opportunities to wrong with impunity.

GLAUCON: True.

SOCRATES: Then is it clear that in other dealings in which he seems to be renowned as just, by force he keeps down bad desires inside, not by persuading them that it's not better nor by taming them with reason, but by compulsion and fear, and from trembling about his possessions?

GLAUCON: Certainly.

SOCRATES: By God, my friend, in most of them you'll discover when there's an opportunity to spend others' money, they have the desires of the drones.

GLAUCON: Most definitely.

SOCRATES: Then such a one would not be free of strife in himself, and would be not one person but two; yet usually the better desires prevail over the worse.

GLAUCON: That's so.

SOCRATES: For this reason, I think, he would be more respectable than many; but the true virtue of a harmonious and ordered soul flees far away from him.

GLAUCON: I think so.

SOCRATES: And the stingy individual would be a poor competitor in the state for any victory or other honors; unwilling to spend money or renown in such contests and afraid of awakening expensive desires and of calling them into the struggle for victory, he fights like an oligarch with few of his resources, and defeated many times is still rich.

GLAUCON: Quite so.

SOCRATES: So do we still have any doubt that the miser and money-maker corresponds to the plutocratic state?

GLAUCON: None at all.

SOCRATES: Democracy probably is to be considered next and the nature of this character so that we may compare what kind of a person that is.

GLAUCON: At least we are proceeding like that.

SOCRATES: Then isn't the transformation from the plutocratic way to the democratic through the insatiable desire for the proposed good, which is to become as rich as possible?

GLAUCON: How?

SOCRATES: Since the leaders lead due to having many possessions, they're

not willing to prohibit by law undisciplined youths from spending and ruin, so that by lending at interest and buying their estates they may become even richer and more esteemed.

GLAUCON: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: Then isn't it already obvious in this state, that honoring wealth and prudent citizens cannot be maintained at the same time, but that one or the other must be neglected?

GLAUCON: It's fairly obvious.

SOCRATES: Negligence and allowing extravagance in plutocracies often forces the well-born into poverty.

GLAUCON: Very much so.

SOCRATES: Then they sit in the city with stingers and arms, owing money, having been dishonored, some hating and plotting against the possessors of their estates and others, eager for revolution.

GLAUCON: That's so.

SOCRATES: But the stooping money-makers don't seem to see them; into the compliant ones remaining they always inject the sting of money, and collecting many times the parent sum in offspring, foster many drones and beggars in the state.

GLAUCON: Many of them.

SOCRATES: Nor are they willing to extinguish the evil as it bursts into flame either by restricting them from doing what they wish or by any other law to undo such things.

GLAUCON: What law is that?

SOCRATES: The second to that which compels citizens to take care of virtue. For if it was ordered that voluntary contracts were to be at the risk of the contractor, money-making would be less shameless in the state, and fewer of the evils we mentioned would occur in it.

GLAUCON: Much fewer.

SOCRATES: But now such leaders treat the followers so; and don't they and their followers spoil their young, and untested both in body and soul, aren't they lazy and too soft to hold up against pleasure and pain?

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: Don't they neglect everything except money-making, and take no more care of virtue than the poor?

GLAUCON: They do.

SOCRATES: So conditioned when the leaders meet the others either on the street or in another common activity, at a festival or a campaign or at sea or in the army, the chances are they'll observe each other; then the poor are not looked down on by the rich, but the strong, sunburned poor often may be

stationed in battle beside the pale and fat rich; and seeing them panting and helpless, don't you think they'll believe such are rich by vice, and communicating to one another when alone they'll say our men aren't worth anything?

GLAUCON: You know I think they would do so.

SOCRATES: Then as a weak body needs little influence from outside help to become sick, and sometimes even without outside help the strife is the same inside the self, so in the same way a weakened state from a slight cause, if one side gets allies from outside the oligarchy, and the other from a democracy, it is sick and battles with itself, sometimes without even strife from outside.

GLAUCON: Definitely.

SOCRATES: Then a democracy, I think, arises when the poor winning kill some, expel others, and grant to the rest of the citizens an equal share in governing, as most of the offices are elected by lottery.

GLAUCON: That is the institution of democracy, whether it arises by force of arms or the previous withdraws because of fear.

SOCRATES: So in what manner do they live? and what kind of government do they have? For it's clear such a man will plainly be democratic.

GLAUCON: It's clear.

SOCRATES: Then first aren't they free, and isn't the state full of liberty and free speech, and don't they have the right to do whatever they wish?

GLAUCON: It is said so.

SOCRATES: Where the right is, it's obvious that each will arrange their lives to please themselves.

GLAUCON: It's obvious.

SOCRATES: Then all kinds of people, I think, would arise in this state.

GLAUCON: Why not?

SOCRATES: Chances are it's the most beautiful state, like a garment with a variety of all colors, embroidered with all kinds of patterns, and probably many would judge it most beautiful, like children and women when they see varied things.

GLAUCON: Very much.

SOCRATES: This is a suitable way to look for its government.

GLAUCON: Why?

