Efficient Double-Colummed PDFs of Political Classics

Political Classics . . . . 0

Classics of
Political and Social Philosophy
Selected and Partially Transliterated by
Jan Narveson
Department of Philosophy
University of Waterloo, Canada

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Note: Each space-efficient double-columned page is the equivalent of somewhat more than three double-spaced, 12-point courier typeface, 1" margin pages.

Introduction to 2006 edition

The idea behind these selections was to assemble the main thoughts of these (mostly) great philosophers concerning politics, in a form compact enough so that the teacher in an introductory course could assign the entire reading for each philosopher without compunctions: each is short enough to be read by a student, operating under the pressures of several other courses in a week. Digesting them thoroughly is, of course, another matter.

They are mostly in historical order except for some which function as commentaries on others. Plato’s Crito has always struck me as the perfect, dream introduction to political philosophy; Thoreau’s is a kind of Hegelian antithesis commentary on it. Those two selections are designed to get the students thinking. The rest will certainly keep them thinking.

There is a companion set of Notes on the History of Political Philosophy, representing roughly the substance of my own lectures on these philosophers during a somewhat shortish semester (12 weeks). Experience suggests that there is ample material in this anthology for an entire semester. My own discussions of these selections reflect forty years of thinking about these matters. We must all do our own such thinking in the end, of course; but readers of this anthology may find my analyses and reflections helpful.

Comments Solicited!

This, in effect, is version 4.1 of this project. Suggestions welcome, both in regard to the selections and in regard to my “tweaking” of the translations of the earlier classics. Also any remaining typos, etc. - it has been spell-checked (with insufficiently uniform judgments between English and American options for words like ‘labor’ (‘labour’?) Suggestions welcome on that, too.

- Jan Narveson
e-mail (preferred) jnarves@uwaterloo.ca
Plato (427-347 B.C.)

Crito

[Scenario: Socrates has been tried and convicted by the Athenian Assembly, the vague charge being “impiety”. In his famous defense speech (recorded in another famous dialogue of Plato’s, the “Apology”) Socrates maintains, plausibly, that he is not guilty. Still, the vote went against him, and they sentenced him to execution, which he now awaits in prison. His friends, notably his wealthy friend Crito, come to try to dissuade him from enduring the penalty, pointing out that the jailer is easily bribed and there are plenty of nice places he can go and live until the political climate in Athens changes for the better, to which he could no doubt return anyway, in future. In this great dialogue, Socrates discusses whether it would be right for him to accept their offer.

Socrates has been generally understood to be arguing for a very strong principle of loyalty to the State, and I am accepting that view. So I take him to be defending the principle that one has a very strong duty to obey the Law in one’s community. I ask you to read it on that assumption.

There’s a considerable amount of charming dramatic chitchat in Plato’s dialogues. This excerpt (comprising more than half the text), however, is stripped down nearly to what I regard as the philosophical essentials... I hope the charm hasn’t entirely gone!

Note that instead of repeating the names ‘Socrates’ and Crito’, etc., I use just an initial after the first occurrence of the character.

- Jan Narveson]

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Crito: If you die, not only will I be deprived of a friend the like of whom I shall never find again, but many people will think that I was too cheap to save you. Surely there can be no worse reputation than that!

Socrates: Why should we care so much about what the majority think? Reasonable people, to whom one should pay more attention, will believe the truth.

C: But the majority can inflict great evils if one is slandered among them.

S: Not really. They act haphazardly, and cannot make a man either wise or foolish. Consider, now, don’t you think it true that one must not value all opinions, but only those of the wise, ignoring the foolish?

C: Well, yes.

S: Especially with regard to important things like just and unjust actions, and beautiful and ugly character: if we don’t follow the path of wisdom and disdain the foolish, shall we not harm and corrupt that part of ourselves that is improved by just actions and destroyed by unjust ones?

C: Yes, you have a point there.

S: And is life worth living for us if it is corrupted? Surely that part of us, whatever it is, is more valuable than the body, is it not?

C: It is.

S: Well, then, we had better examine whether it would be right for me to try to get out of here when the Athenians have not acquitted me. If it is right, of course, I will go with you. But if not, then I must surely stay.

C: Nobly expressed, Socrates, and surely right.

S: Let’s begin at the beginning: namely, that we must never do wrong willingly - whatever the majority may say. Is that right?

C: It is.

S: Moreover, if we are wronged, we must nevertheless inflict no wrong in return, contrary to what the majority seem to think.

C: That seems right, yes.

S: So if we are injured, it is still not right to inflict an injury in return? After all, injuring is wrongdoing, is it not?

C: It is, and we mustn’t.

S: Then let us move to the next point. When we have made a just agreement with someone, should we fulfill it, or do we get to cheat on it?

C: Clearly, we must fulfill it.

S: Well, but consider: if we leave here without the permission of the Athenians, are we not injuring people, people whom we should least injure? Would we be sticking to our just agreement, or reneging?

C: Gosh, I’m not quite sure!

S: Well, look - suppose that as we were planning our getaway, the Laws and the State were to confront us and ask: “Tell me, Socrates, what are you intending to do? Do you not by this action intend to destroy us, the laws, indeed to destroy the whole city, as far as that goes? Or do you think it possible for a city not to be destroyed if the verdicts of its courts have no force but are set at naught by private individuals?” Well, what shall we say to them? Shall we answer, “But the city wronged me, and its decision was not right!”?

C: Well, sure -- that seems the right answer to me.

S: But what if the laws then say, “Was that the agreement between us, Socrates? Or was it, on the contrary, to respect the judgments that the city came to?” To which they add, “Socrates, what accusation do you bring against us and the city, that you should try to destroy us? Was it not through us that your father married your mother and thus enabled you to be born at all? Do you have a criticism of our laws of marriage?” -- To which I would have to admit that I do not. “And then, what about those who nurtured you in infancy, and educated you later on? Do you claim they have wronged you?” I’d have to admit that they did not -- quite the contrary! “Well then”, they would continue, “can you deny that you are our offspring and servant, both you and your parents? If so, do you think that we are merely on an equal footing with you as regards what it is right for you to do to us? Do you really claim a right of retaliation against your country and its laws? That if we undertake to destroy you, thinking it right to do so, you in turn get to destroy us, as far as you can, in return? You claim to care a lot about virtue: well, what would be
virtuous about that kind of behaviour? Indeed, is your country not to be honoured more even than your mother and father? If so, you must either persuade it or obey its orders, and endure whatever insolence it tells you you must endure; and if your country goes to war and demands your services, in the course of which you are wounded or killed, you must nevertheless obey. To do so is right, and not to give way or leave one’s post. If it is impious to bring violence to bear against your mother or father, it is surely much more so to use it against your country. No?” Well, Crito, what could I say in reply to that? Do the Laws speak the truth, or don’t they?

C: I believe they do.

S: And then the laws might continue, “If you grant all this, how can you be treating us rightly by planning to run away now? We gave you birth, nurtured and educated you, gave you and all citizens a share of all the good things we could. Moreover, if you didn’t like this, you were quite free to leave, as you know, and take your possessions with you, too. But you didn’t do that - instead, you chose to stay. Well, we say that if you stay, then you have as much as agreed to our conduct of trials and the other things we do to manage your country. We say, in fact, that the one who disobeys us does wrong, and does so in three ways:

First, because in disobeying us, you disobey your parents, indeed those who are really superior to your parents.

Secondly, you disobey those who brought you up as well; and

Third, despite the agreement we pointed out before, and which you accept, you neither obey nor do you ever try to persuade us to do better -- and we do, after all, allow you to try to persuade us of our errors, if such you think them.

“As a matter of fact, Socrates, you chose us so decisively that you have even gone so far as to have children and raise them here -- when you could have done so elsewhere. And in that fine speech you made to the jury1, you prided yourself on preferring death to exile. Yet instead of showing shame at the very idea, you now plan to sneak away, like the meanest type of slave, contrary to your understandings and agreement to live as a citizen under our care. What do you say to that, Socrates?”

- Well, Crito, what do I say? Have I any choice but to agree with these arguments?

C: It seems not.

S: And the laws might go on to say, “You’ve had seventy years during which you could have left any any time, if you didn’t like the way we do things. But you didn’t choose to go to Sparta or Crete, say, despite your going on about how well governed they are. Evidently we must be doing something right, eh?

“And then, what good will you do yourself or your friends by breaking these agreements? They will then be in danger of exile, disfranchisement, and loss of property, too. In fact, your action may convince the jury that they made the right decision in your case. And when you get to one of those other countries, how will they regard you? Clearly, as a potential destroyer of their laws. Or will you instead choose to live in the wilds, lawless and “free”? We doubt it!

1Recounted in Plato’s dialogue, Apology.
[Note: The following is a much later entry on this subject - a bit more than two millennia. JN]

**Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)**

*On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*

[Note: Thoreau’s case compares directly with Socrates’ in the Crito. Thoreau refused to pay a tax imposed by the American government for the purpose of prosecuting its war against Mexico, which Thoreau thought unjust. And like Socrates, he endured his punishment, though it is not clear whether he would have if he had any real alternative. It was also a far less drastic penalty, to be sure - a night or two in jail. Thoreau also professes sympathy with Anarchism, the view that there should be no government at all. But the purpose of this snippet is only to present Thoreau’s belief in a Right of Conscience, which seems flatly contradictory to Socrates. --- J.N.]

* * * * *

I heartily accept the motto, - “That government is best which governs least;” and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe, - “That government is best which governs not at all;” and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have. Government is at best an expedience; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient. The objections which have been brought against a standing army, and they are many and weighty, and deserve to prevail, may also at last be brought against a standing government. The standing army is only an arm of the standing government. The government itself, which is only the mode which the people have chosen to execute their will, is equally liable to be abused and perverted before the people can act through it. Witness the present Mexican war, the work of comparatively a few individuals using the standing government as their tool; for, in the outset, the people would not have consented to this measure. ...

After all, the practical reason why, when the power is once in the hands of the people, a majority are permitted, and for a long period continue, to rule, is not because they are most likely to be in the right, nor because this seems fairest to the minority, but because they are physically the strongest. .. Can there not be a government in which majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience? Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience, to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience, then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume, is to do any time what I think right. .. Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice. ..

How does it become a man to behave toward this American government today? I answer that he cannot without disgrace be associated with it. I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as my government which is the slave’s government also.

All men recognize the right of revolution; that is, the right to refuse allegiance to and to resist the government, when its tyranny or its inefficiency are great and unendurable. .. when a sixth of the population of a nation which has undertaken to be the refuge of liberty are slaves, and a whole country is unjustly overrun and conquered by a foreign army, and subjected to military law, I think that it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionize. What makes this duty the more urgent is the fact, that the country so overrun is not our own, but ours is the invading army.

Paley, a common authority with many on moral questions, .. resolves all civil obligation into expediency; and he proceeds to say ... “the justice of every particular case of resistance is reduced to a computation of the quantity of the danger and grievance on the one side, and of the probability and expense of redressing it on the other.” Of this, he says, every man shall judge for himself. But Paley appears never to have contemplated those cases in which the rule of expediency does not apply, in which a people, as well as an individual, must do justice, cost what it may ... This people must cease to hold slaves, and to make war on Mexico, though it cost them their existence as a people...

It is not a man’s duty, as a matter of course, to devote himself to the eradication of any, even the most enormous wrong ... but it is his duty, at least, to wash his hands of it, and, if he gives it no thought longer, not to give it practically his support. ... The soldier is applauded who refuses to serve in an unjust war by those who do not refuse to sustain the unjust government which makes the war ...

... Action from principle - the perception and the performance of right - changes things and relations; it is essentially revolutionary ... It not only divides states and churches, it divides families, aye, it divides the *individual*, separating the diabolical in him from the divine.

Unjust laws exist; shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once? Men generally, under such a government as this, think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter them. They think that, if they should resist, the remedy would be worse than the evil. But it is the fault of the government itself that the remedy is worse then the evil. It makes it worse...

As for adopting the ways which the State has provided for remedying the evil, I know not of such ways. They take too much time, and a man’s life will be gone. I have other affairs to attend to. I came into this world, not chiefly to make this a good place to live in, but to live in it, be it good or bad. A man has not every thing to do, but something; and because he cannot do every thing, it is not necessary that he should do something wrong. ..

I do not hesitate to say, that those who call themselves abolitionists should at once effectually withdraw their support, both in person and property, from the government of Massachusetts, and not wait til they constitute a majority of one, before they suffer the right to prevail through them ...

Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison.
I have paid no poll-tax for six years. I was put into a jail once on this account, for one night; as I stood considering the walls of solid stone ... I could not help being struck with the foolishness of that institution which treated me as if I were mere flesh and blood and bones, to be locked up. ... I did not for a moment feel confined, and the walls seemed a great waste of stone and mortar ... I could not but smile to see how industriously they locked the door on my meditations, which followed them out again without let or hindrance, and they were really all that was dangerous. As they could not reach me, they had resolved to punish my body ... I saw that the State was half-witted ... and that it did not know its friends from its foes, and I lost all my remaining respect for it, and pitied it.

Thus the State never intentionally confronts a man’s sense, intellectual or moral, but only his body, his senses. It is not armed with superior wit or honesty, but with superior physical strength. I was not born to be forced ... They only can force me who obey a higher law than I. ... When I meet a government which say to me, “Your money or your life”, why should I be in haste to give it my money? ...

When I came out of prison - for some one interfered, and paid the tax,... I saw to what extent the people among whom I lived could be trusted as good neighbors and friends; that their friendship was for summer weather only; that they did not greatly purpose to do right ....

I have never declined paying the highway tax, because I am as desirous of being a good neighbor as I am of being a bad subject ... I simply wish to refuse allegiance to the State, to withdraw and stand aloof from it effectually, ... I am concerned to trace the effects of my allegiance. In fact, I quietly declare war with the State, after my fashion, though I will still make what use and get what advantage of her I can, as is usual in such cases...

If we were left solely to the wordy wit of legislators in Congress for our guidance, uncorrected by the seasonable experience and the effectual complaints of the people, America would not long retain her rank among the nations.

The authority of government, even such as I am willing to submit to - for I will cheerfully obey those who know and can do better than I, and in many things even those who neither know nor can do so well - is still an impure one; to be strictly just, it must have the sanction and consent of the governed. It can have no pure right over my person and property but what I concede to it. ... There will never be a really free and enlightened State, until the State comes to recognize the individuals as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly. I please myself with imagining a State at last which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect as a neighbor ... A State which bore this kind of fruit, and suffered it to drop off as fast as it ripened, would prepare the day for a still more perfect and glorious State, which also I have imagined, but not yet anywhere seen.
Plato (427-347 B.C.): The Republic

[Introduction (by Jan Narveson)]

Scenario: Socrates encounters a group of friends and, as is Socrates’ way, they soon get off on a lengthy inquiry into the nature of justice in particular and morality in general. Specifically political topics loom very large, and Plato thinks that the two so closely related as to be inseparable. The selections below include Plato’s main ideas in as compact a form as possible. I include a very small amount of summary and description of what is omitted.

I have also -- let the reader be warned -- rather freely adapted the translation. This is not a true “translation”, since I do not read Greek. It is, rather, a “tweaking”, intended to make the text very readable by contemporary students and ordinary citizens. In no case do I consciously alter the substance of what any of the participants are saying, and I assume that the translators of the version I mostly work from know what they’re doing and operate within the limits of scholarly respectability.

(One exception: I have tried to “neuterize” many gender references. Only where the context makes it clear that the speaker intends to be talking specifically about males or about females do I employ specifically gendered particles. This reflects a judgment - that Plato had no intention of confusing the reach of his theorizing to males. The judgment is often disputed; I note here only that it is my judgment.)

Operational note: When a new speaker comes on, I spell out his name. After that, I use only his first initial - or nothing if it is obvious who is doing the talking. I supply a few headings (not Plato’s) to assist in conceptually organizing the material.

The version I have mainly worked from is translated from the Greek by Richard Sterling and William Scott (NY: Norton, 1985). It is highly recommended to all readers who want to see more - the most delightful of the translations I know of (around six at latest count). Happily, while I must bear responsibility for what I’ve done, you, the student, need not. You should take the text below as what we are working from, and not worry about any niceties of translation that a scholar would likely bring up. Enjoy! - J.N.

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The Republic

[Cephalus: Paying Debts, Telling the Truth]

Cephalus [a wealthy, elderly friend]: Thinking of my own case, I would say that the main value of wealth is to strengthen virtue, at least in the person who is already basically good. Money makes it easier to refrain from cheating and fraud, and enables us to pay our debts, so that we needn’t fear the next world because of what one owes anyone. Of course it’s nice in other ways too, but I think that is the chief thing it does from the standpoint of a reasonable person.

Socrates: You do well in praising honesty and honor as essential virtues. But are these the same as justice itself? To tell the truth and pay one’s debts -- is that all there is to justice? Or might it sometimes be right not to pay a debt, or not to tell the truth? For example: a friend, once of sound mind, lends you his weapons; but when he returns to claim them, it turns out that he has gone insane meanwhile, and might well do someone, or himself, great harm with them. Would it still be right to return them? Indeed, wouldn’t it be positively wrong to do so? Nor is it obvious that you should even try to tell him the precise truth about his condition, is it?

C: A good point, Socrates. I can’t dispute that.
S: Well then, we can’t satisfactorily define justice as paying one’s debts or telling the truth.

[Polhemarchus: Friends, Enemies, and What’s “Due”]

Polhemarchus: But we can! The poet Simonides says that justice is giving to each what is his due. That is surely the right account.

S: Well, wouldn’t Simonides - an intelligent man, after all - agree that we shouldn’t return those weapons? Yet the loan had been made and it was due, wasn’t it? Perhaps Simonides had something else in mind?

P: Yes, indeed. He meant to talk of what is due to friends - always good, never evil.
S: Um. But that suggests a generalization: do good to friends - and harm, then, to enemies? That’s what’s due to them?
- Sure, of course... Well, why wouldn’t it be?
S: Let’s consider. Take medicine, for instance: what does that art owe to its patients?
P: Whatever improves their health, I guess.
O.K. Let’s say that arts generally benefit their subjects in some way. What benefit, then, does justice confer, and on whom?
P: I say, benefits to friends and injuries to enemies.
S: I see. Now, suppose there’s an epidemic, who could best deal with that? Or on ship, with a storm at sea?
P: The doctor and the captain, I should think.
S: So whom does the just person benefit, and when?
P: Maybe his countrymen in time of war, when he joins in battle against the common enemy.

S: Oh. But in peacetime, then, justice is of no use?
P: Umm, no - it’s useful in business, too.
S: Ah. Yes. Well, if you were competing in a game, who would you want as a partner - a skilled player, or a just one?
P: Oh, skilled, for sure!
S: Well, what kind of partnership is the just person suited for, then? At bridge, you want a good bridge player; at sea, a shipbuilder or captain; in business, a clever financier. What is the use of the just person, though?
P: To keep money safe between transactions?
S: But not during them? It begins to look as though there’ll be little for him to do, doesn’t it? Justice, it seems, is only useful when money lies idle, or the ship is in dock.
P: It’s beginning to look that way.

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S: And there’s worse to come. Consider again the doctor: he’ll be good not only at making people healthy but, if he wanted to, at poisoning them. And your just man who knows how to guard money - won’t he also be good at stealing it?

P: Evidently.

S: So the just man turns out to be a kind of thief -- is that it?

P: No, no! But now my head is spinning and I’m not quite sure what I said!

S: We must try to settle it down, then. So, let’s look at these friends to whom, you say, we owe benefit. But what about them makes them eligible for this? Isn’t it that you think them good and honest people? And your enemies the reverse?

P: Well, sure - naturally, that’s how we’d regard them.

S: But we could be mistaken, sometimes, right?

P: For sure!

S: And if we did, the just person would defend bad people and injure good ones?

P: Uhhh - yes, I guess.

S: And then it is just to injure those who have done no wrong?

P: Hey, no! That can’t be right!

S: Ah. Well, then, perhaps we should say that we owe harm, not to enemies, as such, but rather to those who do wrong; and that we owe good not to friends, as such, but to good and honest people, whatever our relation to them. What do you say?

P: Yes, that’s much better.

[Justice and Harming People]

S: Well, we’ve come quite a long way from Simonides’ thesis, haven’t we? But having come this far, I think we’ll have to go a bit farther yet. For consider this, now: is it really ever right to inflict injury on anyone?

P: Of course! On the evil who are our true enemies.

S: But just what is an “injury” now, anyway? I have a thought about this. Consider a horse or dog. If you injured one of those, wouldn’t you make it a worse horse or dog?

P: Yes, that sounds right.

S: What about humans, then? If we injure them, don’t we make them worse people, less excellent as people?

P: Yes.

S: I see. Then consider justice -- that’s a human excellence, isn’t it?

P: Yes.

S: So if you injure a man, you make him less just?

P: Gee, it sounds funny - but that seems to follow.

S: And what about the just person, the good person? Can such a person ever really aim to make others less good or just?

P: No, surely not.

S: Indeed, then, the just person can never really injure anyone at all, whether good or bad, right? Which seems to put paid to Simonides’ view ...

P: You’ve got me there, I must admit.

[Thrasymachus: Justice as Power]

[Now Thrasymachus, who has been getting more exasperated every moment, breaks in:] Socrates, you and Polemarchus have shown yourselves to be shallow snivellers. I know what justice is, and it’s not at all what you think. In fact, I say that justice is nothing but the interest of the stronger party. Let’s see you refute that! It’s not going to be easy...!

S: My goodness! This really is a new one on me. So new, I’ll have to ask you to explain it a bit more.

T: That’s easy. By the “stronger”, of course, I don’t mean the people with big muscles and stuff - that’s trivial. I mean the ones who govern, the rulers of the city’. They are, indeed, the “stronger party”, aren’t they? And what I’m saying is that they are the ones who make the laws, which of course the citizens - poor sods - not only obey, but positively identify with justice, you see? Of course, there are many types of government -- tyrannies, democracies, aristocracies. But my thesis is the same in all cases: justice is what is in the interest of the ruling class, be it a single man, the elite, or even the majority. I’m saying that when they get into power and start making laws, they make those laws in their own interest. And so, you see, justice is, as I say, the interest of the strong. What do you say to that, Socrates?

S: Hmm. Well, I guess I begin at least to understand what you’re getting at. But we do have to look a little closer at this interesting new thesis. To start with, you’ve used the expression ‘interest of the stronger party’, and now I see who you meant by the “stronger party”. Moreover, I’m sure that justice has to do with interest. But I’m not at all sure that justice is the interest of the stronger party. We’ll have to examine that matter rather carefully.

T: So go ahead, then.

S: Thank you. Well, these stronger people you speak of - are they absolutely perfect, or do they sometimes make mistakes about what is in their interest?

T: Of course they make some mistakes.

S: I see. But then, when they do, the laws they make, by means of which they were trying to advance their own interests, don’t work out that way after all. Insofar as they go wrong about that, the laws will not be for their interest after all, but perhaps exactly contrary to it. Right?

T: Yes, yes. So what’s the point?

S: Well, what makes your definition tick seems to be the fact that we all think it just to obey the laws. In these particular cases, though, when we obey those laws that the rulers have made mistakenly, we do not promote the interests of the stronger party. That seems to follow from what you’ve claimed, doesn’t it? But it surely contradicts your general thesis, that ‘justice’ = ‘interest of the stronger party’. Right?

\(^2\) A perhaps pedantic reminder: the Greeks lived in city-states, so ‘city’ and ‘state’ are really the same thing.
Polemarchus: It sure does, Socrates - you’ve got him there!

Cleitophon: Not so fast, Polemarchus. What Thrasymachus really meant, surely, is that justice is what the stronger party believes is in his interest, and the duty of the subject is to obey the laws that are made in that belief.

P: But he didn’t say that, did he?

S: Never mind. Let’s just ask him: Is that what you meant?

[“Strict” Use of Terms]

T: Don’t be stupid! Of course not. Obviously I’m not going to call someone “stronger” at the very moment that he’s making a mistake. Making mistakes is a sign of weakness, not strength. The doctor is a doctor not when he bungles and does in his patient, but when he’s doing his work properly. Likewise with the ruler. Of course we do say that it is the “doctor” who makes the mistake, but strictly speaking, that’s wrong: a man who claims to be a doctor is only really being so when he is not mistaken. And the same with rulers. The true ruler does not, insofar as he is a ruler, make mistakes.

S: Oh, I see. Well, now: in this “strict sense” you speak of, tell me, what is the aim of the doctor, say, or the captain of the ship? Is it, for instance, to make money? Or is it to heal patients and get ships where they are meant to go, without mishap?

T: Of course it’s as you say.

S: O.K. And it seems we can generalize more, can we not? The general purpose of any profession is to achieve its specific aim: health from doctors, safe and efficient transport for passengers and cargo from ship-captains, and so on. Right?

T: I’m not entirely sure I’ve got your drift.

S: Consider, then. Are arts, as such, perfect or do they need, so to speak, outside help? Does medicine, as such, need something from outside medicine to do its work? Not, I suggest, insofar as it is medicine rather than some imperfect pretender. I’m sure you appreciate that point, since it is just like what you were saying about the ruler - in the “strict” sense - right?

T: Right, I guess.

S: O.K.: so let’s look at these arts in their perfect form, when they make no mistakes and need nothing from outside themselves. So considered, what do they aim at? They aim, I suggest, at the interests of their subjects: the doctor strives to improve the health of his patient, the sculptor the shape of the stone, the horse trainer the skills of her horse, and so on. They do not, in fact, seek their own advantage, but always that of their subject, isn’t that right? Strictly speaking, that is?

T: Well ... yes, I guess that’s right.

S: Very good. But there’s another thing, too: the arts, as you conceded, are in this strict sense the superior entities, their subjects the inferior. In fact, the arts are the “stronger party”. And yet, their interest is always the “weaker party”. So what is right for the practical and fine arts - what is just in their cases, then, is definitely not to advance the interest of the stronger, but rather of the weaker party - right?

[Thrasy machus, very reluctantly, agrees.]
saw, that generalizes to other arts as well.

Which leads to another question, Thrasymachus: What makes a particular art that particular art and no other? What distinguishes one art from another? Is it not its specific function?

T: Yes, certainly.

S: Thus medicine restores our health, it confers that particular benefit, while working, in the strict sense of earning, brings us our income, and is not to be confused with, say, navigation even though the captain is indeed paid for his navigating, right? Medicine and navigation both bring about benefits, but still, we don’t want to confuse the two, do we?

T: Nope.

S: So wages, although they benefit a wage-earner, do not do so solely by virtue of practicing the art that gets the pay for the earner: that’s a specifically different thing, money-getting, from the art of nursing or teaching or whatever. Those arts do, indeed, benefit something: but what they benefit is the patient and the student, not the nurse and the teacher. You see?

T: Yes, I guess so.

[Rulers Rule for their Subjects]

S: Well, then, our conclusion is as before: the ruler, insofar as he is a ruler, that is to say, insofar as he practices that particular art - the art of ruling- strives with his whole soul to benefit his subjects, not himself. Does that not follow? And that, by the way, is why no one wants to hold public office without pay, for to do so is to work for others’ benefit. That’s why we have to pay them, and heap honours and praise on them, or maybe even threaten penalties if they refuse to serve. So far is it from the truth, then, to say that rulers qua’ rulers exploit and profit from their subjects - that, on the contrary, it’s just the opposite.

T: Hmmphh...

S: So that’s why I really can’t assent to Thrasymachus’ thesis that justice is the “interest of the stronger party”. Nevertheless, he raises another and really more important question when he claims that the unjust do better, live better lives, than the just. What do you say to that? Shall we try to convince Thrasymachus that he is in error about that as well?

Glaucn: You bet!

S: Very good. Now, Thrasymachus, most of us would of course say that justice is a virtue, injustice a vice. But I suppose you will insist that we’ve got it backward - do you?

T: Right on!

S: You sure are a tough customer, Thrasymachus! Obviously we can’t appeal to ordinary notions when dealing with such a view as yours. But we’ll just have to do our best. Here’s a

This little word ‘qua’ will often be used, and is important. It just means what Socrates has been getting at here: ‘qua’ = ‘strictly as’, or ‘insofar as it is’ the kind of thing in question. Cows qua cows are cows when they’re just being cows, as opposed to when, for instance, they try to take up the ballet or when instead they’re used as ballast.
**[Injustice and Discord]**

S: Think about it. An army wouldn’t do very well if it was all disunited, its members at each other’s throats and not just the enemy’s. Nor would any other group that was trying to promote some common purpose. And neither would a gang of thieves, now, would it? I mean, suppose that they could never trust each other even for an instant, and would stab each other in the back the moment that back was turned. They wouldn’t be very successful at their business of robbing if they were always like that, would they?

T: No, I should think not.

S: In fact, injustice is going to generate hatred, quarrels, and factions. It’s only justice that can create unity in a group, isn’t it? And that’s true even of unjust groups -- injustice within the group will make it impossible for them to carry out their purposes, even when those purposes are evil.

T: So it seems.

S: In fact, injustice turns people against each other, makes them hate each other. No two people, or any group, can get any common purpose accomplished if that’s how they regard each other, can they?

T: Evidently not.

S: So it turns out that injustice divides, and the unjust person becomes her own enemy, as well as the enemy of good people everywhere. With this in mind, we can proceed to the question of which is the better, the happier life - that of the just or of the unjust. You have claimed it is the latter. But let’s look more carefully at the situation. What we are inquiring now, in fact, is what is the right way to live --what are the right rules for the conduct of life.

T: Inquire away, then.

**[The Function of the Soul]**

S: All right. Let’s look now at , for instance, the horse. It has, we would all agree, a function, yes? In fact, it has a specific function, the function special to a horse. And that function will be that which only a horse can do, or at least which it can do best. Similarly with the eye and the ear: the eye functions to see, and nothing else can do that; the ear hears, and nothing else does that - not even the best eye ever opened.

T: Yes, I see that, all right.

S: Now, the performance of its function is what establishes the standards of excellence of a thing, isn’t it? The excellent eye is the eye that sees really well and clearly, and the excellent ear hears, though it can’t see a thing, and the excellent archer shoots straight and true, while the poor one goes wide of the mark, and as for the deer itself, say, or that tree over there -- they don’t even shoot at all. You see the point?

T: Yes, I guess so.

S: Good. Next, then, let’s turn to the soul. Won’t it also have a specific function, something that it alone can do, and doing it well is its specific excellence? So, for instance, reasoning and willing and - come to think of it - ruling, are things that can only be done by the soul, not by anything else. Right?

T: Well, again I have to say that I guess so, yes.

S: And what is the peculiar excellence of the soul, then? Awhile back, we were really agreeing that it was justice, weren’t we? Justice is the peculiar excellence of the soul, injustice its defect. And the person who lives well is happy, and who lives badly is miserable?

T: Yes ...

S: So, it follows from all that has been granted that the just soul is the happy one, the unjust the miserable one. Surely, then, justice is the winner here, and not, as you formerly maintained, the loser - is that not so, Thrasymachus? ... Hello, Thrasymachus? Hey, where did he go? ...

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**[Book II]**

**[Does Justice Pay?]**

Glauc: I’m sorry about him going off like that, too, Socrates, for it seems to me that the argument isn’t really over.

S: It isn’t? Oh, dear - and here I thought it was...!

Glauc: Oh, sure! Hey, we know you better than that, Socrates! Anyway, I’m troubled. To make my problem clear, let’s make a distinction.

(1) Some things are good all by themselves, aren’t they? Like the taste of a good pear - yummy! You don’t have to refer it to anything else to like it.

(2)* On the other hand, other things are good not in themselves at all, but only for their effects. Like, a foul-tasting medicine that cures your bowel ailment - yeech! Nobody would take such a medicine if it didn’t do that, right?

(3) And then there’s a third sort that is mixed, such as health, which is both pleasant in itself and good for its results - such as enabling one to get on with one’s life.

Now we can frame my question: in which category is justice: good in itself, good only as a means, or both?

S: I should think it is the last -- good both for its own sake, and also for the other goods it brings.

G: That’s what I was hoping you’d say, Socrates. But ordinary people don’t agree with you, I dare say. They think that justice in itself is a drag! They wouldn’t bother with it if it weren’t for all the external goods it brings: honours, rewards, the profits of fair business dealings, and the good opinion of your neighbors, especially.

S: Yes, I realize that is their opinion, all right. But I’m afraid I don’t share their view.

G: Somehow, I didn’t think you would! But it seems to me that this view of the multitude hasn’t really been given its due by Thrasymachus. So I’m going to try to do better than he did, and give justice a real run for its money. Of course, as you know, I too really agree with you. But I want to be sure, you know? We

* I have changed Plato’s order; he made my “third” category second, and vice versa. This order brings out the distinction more sharply, I think.
don’t want to settle for an illusion or a mere hunch. So I propose to paint injustice in the most vividly favorable colors I can manage. O.K.?

S: My, my! Well, this is wonderful, Glaucon. Nothing could please me more, for after all, this is the most important subject there is, isn’t it? And I can see that you’re all enthused and will give me a real battle. In fact, I’m frankly quite worried!

G: We know you too well to believe that, Socrates! But anyway, here goes. What most people say is that what’s bad about injustice is to suffer from it. When Thrasy machus’ wicked rulers rob or enslave me, that’s bad - bad for me But the guy who does the wrongdoing - is he isn’t suffering? Indeed, not - he’s laughing all the way to the bank where he deposits his ill-gotten gains. However, ordinary people, seeing the danger of people like that, band together and make a sort of compact, the purpose of which is to commit them all against injustice, so that nobody will suffer from it. Still, they only make such deals because they know they are weak. But what if they could do injustice with impunity?

[The Ring of Gyges]

G: To examine this more fully, then, let’s take the old story of Gyges, a mere shepherd in the service of the king of Lydia. One day while feeding his flock, an amazing thing happened to him. There was a storm, followed by an earthquake, which opened a great fissure before him. He clambered down it, and there he beheld a hollow bronze horse fitted with doors. Opening one of them, he saw inside the corpse of a man with a gold ring on his finger. Gyges took that ring - with some trepidation, as you can imagine. Putting it on his finger, he soon forgot he was wearing it, and later showed up at the king’s palace to make his monthly report on the flocks. While waiting in line with the other shepherds, he chanced to turn the ring around on his finger and - Wow! All of a sudden he became absolutely invisible! Turning it back to normal restored ordinary visibility. When he realized this, he set to work. First he got himself appointed as the king’s messenger. As soon as he was in the king’s chamber, he became invisible, seduced the queen, murdered the king, and so became king himself.

Now suppose that there were two rings, one for a just person, the other for an unjust person. Would they really behave any differently? The wearer could do anything at all with impunity - he wouldn’t be kept back by the usual fears of getting caught and punished. Wouldn’t the formerly just man do the same as the unjust one, then - take what he wanted, sleep with whom he pleased, and so on? The man who remained “just” under these circumstances would be regarded as a simpleton.

To complete our little thought-experiment, let’s continue to endow our just man with justice, to the full. However, let’s deprive him of all the external benefits that usually accompany it. Instead, let’s give those to the unjust man. Better yet, let’s assume that the just man, though he really is just, is not thought to be so. He’s falsely convicted of terrible crimes, thrown in prison, tortured to within an inch of his life, deprived of his property, and reviled by all. Meanwhile, our unjust chap is really living it up, praised by everybody, heaped with riches and rewards. And so on - you get the point. Now, Socrates, can you honestly maintain that the just man still has the better life of the two? Really?

[Now Glaucon’s brother Adeimantus joins in, too.] A: We can go still farther, Socrates. For in addition to all the stuff that Glaucon has so ably depicted, let’s also take away from the just man the consolation of an afterlife. Let’s suppose either that it will work out just the opposite of what you’d like to have us believe - the just man winds up in Hell, the unjust in Heaven - or that there simply are no gods at all, and when we’re done, that’s that. Now, Socrates: wouldn’t the rational person, confronted with all these conditions, choose injustice over justice? Wouldn’t he, really?

So what you have to do, dear Socrates, is disregard mere appearances completely, and prove to us that justice is better than injustice, no matter what. A tall order!

S: You can say that again - you guys have put the case so brilliantly that I’m positively floored! I can see that the arguments I used against Thrasy machus are going to get me nowhere with you two! But still, I must take up this challenge, for if I can’t meet it, I’m a fake, and worse - justice itself is a fake. With my last gasp, then, I will defend justice if I possibly can.

G: Now you’re talking, Socrates! Carry on!

[A Famous Analogy: Soul and State]

S: Very well. Now it occurs to me that we might get some help by using a method some very wise teachers have used, so I’ve heard. What they do is, for instance when they’re teaching writing, to draw the letters at first much larger than usual, thus making them easier to distinguish. Maybe we can do that with justice, eh? Now, we talk not only of the just individual, but also of the just state, the just community. The community is a lot larger than you or I, after all. So let’s first see what justice is in this larger case; perhaps that will make it easier to discern its true nature.

- Great idea!

[Origin of the City-State]

S: O.K. Let’s see, now. A city, I think, is formed in response to some needs we all have -- for food, shelter, and many other things. There are also lots of different kinds of people, and the city will have all of them. The obvious thing to do is to cater to these needs better by having those who are better at making or doing one sort of thing do that, and those better at another confine themselves to the other thing. That way, there’s a net gain for all. In fact, that’s another specialty - trading, business. By this specialization of function, then, the city will do much better than if each tried to provide for all of her own wants all by herself without others’ assistance. Lots of specialized activities will soon arise in our city, then: farmers, craft workers, tradesmen, midwives, and so on.

- You speak very well, Socrates. Continue!

S: Now, where do we find justice and injustice in our city? So far, it doesn’t seem to have appeared. But wait a minute: our city, it seems, has become quite well off. People will not just
satisfy their simplest needs, but they’ll start wearing fine and varied clothes, build palaces as well as huts, and so on. Soon there will also be players and dancers, and tutors, and barbers, and goodness knows what. And doctors - for not only will there be the usual diseases we are all heir to, but new ones got from the new social interchange.

Besides that, our city will grow quite a lot, we may be sure. And when it does, it quite likely will encroach on the neighboring lands. This, we may be sure, will lead to quarrels and probably wars. In which case our city will also need an army, to defend all the wealth and luxury it has acquired.

- Why an army, though? Why wouldn’t everyone join in and help repel the enemy?

S: Because, friend Glaucon, of our observation that the city grew up in the first place due to specialization. We wouldn’t do well in a war if the beauticians and the lyre-players went to the front and tried to take up arms, would we? The professional soldier will surely do best. So of course he will have to be trained in those arts, and trained for a long time, too.

[The “Guardians” ]

S: This brings us to a matter that is, I think, going to take us very near the heart of our subject: namely, the guardians, the caretakers of the city. Apparently those who perform that function are going to have to be quite exceptional people, are they not?

Of course, the soldiers guard the city. But we can see a distinction between those who guard it merely by their muscle and skill with the sword, on the one hand, and on the other those who direct those men. That may require special qualities. The soldier on the line must, for instance, be very brave, but the full-fledged guardian must have many other virtues as well.

Now, some of these virtues may seem to be incompatible. A guardian must be fierce when dealing with the enemy’s threat, yet gentle in dealing with the citizens or, say, their children. And to do that, the possessor of these apparently conflicting qualities must be discerning: he must be able to tell with whom he is dealing, and in what circumstances, so that he can respond appropriately. In fact, when you think of it, he is going to have to be something of a philosopher!

Well, all this is going to require a lot of training. Indeed, a whole lifetime of training is not too much, when you think about it. We must train the guardian-to-be from a tender age, so that he will possess all the important qualities needed by the time we need him to perform his function. The education of our guardians, then, will have to be attended to with the greatest care. For example, we can’t have them growing up to believe that the gods quarrel with each other, as Homer tells us - how could that do anything but confuse the aspiring guardian? Clearly we must bring them up to believe only in the goodness of the gods.

[Book Three] 

[Socrates continues] Indeed, I now propose a principle here. Those who are to become guardians should be released from all other duties, so that they can become experts in guarding the freedom of the city; they should do nothing except what serves that freedom. They must devote their whole mind and soul to this cause, avoiding everything that is unseemly or shameful, shabby or false. They must have just the right education, with a proper mix of music and athletics, poetry and mathematics. Moreover, as I have said, the guardian must be a philosopher. He must understand the true nature of courage, temperance, generosity, and the other good things -- and their opposites, too. In fact, they must learn to distinguish the truly good from the reverse, and to love what is good with all their heart. In fact, he or she - for at this level, there is no distinction between male and female - must come to see the very forms of beauty and goodness in themselves, and to love those above all.

Again, the truly wise and just will, for instance, refrain from subjecting themselves to the care and custody of doctors for trivial ailments; nor will they spend their lives in the law courts, trying to induce judges to help them get the better of their neighbours. In fact, they will, after long study, prescribe the kinds of medicine and law we want practiced in our city.

Moreover, they will have nothing to do with the shallow pleasures of the idle rich, or of any who devote themselves to the lower sort of pleasures. For that reason, we will not pay our guardians great wages. Come to that, we will actually give them only the most modest food and clothing, no more. Indeed, nobody in our city will be poorer in outward respects than our honoured guardians. Instead of fixing their gaze on such things, they will instead take their greatest delight in the performance of public duty, and will do it to the best of their ability.

Having selected them with the greatest care and trained them assiduously, these will become guardians in the fullest sense of the word. They will stand guard against enemies abroad and friends at home, so that neither will work injury to our city. We shall, in fact, resort to something that looks very like a lie for this purpose -- a noble lie, if you will.

G: What do you have in mind?

S: We shall tell our guardians-to-be that they, despite being brothers and sisters, were differentiated by the god at their birth, by mixing their souls with gold. Others - the auxiliaries to the rulers - have only silver, while craftsmen are of iron, farmers of brass. Each will generally beget their own kind -- brass from brass, and so on. But sometimes it won’t work out that way, and a soul of gold will crop up among the brass, or vice versa. We must have a vigilant eye for such exceptions, for we are always after the real thing: if we see gold among the brass, we must snatch it away and put that soul in with the guardians, to be trained for that highest function. And an offspring of a guardian who perchance is only of baser metal will be ejected from the school for the guardians and placed with the more ordinary mortals he belongs among.

A soul with the divine gold, we will tell them, has no need of mere human metal, and must not be contaminated with anything ordinary -- say, with luxurious houses and garments. No, indeed. People who love such things will end up plotting and vying with each other for power, to the neglect of the true interests of the state. Our guardians will keep their eyes fixed firmly on the Good, the good for the whole State, and not their own good to the exclusion of the community. In fact, now that I think of it, this noble lie of mine is scarcely a lie at all, is it? Only the images of the golden threads and so on are really false.
The rest is the truth, pure and unsullied. -- Well, isn’t it?

[Book Four]

Adeimantus: Socrates, there seems to be a problem looming before us. For it seems that you are not making your rulers particularly happy, are you? I mean, they are masters of the city, all right, but what do they get for their trouble? You won’t let them have fine houses, great lands, shrines in which to worship the gods. In fact, your rulers seem to be nothing but mercenaries, hired by the city (at very low wages, too!) to do nothing but stand guard over it. What kind of a life is that, eh?

S: Yes, I must certainly reply to that line of criticism. Now, the first thing to point out is that quite possibly this life of theirs will turn out to be their greatest source of happiness anyway. But the main thing is that our concern in founding the city was not how to make any one class happier, but how to make the whole city as happy as possible. If in so doing some have to make do with a bit less, well, that can’t be helped.

Anyway, the guardians are too important to be left to such slavish rewards. And if we do our job right, giving the young just the right kinds of play and amusement, music and poetry, and the rest, then good order will prevail, and cure all ills. A good beginning leads to a good end, a bad one just the reverse. If all goes well, then - and we now have a lot of insight into just what that means - our city will be good in the fullest sense of the word. Which means, as we know, that it will be wise, courageous, temperate, and just. Those are the four great virtues. Let’s see how they work in our city.

[The Virtues in the State]

First, wisdom: our city is wise, for it abounds in good counsel, which is a skill generated from knowledge, not ignorance. This virtue is especially found in the guardians, in short. It will be wise, then, by virtue of its ruling class, its smallest class.

Then there is courage. Here, clearly, we are talking about our armed forces, who are steadfast in their convictions about what is to be feared and what not -- an integral part of the education of the auxiliaries to our guardians. And those courageous soldiers will hold fast in the face of anything that threatens us or them. Mere pain or pleasure, for instance, will not distract them from their duties.

Then there is the virtue of temperance. It is easy to find this in our city, too. For temperance is self-control, specifically in regard to the appetites that inhabit us all, but which we must not allow to get the better of us. Temperance is really self-mastery. In our city, those with many appetites, which we may assume to be the great mass of people, are held in check by the wise, the guardians. And so we may properly call our city temperate.

To be sure, everyone in our city, both ruled and rulers, will share a common conviction concerning who should be ruling. All will agree that the best should rule, and that the best are our guardians, selected and trained from birth to do that as well as it can be done. That agreement is indeed temperance.

But that leaves us with the fourth virtue, justice. Yet we have seen that two of the virtues - wisdom and courage -- reside especially in certain parts of the city, while a third resides in the whole populace, really. Where, though, does justice come into it? It must be here somewhere.

G: Yes, it must. But where? I don’t yet quite see it. Do you? I’ll bet you do ... !

S: You know, we’ve really been blind all this time, now that I think of it. For indeed, justice has been right before us, staring us in the face, and we didn’t even see it. That’s because we had our eyes focussed too far in the distance.

G: Good grief, then, tell us about it! After all, this is what we’re all looking for.

S: Remember that principle we laid down way back at the beginning, at the very founding of our city? It was that each citizen should perform that work for which his or her nature is best suited. And long ago, we had hazardous the guess that justice was tending to one’s own business, and not meddling in others’. I suggest, now, that this is the true nature of justice. Justice does not reside in any one part of the city, but in the whole: and it consists in each part doing what is proper to it, rather than trying to usurp the functions of any others. Thus justice is, after all, a common principle, a common form. Indeed, justice is the harmony among all the elements of the city, that’s what it is!

So in the just city, cloggers, while they might perhaps trade tools with the carpenters for awhile without much harm, will not attempt to force their way into the warrior class, or to sit among the guardians. That would wreak havoc on the city. So would a guardian who insisted on clogging, or a soldier who presumed to govern. Rather, justice is when each tends to their own business, which they can do best.

Or so I think. However, if we are to be really confident in our hypothesis, we will have to look also to the individual soul. We must see whether justice plays the same sort of role there as it does in the state.

G & A: Yes, that’s a splendid idea!

[Virtues in the Individual]

S: O. K. Now, to make this work, we shall have to look more carefully at the soul than we did at first. For just as our city is actually rather complex, with elements of different kinds, so too the individual soul may turn out to be more elaborate than we might have thought. Now, look at our virtues. Will bravery, intellectual effort, and bodily appetites be one and the same in all respects? We suspect not, from our analysis of the city. Turning to the soul of the individual, then, our hypothesis suggests that a different part of the soul, as it were, will be involved in each of these virtues. But I suppose you’ll wonder how that can be?

- Indeed, we might! In fact, we will, Socrates: how, in truth, can that be?

S: Well, consider. A thing cannot, for instance, be at rest and yet in motion at the same time. More generally, no thing can simultaneously be in two opposing conditions. But think of the soul: doesn’t it often seem to behave in contradictory ways?
Aren’t we sometimes pulled both this way and that? If so, then our principle, that no one thing can be in two opposite conditions at once, calls upon us to recognize that the soul must have at least two elements or parts in it, if we are to account for these phenomena.

Look now at the appetites. These are many, to be sure: thirst, hunger, desire for warmth, and so on. However, we often, when possessed by any of these, resist it. We want to drink, but we refrain, for instance. Now, this is a true opposite: being impelled toward drinking, and yet not doing so. Given our principle, though, we see that we can posit two parts to the soul: the desiring part, on the one hand, and the part that can resist such desire, on the other. Hunger, thirst, sexual passion are clearly desires, and dwell in the desiring part. But there must be another part, one which enables us to decide whether we will give in to a desire or not. This would seem, by contrast, to be in the rational department.

- Yes, that seems very plausible.

S: O. K. But now, I see still a third. This is what we may call the spirited part. It enables us to feel, say, anger or indignation. We can direct this at ourselves or others, as in the story of Leontius, who came upon some dead bodies of executed men. He felt an urge to look at them, and yet was disgusted with himself. Finally he was overcome by his desire to look, ran up to the corpses, and cursed his own eyes, saying to them, “O.K., damn you: feast yourselves on the sorry spectacle!” That clearly indicates that desire and anger are different things, for they can be in conflict with each other. It seems, then, that we have a third element in the soul. Besides desire or appetite, on the one hand, and reason, on the other, we also have spirit -- even though I’ve run out of hands for my metaphor!

- So you have. But we see the point, all right.

S: Terrific. Moreover, there is a clear division of function and a definite hierarchy there. For clearly reason is designed to rule over the rest, in particular over the appetites. Spirit, in turn, if it is not corrupted by wrong education, is to be the ally of reason, enabling it to subdue the passions when necessary.

And now we can see how the soul compares with the city. For just as the city has its mass of people concerned with food and other such things to satisfy people’s appetites, so the soul has a department of appetite or desire. And just as temperance in the state is the control of this class, so temperance in the soul is the control of its appetites.

What of the middle part, the “spirited element”? Ah-hah! This, clearly, is where the virtue of courage will apply. And finally, there is wisdom, that splendid virtue: what could it possibly apply to, if not the reason or intellect?

So there are our three parts, with their corresponding virtues. In each case, they correspond exactly to the virtues in the community. How about that, eh?

- Very convincing! Now, what about justice?

[Justice: The Harmony of the Soul]

S: Clearly there is but one way to go, and that is not any one place but at the whole, right? Justice is when each part does its own proper job: wisdom ruling because it is wise, courage restraining us when appetites are running strong, thus assisting the reasoning element in doing its work but not trying to do it itself; and appetites functioning moderately, remaining subordinate to reason so that they will not take over and run wild in the soul -- dread anarchy!

In fact, gentlemen, we have discovered that justice is the harmony of the soul, just as it is the harmony of the city in its political application. It was the latter by keeping each part of the city in its proper relation to the others; it is so in the soul by keeping each part of the soul in its proper relation to the other parts. There is, then, a natural order in the soul, as in the state; and whatever subverts that order is unjust, while whatever maintains it is just.

Let’s test our hypothesis by some illustrations. Consider one who deposits money with a just government, or on the other hand, with a just man. Will it not be equally safe with either, and for the same reason?

- For sure -- he needn’t fear in either case.

S: And will the just person ever steal from others, or from the state? Or commit treachery or sacrilege? Or violate an oath or break an agreement? Or again, would he engage in adultery? Or fail to honor his parents, or neglect the divine services?

- Certainly not, Socrates.

S: And that is all due to having a soul in which each part is doing its own proper work, right?

- Right on!

S: So we have seen that there is a basic pattern to justice, conspicuous when we look in large at the just community. However, to look only at that pattern is to look at analogy, not reality. For the real thing is not a matter of external behavior at all. It is, instead, the way the just person governs that internal “community” which is the soul. The just are their own friends. Such a soul is unified: its various activities all harmonize, and preserve that inner order we have come to see. And the knowledge of this is wisdom.

With the unjust soul, on the other hand, we have a case of internal contention, factions in ourselves meddling with each other’s business, to the point where civil war breaks out. If the worse parts win that war, the possessor of such a soul will be miserable. It will succumb to intemperance, cowardice, ignorance: all of which add up to injustice, my friends.

Thus we see that the virtues make for the very health, beauty, and strength of the soul, while vice makes it sick, ugly, and weak.

- Very true!

S: Well, I think we now have the answer to our most fundamental question, do we not? Is it not profitable to live one’s life in the cause of justice and beauty, whether or not anyone else takes notice? Or is it more profitable to be unjust, provided you can escape punishment?
- By George, Socrates, what a ridiculous idea! How could anyone want to have a soul of the type that you have so clearly described? Now we see that to be without justice is to be without the paramount principle of the soul itself.

S: Just so. And now we are set to explore injustice in all its forms, and to see why we must above all prevent either the soul or the state from succumbing to them. These forms of injustice are four, to which we add the just state or soul, making five: five kinds of government, five kinds of soul. First, of course, the just one, in which reason rules. In the case of a city, it’s rule by the best part, which may be either a single ruler, as in a monarchy, or a number of them, in which case it is called an aristocracy. There is evidently no important difference between them, is there? So long, that is, as the monarch or the aristocrats are properly brought up. Then the state will be ruled by its best, rational part. Otherwise not.

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[Book Five]

[A Digression: Women in the State]

A: Socrates, you have shortchanged us. We’d like to know about the obviously very important subject of how our community is to deal with the production and education of children, and what it is to do with regard to women - a subject on which we suspect you have some rather radical and interesting views!