SOCRATES: Because due to the rights, it has every kind of government, and chances are anyone wishing to organize a state and select the way of life which pleases one, as we were just now doing, must come to the democratic state, as if in a marketplace of states, and in selecting so establish it.

GLAUCON: Probably there would be no lack of models.

SOCRATES: With no compulsion to lead in this state, even if you are

qualified to lead, nor to be led, unless you wish it, nor to make war during war, nor to keep peace when others are keeping it, unless you desire peace, nor again, if some law forbids you to lead or be a judge, nonetheless to lead and judge if you're so inclined, then isn't this a divine and pleasant life-style for the moment?

GLAUCON: Probably, for the moment.

SOCRATES: Isn't the mildness of the condemned exquisite? Or have you never seen a state in which people condemned to death or exile nonetheless remain and turn up in the middle as though no one noticed or saw them going around like a hero?

GLAUCON: And there are many.

SOCRATES: Pardon and no way of making a fine point of that, but looking down on what we declared serious when we founded a state, so that if one didn't have a superior nature, no one could ever become a good person, unless a child should be educated in all kinds of beautiful and fitting things, so superbly does it trample on all these that it doesn't think of what practices one should pursue before going into politics, but honors anyone who claims only to be well-disposed to the crowd.

GLAUCON: That's certainly noble.

SOCRATES: These and other brotherly qualities belong to democracy, and it would probably be a pleasant government, both anarchic and varied, distributing equality to equals and unequals alike.

GLAUCON: What you say is very well known.

SOCRATES: Observe then the corresponding individual. Or first should we consider the origin of the character?

GLAUCON: Yes.

SOCRATES: So isn't it like this? Would that miserly plutocrat have his son trained by the father's habits?

GLAUCON: Why not?

SOCRATES: Thus by force are governed the pleasures in the self, which would spend and not make money and which are not necessary.

GLAUCON: It's clear.

SOCRATES: Then first shall we distinguish desires which are necessary from those which are not?

GLAUCON: We should.

SOCRATES: Then may we rightly call necessary those which may not be avoided and whose satisfaction is beneficial to us? For doesn't our nature compel us to seek both?

GLAUCON: Very much.

SOCRATES: But what about those we can be free of if we take care from

youth, which run to no good and to the opposite, should we not fairly claim all these are unnecessary?

GLAUCON: Yes, fairly.

SOCRATES: For example, eating is necessary to our health, and isn't the appetite for food necessary?

GLAUCON: I think so.

SOCRATES: But can the desire to eat extra relishes and luxuries be avoided, and is it harmful to the body?

GLAUCON: That's correct.

SOCRATES: Then may we not claim some appetites are extravagant and others are profitable for working?

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: Shall we claim this concerning sexual appetites?

GLAUCON: Yes.

SOCRATES: Did we call those with such pleasures and desires drones, and are those governed by necessary appetites the thrifty plutocrats?

GLAUCON: Of course. So how does the democratic person come from the plutocratic?

SOCRATES: When a conservative youth miserly brought up tastes the honey of the drones and associates with the fierce and clever who can provide all kinds of pleasures and variety, there is the beginning of the inner transformation of the plutocratic into the democratic.

GLAUCON: It must be.

SOCRATES: Just as the revolution in the state came by an alliance from outside helping a similar party in the state, so isn't the youth transformed by similar desires from outside which aid a faction in himself?

GLAUCON: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: If an oligarchic opposition battles in himself, either from his father or others who admonish him, then strife and struggle occur inside him.

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: Then the democratic desires may be overcome, and respect comes back into the youth's soul and restores order again.

GLAUCON: That happens sometimes.

SOCRATES: But again other desires like those expelled grow due to the father's ignorance of education, and they become numerous and strong. Then they pull him back to associating with the crowd. Finally, I think, they take the tower of the soul, finding it empty of learning and fine pursuits and true logic, which are the best watchers and guardians in the minds of God-loving people.

GLAUCON: That's quite true.

SOCRATES: Then lies, bragging and opinions run up and take their place.

GLAUCON: Definitely.

SOCRATES: Again he lives openly with the Lotus-eaters, and if help comes from the thrifty part of the soul, the braggarts close the gates of the royal tower and allow no older ambassadors into private life. Struggling they prevail, and naming respect foolishness they throw it out a dishonored fugitive; calling prudence cowardice they expel it into the mud; they are convinced moderation and orderly spending are uncultivated and illiberal, and combining many useless desires they drive them out.

GLAUCON: Definitely.

SOCRATES: Having emptied and purged the soul they have occupied, they bring back insolence and anarchy and indulgence and shamelessness in a large chorus bright and crowned with garlands, and celebrating they praise insolence as well-educated, anarchy as freedom, indulgence as generosity, and shamelessness as courage. So isn't this the transformation from necessary desires to the liberation of the unnecessary and useless ones?

GLAUCON: It is very distinctly described.

SOCRATES: So in life he spends money and time on the necessary and the unnecessary pleasures; but if by luck this period doesn't last long, as he gets older most of the trouble passes; then he balances all the pleasures equally as if they had been drawn by lottery.

GLAUCON: Certainly.

SOCRATES: He doesn't consider some pleasures good and others bad, or that he should value some to discipline others; but he claims they're all alike and equally valuable.