S: A large and tricky subject, indeed. But of course you are right: it cannot be left aside. To begin with, let’s directly confront this matter of differences between the sexes.

A: Surely the only significant distinction is that males are stronger, females weaker.

S: If that is so, then plainly the education of girls and boys, women and men, should be essentially the same. Both sexes are to be taught music and gymnastic, and even, so far as possible, the art of war. Even though the many will ridicule us at the idea of naked women wrestling with naked men to train their bodies, as male wrestlers do now, still, we must follow the path of truth and reason and not be dissuaded by unconsidered opinion. Right?

A: Certainly. Let’s follow the truth path to the end.

S: Very well. Now, the many will say that there are great differences between men and women, and that these differences obviously require that each should perform a different function - just as the different classes in our state each perform the functions they are best fitted for. Surely, then (they continue) we are in great error in proposing to educate them in the same things, and together.

A: What they say does seem plausible. How do you reply?

S: I think that those who say this have failed to reflect on what is meant by different function, and what actual distinctions of one nature from another there are. So, for instance, bald men are different from hairy ones, and yet it would be idiotic to forbid the bald from becoming cobbler on that account. So while obviously men and women have many differences, yet the question must be what follows from the specific differences they have. Clearly those specific differences are sexual: women bear children, men only beget them. But are such differences really relevant to the matters of which we were speaking? In conducting the affairs of state, especially?

Consider how we find out who is good at what. Is it not that the talented learn easily, while the untalented do not?

A: To be sure - that’s the only way to find out.

S: Good. And now, what do we see? Certainly that there are many things, such as baking cakes, at which many women take great pride in being better than men. Conversely, there are many things that most men do much better than most women. Yet, granting all that, we also see that in every case there are plenty of individual exceptions. Many women are much better suited to be carpenters than many men, who seem to have ten thumbs; and of course quite a few men are terrific cooks despite the usual arrangements. Above all, we may be sure, many women are, frankly, sure to be found better suited to govern than most men.

Governing and cooking and all the other things are always done, in the end, by individual people. It simply doesn’t matter what all the other people of one sex or the other may be like: what matters is, how well can this person do this thing? If the best are sometimes of the opposite gender from the customary one, what of it? When we aim at the best, we ignore that fact and select the one most fitted for the tasks in question, of whichever sex that person happens to be. I conclude that we can wish for nothing better for our state than that it nurtures the best possible men and women. Not only are our proposals, radical though they may seem, possible, but they are the best ones possible. Is that not true, Adeimantus?

A: It sounds very good to me, Socrates.

[Communism for the Rulers]

S: Very well. And where do we go from here? It seems to me that once we have found our best people to rule, we should go farther, and have them live together in common houses and eat common meals. In fact, they will have no private property, but will live together, learn together, and exercise together.

No doubt it will also happen that they will mate with one another, people being what they are. Which leads to the production of children, as we know. And that is far too important a matter simply to leave to individual choice. Consider how we control the mating of animals, so as to produce the best possible horses, dogs, and so on. Will not the wise and just state do the same for humans?

A: I see the reasoning there, all right.

S: If you fail to keep a watch on breeding, you can expect the quality of your flocks or herds to deteriorate. The same is true of people. The best of the men must mate with the best of the women, as often as feasible. And so important is it to bring about the best possible crop of children to be the future guardians of our state that we may, as before, have to resort to many more of the kind of “noble lies” we were talking about. We will have our poets compose marriage hymns, and we will reward the high achievers among the young men by putting them together with the best young women - thus producing the best children. Meanwhile, of course, the rulers will see to it that the population is of the right size, not growing too large or too small. (So we
might rule that women between 20 and 40 years of age will bear children, while men will beget them from when they can run most swiftly until they are 55.) All of this, as you see, requires constant surveillance and care.

As to the resultant children, they must be removed to a quarter of the city where they will have the best nurses, whether those nurses are their own mothers or not. After which, as we said before, their education will in turn proceed in the best ways, using the best teachers to instil in them the most important knowledge, and avoid what is inferior.

All of the guardian children will regard one another as sisters and brothers, and will be taught to respect all their parents, whatever their strictly biological relation to them. When someone does well, all of her siblings, and all of her parents, will praise her as one of their own. They will, as you see, be united by the strongest possible common interest. The community of wives and children will promote this.

Lack of individual property will also eliminate those petty quarrels about what is whose, and so on, that destroy so many cities. There won’t be that servile flattery that poor men shower upon the rich, or the struggle and pain of the poor in raising their children and keeping a roof over their heads. All that sort of thing will be absent from our state.

And perhaps now we have shed new light on our answer to your very important question about the happiness of our rulers. For we see that the lives of our guardians are better and nobler than the victors at Olympia, and of course vastly better than those of ordinary people - farmers, cobbler, and so on. Is it not so?

A: Yes, I am more convinced than ever!

S: To continue our reflections. The main problem of a state, as we have seen, is disunity. There are two sorts to distinguish: the disunity between Greeks and barbarians, which leads to war, and the disunity among Greeks themselves, which leads to factional quarrels and sometimes even civil war. What are we to do about this?

Evidently the disunity of Greeks and barbarians is insoluble, and we have seen that our city, and of course the other Greek city-states, must always be ready to fight against aliens. But with regard to fellow Greeks, their attitude must be entirely different. Greeks must never punish, enslave, or destroy each other. They must not act like enemies, but like guardians of the law, rebuking others with kindly discipline, but not with the sword.

A: Yes, that is a very important point. The way Greeks have behaved toward each other too much in the past should be reserved for dealings with the barbarians. With each other, we should be civilized.

But we are now becoming quite worried that this wonderful city-state you have described so splendidly may be practically impossible. Anyone would want to live in such a city, sure: but is that any more than a pipe dream? If not - if it is really possible - then how is it to be actually brought into being?

S: My, my! That is a large and very difficult demand, to be sure. But it is also a reasonable, and of course an extremely important one. Before we get too far into it, though, let me make one small plea. We set out, remember, to find the essence of justice, the idea of justice - and we believe we have found it, too. Now, this world we live in, and the people in it, are not perfect. We can’t expect them to be exactly like our ideal, however hard we strive. So you must not insist that everything we have said will find its exact counterpart in a real-world state. Can we not be satisfied if we can find a way to create, in our world, a city that most nearly approximates the one we’ve described?

A: That does seem reasonable, indeed.

[Philosophers as Kings]

S: I’ll say one more thing, too. Namely, that there is just one change that could really bring about the transformation we desire. That is no less than that philosophers must become the kings of our cities. Until then, or until the kings become true philosophers, there can be no end to troubles, for our cities and for people in general. Only then will our theory really come to life. Obviously this is not easy.

A: You said a mouthful there, Socrates!

S: Indeed. But with your support against all the calumnies to which we will certainly be subjected by the ignorant, I shall press on, offering all the needed explanations of just what is involved in effecting this momentous transformation. I must show that philosophy and political leadership are inherent qualities of the philosopher’s nature.

Well, one thing along this line is clear enough. The philosopher, as the name implies, is the lover of truth and wisdom. He - or she - desires to know the real truth, and desires it with her whole heart and soul. Moreover, she is not caught out by false diversions or shadowy substitutes, but perseveres in her search for the whole truth. That is the important thing: the distinction between mere opinion, let alone sheer conjecture or irresponsible twaddling, and truth itself. It is the latter that we must go for, in every possible way, and let nothing ever deter us from that path.

A: That is inspiringly true, Socrates.

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[Books VI-VII]

[The Divided Line and the Cave]

[These Books contain Plato’s famous account of knowledge, with the Divided Line diagram and the allegory of the cave. While it is a pity to omit this material on its own account, I judge it to be peripheral to the things that interest us for political and social philosophy. Here’s a very quick synopsis.

The Line divides knowledge and opinion. Each is in turn subdivided, though, and in a slightly surprising way. Opinion divides into sheer conjecture, imagination, guesswork, and its objects are shadows, reflections, illusions. The upper half of Opinion, however, rises to the level of hypothesis, more or less reasoned belief - not sheer conjecture. Here, Plato holds, is what we would now call science, for its objects are the sensibly observable physical objects around us. (But Plato himself presumably wouldn’t use the name ‘science’ for anything so uncertain.)

The upper half of the division comprehends what Plato regards as true knowledge. This in turn divides into two parts: (1)
understanding, which knows the nature of multiplicity and whose objects are especially those of mathematics; and (2) Reason, whose object is Reality, which Plato takes to consist of pure ideal “forms”, and above all, the Form of the Good, which he thinks is the author and governor of all things.

The Allegory of The Cave: it’s very like a modern movie theatre. People there are prisoners, sitting in the semi-dark, and they see shadows projected on the wall of the cave before them; the source of the shadows is a lantern behind them. People there live in ignorance, but do not realize it until the enlightened, the philosopher, drags them out into the daylight, where they see real things, illuminated by the sun. It’s all a metaphorical re-explanation of the Divided Line ideas.

What is the political point? Well, those who have seen the truth are in a position to correct those who have not. The Allegory strengthens the case for Guardianship, that is, rule by the best.

[text, continued:]

S: When true philosophers come to power in the city, they will scorn honours, counting them illiberal and worthless. Their first care will be to do what is right, and they accept the honours such care merits only if, and only because, they are merited. They will reform, serve, and maintain the city, and justice will be its chief quality. And they will attain this capability by taking complete control over the education of the children, separating them from their parents and raising them in the right ways, as we have described. That’s the fastest and easiest way to establish our city and to bring true happiness and benefits to the citizens.

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[Book VIII]

[Paths to the Decline of the State]

A: Now we should be ready to resume our inquiry, which was to go into the aberrations, inferior and degenerate forms of the state. There were, as I recall, four of those you were going to discuss.

S: That’s some memory you have, Adeimantus! Yes, indeed, there are four - each worse than the last: (1) Timocracy, the rule of the military class, as in Sparta; (2) Oligarchy, rule by the wealthy; (3) Democracy, or rule by the many; and finally (4) Tyranny, rule by the single all-powerful but corrupt dictator -- the very bottom of the barrel. Of course there are countless minor variations on each. But I think we have here all the main types, do we not?

A: Yes, I believe we do.

S: And to each type of constitution, I believe we’ll find, there corresponds a personality-type. To our ideal type there corresponds the aristocratic person, with all the virtues we have described. And then the four successively worse ones: the Timocratic man, who pursues valor and honor and victory above all else; the oligarch, for whom wealth is everything; the democrat, who panders to his own desires indiscriminately, and to the whims of the multitude; and finally the despot, who is as unjust and miserable as can be imagined. These four, and the progressive process of degeneration by which they arise, are what we are to describe to conclude our inquiry.

First, then, the fall from the best state, aristocracy - which, you will remember, is rule by the best, be they a small number or only one. How does this come about? Likely this: one day, children with baser metals in their souls will be born, perhaps to people making love in the wrong season, or whatever. These children, when they grow up, will find the attractions of the mundane world too great, and they will soon fall into factions, quarreling among themselves and neglecting the good of the city as a whole.

[Timocracy]

And after that, what will happen? A sort of false aristocracy will arise, imitating aristocracy in some respects, oligarchy in others. The genuinely talented will be excluded from office, and ardent but simple-minded types better suited to war than peace will be preferred. War, in fact, will be the leading concern, and warlike attributes and attainments are what will really get you somewhere. But at the same time, these timocratic people will burn with a secret lust for gold and silver, and start to live in luxury behind high walls so that the public won’t notice, and keep mistresses in apartments in the city, that sort of thing.

A: Shrewdly observed, Socrates; we hear about this kind of thing often enough, don’t we?

S: Yes, and here’s another point about them. While they’re stashing away their own money (ill-gotten, often enough), they have no scruples about spending other people’s.

A: For sure. And it isn’t books on social theory that they buy with it, either!

S: Now, as the timocratic youth grows old, he will grow more and more fond of wealth, for he lacks the one true guardian to keep him from such excess: Reason. Instead of being ruled by that sure hand, the timocratic type pays attention to praise and blame, and is liable to intrigues of all sorts. Indeed, he becomes a meddler, and an arrogant person, perpetually seeking honour and envying others who have it more than he.

[Oligarchy]

A: Our ruler has come a long way down, hasn’t he? Let’s hear about the oligarch next, then. An oligarchy is a regime based on the rule of money, as we understand. Tell us how it comes about and what the oligarch’s soul is made of.

S: As to how it arises, that’s easy. We noticed that the lover of honours is easily led to love money as well, and this false value spreads rapidly in the environment where people perpetually mind each other’s business. And you may be sure that as wealth is honored more, virtue is regarded less.

A: They are practically on opposite sides of the scale from each other, aren’t they?

S: I’m afraid so. Well, what soon happens is that those with money want to exclude others from the governing power -- naturally, for as our friend Thrasymachus pointed out, this sort of ruler sees which side of the bread has the butter on it. So property
becomes the sole qualification for the ruling class. Obviously it isn’t much of a qualification, though, is it? I mean, think if you appointed ship captains on the basis of wealth rather than knowledge of the sea! Steering the ship of state is far more important than any ordinary vessel, too, is it not? And so we’re bound to have our city in the hands of the not-very-competent, aren’t we?

A: That’s for sure.

S: Another evil consequence is also inevitable: the city divides into two cities, one of the rich, the other of the poor. They never cease to be plotting against each other, the one ever-suspicious, the other always envious. As you can imagine, the rich rulers will devote more and more of the state’s resources to suppressing the poor, lest they rise up and take over. This, of course, weakens the state’s capacity to engage in war with it’s external foes.

This type of city also will allow people to lose all their property to another, after which they will drop right out of the workforce and become mere paupers. Not, mind you, that they did the city any good when they did have money, for they were nothing but consumers anyway, producing nothing for the rest.

A: Indeed, they were nothing but spendthrifts.

S: They’re drones, really, aren’t they? Only the trouble is, not all such drones are without stings. Of these two-legged drones, all too many will become thieves, cutthroats, rapists, defilers of temples, and the like. And of course they’ll keep the prisons full, making a further drain on the public purse.

A: The case is pretty disturbing, all right. How do you see this coming about?

S: Firstly, the son of the timocrat sees his father ruined by ambitious and jealous rivals, who perhaps take him to court and end up stripping him of his property, or sending him into exile. That will cure him of attaching excessive value to honour, won’t it? Instead, it will encourage him to think how to protect his property holdings. So far as Reason and Spirit go, then, he will make them both into slaves of his avarice. The lover of honour turns into a lover of money, in short.

A: It’s easy to see how that leads to oligarchy.

S: Yes, indeed. In this city, money and wealth are prized above all. And therefore, so are thrift and hard work. The oligarchic person, in fact, is likely to be a miser, gratifying only his own most essential appetites, not spending a dime (of his own!) for anything unprofitable. Such a person, you may be sure, would not make very good company, nor be likely to contribute to any of the really good things in life - art and learning, for instance.

A: What about criminal tendencies? Do you see those as likely to develop?

S: Interesting that you should mention that. Well, unlike our dear friend Cephalus, the soul with an unbridled lust for money is only honest because it pays. Mind you, that’s better than nothing, and for the most part, the oligarch’s better desires prevail over the worse. So he appears respectable - for the time being.

A: You seem to be suggesting that this isn’t going to prove very reliable?

A: Indeed I am. For as soon as the guardianship of Reason has abdicated in the soul, then the lure of greed will work its poisons. First-off, the oligarchs won’t be willing to enforce restrictions on the expenditures of their own children, who will become prodigals. Soon we will have an intemperate citizenry. Neglect and licentiousness will set in. Meanwhile too, those who lose their property due to the strenuous efforts of the other greedy ones will become disgruntled; the disfranchised, of whom there are many, will suffer deprivations and, hating those who got their estates, will thirst for revolution. There will be more and more repression as the wealthy get more and more desperate. Like dry kindling, it will only need a spark.

A: What might provide that spark?

[Democracy]

S: Eventually, a lean, muscular, and clever pauper will arise as a leader and he will spread contempt for the rich who rule, but who are weakened from succumbing to the blandishments of appetite. The poor will rally around him, and before long, there’ll be a battle and the rich, being weak, will lose. So democracy - the rule of the poor - will set in.

A: Tell us all about it - it sounds dreadful!

S: Yes, indeed. The city will resound with the buzzword “freedom”. When the many get into power, of course all will be able to do just as they like. There being no compulsion, this city would also impose no obligation to rule on the competent. Does someone fancy public office, such as a judgeship? No problem! He simply declares his candidacy, regardless of qualification.

A: Fun, eh?

S: Oh, you bet! We’ll see condemned men parading around the city as if they were heroes. And of course the city will scorn our list of requirements for fitness to rule. In a democracy, who cares about the past behavior of the ones who enter public life? All you have to do is declare yourself a “friend of the people”, and you’re in!

A: A distinguished regime, in short.

S: Charming, charming. In its diversity and disorder, it proceeds to dispense a curious sort of equality -- to equals and unequals alike!

A: We need to consider some more the psychology of this Democratic Man, I think.

S: Yes. In order to do so, we should make an important distinction, really one that we’ve already needed. That’s the distinction between necessary and unnecessary pleasures or appetites. Necessary pleasures are the one’s we cannot do without, and, more loosely, those from which we benefit. Nature sets us to desire both.

A: I see. Well, that sounds reasonable, yes.

S: But there are also other desires from which a person could liberate herself, by discipline from youth onward -- desires that do us no good and can easily do us harm. Those are the ones I call ‘unnecessary’.

A: That is a good word for them, indeed.
S: We must all eat, and so on. And we all benefit from some simple harmless pleasures. But if we go on, trying to satisfy just any old desires, whether necessary or unnecessary, we are in for trouble. And that, dear Adeimantus, is the trouble with those I have called “drones”, who buzz with unnecessary appetites and desires. And that the stingy oligarch attends only to the most basic ones, without which one can’t live: illiberal, the oligarch -- the “yuppy” -- has no time for mere pleasures, however harmless. Well, now, let’s consider the children of the oligarch, denied education and required to practice strictest economy. Once they taste the honey offered by the drones, though, they’ll join up with those creatures, adept at catering to every sort of pleasure. That’s where they turn away from oligarchy and toward democracy.

A: Interesting account. There seems to be a sort of general principle at work here: vices breed their opposites. If the parents allow too little of pleasure, their children will go to the opposite extreme and seek too much.

S: Exactly. And now, when they join up with the Lotus Eaters’, any thought of temperance is over and done with: it comes to be regarded as cowardice. Every pleasure will be tried out, without discernment or thought, until they become tired of it. Meanwhile, what about the constitution of the city? What will democracy do in that sphere?

S: Clearly, the democrit’s greatest good is “liberty”. If the rulers try to impose any order or control, they are immediately denounced. In fact, praise goes to rulers who behave like subjects, and subjects who behave like rulers. Inevitably, such liberty will exceed all limits. Slaves will be as free as masters, and of course there will be no thought of women doing anything differently from the men -- things like modesty, for instance, just won’t rate. Above all, no one will deign even to hear the word ‘authority’!

A: Sounds pretty bad! What will this lead to?

S: The interesting result is that this excess of liberty, whether in the individual or the state, must end up at the same place: slavery. The individual is a slave to his desires, no longer capable of distinguishing those that benefit from those that harm. The city will be infested with drones, with or without stings -- in either case, a plague, which should be exterminated as quickly as possible. But in a democracy, this drone class is the the one that holds power -- unlike an oligarchy, where it is at least held in check. And the worst among these drones soon become the leaders, their swirling and buzzing silencing all dissent.

A: What next, then?

[Tyranny]

S: Well, some among these drones will rise to power, and when they get there, they will plunder the rich or hardworking, keeping most of the spoils for themselves and distributing the rest to the people at large, whether in any way deserving or not. Of course they will make many enemies, and there tends to arise a champion of the people among them, glorified and elevated by the people - the emerging tyrant - posing as the People’s Protector.

The people grant him such free reign that he is soon free to do everything, and he does indeed: murdering and banishing enemies and presumed enemies, even if they are his own parents and former friends.

Once such a man takes power, we are really in for it. One major thing, for instance, is that such a man will always be on the lookout for wars to get involved with.

A: Why would that be? Let me guess: He can get his enemies out of the way by putting them in the front lines, right?

S: Yes, indeed. And what better than a war as an excuse to tax the people heavily - which keeps them busy trying to meet the bills, and thus keeps them quiet, too. More generally, the tyrant will have an eye out for anyone of genuine virtue, anyone really brave, magnanimous, wise, or rich, especially if they’d be become rich by hard work and honest dealing. All these he will destroy - have them imprisoned, exiled, tortured, executed. He’ll stop at nothing.

A: The tyrant is really a parricide, then. To think that this enslavement is what must come from an overly great attachment to liberty!

S: It is indeed sobering. And now if we look at the soul of the tyrant himself, this person whom Thrasymachus tried to tell us would be the happiest of men, what will we find? - A man ruled by his basest desires, by a fierce brood of savage and imperious appetites that torment him continually because, of course, they can never be satisfied.

A: Of course they can’t -- I can see that, all right.

S: And as to the tyrant’s lifestyle, well, what can we expect? He will no limits, no rules. He’ll strike down his own dear mother for the casual favours of some harlot, put away his father for love of some silly boy, turn casually to theft, temple-ransacking, murders galore... His passions drive him to the extremes of anarchy and lawlessness. Obviously such a man will be as hard on himself as he is on the city - which he will soon destroy, as you can see.

Glauc: Socrates, this is amazing! You have now shown us that Thrasymachus’ view is exactly the opposite of the truth: this worst of rulers will also be the most wretched of men. Is this certain?

S: Indeed it is. In fact, we can find out just how wretched he will be. To do this, we must use a serious method, for after all, this is the greatest of questions: the difference between the good life and the bad.

G: It certainly deserves our best thought.

S: We saw that our ideal city, like all cities, can be divided into three parts: (1) the wise rulers, who take their pleasure from truth and knowledge; (2) the spirited soldiers, who value courage and strength; and (3) the hardworking people, who value temperance. So we have three distinctive pleasures and three distinctive desires or appetites, with three distinctive codes to go with them.

A: How is that?

S: There is the part of ourselves by which we learn and understand - Reason. Another part responds to the passions. And

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4 Inhabitants of one of the islands encountered by Odysseus in Homer’s Odyssey. The honey-sweet fruit of the lotus extinguished any desire to continue the rigorous voyage. Nowadays, we would speak of “potheads”, perhaps.
the third, the “desiring” part, is very diverse, but we will call it money-loving, since desires of that kind are generally gratified by the kind of exchanges governed by money.

In reverse order, then, the last-named seeks gain, while the second looks to conquest, domination, and fame -- the ambitious or honour-loving part. But the rational part seeks knowledge of the truth only, and is not interested in honours or riches, except insofar as they might happen to be helpful in promoting true knowledge (which they sometimes are, no doubt).

A: No doubt.

[Philosophers as the Happiest Men]

S: The philosopher is preeminently the person of wisdom, deriving pleasure from that source - the unfailing joys of learning, which never bring one to any evil. But the other parts of the soul have baser objects which, as we have seen, lead to many evils. Thus the philosopher is far ahead of the others, is he not?

A: Way ahead, Socrates!

S: Only wisdom is fitted to judge, after all. The money lover and the ambitious person, though, lack the qualities essential to judgment: namely discernment and rational analysis and discussion.

A: I see. So if experience, reason, and inquiry are our guides --

G: Then the philosopher’s judgment will necessarily be the truest, right?

S: Right, indeed. Anyway, if we turn now to the claim that it pays to be unjust, and that justice is inexpedient, we shall find this teaching to be no more than a recommendation to exalt and unleash the beast in us at the expense of the human being within. To subordinate the best part of oneself to sordid desires and a taste for flattery -- what kind of wisdom and intelligence does that display?

A: A very poor imitation of it, I should say.

S: Consider the laborer, who is regarded with disdain. But why? Not, surely, because he labors, for after all that is useful, but rather because the best element in him is so weak that he cannot successfully govern the beast within him. Clearly, we should take our guide from the best kind of people. And so if some person is unable to rule over himself in that way, then the next best thing is for him to be governed by those who are possessed of the intelligence that is our share of the divine -- by our rightly-selected guardians, in short.

[The Ideal Ruler]

S: The good ruler, far from exploiting and robbing the multitude as Thrasymachus was proposing, is the ally of all classes in the state, treating each in the manner that respects the best in them. And we must all govern our children in the same manner, in effect establishing a government right within their own souls. For that, ultimately, is the key to success both in life and in the city. Only those can be free who can govern themselves.

Now, turning to Glaucón’s shepherd and the other budding tyrants: can it really be profitable to commit an injustice merely because it goes undetected and escapes penalties? Or does the man who does this actually become still worse? At least he who suffers the penalty has the beast in him calmed and tamed to some extent, giving him a chance to return to temperance, wisdom, and justice. The one who “gets away” with his crimes, on the other hand, is on his way down the tubes.

G: Excellently said, Socrates. We see it clearly now.

S: The well-governed soul will value health, strength, beauty and the other goods, indeed: but only insofar as they serve to promote temperance. Such a person values the harmony of the body only in order to further the harmony of the soul.

A: Like the true musician!

S: Just so. And similarly, such a soul will value honours, private or public, only insofar as they help to make that soul still better. Any dishonorable honours or undeserved rewards will be firmly rejected.

G: Yes, I see. Evidently such a person won’t want to enter politics.

S: I see why you say that, but in a sense I want to say that she will want to. Especially, she will want to enter the politics of her own soul, so as to rule over herself, you see? And of course the soul possessed of truth and wisdom cannot refuse if it is possible to help rule in the just city as well.

A: Ah, yes. I guess that’s right.

S: In the end, you know, it doesn’t really matter whether our City exists, now or ever. For perhaps there is a prototype of that city somewhere in heaven, for those willing to see. And seeing it, they will in truth declare themselves to be its citizens. Only that sort of politics will guide our full human, will it not?

A & G: We are entirely convinced, Socrates. Let us hope that many others will go through this discourse as well, for if they do it rightly, they will surely arrive at the same conclusion.

* * * *

[The final Book of The Republic is mainly occupied with an examination of poetry, of which Plato was generally suspicious because of its apparent disdain for literal truth and its tendency to exaggerate and distort. And he propounds a myth, the Myth of Er, by way of further illustrating and confirming his results. I include most of this Book in our selection, from the public-domain translation of Benjamin Jowett (essentially unmodified by myself) Jowett mostly leaves out the names of the speakers; it shouldn’t be hard to see who is saying what ...]

[Book X]

Socrates - GLAUCON

Of the many excellences which I perceive in the order of our State, there is none which upon reflection pleases me better than the rule about poetry.

To what do you refer?

To the rejection of imitative poetry, which certainly ought not to be received; as I see far more clearly now that the parts of the soul have been distinguished.
What do you mean?

Speaking in confidence, for I should not like to have my words repeated to the tragedians and the rest of the imitative tribe --but I do not mind saying to you, that all poetical imitations are ruinous to the understanding of the hearers, and that the knowledge of their true nature is the only antidote to them.

Explain the purport of your remark.

Well, I will tell you, although I have always from my earliest youth had an awe and love of Homer, which even now makes the words falter on my lips, for he is the great captain and teacher of the whole of that charming tragic company; but a man is not to be reverenced more than the truth, and therefore I will speak out.

Very good, he said. Listen to me then, or rather, answer me. Put your question. Can you tell me what imitation is? for I really do not know.

A likely thing, then, that I should know. Why not? for the duller eye may often see a thing sooner than the keener.

Very true, he said; but in your presence, even if I had any faint notion, I could not muster courage to utter it. Will you enquire yourself?

Well then, shall we begin the enquiry in our usual manner: Whenever a number of individuals have a common name, we assume them to have also a corresponding idea or form. Do you understand me?

I do. Let us take any common instance; there are beds and tables in the world --plenty of them, are there not?

Yes. But there are only two ideas or forms of them --one the idea of a bed, the other of a table.

True. And the maker of either of them makes a bed or he makes a table for our use, in accordance with the idea --that is our way of speaking in this and similar instances --but no artificer makes the ideas themselves: how could he?

Impossible. And there is another artist, --I should like to know what you would say of him.

Who is he? One who is the maker of all the works of all other workmen.

What an extraordinary man! Wait a little, and there will be more reason for your saying so. For this is he who is able to make not only vessels of every kind, but plants and animals, himself and all other things --the earth and heaven, and the things which are in heaven or under the earth; he makes the gods also.

He must be a wizard and no mistake. Oh! you are incredulous, are you? Do you mean that there is no such maker or creator, or that in one sense there might be a maker of all these things but in another not? Do you see that there is a way in which you could make them all yourself?

What way?

An easy way enough; or rather, there are many ways in which the feat might be quickly and easily accomplished, none quicker than that of turning a mirror round and round --you would soon enough make the sun and the heavens, and the earth and yourself, and other animals and plants, and all the, other things of which we were just now speaking, in the mirror.

Yes, he said; but they would be appearances only.

Very good, I said, you are coming to the point now. And the painter too is, as I conceive, just such another --a creator of appearances, is he not?

Of course. But then I suppose you will say that what he creates is untrue. And yet there is a sense in which the painter also creates a bed?

Yes, he said, but not a real bed.

And what of the maker of the bed? Were you not saying that he too makes, not the idea which, according to our view, is the essence of the bed, but only a particular bed?

Yes, I did. Then if he does not make that which exists he cannot make true existence, but only some semblance of existence; and if any one were to say that the work of the maker of the bed, or of any other workman, has real existence, he could hardly be supposed to be speaking the truth.

At any rate, he replied, philosophers would say that he was not speaking the truth.

No wonder, then, that his work too is an indistinct expression of truth.

No wonder. Suppose now that by the light of the examples just offered we enquire who this imitator is?

If you please. Well then, here are three beds: one existing in nature, which is made by God, as I think that we may say --for no one else can be the maker?

No. There is another which is the work of the carpenter? Yes. And the work of the painter is a third? Yes. Beds, then, are of three kinds, and there are three artists who superintend them: God, the maker of the bed, and the painter? Yes, there are three of them. God, whether from choice or from necessity, made one bed.
in nature and one only; two or more such ideal beds neither ever
have been nor ever will be made by God.

Why is that?

Because even if He had made but two, a third would still
appear behind them which both of them would have for their idea,
and that would be the ideal bed and the two others.

Very true, he said. God knew this, and He desired to be the
real maker of a real bed, not a particular maker of a particular bed,
and therefore He created a bed which is essentially and by nature
one only.

So we believe.

Shall we, then, speak of Him as the natural author or maker
of the bed?

Yes, he replied; inasmuch as by the natural process of
creation He is the author of this and of all other things.

And what shall we say of the carpenter --is not he also the
maker of the bed?

Yes.

But would you call the painter a creator and maker?

Certainly not.

Yet if he is not the maker, what is he in relation to the bed?
I think, he said, that we may fairly designate him as the imitator
of that which the others make.

Good, I said; then you call him who is third in the descent
from nature an imitator?

And the tragic poet is an imitator, and therefore, like all
other imitators, he is thrice removed from the king and from the
truth?

That appears to be so.

Then about the imitator we are agreed. And what about the
painter? --I would like to know whether he may be thought to
imitate that which originally exists in nature, or only the
creations of artists?

The latter.

As they are or as they appear?

You have still to determine this.

What do you mean?

I mean, that you may look at a bed from different points of
view, obliquely or directly or from any other point of view, and
the bed will appear different, but there is no difference in reality.
And the same of all things.

Yes, he said, the difference is only apparent.

Now let me ask you another question: Which is the art of
painting designed to be --an imitation of things as they are, or as
they appear --of appearance or of reality?

Of appearance.

Then the imitator, I said, is a long way off the truth, and can
do all things because he lightly touches on a small part of them,
and that part an image. For example: A painter will paint a
cobbler, carpenter, or any other artist, though he knows nothing
of their arts; and, if he is a good artist, he may deceive children or
simple persons, when he shows them his picture of a carpenter
from a distance, and they will fancy that they are looking at a real
carpenter.

Certainly.

And whenever any one informs us that he has found a man
who knows all the arts, and all things else that anybody knows,
and every single thing with a higher degree of accuracy than any
other man --whoever tells us this, I think that we can only
imagine to be a simple creature who is likely to have been
deceived by some wizard or actor whom he met, and whom he
thought all-knowing, because he himself was unable to analyse
the nature of knowledge and ignorance and imitation.

Most true.

And so, when we hear persons saying that the tragedians,
and Homer, who is at their head, know all the arts and all things
human, virtue as well as vice, and divine things too, for that the
good poet cannot compose well unless he knows his subject, and
that he who has not this knowledge can never be a poet, we ought
to consider whether here also there may not be a similar illusion.
Perhaps they may have come across imitators and been deceived
by them; they may not have remembered when they saw their
works that these were but imitations thrice removed from the
truth, and could easily be made without any knowledge of the
truth, because they are appearances only and not realities? Or,
after all, they may be in the right, and poets do really know the
things about which they seem to the many to speak so well?

The question, he said, should by all means be considered.

Now do you suppose that if a person were able to make the
original as well as the image, he would seriously devote himself
to the image-making branch? Would he allow imitation to be the
ruling principle of his life, as if he had nothing higher in him?

I should say not.

The real artist, who knew what he was imitating, would be
interested in realities and not in imitations; and would desire to
leave as memorials of himself works many and fair; and, instead
of being the author of encomiums, he would prefer to be the
theme of them.

Yes, he said, that would be to him a source of much greater
honour and profit.

Then, I said, we must put a question to Homer; not about
medicine, or any of the arts to which his poems only incidentally
refer: we are not going to ask him, or any other poet, whether he
has cured patients like Asclepius, or left behind him a school of
medicine such as the Asclepiads were, or whether he only talks
about medicine and other arts at second hand; but we have a right
to know respecting military tactics, politics, education, which are
the chiefest and noblest subjects of his poems, and we may fairly
ask him about them. 'Friend Homer,' then we say to him, 'if you
are only in the second remove from truth in what you say of
virtue, and not in the third --not an image maker or imitator --and
if you are able to discern what pursuits make men better or worse
in private or public life, tell us what State was ever better
governed by your help? The good order of Lacedaemon is due to
Lycurgus, and many other cities great and small have been
similarly benefited by others; but who says that you have been a good legislator to them and have done them any good? Italy and Sicily boast of Charondas, and there is Solon who is renowned among us; but what city has anything to say about you? Is there any city which he might name?

I think not, said Glaucôn; not even the Homerids themselves pretend that he was a legislator.

Well, but is there any war on record which was carried on successfully by him, or aided by his counsels, when he was alive?

There is not. Or is there any invention of his, applicable to the arts or to human life, such as Thales the Milesian or Anacharsis the Scythian, and other ingenious men have conceived, which is attributed to him?

There is absolutely nothing of the kind.

But, if Homer never did any public service, was he privately a guide or teacher of any? Had he in his lifetime friends who loved to associate with him, and who handed down to posterity an Homeric way of life, such as was established by Pythagoras who was so greatly beloved for his wisdom, and whose followers are to this day quite celebrated for the order which was named after him?

Nothing of the kind is recorded of him. For surely, Socrates, Creophylus, the companion of Homer, that child of flesh, whose name always makes us laugh, might be more justly ridiculed for his stupidity, if, as is said, Homer was greatly neglected by him and others in his own day when he was alive?

Yes, I replied, that is the tradition. But can you imagine, Glaucôn, that if Homer had really been able to educate and improve mankind -- if he had possessed knowledge and not been a mere imitator -- can you imagine, I say, that he would not have had many followers, and been honoured and loved by them? Protagoras of Abdera, and Prodicus of Ceos, and a host of others, have only to whisper to their contemporaries: You will never be able to manage either your own house or your own State until you appoint us to be your ministers of education -- and this ingenious device of theirs has such an effect in making them love them that their companions all but carry them about on their shoulders. And is it conceivable that the contemporaries of Homer, or again of Hesiod, would have allowed either of them to go about as rhapsodists, if they had really been able to make mankind virtuous? Would they not have been as unwilling to part with them as with gold, and have compelled them to stay at home with them? Or, if the master would not stay, then the disciples would have followed him about everywhere, until they had got education enough?

Yes, Socrates, that, I think, is quite true. Then must we not infer that all these poetical individuals, beginning with Homer, are only imitators; they copy images of virtue and the like, but the truth they never reach? The poet is like a painter who, as we have already observed, will make a likeness of a cobbler though he understands nothing of cobbling; and his picture is good enough for those who know no more than he does, and judge only by colours and figures.

Quite so. In like manner the poet with his words and phrases may be said to lay on the colours of the several arts, himself understanding their nature only enough to imitate them; and other people, who are as ignorant as he is, and judge only from his words, imagine that if he speaks of cobbling, or of military tactics, or of anything else, in metre and harmony and rhythm, he speaks very well -- such is the sweet influence which melody and rhythm by nature have. And I think that you must have observed again and again what a poor appearance the tales of poets make when stripped of the colours which music puts upon them, and recited in simple prose.

Yes, he said. They are like faces which were never really beautiful, but only blooming; and now the bloom of youth has passed away from them?

Exactly. Here is another point: The imitator or maker of the image knows nothing of true existence; he knows appearances only. Am I not right?

Yes.

Then let us have a clear understanding, and not be satisfied with half an explanation.

Proceed.

Of the painter we say that he will paint reins, and he will paint a bit?

Yes. And the worker in leather and brass will make them? Certainly. But does the painter know the right form of the bit and reins? Nay, hardly even the workers in brass and leather who make them; only the horseman who knows how to use them -- he knows their right form.

Most true. And may we not say the same of all things? What? That there are three arts which are concerned with all things: one which uses, another which makes, a third which imitates them?

Yes. And the excellence or beauty or truth of every structure, animate or inanimate, and of every action of man, is relative to the use for which nature or the artist has intended them.

True. Then the user of them must have the greatest experience of them, and he must indicate to the maker the good or bad qualities which develop themselves in use; for example, the flute-player will tell the flute-maker which of his flutes is satisfactory to the performer; he will tell him how he ought to make them, and the other will attend to his instructions?

Of course.

The one knows and therefore speaks with authority about the goodness and badness of flutes, while the other, confiding in him, will do what he is told by him?

True.

The instrument is the same, but about the excellence or badness of it the maker will only attain to a correct belief; and this he will gain from him who knows, by talking to him and being compelled to hear what he has to say, whereas the user will have knowledge?

True.

But will the imitator have either? Will he know from use whether or no his drawing is correct or beautiful? Or will he have
right opinion from being compelled to associate with another who knows and gives him instructions about what he should draw?

Neither. Then he will no more have true opinion than he will have knowledge about the goodness or badness of his imitations?

I suppose not. The imitative artist will be in a brilliant state of intelligence about his own creations?

Nay, very much the reverse. And still he will go on imitating without knowing what makes a thing good or bad, and may be expected therefore to imitate only that which appears to be good to the ignorant multitude?

Just so.

Thus far then we are pretty well agreed that the imitator has no knowledge worth mentioning of what he imitates. Imitation is only a kind of play or sport, and the tragic poets, whether they write in iambic or in Heroic verse, are imitators in the highest degree?

Very true.

And now tell me, I conjure you, has not imitation been shown by us to be concerned with that which is thrice removed from the truth?

Certainly. And what is the faculty in man to which imitation is addressed? What do you mean?

I will explain: The body which is large when seen near, appears small when seen at a distance?

True.

And the same object appears straight when looked at out of the water, and crooked when in the water; and the concave becomes convex, owing to the illusion about colours to which the sight is liable. Thus every sort of confusion is revealed within us; and this is that weakness of the human mind on which the art of conjuring and of deceiving by light and shadow and other ingenious devices imposes, having an effect upon us like magic?

True.

And the arts of measuring and numbering and weighing come to the rescue of the human understanding—there is the beauty of them—and the apparent greater or less, or more or heavier, no longer have the mastery over us, but give way before calculation and measure and weight?

Most true.

And this, surely, must be the work of the calculating and rational principle in the soul

To be sure.

And when this principle measures and certifies that some things are equal, or that some are greater or less than others, there occurs an apparent contradiction?

True.

But were we not saying that such a contradiction is the same faculty cannot have contrary opinions at the same time about the same thing?

Very true.

Then that part of the soul which has an opinion contrary to measure is not the same with that which has an opinion in accordance with measure?

True.

And the better part of the soul is likely to be that which trusts to measure and calculation?

Certainly.

And that which is opposed to them is one of the inferior principles of the soul?

No doubt.

This was the conclusion at which I was seeking to arrive when I said that painting or drawing, and imitation in general, when doing their own proper work, are far removed from truth, and the companions and friends and associates of a principle within us which is equally removed from reason, and that they have no true or healthy aim.

Exactly.

The imitative art is an inferior who marries an inferior, and has inferior offspring.

Very true.

And is this confined to the sight only, or does it extend to the hearing also, relating in fact to what we term poetry?

Probably the same would be true of poetry. Do not rely, I said, on a probability derived from the analogy of painting; but let us examine further and see whether the faculty with which poetical imitation is concerned is good or bad.

By all means. We may state the question thus:—Imitation imitates the actions of men, whether voluntary or involuntary, on which, as they imagine, a good or bad result has ensued, and they rejoice or sorrow accordingly. Is there anything more?

No, there is nothing else. But in all this variety of circumstances is the man at unity with himself—or rather, as in the instance of sight there was confusion and opposition in his opinions about the same things, so here also is there not strife and inconsistency in his life? Though I need hardly raise the question again, for I remember that all this has been already admitted; and the soul has been acknowledged by us to be full of these and ten thousand similar oppositions occurring at the same moment?

And we were right, he said. Yes, I said, thus far we were right; but there was an omission which must now be supplied.

What was the omission? Were we not saying that a good man, who has the misfortune to lose his son or anything else which is most dear to him, will bear the loss with more equanimity than another?

Yes. But will he have no sorrow, or shall we say that although he cannot help sorrowing, he will moderate his sorrow?

The latter, he said, is the truer statement. Tell me: will he be more likely to struggle and hold out against his sorrow when he is seen by his equals, or when he is alone?

It will make a great difference whether he is seen or not.
When he is by himself he will not mind saying or doing many things which he would be ashamed of any one hearing or seeing him do?

True. There is a principle of law and reason in him which bids him resist, as well as a feeling of his misfortune which is forcing him to indulge his sorrow?

True. But when a man is drawn in two opposite directions, to and from the same object, this, as we affirm, necessarily implies two distinct principles in him?

Certainly. One of them is ready to follow the guidance of the law? How do you mean? The law would say that to be patient under suffering is best, and that we should not give way to impatience, as there is no knowing whether such things are good or evil; and nothing is gained by impatience; also, because no human thing is of serious importance, and grief stands in the way of that which at the moment is most required.

What is most required? he asked.

That we should take counsel about what has happened, and when the dice have been thrown order our affairs in the way which reason deems best; not, like children who have had a fall, keeping hold of the part struck and wasting time in setting up a howl, but always accustoming the soul forthwith to apply a remedy, raising up that which is sickly and fallen, banishing the cry of sorrow by the healing art.

Yes, he said, that is the true way of meeting the attacks of fortune.

Yes, I said; and the higher principle is ready to follow this suggestion of reason?

Clearly.

And the other principle, which inclines us to recollection of our troubles and to lamentation, and can never have enough of them, we may call irrational, useless, and cowardly?

Indeed, we may.

And does not the latter --I mean the rebellious principle -- furnish a great variety of materials for imitation? Whereas the wise and calm temperament, being always nearly equable, is not easy to imitate or to appreciate when imitated, especially at a public festival when a promiscuous crowd is assembled in a theatre. For the feeling represented is one to which they are strangers.

Certainly.

Then the imitative poet who aims at being popular is not by nature made, nor is his art intended, to please or to affect the principle in the soul; but he will prefer the passionate and fitful temper, which is easily imitated?

Clearly.

And now we may fairly take him and place him by the side of the painter, for he is like him in two ways: first, inasmuch as his creations have an inferior degree of truth --in this, I say, he is like him; and he is also like him in being concerned with an inferior part of the soul; and therefore we shall be right in refusing to admit him into a well-ordered State, because he awakens and nourishes and strengthens the feelings and impairs the reason. As in a city when the evil are permitted to have authority and the good are put out of the way, so in the soul of man, as we maintain, the imitative poet implants an evil constitution, for he indulges the irrational nature which has no discernment of greater and less, but thinks the same thing at one time great and at another small--he is a manufacturer of images and is very far removed from the truth.

Exactly.

But we have not yet brought forward the heaviest count in our accusation: --the power which poetry has of harming even the good (and there are very few who are not harmed), is surely an awful thing?

Yes, certainly, if the effect is what you say.

Hear and judge: The best of us, as I conceive, when we listen to a passage of Homer, or one of the tragedians, in which he represents some pitiful hero who is drawing out his sorrows in a long oration, or weeping, and smiting his breast --the best of us, you know, delight in giving way to sympathy, and are in raptures at the excellence of the poet who stirs our feelings most.

Yes, of course I know. But when any sorrow of our own happens to us, then you may observe that we pride ourselves on the opposite quality --we would fain be quiet and patient; this is the manly part, and the other which delighted us in the recitation is now deemed to be the part of a woman.

Very true, he said. Now can we be right in praising and admiring another who is doing that which any one of us would abominate and be ashamed of in his own person?

No, he said, that is certainly not reasonable. Nay, I said, quite reasonable from one point of view. What point of view? If you consider, I said, that when in misfortune we feel a natural hunger and desire to relieve our sorrow by weeping and lamentation, and that this feeling which is kept under control in our own calamities is satisfied and delighted by the poets;--the better nature in each of us, not having been sufficiently trained by reason or habit, allows the sympathetic element to break loose because the sorrow is another's; and the spectator fancies that there can be no disgrace to himself in praising and pitying any one who comes telling him what a good man he is, and making a fuss about his troubles; he thinks that the pleasure is a gain, and why should he be supercilious and lose this and the poem too? Few persons ever reflect, as I should imagine, that from the evil of other men something of evil is communicated to themselves. And so the feeling of sorrow which has gathered strength at the sight of the misfortunes of others is with difficulty repressed in our own.

How very true! And does not the same hold also of the ridiculous? There are jests which you would be ashamed to make yourself, and yet on the comic stage, or indeed in private, when you hear them, you are greatly amused by them, and are not at all disgusted at their unseemliness;--the case of pity is repeated; --there is a principle in human nature which is disposed to raise a laugh, and this which you once restrained by reason, because you were afraid of being thought a buffoon, is now let out again; and having stimulated the risible faculty at the theatre, you are betrayed unconsciously to yourself into playing the comic poet at
home.

Quite true, he said.

And the same may be said of lust and anger and all the other affections, of desire and pain and pleasure, which are held to be inseparable from every action—in all of them poetry feeds and waters the passions instead of drying them up; she lets them rule, although they ought to be controlled, if mankind are ever to increase in happiness and virtue.

I cannot deny it.

Therefore, Glaucon, I said, whenever you meet with any of the eulogists of Homer declaring that he has been the educator of Hellas, and that he is profitable for education and for the ordering of human things, and that you should take him up again and again and get to know him and regulate your whole life according to him, we may love and honour those who say these things—they are excellent people, as far as their lights extend; and we are ready to acknowledge that Homer is the greatest of poets and first of tragedy writers; but we must remain firm in our conviction that hymns to the gods and praises of famous men are the only poetry which ought to be admitted into our State. For if you go beyond this and allow the honeyed muse to enter, either in epic or lyric verse, not law and the reason of mankind, which by common consent have ever been deemed best, but pleasure and pain will be the rulers in our State.

That is most true, he said.

And now since we have reverted to the subject of poetry, let this our defence serve to show the reasonableness of our former judgment in sending away out of our State an art having the tendencies which we have described; for reason constrained us. But that she may impute to us any harshness or want of politeness, let us tell her that there is an ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry; of which there are many proofs, such as the saying of 'the yelping hound howling at her lord,' or of one 'mighty in the vain talk of fools,' and 'the mob of sages circumventing Zeus,' and the 'subtle thinkers who are beggars after all'; and there are innumerable other signs of ancient enmity between them. Notwithstanding this, let us assure our sweet friend and the sister arts of imitation that if she will only prove her title to exist in a well-ordered State we shall be delighted to receive her—we are very conscious of her charms; but we may not on that account betray the truth. I dare say, Glaucon, that you are as much charmed by her as I am, especially when she appears in Homer?

Yes, indeed, I am greatly charmed.

Shall I propose, then, that she be allowed to return from exile, but upon this condition only—that she make a defence of herself in lyrical or some other metre?

Certainly.

And we may further grant to those of her defenders who are lovers of poetry and yet not poets the permission to speak in prose on her behalf: let them show not only that she is pleasant but also useful to States and to human life, and we will listen in a kindly spirit; for if this can be proved we shall surely be the gainers—I mean, if there is a use in poetry as well as a delight?

Certainly, he said, we shall the gainers.

If her defence fails, then, my dear friend, like other persons who are enamoured of something, but put a restraint upon themselves when they think their desires are opposed to their interests, so too must we after the manner of lovers give her up, though not without a struggle. We too are inspired by that love of poetry which the education of noble States has implanted in us, and therefore we would have her appear at her best and truest; but so long as she is unable to make good her defence, this argument of ours shall be a charm to us, which we will repeat to ourselves while we listen to her strains; that we may not fall away into the childish love of her which captivates the many. At all events we are well aware that poetry being such as we have described is not to be regarded seriously as attaining to the truth; and he who listens to her, fearing for the safety of the city which is within him, should be on his guard against her seductions and make our words his law.

Yes, he said, I quite agree with you. Yes, I said, my dear Glaucon, for great is the issue at stake, greater than appears, whether a man is to be good or bad. And what will any one be profited if under the influence of honour or money or power, aye, or under the excitement of poetry, he neglect justice and virtue?

Yes, he said; I have been convinced by the argument, as I believe that any one else would have been.

And yet no mention has been made of the greatest prizes and rewards which await virtue.

What, are there any greater still? If there are, they must be of an inconceivable greatness.

Why, I said, what was ever great in a short time? The whole period of threescore years and ten is surely but a little thing in comparison with eternity?

Say rather 'nothing,' he replied. And should an immortal being seriously think of this little space rather than of the whole?

Of the whole, certainly. But why do you ask? Are you not aware, I said, that the soul of man is immortal and imperishable?

He looked at me in astonishment, and said: No, by heaven: And are you really prepared to maintain this?

Yes, I said, I ought to be, and you too—there is no difficulty in proving it.

I see a great difficulty; but I should like to hear you state this argument of which you make so light.

Listen then. I am attending. There is a thing which you call good and another which you call evil?

Yes, he replied. Would you agree with me in thinking that the corrupting and destroying element is the evil, and the saving and improving element the good?

Yes. And you admit that every thing has a good and also an evil; as ophthalmia is the evil of the eyes and disease of the whole body; as mildew is of corn, and rot of timber, or rust of copper and iron: in everything, or in almost everything, there is an inherent evil and disease?

Yes, he said.

And anything which is infected by any of these evils is made evil, and at last wholly dissolves and dies?
True.

The vice and evil which is inherent in each is the destruction of each; and if this does not destroy them there is nothing else that will; for good certainly will not destroy them, nor again, that which is neither good nor evil.

Certainly not.

If, then, we find any nature which having this inherent corruption cannot be dissolved or destroyed, we may be certain that of such a nature there is no destruction?

That may be assumed.

Well, I said, and is there no evil which corrupts the soul? Yes, he said, there are all the evils which we were just now passing in review: unrighteousness, intemperance, cowardice, ignorance.

But does any of these dissolve or destroy her? --and here do not let us fall into the error of supposing that the unjust and foolish man, when he is detected, perishes through his own injustice, which is an evil of the soul. Take the analogy of the body: The evil of the body is a disease which wastes and reduces and annihilates the body; and all the things of which we were just now speaking come to annihilation through their own corruption attaching to them and inhering in them and so destroying them. Is not this true?

Yes.

Consider the soul in like manner. Does the injustice or other evil which exists in the soul waste and consume her? Do they by attaching to the soul and inhering in her at last bring her to death, and so separate her from the body?

Certainly not. And yet, I said, it is unreasonable to suppose that anything can perish from without through affection of external evil which could not be destroyed from within by a corruption of its own?

It is, he replied.

Consider, I said, Glaucus, that even the badness of food, whether staleness, decomposition, or any other bad quality, when confined to the actual food, is not supposed to destroy the body; although, if the badness of food communicates corruption to the body, then we should say that the body has been destroyed by a corruption of itself, which is disease, brought on by this; but that the body, being one thing, can be destroyed by the badness of food, which is another, and which does not engender any natural infection --this we shall absolutely deny?

Very true.

And, on the same principle, unless some bodily evil can produce an evil of the soul, we must not suppose that the soul, which is one thing, can be dissolved by any merely external evil which belongs to another?