GLAUCON: That's definitely how it goes.

SOCRATES: So he lives indulging the pleasure of the day, now drinking and partying, then later dieting and exercising, now lazy and neglecting everything, then spending time in philosophy; often going into politics he says and does whatever; if war is exciting, he rushes into that, or he goes into money-making; there's neither order nor necessity in his life, but he needs pleasure and freedom and happiness all through life.

GLAUCON: That entirely describes the life of equality.

SOCRATES: All this beauty and variety is full of many habits, and he's like that diverse state which has many models of institutions and characters.

GLAUCON: That's so.

SOCRATES: Then have we correctly defined the democratic person?

GLAUCON: We have. Now explain how dictatorship arises.

SOCRATES: It's quite obvious it's transformed out of democracy. Just as greed for wealth and moneymaking caused the undoing of plutocracy, so excessive freedom and the neglect of other things prepares the way for



dictatorship.

GLAUCON: How?

SOCRATES: When the leaders drink too much and are not easy-going, dispensing enough liberty, they are criticized as hated oligarchs. The people want leaders who are like followers and followers who are like leaders. The parents try to be like the children, and the children don't respect their parents. The resident aliens feel themselves equal to citizens. Teachers fear and flatter their students, and the students pay no attention to teachers. Generally the young compete with their elders, and the old imitate the young out of fear of being thought disagreeable and authoritative. Servants no longer obey their employers. In this freedom men and women are equal, and the spirit of liberty is all-pervasive.

GLAUCON: I have seen this in the country.

SOCRATES: They no longer wish to obey anyone and pay no attention to laws written or unwritten lest any master be over them.

GLAUCON: Yes, but how does dictatorship grow out of this root?

SOCRATES: Any excess is bound to cause an opposite reaction. So too much freedom results in too much slavery for the individual and the state. In all this freedom conflict arises between plutocratic capitalists and the common people, resulting in impeachments and lawsuits on both sides. The people find a protector who fights for them, but having tasted blood, he becomes a wolf leading a mob. His enemies who represent property may banish him or try to assassinate him secretly. So he asks for a bodyguard to protect the democracy.

GLAUCON: And the people grant it, afraid for him.

SOCRATES: Yes, but unconcerned about themselves. Yet soon the protector is transformed into a dictator.

GLAUCON: What else?

SOCRATES: Shall we describe the happiness of this man and state?

GLAUCON: Certainly.

SOCRATES: At first he smiles on everyone and doesn't claim to be a dictator but makes many promises and frees people from debt, distributes land to people and his own friends, and seems very gracious. Having come to terms with outside enemies and ruined others so that he's no longer disturbed, nevertheless he's always stirring up a war so that the people will need a leader.

GLAUCON: That's likely.

SOCRATES: Impoverished by war-taxes people have to keep busy and are less likely to plot against him. Free thinkers who will not submit to him he destroys by exposing them to the enemy. Thus a dictator is always provoking wars.

GLAUCON: Necessarily.

SOCRATES: And those who courageously speak out against him must be imprisoned or removed until the most worthy are purged from the state.

GLAUCON: A fine purgation.

SOCRATES: Yes, just the opposite to what physicians do on bodies, for they remove the worst and leave the best.

GLAUCON: But he must do the reverse to keep his power.

SOCRATES: Yes, and the most slave-like people he adds to his bodyguard and his army. To pay the army and make sure taxes are not too high he confiscates the public treasuries and spends them, resulting in an ever-growing public debt. Finally all is ruled by him and the force of arms.

GLAUCON: That certainly is a description of dictatorship.

SOCRATES: What's left to consider is how the tyrannical person is formed out of the democratic character.

GLAUCON: Yes, that is left.

SOCRATES: The democratic person is drawn toward complete freedom, giving in to all desires, good and bad; but in this competition finally one desire, jealous of the others, starts to take them over, and like the drunk, the obsessed and the addicted, this lust finally becomes a tyrant over all the other desires.

GLAUCON: That's so.

SOCRATES: So this master passion becomes a despot, and all other desires must serve this one whether by deceit or violence or crime. Wouldn't one so desperate rob one's own parents, and if they resisted, even use force?

GLAUCON: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Then this type will be a tyrant or will serve one as a body-guard or soldier, or they'll steal, burglarize, mug, kidnap, take bribes and inform, and even murder, because they're enslaved by their desire, becoming envious, unjust, friendless, impious, wicked, and in consequence most unhappy.

GLAUCON: Yes, all these little evils.

SOCRATES: But the greater the tyrant the worse the evil is, and most miserable is the dictator of a state, who has the power to get away with the most wrong. And so our discussion comes full circle, that the most unjust person is the most miserable.

GLAUCON: That must be true.

SOCRATES: Then dictatorship where the people are most enslaved must also be the worst state, because the smallest and worst part of it governs.

GLAUCON: Definitely.

SOCRATES: Is this state the poorest and most full of fear?

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: Thus have we seen how a just and peaceful state can degenerate

by degrees down to the worst tyranny.

GLAUCON: The whole process has been portrayed for us in words.