Yes, he said, there is reason in that.

Either then, let us refute this conclusion, or, while it remains unrefuted, let us never say that fever, or any other disease, or the knife put to the throat, or even the cutting up of the whole body into the minutest pieces, can destroy the soul, until she herself is proved to become more unholy or unrighteous in consequence of these things being done to the body; but that the soul, or anything else if not destroyed by an internal evil, can be destroyed by an external one, is not to. be affirmed by any man.

And surely, he replied, no one will ever prove that the souls of men become more unjust in consequence of death. But if some one who would rather not admit the immortality of the soul boldly denies this, and says that the dying do really become more evil and unrighteous, then, if the speaker is right, I suppose that injustice, like disease, must be assumed to be fatal to the unjust, and that those who take this disorder die by the natural inherent power of destruction which evil has, and which kills them sooner or later, but in quite another way from that in which, at present, the wicked receive death at the hands of others as the penalty of their deeds?

Nay, he said, in that case injustice, if fatal to the unjust, will not be so very terrible to him, for he will be delivered from evil. But I rather suspect the opposite to be the truth, and that injustice which, if it have the power, will murder others, keeps the murderer alive --aye, and well awake too; so far removed is her dwelling-place from being a house of death.

True, I said; if the inherent natural vice or evil of the soul is unable to kill or destroy her, hardly will that which is appointed to be the destruction of some other body, destroy a soul or anything else except that of which it was appointed to be the destruction.

Yes, that can hardly be.

But the soul which cannot be destroyed by an evil, whether inherent or external, must exist for ever, and if existing for ever, must be immortal?

Certainly.

That is the conclusion, I said; and, if a true conclusion, then the souls must always be the same, for if none be destroyed they will not diminish in number. Neither will they increase, for the increase of the immortal natures must come from something mortal, and all things would thus end in immortality.

Very true. But this we cannot believe --reason will not allow us --any more than we can believe the soul, in her truest nature, to be full of variety and difference and dissimilarity.

What do you mean? he said.

The soul, I said, being, as is now proven, immortal, must be the fairest of compositions and cannot be compounded of many elements?

Certainly not.

Her immortality is demonstrated by the previous argument, and there are many other proofs; but to see her as she really is, not as we now behold her, marred by communion with the body and other miseries, you must contemplate her with the eye of reason, in her original purity; and then her beauty will be revealed, and justice and injustice and all the things which we have described will be manifested more clearly. Thus far, we have spoken the truth concerning her as she appears at present, but we must remember also that we have seen her only in a condition which may be compared to that of the sea-god Glaucus, whose
original image can hardly be discerned because his natural
members are broken off and crushed and damaged by the waves in
all sorts of ways, and incrustations have grown over them of
seaweed and shells and stones, so that he is more like some
monster than he is to his own natural form. And the soul which
we behold is in a similar condition, disfigured by ten thousand
ills. But not there, Glaucon, not there must we look.

Where then?
At her love of wisdom.

Let us see whom she affects, and what society and converse
she seeks in virtue of her near kindred with the immortal and
eternal and divine; also how different she would become if wholly
following this superior principle, and borne by a divine impulse
out of the ocean in which she now is, and disengaged from the
stones and shells and things of earth and rock which in wild
variety spring up around her because she feeds upon earth, and is
overgrown by the good things of this life as they are termed: then
you would see her as she is, and know whether she has one shape
only or many, or what her nature is. Of her affections and of the
forms which she takes in this present life I think that we have
now said enough.

True, he replied.

And thus, I said, we have fulfilled the conditions of the
argument; we have not introduced the rewards and glories of
justice, which, as you were saying, are to be found in Homer and
Hesiod; but justice in her own nature has been shown to be best
for the soul in her own nature. Let a man do what is just, whether
he have the ring of Gyges or not, and even if in addition to the
ring of Gyges he put on the helmet of Hades.

Very true.

And now, Glaucon, there will be no harm in further
enumerating how many and how great are the rewards which
justice and the other virtues procure to the soul from gods and
men, both in life and after death.

Certainly not, he said.

Will you repay me, then, what you borrowed in the
argument?

What did I borrow?

The assumption that the just man should appear unjust and
the unjust just: for you were of opinion that even if the true state
of the case could not possibly escape the eyes of gods and men,
still this admission ought to be made for the sake of the
argument, in order that pure justice might be weighed against
pure injustice. Do you remember?

I should be much to blame if I had forgotten. Then, as the
cause is decided, I demand on behalf of justice that the estimation
in which she is held by gods and men and which we acknowledge
to be her due should now be restored to her by us; since she has
been shown to confer reality, and not to deceive those who truly
possess her, let what has been taken from her be given back, that
so she may win that palm of appearance which is hers also, and
which she gives to her own.

The demand, he said, is just.

In the first place, I said --and this is the first thing which
you will have to give back --the nature both of the just and unjust
is truly known to the gods.

Granted.

And if they are both known to them, one must be the friend
and the other the enemy of the gods, as we admitted from the
beginning?

True.

And the friend of the gods may be supposed to receive from
them all things at their best, excepting only such evil as is the
necessary consequence of former sins?

Certainly.

Then this must be our notion of the just man, that even
when he is in poverty or sickness, or any other seeming
misfortune, all things will in the end work together for good to
him in life and death: for the gods have a care of any one whose
desire is to become just and to be like God, as far as man can
attain the divine likeness, by the pursuit of virtue?

Yes, he said; if he is like God he will surely not be
neglected by him.

And of the unjust may not the opposite be supposed?

 Certainly.

Such, then, are the palms of victory which the gods give the
just?

That is my conviction.

And what do they receive of men? Look at things as they
really are, and you will see that the clever unjust are in the case of
runners, who run well from the starting-place to the goal but not
back again from the goal: they go off at a great pace, but in the
end only look foolish, slinking away with their ears dragging on
their shoulders, and without a crown; but the true runner comes to
the finish and receives the prize and is crowned. And this is the
way with the just: he who endures to the end of every action and
occasion of his entire life has a good report and carries off the
prize which men have to bestow.

True.

And now you must allow me to repeat of the just the
blessings which you were attributing to the fortunate unjust. I
shall say of them, what you were saying of the others, that as
they grow older, they become rulers in their own city if they care
to be; they marry whom they like and give in marriage to whom
they will; all that you said of the others I now say of these. And,
on the other hand, of the unjust I say that the greater number,
even though they escape in their youth, are found out at last and
look foolish at the end of their course, and when they come to be
old and miserable are flouted alike by stranger and citizen; they are
beaten and then come those things unfit for ears polite, as you
truly term them; they will be racked and have their eyes burned
out, as you were saying. And you may suppose that I have
repeated the remainder of your tale of horrors. But will you let me
assume, without reciting them, that these things are true?

Certainly, he said, what you say is true.

These, then, are the prizes and rewards and gifts which are
bestowed upon the just by gods and men in this present life, in addition to the other good things which justice of herself provides.

Yes, he said; and they are fair and lasting.

And yet, I said, all these are as nothing, either in number or greatness in comparison with those other recompenses which await both just and unjust after death. And you ought to hear them, and then both just and unjust will have received from us a full payment of the debt which the argument owes to them.

Speak, he said; there are few things which I would more gladly hear.

[Now Socrates tells the “Myth of Er”. Reading this is optional.]

Socrates:

Well, I said, I will tell you a tale; not one of the tales which Odysseus tells to the hero Alcinous, yet this too is a tale of a hero, Er the son of Armenius, a Pamphylian by birth. He was slain in battle, and ten days afterwards, when the bodies of the dead were taken up already in a state of corruption, his body was found unaffected by decay, and carried away home to be buried. And on the twelfth day, as he was lying on the funeral pile, he returned to life and told them what he had seen in the other world. He said that when his soul left the body he went on a journey with a great company, and that they came to a mysterious place at which there were two openings in the earth; they were near together, and over against them were two other openings in the heaven above. In the intermediate space there were judges seated, who commanded the just, after they had given judgment on them and had bound their sentences in front of them, to ascend by the heavenly way on the right hand; and in like manner the unjust were bidden by them to descend by the lower way on the left hand; these also bore the symbols of their deeds, but fastened on their backs. He drew near, and they told him that he was to be the messenger who would carry the report of the other world to men, and they bade him hear and see all that was to be heard and seen in that place. Then he beheld and saw on one side the souls departing at either opening of heaven and earth when sentence had been given on them; and at the two other openings other souls, some ascending out of the earth dusty and worn with travel, some descending out of heaven clean and bright. And arriving ever and anon they seemed to have come from a long journey, and they went forth with gladness into the meadow, where they encamped as at a festival; and those who knew one another embraced and conversed, the souls which came from earth curiously enquiring about the things above, and the souls which came from heaven about the things beneath. And they told one another of what had happened by the way, those from below weeping and sorrowing at the remembrance of the things which they had endured and seen in their journey beneath the earth (now the journey lasted a thousand years), while those from above were describing heavenly delights and visions of inconceivable beauty.

The Story, Glaucon, would take too long to tell; but the sum was this: --He said that for every wrong which they had done to any one they suffered tenfold; or once in a hundred years --such being reckoned to be the length of man's life, and the penalty being thus paid ten times in a thousand years. If, for example, there were any who had been the cause of many deaths, or had betrayed or enslaved cities or armies, or been guilty of any other evil behaviour, for each and all of their offences they received punishment ten times over, and the rewards of beneficence and justice and holiness were in the same proportion. I need hardly repeat what he said concerning young children dying almost as soon as they were born. Of piety and impiety to gods and parents, and of murderers, there were retributions other and greater far which he described. He mentioned that he was present when one of the spirits asked another, 'Where is Ardiaeus the Great?' (Now this Ardiaeus lived a thousand years before the time of Er: he had been the tyrant of some city of Pamphylia, and had murdered his aged father and his elder brother, and was said to have committed many other abominable crimes.) 'The answer of the other spirit was: 'He comes not hither and will never come. And this,' said he, 'was one of the dreadful sights which we ourselves witnessed. We were at the mouth of the cavern, and, having completed all our experiences, were about to reascend, when of a sudden Ardiaeus appeared and several others, most of whom were tyrants; and there were also besides the tyrants private individuals who had been great criminals: they were just, as they fancied, about to return into the upper world, but the mouth, instead of admitting them, gave a roar, whenever any of these incurable sinners or some one who had not been sufficiently punished tried to ascend; and then wild men of fiery aspect, who were standing by and heard the sound, seized and carried them off; and Ardiaeus and others they bound head and foot and hand, and threw them down and flayed them with scourgies, and dragged them along the road at the side, carding them on thorns like wool, and declaring to the passers-by what were their crimes, and that they were being taken away to be cast into hell.' And of all the many terrors which they had endured, he said that there was none like the terror which each of them felt at that moment, lest they should hear the voice; and when there was silence, one by one they ascended with exceeding joy. These, said Er, were the penalties and retributions, and there were blessings as great.

Now when the spirits which were in the meadow had tarried seven days, on the eighth they were obliged to proceed on their journey, and, on the fourth day after, he said that they came to a place where they could see from above a line of light, straight as a column, extending right through the whole heaven and through the earth, in colour resembling the rainbow, only brighter and purer; another day's journey brought them to the place, and there, in the midst of the light, they saw the ends of the chains of heaven let down from above: for this light is the belt of heaven, and holds together the circle of the universe, like the under-girders of a trireme. From these ends is extended the spindle of Necessity, on which all the revolutions turn. The shaft and hook of this spindle are made of steel, and the whorl is made partly of steel and also partly of other materials. Now the whorl is in form like the whorl used on earth; and the description of it implied that there is one large hollow whorl which is quite scooped out, and into this is fitted another lesser one, and another, and another, and four others, making eight in all, like vessels which fit into one another; the whorls show their edges on the upper side, and on their lower side all together form one continuous whorl. This is pierced by the spindle, which is driven home through the centre of
the eighth. The first and outermost whorl has the rim broadest, and the seven inner whorls are narrower, in the following proportions -- the sixth is next to the first in size, the fourth next to the sixth; then comes the eighth; the seventh is fifth, the fifth is sixth, the third is seventh, last and eighth comes the second. The largest (of fixed stars) is spangled, and the seventh (or sun) is brightest; the eighth (or moon) coloured by the reflected light of the seventh; the second and fifth (Saturn and Mercury) are in colour like one another, and yellower than the preceding; the third (Venus) has the whitest light; the fourth (Mars) is reddish; the sixth (Jupiter) is in whiteness second. Now the whole spindle has the same motion; but, as the whole revolves in one direction, the seven inner circles move slowly in the other, and of these the swiftest is the eighth; next in swiftness are the seventh, sixth, and fifth, which move together; third in swiftness appeared to move according to the law of this reversed motion the fourth; the third appeared fourth and the second fifth. The spindle turns on the knees of Necessity; and on the upper surface of each circle is a siren, who goes round with them, hymning a single tone or note. The eight together form one harmony; and round about, at equal intervals, there is another band, three in number, each sitting upon her throne: these are the Fates, daughters of Necessity, who are clothed in white robes and have chaplets upon their heads, Lachesis and Clotho and Atropos, who accompany with their voices the harmony of the sirens -- Lachesis singing of the past, Clotho of the present, Atropos of the future; Clotho from time to time assisting with a touch of her right hand the revolution of the outer circle of the whorl or spindle, and Atropos with her left hand touching and guiding the inner ones, and Lachesis laying hold of either in turn, first with one hand and then with the other.

When Er and the spirits arrived, their duty was to go at once to Lachesis; but first of all there came a prophet who arranged them in order; then he took from the knees of Lachesis lots and samples of lives, and having mounted a high pulpit, spoke as follows: 'Hear the word of Lachesis, the daughter of Necessity. Mortal souls, behold a new cycle of life and mortality. Your genius will not be allotted to you, but you choose your genius; and let him who draws the first lot have the first choice, and the life which he chooses shall be his destiny. Virtue is free, and as a man honours or dishonours her he will have more or less of her; the responsibility is with the chooser -- God is justified.' When the Interpreter had thus spoken he scattered lots indifferently among them all, and each of them took up the lot which fell near him, all but Er himself (he was not allowed), and each as he took his lot perceived the number which he had obtained. Then the Interpreter placed on the ground before them the samples of lives; and there were many more lives than the souls present, and they were of all sorts. There were lives of every animal and of man in every condition. And there were tyrannies among them, some lasting out the tyrant's life, others which broke off in the middle and came to an end in poverty and exile and beggary; and there were lives of famous men, some who were famous for their form and beauty as well as for their strength and success in games, or, again, for their birth and the qualities of their ancestors; and some who were the reverse of famous for the opposite qualities. And of women likewise; there was not, however, any definite character them, because the soul, when choosing a new life, must of necessity become different. But there was every other quality, and the all mingled with one another, and also with elements of wealth and poverty, and disease and health; and there were mean states also. And here, my dear Glaucon, is the supreme peril of our human state; and therefore the utmost care should be taken. Let each one of us leave every other kind of knowledge and seek and follow one thing only, if peradventure he may be able to learn and may find some one who will make him able to learn and discern between good and evil, and so to choose always and everywhere the better life as he has opportunity. He should consider the bearing of all these things which have been mentioned severally and collectively upon virtue; he should know what the effect of beauty is when combined with poverty or wealth in a particular soul, and what are the good and evil consequences of noble and humble birth, of private and public station, of strength and weakness, of cleverness and dullness, of some and of all the soul, and the operation of them when conjoined; he will then look at the nature of the soul, and from the consideration of all these qualities he will be able to determine which is the better and which is the worse; and so he will choose, giving the name of evil to the life which will make his soul more unjust, and good to the life which will make his soul more just; all else he will disregard. For we have seen and know that this is the best choice both in life and after death. A man must take with him into the world below an adamantine faith in truth and right, that there too he may be undazzled by the desire of wealth or the other allurements of evil, lest, coming upon tyrannies and similar villainies, he do irremediable wrongs to others and suffer yet worse himself; but let him know how to choose the mean and avoid the extremes on either side, as far as possible, not only in this life but in all that which is to come. For this is the way of happiness.

And according to the report of the messenger from the other world this was what the prophet said at the time: 'Even for the last comer, if he chooses wisely and will live diligently, there is appointed a happy and not undesirable existence. Let not him who chooses first be careless, and let not the last despair.' And when he had spoken, he who had the first choice came forward and in a moment chose the greatest tyranny; his mind having been darkened by folly and sensuality, he had not thought out the whole matter before he chose, and did not at first sight perceive that he was hated, among other evils, to devour his own children. But when he had time to reflect, and saw what was in the lot, he began to beat his breast and lament over his choice, forgetting the proclamation of the prophet; for, instead of throwing the blame of his misfortune on himself, he accused chance and the gods, and everything rather than himself. Now he was one of those who came from heaven, and in a former life had dwelt in a well-ordered State, but his virtue was a matter of habit only, and he had no philosophy. And it was true of others who were similarly overtaken, that the greater number of them came from heaven and therefore they had never been schooled by trial, whereas the pilgrims who came from earth, having themselves suffered and seen others suffer, were not in a hurry to choose. And owing to this inexperience of theirs, and also because the lot was a chance, many of the souls exchanged a good destiny for an evil or an evil for a good. For if a man had always on his arrival in this world dedicated himself from the first to sound philosophy, and had been moderately fortunate in the number of the lot, he might, as the
And thus, Glaucon, the tale has been saved and has not perished, and will save us if we are obedient to the word spoken; and we shall pass safely over the river of Forgetfulness and our soul will not be defiled. Wherefore my counsel is that we hold fast ever to the heavenly way and follow after justice and virtue always, considering that the soul is immortal and able to endure every sort of good and every sort of evil. Thus shall we live dear to one another and to the gods, both while remaining here and when, like conquerors in the games who go round to gather gifts, we receive our reward. And it shall be well with us both in this life and in the pilgrimage of a thousand years which we have been describing.

THE END
Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics* (350 BC) (384-322 B.C.)

Selected and somewhat reworded by Jan Narveson [Basically from the Ross translation, public domain]

**Book I. The End of Human Life**

Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim. 

If, then, there is some end of the things we do, which we desire for its own sake (everything else being desired for the sake of this), and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (for at that rate the process would go on to infinity, so that our desire would be empty and vain), clearly this must be the good and the chief good. Will not the knowledge of it, then, have a great influence on life?

We must try, then, in outline at least to determine what it is, and of which of the sciences or capacities it is the object. It would seem to belong to the most authoritative art and that which is most truly the master art. And politics appears to be of this nature; for it is this that ordains which of the sciences should be studied in a state, and which each class of citizens should learn. again, it legislates as to what we are to do and what we are to abstain from, the end of this science must include those of the others, so that this end must be the good for man. For even if the end is the same for a single man and for a state, that of the state seems at all events something greater and more complete whether to attain or to preserve; though it is worth while to attain the end merely for one man, it is finer and more godlike to attain it for a nation or for city-states.

Our discussion will be adequate if it has as much clearness as the subject-matter admits of, for precision is not to be sought for alike in all discussions. Now fine and just actions, which political science investigates, admit of much variety and fluctuation of opinion. And goods also give rise to a similar fluctuation because they bring harm to many people. We must be content, then, to indicate the truth roughly and in outline, and in speaking about things which are only for the part most true and with premises of the same kind to reach conclusions that are no better. ... it is evidently equally foolish to accept probable reasoning from a mathematician and to demand from a rhetorician scientific proofs.

Now each man judges well the things he knows ... so the man who has been educated in a subject is a good judge of that subject, and the man who has received an all-round education is a good judge in general. Hence a young man is not a proper hearer of lectures on political science; for he is inexperienced in the actions that occur in life, but its discussions start from these ... further, since he tends to follow his passions, his study will be vain and unprofitable. It makes no difference whether he is young in years or in character - the defect does not depend on time, but on his lifestyle. To such persons, knowledge brings no profit. But to those who desire and act in accordance with a rational principle, knowledge about such matters will be of great benefit.

Let us resume our inquiry into the highest of goods. Verbally, there is general agreement: all say that it is happiness. But with regard to what happiness is, they differ - the many do not give the same account as the wise. Most men, to judge from the lives they lead, identify the good, or happiness, with pleasure.

Surveying the evidence, we see that there are three prominent types of life: the one just mentioned, the political, and the contemplative life.

As to the first, the mass of men are slavish in tastes, preferring a life suitable for beasts.

And regarding honor, which is roughly speaking the end of the political life, this seems too superficial. After all, men pursue honor in order that they may be assured of their virtue - which implies that virtue itself is *better* than honor. This leaves the contemplative life.

What is this good we seek, then? The chief good is evidently something final. If there is only one final, then that is what we seek; if more, then the most final of those is our object. Now, we call that which is itself worthy of pursuit more final than that which is worthy of pursuit only for the sake of something else. The end that is final without qualification of any kind, then, would be that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else. That's what happiness must be - we always choose it for itself, never for the sake of something else.

We may get clearer about this by considering the function of man, if he has one. But surely he does: do carpenters and tanners have functions, and man none? Or as eye, hand, foot, and so on have functions, how can man as a whole not have one? But what can this function be? It has to be something peculiar to man, not something he shares with the lesser creatures or inanimate objects. The life of nutrition and growth, or even of perception, are shared with animals, however. This leaves one thing special to us: the active life of the rational principle. The function of man, we say, is an activity of soul which follows or implies a rational principle. To which we add, that it does so during a complete, whole life.

Those who identify happiness with virtue, or some one, are on the right track; for to virtue belongs virtuous activity. Of course it is the use of our faculties, not just their possession, that is good. Only whose who act win, and rightly win, the noble and good things in life.

The life of the virtuous is also pleasant, pleasure being a state of soul produced by what one loves. And of course the virtuous man loves virtuous acts, such as justice. The man who does not rejoice in noble acts, on the other hand, isn't even good. Happiness, then, derived from the performance of virtuous actions, is the best, noblest, and most pleasant thing in the world...

Now, as we know from out previous studies, the soul has two parts or principles: one irrational, the other rational. Actually, though, the irrational one is in turn divisible into two: the part having to do with nutrition and growth, as we may call it the Vegetative soul; and then, the active soul, which actually shares in a rational principle too. This is the part that includes the appetites and passions, in general what we may call the practical...
portion of the soul.

Accordingly, we must make a distinction: there are intellectual virtues, and there are moral virtues.

II. Moral Virtue

This book is mainly about the latter, moral virtue. It’s clear that moral virtues aren’t in us just by nature. You can’t make a stone fall upwards - it just isn’t that kind of thing. But virtues are not anti-natural, either. It’s just that we have to work at it: they are made perfect by habit. We get them by exercising them, just like the arts. People have to learn to paint, build, and so on; similarly, they must also learn to be just, temperate, and so on, and they do this by performing just, temperate, and other virtuous acts.

We aren’t aiming here at merely theoretical knowledge, but pursue these studies in order to become better people. To do this, we have to know the nature of actions ad how they ought to be done. We must act according to the right rules - which, as I said, cannot be stated with great precision, so don’t expect that!

What is moral virtue? It’s not a faculty, such as the sheer capacity to feel pleasure or pain, for those we have by nature; nor is it a passion, such as anger or joy, since it is precisely with the control of the passions that virtue is concerned. That leaves states of character: those qualities of person by virtue of which we stand well or badly in relation to the passions.

So, which state of character is virtue? In general, of course, a virtue or excellence is what brings the thing whose virtue or excellence it is into good or the best condition: it is what makes that thing do its work well, as Plato says. So a moral virtue is a state of character by which we are made good and enabled to do our work well.

Now, there is a definite account to give of the general nature of moral virtue. It has to do with passions and actions, and about these we see that it is always possible to have too much, too little, or the right amount. We can get too angry too easily, and that is a vice; or we can be a Casper Milquetoast and never get angry about anything, which is also a vice. The virtuous person gets angry at the right time, about the right things - neither too much nor too little.

We have to distinguish two concepts of the intermediate here. One is arithmetical: the mean or intermediate is exactly half of the whole relevant amount. But how much is the right amount will, of course, vary from one person to another - just as the right amount of meat for Milo the Wrestler is a lot more than the right amount for you or me.

Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, this being the appropriate mean in relation to the individual agent...”

Note that not every action or passion admits of a mean, for we have many names for passions that already imply that they are vices or virtues. Shamelessness, for instance, means a deficiency of shame, so you can’t have too much or too little or the right amount of it.. What you can have is too much or too little or the right amount of shame. Other examples: adultery, theft, and murder.¹

[Aristotle then goes on to give all sorts of examples illustrating his general thesis about virtues. For example:] “With regard to truth, then, the intermediate is a truthful sort of person and the mean may be called truthfulness, while the pretense which exaggerates is boastfulness and the person characterized by it a boaster...”

It is no easy task to be good. For in everything it is no easy task to find the middle ... so, too, any one can get angry - that is easy - or give or spend money; but to do this to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, and in the right way, that is not for every one, nor is it easy...

...But up to what point and to what extent a man must deviate before he becomes blameworthy it is not easy to determine by reasoning ... such things depend on particular facts, and the decision rests with perception....

[Books III and IV take up responsibility and various specific virtues.]

V. Justice

Both the lawless man and the grasping and unfair man are thought to be unjust, so that evidently both the law-abiding and the fair man will be just. The just, then, is the lawful and the fair, the unjust the unlawful and the unfair.

Now, evidently all lawful acts are in a sense just acts; for the acts laid down by the legislative art are lawful, and each of these, we say, is just. Now the laws in their enactments on all subjects aim at the common advantage either of all or of the best or of those who hold power, or something of the sort; so that in one sense we call those acts just that tend to produce and preserve happiness and its components for the political society. And the law bids us do both the acts of a brave man ... and those of a good-tempered man (e.g. not to strike another nor to speak evil), and similarly with regard to the other virtues ... This form of justice, then, is complete virtue, but not absolutely, but in relation to our neighbour.

But we are here investigating the justice which is only a part of virtue. ... All that is unfair is unlawful, but not vice versa; injustice in this sense is a part of injustice in the wide sense ... Of the kind we are talking about here, (a) one kind is manifested

¹ In this very famous passage, Aristotle seems unaware that he is discussing two different things at once: (1) whether the “mean” in question in moral matters is “arithmetical” in the sense that it’s half-way along a commensurable continuum of something, such as a passion; and (2) whether the quantity in question is the same for everyone. In denying the latter, we do not necessarily deny the former: virtue could be precisely half of something for each of us, though how much it is half of varies from one to another.

² Aristotle deftly beguies an important question here. Is murder wrong by virtue of being too much or too little of some passion? Its name does indeed imply wrongness - ‘murder’ may plausibly be defined as ‘wrongful killing’. But wrongful killing isn’t too much or too little killing, is it?

³ But truth-telling is not a “mean” - unless we take the question to be, how much of what is true should one say? Some talk too much, others too little - but talking too much isn’t being too truthful.
in *distributions* of honor or money or the other things that fall to be divided among those who have a share in the constitution .. and (b) another part is concerned with *rectifications*. Within the latter, we can distinguish (1) the voluntary, such as sale, purchase, loan, and so on; and (2) the involuntary, of which some are clandestine - theft, adultery, procuring - while others are violent, such as assault, murder, mutilation, and insult.

Now, regarding (a): The unjust is unequal, the just is equal; and the equal is intermediate, so the just will be an intermediate. So, the just involves four (or more) terms: two (or more) persons, and two (or more) things. The equality which is justice may now be defined: it is when the goods (or evils) distributed are proportioned to the persons who receive them. The just proportion is an equality of *ratio*: A’s share is to B’s share as A is to B. The just, then, may be said to be the proportional.

In rectificatory justice, the judge tries to equalize an inequality: he visits a penalty upon the aggressor, which takes away his ill-gotten gain, thus equalizing the situation of the criminal and his victim.

All things that are exchanged must be somehow comparable. That is why we have money, which becomes in a sense an intermediate\(^{10}\), enabling all things to be measured. How many shoes equal one house, or a given amount of food? How can these be equated? The answer is that the unit of exchange is, in truth, *demand*, which holds all things together - money being a sort of conventional representative of demand. When men have no need of each other, there is no exchange. But when each wants something that the other has, then they exchange. Whether they exchange goods for goods or for money is all the same: the money acts as a surety of future goods.

Just action is intermediate between acting unjustly and being unjustly treated; for the one is to have too much and the other too little.

But we look not only for what is just without qualification but also political justice, which exists only between men whose mutual relations are governed by law, which exists for men between whom there is sometimes injustice: legal justice is the discrimination of the just and the unjust. So we do not allow a man to rule, but *rational principle*, for a man behaves thus in his own interest and becomes a tyrant; but the magistrate is the guardian of justice, and thus of equality. Now, the magistrate is assumed to have enough himself, and his business is to decide what is right for others - which is why a reward must be given him, this being honor and privilege. But those for whom such things aren’t reward enough become tyrants.

Of political justice, some is legal, some natural. The interesting thing about legal justice is that what it lays down was originally indifferent, but when it has been laid down is no longer so: that a prisoner’s ransom is $1,000 is laid down not by nature but by the judge; still, once he lays it down it is so.

Justice and injustice must both be *voluntary*. In your sleep you cannot act either justly or unjustly. Some involuntary acts, moreover, are excusable: if your mistake is not only *in ignorance*, but *from* ignorance - from a right motive, but with wrong information which it is not your fault that you have - it may be excused.

The *equitable* is worth a note, too. The equitable is just, but not legally just; rather, it is a *correction* of legal justice. For the law is universal, yet there are some things that it is impossible to make a correct universal statement about. Where it is nevertheless necessary to speak universally, the law takes the usual case - yet some cases will be unusual. And regarding those, the equitable person will act rightly anyway, discerning what is the right share even though the law does not specifically say so. The equitable person is not a stickler for his right, even when he has the law on his side: he will settle for less than his legal share, because the other party nevertheless deserves more even though the law hasn’t taken account of his case.

**VII.** There are three moral states to be avoided: vice, incontinence, and brutishness.

The incontinent person, knowing that his act is bad, does it as the result of passion, whereas the continent person has a *rational principle* against following such appetites.

As regards the incontinent, they may be said to be in a similar condition to those who are asleep, mad, or drunk. The fact that they speak intelligibly while acting this way proves nothing: even men under the influence of these passions utter scientific proofs and verses of Empedocles - but it means no more than the utterance of those words by actors on a stage.

Here is how one acts from practical reason. First, one must be in possession of some universal opinion or principle. Next, one has to know the relevant facts about the particular circumstances in which one acts, something within the sphere of *perception*. For instance, the general principle might be “one ought to taste what is sweet”, the particular fact, “this orange is sweet”. Given this, one then acts. (It is parallel with theoretical reason: If one accepts both “All men are mortal”, and “Socrates is a man”, then one must also accept the conclusion, “Socrates is mortal”.)

But the incontinent man lets his appetites get the better of him. Suppose we have the universal opinion, “One ought to eat what maintains one’s optimum weight”; the general finding, “sweet things make one too fat”; and the particular fact, “this chocolate is sweet”. Here we have contrary premises, in a sense. But the rational agent will refrain from eating in this case, whereas the incontinent will succumb and eat.

Some things are pleasant by nature, while others are not so, but become so by reason of injuries to the system, or of acquired habits, *or* of originally bad natures - like some of the tribes along the Black Sea, who are said to take delight in eating raw meat or human flesh, or lending their children to one another to feast upon.

While there are, as we have seen, some bad pleasures, nevertheless that doesn’t keep us from recognizing that pleasure is good - a fact clear enough when we consider that pain is bad and pleasure is its opposite. Moreover, unimpeded activity will always point us toward what is most worthy of choice, and that is pleasure. Thus the chief good must be some pleasure, even

\(^{10}\) Here Aristotle anticipates the modern definition of money as a “medium of exchange”.

\(^{11}\) Aristotle didn’t know about chocolate, of course.
though most pleasures might perhaps be bad. So all men think that the happy life is pleasant and weave pleasure into their ideal of happiness. Those who say that the victim on the rack or the man who falls into great misfortunes is happy if he is good, whether they mean to or not, talk nonsense. We need good luck as well as a good soul (from which it does not follow that good fortune is the same thing as happiness).

VIII. Friendship

Let’s now have a look at Friendship. For no one would choose to live without friends, even if he had all the other goods in the world. What would be the use of being immensely wealthy if you had no one to share your good fortune with? Friends are not only necessary, but noble: to love one’s friends is a fine thing, and it is the same ones who are good peopleander good friends.

Perfect friendship is the friendship of those who are good, and they wish each other well because and insofar as they are good. So their friendship lasts, for it is in the nature of goodness to be enduring.

Bad men will be friends only for the sake of pleasure or of utility, but good men will be friends for their own sake, i.e. for their goodness. They are friends without qualification - others are so only incidentally and by general resemblance to these.

There are friendships of unequals too, for example that of parent to child or of man to wife or ruler to subject. Neither party in these various cases get the same from the other, nor ought they to seek it: when children render to parents what they ought, and parents do as they should toward their children, the friendship between will be abiding and excellent. In all of these cases involving inequality the love should also be proportional: the better should be more loved than he loves, and so should the more useful, and similarly in each of the other cases; for when the love is in proportion to the merit of the parties, then in a sense arises equality, which is certainly held to be characteristic of friendship.

When there is great inequality, though, friendship isn’t really possible, and is not expected. This is most obvious in the case of the gods, who surpass even the best of us in all good things: claiming “friendship” with the gods is simply out of the question.

9. Friendship and justice seem to be concerned with the same objects and exhibited between the same persons. For in every community there is thought to be some form of justice, and friendship too; at least men address as friends their fellow-voyagers and fellow soldiers, and likewise those associated with them in any other kind of community. Indeed, the extent of their association is the extent of their friendship, and also of justice between them. The proverb ‘what friends have is common property’ is true: friendship depends upon community. The demands of justice also seem to increase with the intensity of the friendship, which implies that friendship and justice exist between the same persons and have an equal extension.

Translators have the Greeks always talking of “men”. But whatever Aristotle’s particular biases as a Greek of his time, his points about the nature of friendship surely apply with anyone, not just with men.

IX. Self-Love

The question is debated - should a man love himself most, or some one else? People criticize those who love themselves most, calling them egotists, a term of disgrace; and a bad man seems to do everything for himself, and the more so the worse he is.

Yet the facts clash with these arguments... The truth is that those who use the term as one of reproach ascribe self-love to people who assign to themselves the greater share of wealth, honours, and bodily pleasures. Such people gratify their appetites and in general, the irrational element of the soul. But if a man is always anxious that he himself, above all things, should act justly, temperately, or in accordance with any other of the virtues, no one will call such a man selfish or blame him.

Such a man is truly a lover of self more than the other; for he assigns to himself the things that are noblest and best, and gratifies the most authoritative element in himself and in all things obeys this...

All in all, we say that the good man should love himself, whereas the wicked man should not.

XII. Happiness; Transition to Politics

If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest virtue; and this will be of the best thing in us. This activity is contemplative, as we have already said.

The self-sufficiency spoken of must belong most to the contemplative activity. For while a philosopher too needs the necessaries of life, the just man needs people toward whom he can be just, and similarly with the brave, the temperate, and so on, yet the philosopher can contemplate truth all by himself if need be. And this activity alone would seem to be loved for its own sake; for nothing arises from it apart from the contemplating, while from practical activities we gain more or less apart from the action...

If reason is divine, then the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life. But we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us; for even if it be small in bulk, much more does it surpass everything in power and worth.

But in a secondary degree the life in accordance with the other kind of virtue is happy .. and - being, after all, men - we will also need external prosperity; for our nature is not self-sufficient for the purpose of contemplation, but our body also must be healthy and must have food and other attention. Still, we must not think that the man who is to be happy will need many things or great things, merely because he cannot be supremely happy without external goods; for self-sufficiency and action do not involve excess, and we can do noble acts without ruling earth and sea.

If these matters and the virtues, and also friendship and pleasure, have been dealt with sufficiently, are we to suppose that our program has reached its end? Surely, where there are things to be done the end is not to survey and recognize them, but rather to
do them.

Now if arguments were in themselves enough to make men good, they would justly have won very great rewards. But as things are, while they seem to have power to encourage and stimulate the generous-minded among our youth, they are not able to encourage the many to nobility and goodness. For these do not by nature obey the sense of shame but only fear, and do not abstain from bad acts because of their baseness but through fear of punishment ....

It is difficult to get from youth up a right training for virtue if one has not been brought up under right laws... For this reason their nurture and occupations should be fixed by law; for they will not be painful when they have become customary. But it is surely not enough that when they are young they should get the right nurture and attention; even when they are grown up, we shall need laws for this as well, and generally speaking to cover the whole of life; for most people obey necessity rather than argument, and punishments rather than the sense of what is noble.

That is why legislators ought to stimulate men to virtue and urge them forward by the motive of the noble; and that punishments and penalties should be imposed on those who disobey and are of inferior nature, and the incurably bad should be banished. ...

Must we not, then, next examine when or how one can learn how to legislate?

Our predecessors have left the subject of legislation unexamined; it is perhaps best, therefore, that we should ourselves study it, and in general study the question of the constitution, in order to complete to the best of our ability our philosophy of human nature.

Aristotle: Politics (350 BC)

Translated by Benjamin Jowett [public domain]

[This selection is especially extracted for students by Jan Narveson. Many digressions, references to then-classical poets, apparent redundancies, etc., have been omitted, but all major discussions retained. Sometimes Jowett's English has been further brushed up for modern readers.]

BOOK ONE

I

EVERY STATE is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good; for mankind always act in order to obtain that which they think good. But, if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good.

Some people think that the qualifications of a statesman, king, householder, and master are the same, and that they differ, not in kind, but only in the number of their subjects. For example, the ruler over a few is called a master; over more, the manager of a household; over a still larger number, a statesman or king, as if there were no difference between a great household and a small state.

The distinction which is made between the king and the statesman is as follows: When the government is personal, the ruler is a king; when, according to the rules of the political science, the citizens rule and are ruled in turn, then he is called a statesman.

But all this is a mistake; for governments differ in kind, as will be evident to any one who considers the matter according to the method which has hitherto guided us. As in other departments of science, so in politics, the compound should always be resolved into the simple elements or least parts of the whole. We must therefore look at the elements of which the state is composed, in order that we may see in what the different kinds of rule differ from one another, and whether any scientific result can be attained about each one of them.

II

He who thus considers things in their first growth and origin, whether a state or anything else, will obtain the clearest view of them. In the first place there must be a union of those who cannot exist without each other; namely, of male and female, that the race may continue (and this is a union which is formed, not of deliberate purpose, but because, in common with other animals and with plants, mankind have a natural desire to leave behind them an image of themselves), and of natural ruler and subject, that both may be preserved. For that which can foresee by the exercise of mind is by nature intended to be lord and master, and that which can with its body give effect to such foresight is a subject, and by nature a slave; hence master and slave have the same interest. Now nature has distinguished between the female and the slave. For she is not niggardly, like the smith who fashions the Delphian knife for many uses; she makes each thing for a single use, and every instrument is best made when intended for one and not for many uses. But among barbarians no distinction is made between women and slaves, because there is no natural ruler among them: they are a community of slaves, male and female....
Out of these two relationships - between man and woman, and between master and slave - the first thing to arise is the family... The family is the association established by nature for the supply of men's everyday wants... But when several families are united, and the association aims at something more than the supply of daily needs, the first society to be formed is the village...

When several villages are united in a single complete community, large enough to be nearly or quite self-sufficing, the state comes into existence, originating in the bare needs of life, and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life. And therefore, if the earlier forms of society are natural, so is the state, for it is the end of them, and the nature of a thing is its end. For what each thing is when fully developed, we call its nature, whether we are speaking of a man, a horse, or a family. Besides, the final cause and end of a thing is the best, and to be self-sufficing is the end and the best.

Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal. Now, that man is more of a political animal than bees or any other gregarious animals is evident. Nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal whom she has endowed with the gift of speech. And it is a characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust, and the like, and the association of living beings who have this sense makes a family and a state.

Further, the state is by nature clearly prior to the family and to the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part; for example, if the whole be destroyed, there will be no foot or hand, except in an equivocal sense, as we might speak of a stone hand; for when destroyed the hand will be no better than that. But things are defined by their working and power; and we ought not to say that they are the same when they no longer have their proper quality, but only that they have the same name.

The proof that the state is a creation of nature and prior to the individual is that the individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficing; and therefore he is like a part in relation to the whole. But he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god: he is no part of a state.

A social instinct is implanted in all men by nature, and yet he who first founded the state was the greatest of benefactors. For man, when perfected, is the best of animals, but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all; since armed injustice is the more dangerous, and he is equipped at birth with arms, meant to be used by intelligence and virtue, which he may use for the worst ends. Wherefore, if he have not virtue, he is the most unholy and the most savage of animals, and the most full of lust and gluttony. But justice is the bond of men in states, for the administration of justice, which is the determination of what is just, is the principle of order in political society.

III

Seeing then that the state is made up of households, before speaking of the state we must speak of the management of the household. The parts of household management correspond to the persons who compose the household, and a complete household consists of slaves and freemen. Now we should begin by examining everything in its fewest possible elements; and the first and fewest possible parts of a family are master and slave, husband and wife, father and children. We have therefore to consider what each of these three relations is and ought to be...

And there is another element of a household, the so-called art of getting wealth, which, according to some, is identical with household management, according to others, a principal part of it; the nature of this art will also have to be considered by us.

Let us first speak of master and slave, looking to the needs of practical life and also seeking to attain some better theory of their relation than exists at present. For some are of opinion that the rule of a master is a science, and that the management of a household, and the mastership of slaves, and the political and royal rule, as I was saying at the outset, are all the same. Others affirm that the rule of a master over slaves is contrary to nature, and that the distinction between slave and freeman exists by law only, and not by nature; and being an interference with nature is therefore unjust.

IV

Property is a part of the household, and the art of acquiring property is a part of the art of managing the household; for no man can live well, or indeed live at all, unless he be provided with necessaries. And as in the arts which have a definite sphere the workers must have their own proper instruments for the accomplishment of their work, so it is in the management of a household. Now instruments are of various sorts; some are living, others lifeless; in the rudder, the pilot of a ship has a lifeless, in the lookout man, a living instrument; for in the arts the servant is a kind of instrument. Thus, too, a possession is an instrument for maintaining life. And so, in the arrangement of the family, a slave is a living possession, and property a number of such instruments; and the servant is himself an instrument which takes precedence of all other instruments. For if every instrument could accomplish its own work, obeying or anticipating the will of others, like the statues of Daedalus, or the tripods of Hephaestus, which, says the poet, of their own accord entered the assembly of the Gods; if, in like manner, the shuttle would weave and the plectrum touch the lyre without a hand to guide them, chief workmen would not want servants, nor masters slaves.

... The master is only the master of the slave; he does not belong to him, whereas the slave is not only the slave of his master, but wholly belongs to him. Hence we see what is the nature and office of a slave; he who is by nature not his own but another's man, is by nature a slave; and he may be said to be another's man who, being a human being, is also a possession. And a possession may be defined as an instrument of action, separable from the possessor.

V

But is there any one thus intended by nature to be a slave, and for whom such a condition is expedient and right, or rather is not all slavery a violation of nature?

There is no difficulty in answering this question, on grounds both of reason and of fact. For that some should rule and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary, but expedient; from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule.

... The living creature consists of soul and body: and of these two, the one is by nature the ruler, and the other the subject. But then we must look for the intentions of nature in things which retain their nature, and not in things which are corrupted. And therefore we must study the man who is in the most perfect state both of body and soul, for in him we shall see...
the true relation of the two; although in bad or corrupted natures
the body will often appear to rule over the soul, because they are
in an evil and unnatural condition.

At all events we may firstly observe in living creatures both
despotical and a constitutional rule; for the soul rules the body
with a despotical rule, whereas the intellect rules the appetites
with a constitutional and royal rule. And it is clear that the rule
of the soul over the body, and of the mind and the rational
element over the passionate, is natural and expedient; whereas the
equality of the two or the rule of the inferior is always hurtful.

The same holds good of animals in relation to men; for tame
animals have a better nature than wild, and all tame animals are
better off when they are ruled by man; for then they are preserved.

Again, the male is by nature superior, and the female
inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle,
of necessity, extends to all mankind.

Where there is such a difference as that between soul and
body, or men and animals, the lower sort are by nature slaves,
and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be
under the rule of a master. For he who can be, and therefore is,
another's and he who participates in rational principle enough to
apprehend, but not to have, such a principle, is a slave by nature.
Whereas the lower animals cannot even apprehend a principle;
they obey their instincts.

And indeed the use made of slaves and of tame animals is
not very different; for both with their bodies minister to the
needs of life. Nature would like to distinguish between the
bodies of freemen and slaves, making the one strong for servile
labor, the other upright, and although useless for such services,
useful for political life in the arts both of war and peace. But the
opposite often happens - some have the souls and others have the
bodies of freemen. And doubtless if men differed from one
another in the mere forms of their bodies as much as the statues
of the Gods do from men, all would acknowledge that the
inferior class should be slaves of the superior. And if this is true
of the body, how much more just that a similar distinction
should exist in the soul? But the beauty of the body is seen,
whereas the beauty of the soul is not seen. It is clear, then, that
some men are by nature free, and others slaves, and that for these
latter slavery is both expedient and right.

VI

But that those who take the opposite view have in a
certain way right on their side, may be easily seen. For the words
'slavery' and 'slave' are used in two senses. There is a slave or
slavery by law as well as by nature.

(1) The law of which I speak is a sort of convention - the law
by which whatever is taken in war is supposed to belong to the
victors. But this right many jurists impeach, as they would an
orator who brought forward an unconstitutional measure: they
detest the notion that, because one man has the power of doing
violence and is superior in brute strength, another shall be his
slave and subject. Even among philosophers there is a difference
of opinion.

The origin of the dispute, and what makes the views invade
each other's territory, is as follows: in some sense virtue, when
furnished with means, has actually the greatest power of
exercising force; and as superior power is only found where there
is superior excellence of some kind, power seems to imply
virtue, and the dispute to be simply one about justice (for it is
due to one party identifying justice with goodwill while the other
identifies it with the mere rule of the stronger). If these views are
thus set out separately, the other views have no force or
plausibility against the view that the superior in virtue ought to
rule, or be master.

Others, clinging, as they think, simply to a principle of
justice (for law and custom are a sort of justice), assume that
slavery in accordance with the custom of war is justified by law,
but at the same moment they deny this. For what if the cause of
the war be unjust?

(2) And again, no one would ever say he is a slave who is
unworthy to be a slave. Were this the case, men of the highest
rank would be slaves and the children of slaves if they or their
parents chance to have been taken captive and sold. Wherefore
Hellenes do not like to call Hellenes slaves, but confine the term
to barbarians. Yet, in using this language, they really mean the
natural slave of whom we spoke at first; for it must be admitted
that some are slaves everywhere, others nowhere. ...

We see then that there is some foundation for this difference
of opinion, and that all are not either slaves by nature or freemen
by nature, and also that there is in some cases a marked
distinction between the two classes, rendering it expedient and
right for the one to be slaves and the others to be masters: the
one practicing obedience, the others exercising the authority and
lordship which nature intended them to have.

The abuse of this authority is injurious to both; for the
interests of part and whole, of body and soul, are the same, and
the slave is a part of the master, a living but separated part of his
bodily frame. Hence, where the relation of master and slave
between them is natural they are friends and have a common
interest, but where it rests merely on law and force the reverse is
true.

VII

The previous remarks show that the rule of a master is not
a constitutional rule, and that all the different kinds of rule are
not, as some affirm, the same. For there is one rule exercised
over subjects who are by nature free, another over subjects who
are by nature slaves. The rule of a household is a monarchy, for
every house is under one head: whereas constitutional rule is a
government of freemen and equals.

The master is not called a master because he has science, but
because he is of a certain character, and the same remark applies
to the slave and the Freeman. Still there may be a science for the
master and science for the slave. The science of the slave would
... instruct slaves in their ordinary duties. And such a knowledge
may be carried further, so as to include cookery and similar
menial arts. ... But all such branches of knowledge are servile.
There is likewise a science of the master, which teaches the use of
slaves; for the master as such is concerned, not with the
acquisition, but with the use of them.

Yet this so-called science is not anything great or wonderful;
for the master need only know how to order that which the slave
must know how to execute. ...

VIII

Let us now inquire into property generally, and into the art
of getting wealth, in accordance with our usual method, for a
slave has been shown to be a part of property.

The first question is whether the art of getting wealth is the
same with the art of managing a household or a part of it, or
instrumental to it; and if the last, whether in the way that the art
of making shuttles is instrumental to the art of weaving, or in the
way that the casting of bronze is instrumental to the art of the
statuary, for they are not instrumental in the same way, but the
one provides tools and the other material; and by material I mean
the substratum out of which any work is made; thus wool is the
material of the weaver, bronze of the statuary. Now it is easy to
see that the art of household management is not identical with
the art of getting wealth, for the one uses the material which the
other provides. For the art which uses household stores can be no
other than the art of household management. ...

Property, in the sense of a bare livelihood, seems to be
given by nature herself to all, both when they are first born, and
when they are grown up. For some animals bring forth, together
with their offspring, so much food as will last until they are able
to supply themselves. In like manner we may infer that, after
the birth of animals, plants exist for their sake, and that the other
animals exist for the sake of man, the same for use and food, the
wild, if not all at least the greater part of them, for food, and for
the provision of clothing and various instruments. Now if nature
makes nothing incomplete, and nothing in vain, the inference
must be that she has made all animals for the sake of man. ...

Of the art of acquisition then there is one kind which by
nature is a part of the management of a household, in so far as
the art of household management must either find ready to hand,
or itself provide, such things necessary to life, and useful for the
community of the family or state, as can be stored. They are
the elements of true riches; for the amount of property which is
needed for a good life is not unlimited, although Solon in one of
his poems says that “No bound to riches has been fixed for man.”
But there is a boundary fixed, just as there is in the other arts; for
the instruments of any art are never unlimited, either in number
or size, and riches may be defined as a number of instruments to
be used in a household or in a state. And so we see that there is
a natural art of acquisition which is practiced by managers of
households and by statesmen, and what is the reason of this.

IX

There is another variety of the art of acquisition which is
commonly and rightly called an art of wealth-getting, and has in
fact suggested the notion that riches and property have no limit.
... But though they are not very different, neither are they the
same. The kind already described is given by nature, the other is
gained by experience and art.

Let us begin our discussion of the question with
the following considerations. Of everything which we possess there
are two uses: both belong to the thing as such, but not in the
same manner, for one is the proper, and the other the improper
or secondary use of it. For example, a shoe is used for wear, and is
used for exchange; both are uses of the shoe. He who gives a
shoe in exchange for money or food to him who wants one, does
indeed use the shoe as a shoe, but this is not its proper or
primary purpose, for a shoe is not made to be an object of barter.

The same may be said of all possessions, for the art of
exchange extends to all of them, and it arises at first from what is
natural, from the circumstance that some have too little, others
too much. Hence we may infer that retail trade is not a natural
part of the art of getting wealth; had it been so, men would have
cess to exchange when they had enough.

In the first community, indeed, which is the family, this art
is obviously of no use, but it begins to be useful when the
society increases. For the members of the family originally had
all things in common; later, when the family divided into parts,
wealth-getting; in either, the instrument is the same, although the use is different, and so they pass into one another; for each is a use of the same property, but with a difference: accumulation is the end in the one case, but there is a further end in the other.

Hence some persons are led to believe that getting wealth is the object of household management, and the whole idea of their lives is that they ought either to increase their money without limit, or at any rate not to lose it. The origin of this disposition in men is that they are intent upon living only, and not upon living well; and, as their desires are unlimited they also desire that the means of gratifying them should be without limit.

Those who do aim at a good life seek the means of obtaining bodily pleasures; and, since the enjoyment of these appears to depend on property, they are absorbed in getting wealth: and so there arises the second species of wealth-getting. For, as their enjoyment is in excess, they seek an art which produces the excess of enjoyment; and, if they are not able to supply their pleasures by the art of getting wealth, they try other arts, using in turn every faculty in a manner contrary to nature. The quality of courage, for example, is not intended to make wealth, but to inspire confidence; neither is this the aim of the general's or of the physician's art; but the one aims at victory and the other at health.

Nevertheless, some men turn every quality or art into a means of getting wealth; this they conceive to be the end, and to the promotion of the end they think all things must contribute. Thus, then, we have considered the art of wealth-getting which is unnecessary, and why men want it; and also the necessary art of wealth-getting, which we have seen to be different from the other, and to be a natural part of the art of managing a household, concerned with the provision of food, not, however, like the former kind, unlimited, but having a limit.

X

And we have found the answer to our original question, Whether the art of getting wealth is the business of the manager of a household and of the statesman or not their business - viz., that wealth is presupposed by them...

At this stage begins the duty of the manager of a household, who has to order the things which nature supplies; he may be compared to the weaver who has not to make but to use wool, and to know, too, what sort of wool is good and serviceable or bad and unserviceable....

There are two sorts of wealth-getting, as I have said; one is a part of household management, the other is retail trade: the former necessary and honorable, while that which consists in exchange is justly censured; for it is unnatural, and a mode by which men gain from one another. The most hated sort, and with the greatest reason, is usury, which makes a gain out of money itself, and not from the natural object of it. For money was intended to be used in exchange, but not to increase at interest.

And this term interest, which means the birth of money from money, is applied to the breeding of money because the offspring resembles the parent. Wherefore of all modes of getting wealth this is the most unnatural.

XI

Enough has been said about the theory of wealth-getting; we will now proceed to the practical part. The discussion of such matters is not unworthy of philosophy, but to be engaged in them practically is illiberal and irksome....

...There is [a famous] anecdote of Thales the Milesian [philosopher] and his financial device, which involves a principle of universal application, but is attributed to him on account of his reputation for wisdom. He was reproached for his poverty, which was supposed to show that philosophy was of no use. According to the story, he knew by his skill in the stars while it was yet winter that there would be a great harvest of olives in the coming year; so, having a little money, he gave deposits for the use of all the olive-presses in Chios and Miletus, which he hired at a low price because no one bid against him. When the harvest-time came, and many were wanted all at once and of a sudden, he let them out at any rate which he pleased, and made a quantity of money. Thus he showed the world that philosophers can easily be rich if they like, but that their ambition is of another sort. He is supposed to have given a striking proof of his wisdom, but, as I was saying, his device for getting wealth is of universal application, and is nothing but the creation of a monopoly. It is an art often practiced by cities when they are in want of money...

XII

Of household management we have seen that there are three parts. One is the rule of a master over slaves, which has been discussed already, another of a father, and the third of a husband. A husband and father, we saw, rules over wife and children, both free, but the rule differs, the rule over his children being a royal, over his wife a constitutional rule. For although there may be exceptions to the order of nature, the male is by nature fitter for command than the female, just as the elder and full-grown is superior to the younger and more immature. But in most constitutional states the citizens rule and are ruled by turns, for the idea of a constitutional state implies that the natures of the citizens are equal, and do not differ at all.

Nevertheless, when one rules and the other is ruled we endeavor to create a difference of outward forms and names and titles of respect....

XIII

... A question may indeed be raised, whether there is any excellence at all in a slave beyond and higher than merely instrumental and ministerial qualities - whether he can have the virtues of temperance, courage, justice, and the like; or whether slaves possess only bodily and ministerial qualities. And, whichever way we answer the question, a difficulty arises; for, if they have virtue, in what will they differ from freemen? On the other hand, since they are men and share in rational principle, it seems absurd to say that they have no virtue.

A similar question may be raised about women and children, whether they too have virtues: ought a woman to be temperate and brave and just, and is a child to be called temperate, and intemperate, or not? So too we may ask about the natural ruler, and the natural subject, whether they have the same or different virtues. For if a noble nature is equally required in both, why should one of them always rule, and the other always be ruled?

Nor can we say that this is a question of degree, for the difference between ruler and subject is a difference of kind... Yet how strange is the supposition that the one ought, and that the other ought not, to have virtue! For if the ruler is intemperate and unjust, how can he rule well? If the subject, how can he obey well? If he be licentious and cowardly, he will certainly not do his duty. It is evident, therefore, that both of them must have a share of virtue, but varying as natural subjects also vary among
themselves. Here the very constitution of the soul has shown us the way; in it one part naturally rules, and the other is subject, and the virtue of the ruler we maintain to be different from that of the subject; the one being the virtue of the rational, and the other of the irrational part.

Now, it is obvious that the same principle applies generally, and therefore almost all things rule and are ruled according to nature. But the kind of rule differs; the freeman rules over the slave after another manner from that in which the male rules over the female, or the man over the child; although the parts of the soul are present in an of them, they are present in different degrees. For the slave has no deliberative faculty at all; the woman has, but it is without authority, and the child has, but it is immature.

So it must necessarily be supposed to be with the moral virtues also; all should partake of them, but only in such manner and degree as is required by each for the fulfillment of his duty.

Hence the ruler ought to have moral virtue in perfection, for his function, taken absolutely, demands a master artificer, and rational principle is such an artificer; the subjects, on the other hand, require only that measure of virtue which is proper to each of them.

Clearly, then, moral virtue belongs to all of them; but the temperance of a man and of a woman, or the courage and justice of a man and of a woman, are not, as Socrates maintained, the same; the courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying. And this holds of all other virtues, as will be more clearly seen if we look at them in detail, for those who say generally that virtue consists in a good disposition of the soul, or in doing rightly, or the like, only deceive themselves. ... All classes must be deemed to have their special attributes; as the poet says of women, “Silence is a woman's glory” - but this is not equally the glory of man. The child is imperfect, and therefore obviously his virtue is not relative to himself alone, but to the perfect man and to his teacher, and in like manner the virtue of the slave is relative to a master.

A slave is useful for the wants of life, and therefore he will obviously require only so much virtue as will prevent him from failing in his duty through cowardice or lack of self-control... It is manifest, then, that the master ought to be the source of excellence in the slave, and not a mere possessor of the art of mastership which trains the slave in his duties. Wherefore they are mistaken who forbid us to converse with slaves and say that we should employ command only, for slaves stand even more in need of admonition than children.

So much for this subject; the relations of husband and wife, parent and child, their several virtues, what in their intercourse with one another is good, and what is evil, and how we may pursue the good and escape the evil, will have to be discussed when we speak of the different forms of government. For, inasmuch as every family is a part of a state, and these relationships are the parts of a family, and the virtue of the part must have regard to the virtue of the whole, women and children must be trained by education with an eye to the constitution, if the virtues of either of them are supposed to make any difference in the virtues of the state. And they must make a difference: for the children grow up to be citizens, and half the free persons in a state are women.

BOOK TWO

I

Our purpose is to consider what form of political community is best of all for those who are most able to realize their ideal of life. We must therefore examine not only this but other constitutions, both such as actually exist in well-governed states, and any theoretical forms which are held in esteem; that what is good and useful may be brought to light. And let no one suppose that in seeking for something beyond them we are anxious to make a sophistical display at any cost; we only undertake this inquiry because all the constitutions with which we are acquainted are faulty.

We will begin with the natural beginning of the subject. Three alternatives are conceivable: The members of a state must either have (1) all things or (2) nothing in common, or (3) some things in common and some not. That they should have nothing in common is clearly impossible, for the constitution is a community, and must at any rate have a common place - one city will be in one place, and the citizens are those who share in that one city. But should a well ordered state have all things, as far as may be, in common, or some only and not others? For the citizens might conceivably have wives and children and property in common, as Socrates proposes in the Republic of Plato. Which is better, our present condition, or the proposed new order of society?

II

[Aristotle now addresses the “ideal” State in Plato’s Republic]

There are many difficulties in the community of women. And the principle on which Socrates rests the necessity of such an institution evidently is not established by his arguments. Further, as a means to the end which he ascribes to the state, the scheme, taken literally is impracticable, and how we are to interpret it is nowhere precisely stated.

I am speaking of the premise from which the argument of Socrates proceeds, ‘that the greater the unity of the state the better.’ Is it not obvious that a state may at length attain such a degree of unity as to be no longer a state? Since the nature of a state is to be a plurality, and in tending to greater unity, from being a state, it becomes a family, and from being a family, an individual; for the family may be said to be more than the state, and the individual than the family. So that we ought not to attain this greatest unity even if we could, for it would be the destruction of the state.

Again, a state is not made up only of so many men, but of different kinds of men; for similars do not constitute a state. It is not like a military alliance The usefulness of the latter depends upon its quantity even where there is no difference in quality (for mutual protection is the end aimed at), just as a greater weight of anything is more useful than a less ...; but the elements out of which a unity is to be formed differ in kind. Wherefore the principle of compensation, as I have already remarked in the Ethics, is the salvation of states.

Even among freemen and equals this is a principle which must be maintained, for they cannot all rule together, but must change at the end of a year or some other period of time or in some order of succession. The result is that upon this plan they all govern; just as if shoemakers and carpenters were to exchange their occupations, and the same persons did not always continue shoemakers and carpenters. And since it is better that this should
be so in politics as well, it is clear that while there should be continuance of the same persons in power where this is possible; yet where this is not possible by reason of the natural equality of the citizens, and at the same time it is just that all should share in the government (whether to govern be a good thing or a bad), an approximation to this is that equals should in turn retire from office and should, apart from official position, be treated alike. Thus the one party rule and the others are ruled in turn, as if they were no longer the same persons.

In like manner when they hold office there is a variety in the offices held. Hence it is evident that a city is not by nature one in that sense which some persons affirm; and that what is said to be the greatest good of cities is in reality their destruction; but surely the good of things must be that which preserves them. Again, in another point of view, this extreme unification of the state is clearly not good; for a family is more self-sufficing than an individual, and a city than a family, and a city only comes into being when the community is large enough to be self-sufficing. If then self-sufficiency is to be desired, the lesser degree of unity is more desirable than the greater.

III

But, even supposing that it were best for the community to have the greatest degree of unity, this unity is by no means proved to follow from the fact ‘of all men saying “mine” and “not mine” at the same instant of time,’ which, according to Socrates, is the sign of perfect unity in a state. For the word ‘all’ is ambiguous. If the meaning be that every individual says ‘mine’ and ‘not mine’ at the same time, then perhaps the result at which Socrates aims may be in some degree accomplished; each man will call the same person his own son and the same person his wife, and so of his property and of all that falls to his lot. This, however, is not the way in which people would speak who had their had their wives and children in common; they would say ‘all’ but not ‘each.’ In like manner their property would be described as belonging to them, not severally but collectively.

There is an obvious fallacy in this application of the term ‘all’: like some other words, such as ‘both,’ ‘odd,’ and ‘even,’ it is ambiguous, and even in abstract argument becomes a source of logical puzzles. That all persons call the same thing ‘mine’ in the sense in which each does so may be a fine thing, but it is impracticable; or if the words are taken in the other sense, such a unity in no way conduces to harmony.

And there is another objection to the proposal. For that which is common to the greatest number has the least care bestowed upon it. Every one thinks chiefly of his own, hardly at all of the common interest; and only when he is himself concerned as an individual. For besides other considerations, everybody is more inclined to neglect the duty which he expects another to fulfill; as in families many attendants are often less useful than a few. Each citizen will have a thousand sons who will not be his sons individually but anybody will be equally the son of anybody, and will therefore be neglected by all alike.

Further, upon this principle, every one will use the word ‘mine’ of one who is prospering or the reverse, however small a fraction he may himself be of the whole number; the same boy will be ‘so and so’s son,’ the son of each of the thousand, or whatever be the number of the citizens; and even about this he will not be positive; for it is impossible to know who chanced to have a child, or whether, if one came into existence, it has survived. But which is better: for each to say ‘mine’ in this way, making a man the same relation to two thousand or ten thousand citizens, or to use the word ‘mine’ in the ordinary and more restricted sense? ... [H]ow much better is it to be the real cousin of somebody than to be a “son” after Plato’s fashion!

Nor is there any way of preventing brothers and children and fathers and mothers from sometimes recognizing one another; for children are born like their parents, and they will necessarily be finding indications of their relationship to one another. ...

IV

... [I]n a state having women and children common, love will be watery; the father will certainly not say ‘my son,’ or the son ‘my father.’ As a little sweet wine mingled with a great deal of water is imperceptible in the mixture, so, in this sort of community, the idea of relationship which is based upon these names will be lost; there is no reason why the so-called father should care about the son, or the son about the father, or brothers about one another. Of the two qualities which chiefly inspire regard and affection - that a thing is your own and that it is your only one - neither can exist in such a state as this.

V

Next let us consider what should be our arrangements about property: should the citizens of the perfect state have their possessions in common or not? This question may be discussed separately from the enactments about women and children. Even supposing that the women and children belong to individuals, according to the custom which is at present universal, may there not be an advantage in having and using possessions in common?

Three cases are possible: (1) the soil may be appropriated, but the produce may be thrown for consumption into the common stock; and this is the practice of some nations. Or (2) the soil may be common, and may be cultivated in common, but the produce divided among individuals for their private use; this is a form of common property which is said to exist among certain barbarians. Or (3) the soil and the produce may be alike common.

When the husbandmen are not the owners, the case will be different and easier to deal with; but when they till the ground for themselves the question of ownership will give a world of trouble. If they do not share equally enjoyments and toils, those who labor much and get little will necessarily complain of those who labor little and receive or consume much. Now indeed there is always a difficulty in men living together and having all human relations in common, but especially in their having common property. The partnerships of fellow-travelers are an example to the point; for they generally fall out over everyday matters and quarrel about any trifle which turns up. So with servants: we are most able to take offense at those with whom we most frequently come into contact in daily life. These are only some of the disadvantages which attend the community of property; the present arrangement, if improved as it might be by good customs and laws, would be far better, and would have the advantages of both systems.

Thus property should be in a certain sense common, but, as a general rule, private; for, when everyone has a distinct interest, men will not complain of one another and will make more progress, because every one will be attending to his own business. And yet by reason of goodness, and in respect of use, ‘Friends,’ as the proverb says, ‘will have all things common.’

Even now there are traces of such a principle, showing that it
is not impracticable, but, in well-ordered states, exists already to a certain extent and may be carried further. For, although every man has his own property, some things he will place at the disposal of his friends, while of others he shares the use with them. The Lacedaemonians, for example, use one another’s slaves, and horses, and dogs, as if they were their own; and when they lack provisions on a journey, they appropriate what they find in the fields throughout the country. It is clearly better that property should be private, but the use of it common; and the special business of the legislator is to create in men this benevolent disposition.

Again, how immeasurably greater is the pleasure, when a man feels a thing to be his own; for surely the love of self is a feeling implanted by nature and not given in vain, although selfishness is rightly censured; this, however, is not the mere love of self, but the love of self in excess, like the miser’s love of money...

And further, there is the greatest pleasure in doing a kindness or service to friends or guests or companions, which can only be rendered when a man has private property. These advantages are lost by excessive unification of the state.

The exhibition of two virtues, besides, is visibly annihilated in such a state: first, temperance towards women (for it is an honorable action to abstain from another’s wife for temperance’ sake); secondly, liberality in the matter of property. No one, when men have all things in common, will any longer set an example of liberality or do any liberal action; for liberality consists in the use which is made of property.

Such legislation may have a specious appearance of benevolence; men readily listen to it, and are easily induced to believe that in some wonderful manner everybody will become everybody’s friend, especially when some one is heard denouncing the evils now existing in states, suits about contracts, convictions for perjury, flatteries of rich men and the like, which are said to arise out of the possession of private property. These evils, however, are due to a very different cause: the wickedness of human nature. Indeed, we see that there is much more quarreling among those who have all things in common, though there are not many of them when compared with the vast numbers who have private property. ... The life which the communalists are to lead appears to be quite impracticable.

The error of Socrates must be attributed to the false notion of unity from which he starts. Unity there should be, both of the family and of the state, but in some respects only. For there is a point at which a state may attain such a degree of unity as to be no longer a state, or at which, without actually ceasing to exist, it will become an inferior state, like harmony passing into unison, or rhythm which has been reduced to a single foot. ... But, indeed, Socrates has not said, nor is it easy to decide, what in such a community will be the general form of the state. The citizens who are not guardians are the majority, and about them nothing has been determined: are the husbandmen, too, to have their property in common? Or is each individual to have his own? And are their wives and children to be individual or common? If, like the guardians, they are to have all things in common, in what do they differ from them, or what will they gain by submitting to their government? ...

If, on the other hand, the inferior classes are to be like other cities in respect of marriage and property, what will be the form of the community? Must it not contain two states in one, each hostile to the other? He makes the guardians into a mere occupying garrison, while the husbandmen and artisans and the rest are the real citizens. But if so the suits and quarrels, and all the evils which Socrates affirms to exist in other states, will exist equally among them.

He says indeed that, having so good an education, the citizens will not need many laws, for example laws about the city or about the markets; but then he confines his education to the guardians. ... And whether community of wives and property be necessary for the lower equally with the higher class or not, and the questions akin to this, what will be the education, form of government, laws of the lower class, Socrates has nowhere determined: neither is it easy to discover this, nor is their character of small importance if the common life of the guardians is to be maintained.

... The government, too, as constituted by Socrates, contains elements of danger; for he makes the same persons always rule. And if this is often a cause of disturbance among the meaner sort, how much more among high-spirited warriors? ... Again, he deprives the guardians even of happiness, and says that the legislator ought to make the whole state happy. But the whole cannot be happy unless most, or all, or some of its parts enjoy happiness. ... And if the guardians are not happy, who are? Surely not the artisans, or the common people.

The Republic of which Socrates discourses has all these difficulties, and others quite as great.

VI

The same, or nearly the same, objections apply to Plato’s later work, the Laws .... [We have not read Plato’s Laws, so this long chapter is omitted - JN]

VII

Other constitutions have been proposed ... No one else has introduced such novelties as the community of women and children, or public tables for women: other legislators begin with what is necessary. In the opinion of some, the regulation of property is the chief point of all, that being the question upon which all revolutions turn. This danger was recognized by Phileas of Chalcedon, who was the first to affirm that the citizens of a state ought to have equal possessions. He thought that in a new colony the equalization might be accomplished without difficulty...

But those who make such laws should remember what they are apt to forget - that the legislator who fixes the amount of property should also fix the number of children; for, if the children are too many for the property, the law must be broken. And, besides the violation of the law, it is a bad thing that many from being rich should become poor; for men of ruined fortunes are sure to stir up revolutions. ...

Where there is equality of property, the possessor may be living either in luxury or penury. Clearly, then, the legislator ought not only to aim at the equalization of properties, but at moderation in their amount. Further, if he prescribe this moderate amount equally to all, he will be no nearer the mark; for it is not the possessions but the desires of mankind which require to be equalized, and this is impossible, unless a sufficient education is provided by the laws. ...

Moreover, civil troubles arise, not only out of the inequality of property, but out of the inequality of honor, though in opposite ways. For the common people quarrel about the inequality of property, the higher class about the equality of honor; as the poet says, “The bad and good alike in honor share.” ... There are crimes of which the motive is want; and for
these Phaleas expects to find a cure in the equalization of property, which will take away from a man the temptation to be a highwayman, because he is hungry or cold. But want is not the sole incentive to crime; men also wish to enjoy themselves and not to be in a state of desire - they wish to cure some desire, going beyond the necessities of life, which preys upon them. Nor is this the only reason - for they may desire superfluities in order to enjoy pleasures unaccompanied with pain, and therefore they commit crimes.

... The fact is that the greatest crimes are caused by excess and not by necessity. Men do not become tyrants in order that they may not suffer cold; and hence great is the honor bestowed, not on him who kills a thief, but on him who kills a tyrant. Thus we see that the institutions of Phaleas avail only against petty crimes.

... The equalization of property is one of the things that tend to prevent the citizens from quarreling. Not that the gain in this direction is very great. For the nobles will be dissatisfied because they think themselves worthy of more than an equal share of honors; and this is often found to be a cause of sedition and revolution. And the avarice of mankind is insatiable; at one time two obols was pay enough; but now, when this sum has become customary, men always want more and more without end; for it is of the nature of desire not to be satisfied, and most men live only for the gratification of it.

The beginning of reform is not so much to equalize property as to train the nobler sort of natures not to desire more, and to prevent the lower from getting more; that is to say, they must be kept down, but not ill-treated.

... VIII [omitted]

IX

In all governments, two points have to be considered: first, whether any particular law is good or bad, when compared with the perfect state; secondly, whether it is or is not consistent with the idea and character which the lawgiver has set before his citizens. That in a well-ordered state the citizens should have leisure and not have to provide for their daily wants is generally acknowledged, but there is a difficulty in seeing how this leisure is to be attained. ...

Besides, if there were no other difficulty, the treatment or management of slaves is a troublesome affair; for, if not kept in hand, they are insolent, and think that they are as good as their masters, and, if harshly treated, they hate and conspire against them. Now it is clear that when these are the results the citizens of a state have not found out the secret of managing their subject population.

Again, the license of the Lacedaemonian women defeats the intention of the Spartan constitution, and is adverse to the happiness of the state. For, a husband and wife being each a part of every family, the state may be considered as about equally divided into men and women; and, therefore, in those states in which the condition of the women is bad, half the city may be regarded as having no laws. And this is what has actually happened at Sparta. ... The old mythologer would seem to have been right in uniting Ares and Aphrodite, for all warlike races are prone to the love either of men or of women. This was exemplified among the Spartans in the days of their greatness; many things were managed by their women. But what difference does it make whether women rule, or the rulers are ruled by women? The result is the same. ...
a democracy will often not be a citizen in an oligarchy. Leaving out of consideration those who have been made citizens, or who have obtained the name of citizen any other accidental manner, we may say, first, that a citizen is not a citizen because he lives in a certain place, for resident aliens and slaves share in the place; nor is he a citizen who has no legal right except that of suing and being sued; for this right may be enjoyed under the provisions of a treaty. Nay, resident aliens in many places do not possess even such rights completely, for they are obliged to have a patron, so that they do but imperfectly participate in citizenship, and we call them citizens only in a qualified sense, as we might apply the term to children who are too young to be on the register, or to old men who have been relieved from state duties. ... Similar difficulties to those which I have mentioned may be raised and answered about deprived citizens and about exiles.

But the citizen whom we are seeking to define is a citizen in the strictest sense, against whom no such exception can be taken, and his special characteristic is that he shares in the administration of justice, and in offices. ... This is the most comprehensive definition of a citizen, and best suits all those who are generally so called. But we must not forget that things of which the underlying principles differ in kind, ... when regarded in this relation, nothing, or hardly anything, worth mentioning in common.

Now we see that governments differ in kind... The citizen then of necessity differs under each form of government; and our definition is best adapted to the citizen of a democracy; but not necessarily to other states. For in some states the people are not acknowledged, nor have they any regular assembly, but only extraordinary ones ...

The conception of the citizen now begins to clear up. He who has the power to take part in the deliberative or judicial administration of any state is said by us to be a citizens of that state; and, speaking generally, a state is a body of citizens sufficing for the purposes of life.

II

But in practice a citizen is defined to be one of whom both the parents are citizens; others insist on going further back; say to two or three or more ancestors. ...Some then raise the further question: How this third or fourth ancestor came to be a citizen? ... Yet the question is really simple, for, if according to the definition just given they shared in the government, they were citizens. This is a better definition than the other. For the words, ‘born of a father or mother who is a citizen,’ cannot possibly apply to the first inhabitants or founders of a state.

There is a greater difficulty in the case of those who have been made citizens after a revolution, as by Cleisthenes at Athens after the expulsion of the tyrants, for he enrolled in tribes many metics, both strangers and slaves. The doubt in these cases is, not who is, but whether he who is ought to be a citizen; and there will still be a furthering the state, whether a certain act is or is not an act of the state; for what ought not to be is what is false. Now, there are some who hold office, and yet ought not to hold office, whom we describe as ruling, but ruling unjustly. And the citizen was defined by the fact of his holding some kind of rule or office - he who holds a judicial or legislative office fulfills our definition of a citizen. It is evident, therefore, that the citizens about whom the doubt has arisen must be called citizens.

III

Whether they ought to be so or not is a question which is bound up with the previous inquiry. For a parallel question is raised respecting the state, whether a certain act is or is not an act of the state; for example, in the transition from an oligarchy or a tyranny to a democracy. In such cases persons refuse to fulfill their contracts or any other obligations, on the ground that the tyrant, and not the state, contracted them; they argue that some constitutions are established by force, and not for the sake of the common good.

But this would apply equally to democracies, for they too may be founded on violence, and then the acts of the democracy will be neither more nor less acts of the state in question than those of an oligarchy or of a tyranny. This question runs up into another: on what principle shall we ever say that the state is the same, or different?

It would be a very superficial view which considered only the place and the inhabitants (for the soil and the population may be separated, and some of the inhabitants may live in one place and some in another). This, however, is not a very serious difficulty; we need only remark that the word 'state' is ambiguous.

It is further asked: When are men, living in the same place, to be regarded as a single city - what is the limit? Certainly not the wall of the city, for you might surround all Peloponnesus with a wall...

Again, shall we say that while the race of inhabitants, as well as their place of abode, remain the same, the city is also the same, although the citizens are always dying and being born, as we call rivers and fountains the same, although the water is always flowing away and coming again? Or shall we say that the generations of men, like the rivers, are the same, but that the state changes? For, since the state is a partnership - of citizens in a constitution - when the form of government changes, then it may be supposed that the state is no longer the same. ... And in this manner we speak of every union or composition of elements as different when the form of their composition alters ... it is evident that the sameness of the state consists chiefly in the sameness of the constitution, and it may be called by the same, or not, whether the inhabitants are the same or entirely different. It is quite another question, whether a state ought or ought not to fulfill engagements when the form of government changes.

IV

There is a point nearly allied to the preceding: Whether the virtue of a good man and a good citizen is the same or not. But, before entering on this discussion, we must certainly first obtain some general notion of the virtue of the citizen. Like the sailor, the citizen is a member of a community. Now, sailors have different functions, for one of them is a rower, another a pilot, etc; and while the precise definition of each individual's virtue applies exclusively to him, there is, at the same time, a common definition applicable to them all. For they all have a common object, which is safety in navigation. Similarly, one citizen differs from another, but the salvation of the community is the common business of them all.

This community is the constitution; the virtue of the citizen must therefore be relative to the constitution of which he is a member. If, then, there are many forms of government, it is evident that there is not one single virtue of the good citizen which is perfect virtue. But we say that the good man is he who has one single virtue, which is perfect virtue. Hence it is evident that the good citizen need not of necessity possess the virtue which makes a good man.
The same question may also be approached by another road, from a consideration of the best constitution. If the state cannot be entirely composed of good men, and yet each citizen is expected to do his own business well, and must therefore have virtue, still inasmuch as all the citizens cannot be alike, the virtue of the citizen and of the good man cannot coincide. All must have the virtue of the good citizen - thus, and thus only, can the state be perfect; but they will not have the virtue of a good man, unless we assume that in the good state all the citizens must be good.

Again, the state, as composed of unlikes, may be compared to the living being: as the first elements into which a living being is resolved are soul and body, as soul is made up of rational principle and appetite, the family of husband and wife, property of master and slave, so of all these, as well as other dissimilar elements, the state is composed; and, therefore, the virtue of all the citizens cannot possibly be the same, any more than the excellence of the leader of a chorus is the same as that of the performer who stands by his side.

I have said enough to show why the two kinds of virtue cannot be absolutely and always the same. But will there then be no case in which the virtue of the good citizen and the virtue of the good man coincide? To this we answer that the good ruler is a good and wise man, and that he who would be a statesman must be a wise man.

Now, some persons say that even the education of the ruler should be of a special kind ... As though there were a special education needed by a ruler. If then the virtue of a good ruler is the same as that of a good man, and we assume further that the subject is a citizen as well as the ruler, the virtue of the good citizen and the virtue of the good man cannot be absolutely the same, although in some cases they may; for the virtue of a ruler differs from that of a citizen. ... But, on the other hand, it may be argued that men are praised for knowing both how to rule and how to obey, and he is said to be a citizen of approved virtue who is able to do both. Now if we suppose the virtue of a good man to be that which rules, and the virtue of the citizen to include ruling and obeying, it cannot be said that they are equally worthy of praise.

Since, then, it is sometimes thought that the ruler and the ruled must learn different things, but that the citizen must know and share in them both, the inference is obvious. There is, indeed, the rule of a master, which is concerned with menial offices - the master need not know how to perform these, but may employ others in the execution of them. Certainly the good man and the statesman and the good citizen ought not to learn the Crafts of inferior except for their own occasional use; if they habitually practice them, there will cease to be a distinction between master and slave.

This is not the rule of which we are speaking; but there is a rule of another kind, which is exercised by freemen and equals by birth - a constitutional rule, which the ruler must learn by obeying, as he would learn the duties of a general of cavalry by being under the orders of a general of cavalry, or the duties of a general of infantry by being under the orders of a general of infantry, and by having had the command of a regiment and of a company. It has been well said that 'he who has never learned to obey cannot be a good commander.' The two are not the same, but the good citizen ought to be capable of both; he should know how to govern like a free man, and how to obey like a freeman - these are the virtues of a citizen.

... Practical wisdom only is characteristic of the ruler: it would seem that all other virtues must equally belong to ruler and subject. The virtue of the subject is certainly not wisdom, but only true opinion; he may be compared to the maker of the flute, while his master is like the flute-player or user of the flute. From these considerations may be gathered the answer to the question, whether the virtue of the good man is the same as that of the good citizen, or different, and how far the same, and how far different.

V

There still remains one more question about the citizen: Is he only a true citizen who has a share of office, or is the mechanic to be included? If they who hold no office are to be deemed citizens, not every citizen can have this virtue of ruling and obeying; for this man is a citizen. And if none of the lower class are citizens, in which part of the state are they to be placed? For they are not resident aliens, and they are not foreigners.

May we not reply, that as far as this objection goes there is no more absurdity in excluding them than in excluding slaves and freedmen from any of the above-mentioned classes? It must be admitted that we cannot consider all those to be citizens who are necessary to the existence of the state; for example, children are not citizen equally with grown-up men, who are citizens absolutely, but children, not being grown up, are only citizens on a certain assumption. Nay, in ancient times, and among some nations the artisan class were slaves or foreigners, and therefore the majority of them are so now. The best form of state will not admit them to citizenship; but if they are admitted, then our definition of the virtue of a citizen will not apply to every citizen nor to every free man as such, but only to those who are freed from necessary services. The necessary people are either slaves who minister to the wants of individuals, or mechanics and laborers who are the servants of the community. These reflections carried a little further will explain their position; and indeed what has been said already is of itself, when understood, explanation enough.

Since there are many forms of government there must be many varieties of citizen and especially of citizens who are subjects; so that under some governments the mechanic and the laborer will be citizens, but not in others, as, for example, in aristocracy or the so-called government of the best (if there be such an one), in which honors are given according to virtue and merit; for no man can practice virtue who is living the life of a mechanic or laborer.

In oligarchies the qualification for office is high, and therefore no laborer can ever be a citizen; but a mechanic may, for an actual majority of them are rich. ...

Hence, as is evident, there are different kinds of citizens; and he is a citizen in the highest sense who shares in the honors of the state.

As to the question whether the virtue of the good man is the same as that of the good citizen, the considerations already adduced prove that in some states the good man and the good citizen are the same, and in others different. When they are the same it is not every citizen who is a good man, but only the statesman and those who have or may have, alone or in conjunction with others, the conduct of public affairs.

VI

Having determined these questions, we have next to consider whether there is only one form of government or many, and if many, what they are, and how many, and what are the
differences between them.

A constitution is the arrangement of magistracies in a state, especially of the highest of all. The government is everywhere sovereign in the state, and the constitution is in fact the government. For example, in democracies the people are supreme, but in oligarchies, the few; and, therefore, we say that these two forms of government also are different: and so in other cases.

First, let us consider what is the purpose of a state, and how many forms of government there are by which human society is regulated. We have already said, in the first part of this treatise, when discussing household management and the rule of a master, that man is by nature a political animal. And therefore, men, even when they do not require one another’s help, desire to live together; but they are also brought together by their common interests in proportion as they severally attain to any measure of well-being. This is certainly the chief end, both of individuals and of states. And also for the sake of mere life ... mankind meet together and maintain the political community. And we all see that men cling to life even at the cost of enduring great misfortune, seeming to find in life a natural sweetness and happiness.

There is no difficulty in distinguishing the various kinds of authority; they have been often defined already in discussions outside the school. The rule of a master, although the slave by nature and the master by nature have in reality the same interests, is nevertheless exercised primarily with a view to the interest of the master, but accidentally considers the slave, since, if the slave perish, the rule of the master perishes with him. On the other hand, the government of a wife and children and of a household, which we have called household management, is exercised in the first instance for the good of the governed or for the common good of both parties, but essentially for the good of the governed, as we see to be the case in medicine, gymnastic, and the arts in general, which are only accidentally concerned with the good of the artists themselves. ... And so in politics: when the state is framed upon the principle of equality and likeness, the citizens think that they ought to hold office by turns. Formerly, as is natural, every one would take his turn of service; and then again, somebody else would look after his interest, just as he, while in office, had looked after theirs. But nowadays, for the sake of the advantage which is to be gained from the public revenues and from office, men want to be always in office.

The conclusion is evident: that governments which have a regard to the common interest are constituted in accordance with strict principles of justice, and are therefore true forms; but those which regard only the interest of the rulers are all defective and perverted forms, for they are despotic, whereas a state is a community of freemen.

VII

Having determined these points, we have next to consider how many forms of government there are, and what they are; and in the first place what are the true forms, for when they are determined the perversions of them will at once be apparent. The words constitution and government have the same meaning, and the government, which is the supreme authority in states, must be in the hands of one, or of a few, or of the many. The true forms of government, therefore, are those in which the one, or the few, or the many, govern with a view to the common interest; but governments which rule with a view to the private interest, whether of the one or of the few, or of the many, are perversions.

For the members of a state, if they are truly citizens, ought to participate in its advantages.

Of forms of government in which one rules, we call that which regards the common interests, kingship or royalty; that in which more than one, but not many, rule, aristocracy; and it is so called, either because the rulers are the best men, or because they have at heart the best interests of the state and of the citizens. But when the citizens at large administer the state for the common interest, the government is called by the generic name - a constitution. ...

Of the above-mentioned forms, the perversions are as follows: of royalty, tyranny; of aristocracy, oligarchy; of constitutional government, democracy. For tyranny is a kind of monarchy which has in view the interest of the monarch only; oligarchy has in view the interest of the wealthy; democracy, of the needy: none of them the common good of all.

VIII

But there are difficulties about these forms of government, and it will therefore be necessary to state a little more at length the nature of each of them. For he who would make a philosophical study of the various sciences, and does not regard practice only, ought not to overlook or omit anything, but to set forth the truth in every particular. Tyranny, as I was saying, is monarchy exercising the rule of a master over the political society; oligarchy is when men of property have the government in their hands; democracy, the opposite, when the indigent, and not the men of property, are the rulers.

And here arises the first of our difficulties, and it relates to the distinction drawn. For democracy is said to be the government of the many. But what if the many are men of property and have the power in their hands? In like manner oligarchy is said to be the government of the few; but what if the poor are fewer than the rich, and have the power in their hands because they are stronger? In these cases the distinction which we have drawn between these different forms of government would no longer hold good.

Suppose, once more, that we add wealth to the few and poverty to the many ... if the only forms of government are the ones already mentioned, how shall we describe those other governments also just mentioned by us, in which the rich are the more numerous and the poor are the fewer, and both govern in their respective states?

The argument seems to show that, whether in oligarchies or in democracies, the number of the governing body, whether the greater number, as in a democracy, or the smaller number, as in an oligarchy, is an accident due to the fact that the rich everywhere are few, and the poor numerous. But if so, there is a misapprehension of the causes of the difference between them. For the real difference between democracy and oligarchy is poverty and wealth. Wherever men rule by reason of their wealth, whether they be few or many, that is an oligarchy, and where the poor rule, that is a democracy. But as a fact the rich are few and the poor many; for few are well-to-do, whereas freedom is enjoyed by all, and wealth and freedom are the grounds on which the oligarchical and democratical parties respectively claim power in the state.

IX

Let us begin by considering the common definitions of oligarchy and democracy, and what is justice oligarchical and
democratical. For all men cling to justice of some kind, but their conceptions are imperfect and they do not express the whole idea.

For example, justice is thought by them to be, and is, equality - not, however, for all, but only for equals. And inequality is thought to be, and is; justice; neither is this for all, but only for unequals. When the persons are omitted, then men judge erroneously.

The reason is that they are passing judgment on themselves, and most people are bad judges in their own case. ... For the one party, if they are unequal in one respect, for example wealth, consider themselves to be unequal in all; and the other party, if they are equal in one respect, for example free birth, consider themselves to be equal in all. But they leave out the capital point. For if men met and associated out of regard to wealth only, their share in the state would be proportioned to their property, and the oligarchical doctrine would then seem to carry the day. It would not be just that he who paid one mina should have the same share of a hundred minae, whether of the principal or of the profits, as he who paid the remaining ninety-nine. But a state exists for the sake of a good life, and not for the sake of life only: if life only were the object, slaves and brute animals might form a state, but they cannot, for they have no share in happiness or in a life of free choice.

Nor does a state exist for the sake of alliance and security from injustice, nor yet for the sake of exchange and mutual intercourse; for then the Tyrrhenians and the Carthaginians, and all who have commercial treaties with one another, would be the citizens of one state. True, they have agreements about imports, and engagements that they will do no wrong to one another, and written articles of alliance. But there are no magistrates common to the contracting parties who will enforce their engagements; different states have each their own magistracies.

Nor does one state care that the citizens of the other are such as they ought to be, nor see that those who come under the terms of the treaty do no wrong or wickedness at all, but only that they do no injustice to one another. Whereas, those who care for good government take into consideration virtue and vice in states. Whence it may be further inferred that virtue must be the care of a state which is truly so called, and not merely one which enjoys the name ...

This is obvious; for suppose distinct places, such as Corinth and Megara, to be brought together so that their walls touched, still they would not be one city, not even if the citizens had the right to intermarry, which is one of the rights peculiarly characteristic of states. Again, if men dwell at a distance from one another, but not so far off as to have no intercourse, and there were laws among them that they should not wrong each other in their exchanges, neither would this be a state.

Let us suppose that one man is a carpenter, another a husbandman, another a shoemaker, and so on, and that their number is ten thousand: nevertheless, if they have nothing in common but exchange, alliance, and the like, that would not constitute a state.

Why is this? Surely not because they are at a distance from one another: for even supposing that such a community were to meet in one place, but that each man had a house of his own, which was in a manner his state, and that they made alliance with one another, but only against evildoers; still an accurate thinker would not deem this to be a state, if their intercourse with one another was of the same character after as before their union.

It is clear then that a state is not a mere society, having a common place, established for the prevention of mutual crime and for the sake of exchange. These are conditions without which a state cannot exist; but all of them together do not constitute a state, which is a community of families and aggregations of families in well-being, for the sake of a perfect and self-sufficing life. Such a community can only be established among those who live in the same place and intermarry. Hence arise in cities family connections, brotherhoods, common sacrifices, amusements which draw men together. But these are created by friendship, for the will to live together is friendship. The end of the state is the good life, and these are the means towards it. And the state is the union of families and villages in a perfect and self-sufficing life, by which we mean a happy and honorable life.

Our conclusion, then, is that political society exists for the sake of noble actions, and not of mere companionship. Hence they who contribute most to such a society have a greater share in it than those who have the same or a greater freedom or nobility of birth but are inferior to them in political virtue; or than those who exceed them in wealth but are surpassed by them in virtue.

From what has been said it will be clearly seen that all the partisans of different forms of government speak of a part of justice only.

X

There is also a doubt as to what is to be the supreme power in the state: Is it the multitude? Or the wealthy? Or the good? Or the one best man? Or a tyrant? Any of these alternatives seems to involve disagreeable consequences. If the poor, for example, because they are more in number, divide among themselves the property of the rich - is not this unjust? No, by heaven (will be the reply), for the supreme authority justly willed it. But if this is not injustice, pray what is?

Again, when in the first division all has been taken, and the majority divide anew the property of the minority, is it not evident, if this goes on, that they will ruin the state? Yet surely, virtue is not the ruin of those who possess her, nor is justice destructive of a state; and therefore this law of confiscation clearly cannot be just. If it were, all the acts of a tyrant must of necessity be just; for he only coerces other men by superior power, just as the multitude coerce the rich.

But is it just then that the few and the wealthy should be the rulers? And what if they, in like manner, rob and plunder the people - is this just? If so, the other case will likewise be just. But there can be no doubt that all these things are wrong and unjust.

Then ought the good to rule and have supreme power? But in that case everybody else, being excluded from power, will be dishonored. For the offices of a state are posts of honor; and if one set of men always holds them, the rest must be deprived of them. Then will it be well that the one best man should rule? Nay, that is still more oligarchical, for the number of those who are dishonored is thereby increased.

Some one may say that it is bad in any case for a man, subject as he is to all the accidents of human passion, to have the supreme power, rather than the law. But what if the law itself be democratical or oligarchical, how will that help us out of our difficulties? Not at all; the same consequences will follow.

XI

Most of these questions may be reserved for another occasion. The principle that the multitude ought to be supreme rather than the few best is one that is maintained, and, though not free from difficulty, yet seems to contain an element of truth.
For the many, of whom each individual is but an ordinary person, when they meet together may very likely be better than the few good, if regarded not individually but collectively, just as a feast to which many contribute is better than a dinner provided out of a single purse. For each individual among the many has a share of virtue and prudence, and when they meet together, they become in a manner one man, who has many feet, and hands, and senses; that is a figure of their mind and disposition.

Hence the many are better judges than a single man of music and poetry; for some understand one part, and some another, and among them they understand the whole. There is a similar combination of qualities in good men, who differ from any individual of the many, as the beautiful are said to differ from those who are not beautiful, and works of art from realities, because in them the scattered elements are combined, although, if taken separately, the eye of one person or some other feature in another person would be fairer than in the picture. Whether this principle can apply to every democracy, and to all bodies of men, is not clear. Or rather, by heaven, in some cases it is impossible of application; for the argument would equally hold about brutes; and wherein, it will be asked, do some men differ from brutes?

But there may be bodies of men about whom our statement is nevertheless true. And if so, the difficulty which has been already raised, and also another which is akin to it - viz., what power should be assigned to the mass of freemen and citizens, who are not rich and have no personal merit - are both solved. There is still a danger in allowing them to share the great offices of state, for their folly will lead them into error, and their dishonesty into crime. But there is a danger also in not letting them share, for a state in which many poor men are excluded from office will necessarily be full of enemies.

The only way of escape is to assign to them some deliberative and judicial functions. For this reason Solon and certain other legislators give them the power of electing to offices, and of calling the magistrates to account, but they do not allow them to hold office singly. When they meet together their perceptions are quite good enough, and combined with the better class they are useful to the state (just as impure food when mixed with what is pure sometimes makes the entire mass more wholesome than a small quantity of the pure would be), but each individual, left to himself, forms an imperfect judgment.

On the other hand, the popular form of government involves certain difficulties. In the first place, it might be objected that he who can judge of the healing of a sick man would be one who could himself heal his disease ... But physicians are of three kinds: there is the ordinary practitioner, and there is the physician of the higher class, and thirdly the intelligent man who has studied the art: in all arts there is such a class; and we attribute the power of judging to them quite as much as to professors of the art.

Secondly, does not the same principle apply to elections? For a right election can only be made by those who have knowledge; those who know geometry, for example, will choose a geometrical sight and rightness, and those who know how to steer, a pilot; and, even if there be some occupations and arts in which private persons share in the ability to choose, they certainly cannot choose better than those who know. So that, according to this argument, neither the election of magistrates, nor the calling of them to account, should be entrusted to the many.

Yet possibly these objections are to a great extent met by our old answer, that if the people are not utterly degraded, although individually they may be worse judges than those who have special knowledge - as a body they are as good or better. Moreover, there are some arts whose products are not judged of solely, or best, by the artists themselves, namely those arts whose products are recognized even by those who do not possess the art; for example, the knowledge of the house is not limited to the builder only; the user, or, in other words, the master, of the house will be even a better judge than the builder ...

... That inferior persons should have authority in greater matters than the good would appear to be a strange thing, yet the election and calling to account of the magistrates is the greatest of all. And these, as I was saying, are functions which in some states are assigned to the people, for the assembly is supreme in all such matters. Yet persons of any age, and having but a small property qualification, sit in the assembly and deliberate and judge, although for the great officers of state, such as treasurers and generals, a high qualification is required.

This difficulty may be solved in the same manner as the preceding, and the present practice of democracies may be really defensible. For the power does not reside in the senator ... but in the senate, and the assembly, of which individual senators .. are only parts or members. And for this reason the many may claim to have a higher authority than the few; for the people, and the senate, and the courts consist of many persons, and their property collectively is greater than the property of one or of a few individuals holding great offices. But enough of this.

The discussion of the first question shows nothing so clearly as that laws, when good, should be supreme; and that the magistrate or magistrates should regulate those matters only on which the laws are unable to speak with precision owing to the difficulty of any general principle embracing all particulars. But what are good laws has not yet been clearly explained ... True forms of government will of necessity have just laws, and perverted forms of government will have unjust laws.

XII

In all sciences and arts the end is a good, and the greatest good and in the highest degree a good in the most authoritative of all - this is the political science of which the good is justice, in other words, the common interest.

All men think justice to be a sort of equality; and to a certain extent they agree in the philosophical distinctions which have been laid down by us about Ethics. For they admit that justice is a thing and has a relation to persons, and that equals ought to have equality. But there still remains a question: equality or inequality of what?

Here is a difficulty which calls for political speculation. For very likely some persons will say that offices of state ought to be unequally distributed according to superior excellence, in whatever respect, of the citizen, although there is no other difference between him and the rest of the community; for that those who differ in any one respect have different rights and claims. But, surely, if this is true, the complexion or height of a man, or any other advantage, will be a reason for his obtaining a greater share of political rights.

The error here lies upon the surface, and may be illustrated from the other arts and sciences. When a number of flute players are equal in their art, there is no reason why those of them who are better born should have better flutes given to them; for they will not play any better on the flute, and the superior instrument should be reserved for him who is the superior artist. ... For if there were a superior flute-player who was far inferior in birth and beauty, although either of these may be a greater good than the
art of flute-playing ... still he ought to have the best flutes given
to him, since the advantages of wealth and birth do not
contribute to excellence in flute-playing.

Moreover, upon this principle any good may be compared
with any other. [say, height and virtue] .. But since no such
comparison can be made, it is evident that there is good reason
why in politics men do not ground their claim to office on every
sort of inequality any more than in the arts. For if some be slow,
and others swift, that is no reason why the one should have little
and the others much; it is in gymnastics contests that such
excellence is rewarded. Whereas the rival claims of candidates for
office can only be based on the possession of elements which
enter into the composition of a state.

And therefore the noble, or freeborn, or rich, may with good
reason claim office; for holders of offices must be freemen and
taxpayers: a state can be no more composed entirely of poor men
than of slaves. But if wealth and freedom are necessary
elements, justice and valor are equally so; for without the former
qualities a state cannot exist at all, without the latter not well.

XIII

If the existence of the state is alone to be considered, then
it would seem that all, or some at least, of these claims are just;
but, if we take into account a good life, then, as I have already
said, education and virtue have superior claims. As, however,
those who are equal in one thing ought not to have an equal
share in all, nor those who are unequal in one thing to have an unequal
share in all, it is certain that all forms of government which rest
on either of these principles are perversions.

All men have a claim in a certain sense, as I have already
admitted, but all have not an absolute claim. The rich claim
because they have a greater share in the land, and land is the
common element of the state; also they are generally more
trustworthy in contracts. The free claim under the same title as
the noble; for they are nearly akin. For the noble are citizens in a
truer sense than the ignoble, and good birth is always valued in a
man's own home and country.

And those who are sprung from better ancestors are likely to
be better men, for nobility is excellence of race. Virtue, too, may
be truly said to have a claim, for justice has been acknowledged
by us to be a social virtue, and it implies all others. Again, the
many may urge their claim against the few; for, when taken
collectively, and compared with the few, they are stronger and
richer and better. But, what if the good, the rich, the noble, and
the other classes who make up a state, are all living together in the
same city? Will there, or will there not, be any doubt who
shall rule?

There is no doubt at all in determining who ought to rule in
each of the above-mentioned forms of government. For states are
characterized by differences in their governing bodies - one of
them has a government of the rich, another of the virtuous, and
so on. But a difficulty arises when all these elements coexist.

How are we to decide?

Suppose the virtuous to be very few in number: may we
consider their numbers in relation to their duties, and ask whether
they are enough to administer the state, or so many as will make
up a state? Objections may be urged against all the aspirants to
political power. For those who found their claims on wealth or
family might be thought to have no basis of justice; on this
principle, if any one person were richer than all the rest, it is clear
that he ought to be ruler of them. In like manner he who is very
distinguished by his birth ought to have the superiority over all
those who claim on the ground that they are freeborn. In an
aristocracy, or government of the best, a like difficulty occurs
about virtue; for if one citizen be better than the other members
of the government, however good they may be, he too, upon the
same principle of justice, should rule over them. And if the
people are to be supreme because they are stronger than the few,
then if one man, or more than one, but not a majority, is stronger
than the many, they ought to rule, and not the many.

All these considerations appear to show that none of the
principles on which men claim to rule and to hold all other men
in subjection to them are strictly right. To those who claim to be
masters of the government on the ground of their virtue or their
wealth, the many might fairly answer that they themselves are
often better and richer than the few - not individually, but
collectively.

And another ingenious objection which is sometimes put
forward may be met in a similar manner. Some persons doubt
whether the legislator who desires to make the most just laws
ought to legislate with a view to the good of the higher classes or
of the many, when the case which we have mentioned occurs. ...

A citizen is one who shares in governing and being
governed. He differs under different forms of government, but in
the best state he is one who is able and willing to be governed
and to govern with a view to the life of virtue. If, however, there
be some one person, or more than one, although not enough to
make up the full complement of a state, whose virtue is so
preeminent that the virtues or the political capacity of all the rest
admit of no comparison with his or theirs, he or they can be no
longer regarded as part of a state; for justice will not be done to
the superior, if he is reckoned only as the equal of those who are
so far inferior to him in virtue and in political capacity. Such an
one may truly be deemed a God among men.

Hence we see that legislation is necessarily concerned only
with those who are equal in birth and in capacity; and that for
men of preeminent virtue there is no law - they are themselves a
law. Any would be ridiculous who attempted to make laws for
them: they would probably retort what, in the fable of
Antisthenes, the lions said to the hares, when in the council of
the beasts the latter began haranguing and claiming equality for
all. And for this reason democratic states have instituted
ostracism; equality is above all things their aim, and therefore
they ostracized and banished from the city for a time those who
seemed to predominate too much through their wealth, or the
number of their friends, or through any other political influence.

... Ostracism is a measure which acts by disabling and
banishing the most prominent citizens. Great powers do the same
to whole cities and nations, as the Athenians did to the Samians,
Chians, and Lesbians; no sooner had they obtained a firm grasp of
the empire, than they humbled their allies contrary to treaty ...

The problem is a universal one, and equally concerns all
forms of government, true as well as false; for, although
perverted forms with a view to their own interests may adopt this
policy, those which seek the common interest do so likewise.
The same thing may be observed in the arts and sciences; for the
painter will not allow the figure to have a foot which, however
beautiful, is not in proportion, nor will the shipbuilder allow the
stem or any other part of the vessel to be unduly large, any more
than the chorus-master will allow any one who sings louder or
better than all the rest to sing in the choir.

Monarchs, too, may practice compulsion and still live in
harmony with their cities, if their own government is for the
interest of the state. Hence where there is an acknowledged
superiority the argument in favor of ostracism is based upon a
kind of political justice. It would certainly be better that the legislator should from the first so order his state as to have no need of such a remedy. But if the need arises, the next best thing is that he should endeavor to correct the evil by this or some similar measure.

The principle, however, has not been fairly applied in states; for, instead of looking to the good of their own constitution, they have used ostracism for factious purposes. ...

In the perfect state there would be great doubts about the use of it, not when applied to excess in strength, wealth, popularity, or the like, but when used against some one who is preeminent in virtue - what is to be done with him? Mankind will not say that such an one is to be expelled and exiled; on the other hand, he ought not to be a subject - that would be as if mankind should claim to rule over Zeus, dividing his offices among them.

The only alternative is that all should joyfully obey such a ruler, according to what seems to be the order of nature, and that men like him should be kings in their state for life.

XIV

The preceding discussion, by a natural transition, leads to the consideration of royalty, which we admit to be one of the true forms of government. Let us see whether in order to be well governed a state or country should be under the rule of a king or under some other form of government; and whether monarchy, although good for some, may not be bad for others.

But first we must determine whether there is one species of royalty or many. It is easy to see that there are many, and that the manner of government is not the same in all of them.

Of royalties according to law, (1) the Lacedaemonian is thought to answer best to the true pattern; but there the royal power is not absolute, except when the kings go on an expedition, and then they take the command. ...The kingly office is in truth a kind of generalship, irresponsible and perpetual. ... This, then, is one form of royalty - a generalship for life: and of such royalties some are hereditary and others elective.

(2) There is another sort of monarchy not uncommon among the barbarians, which nearly resembles tyranny. But this is both legal and hereditary. For barbarians, being more servile in character than Hellenes, and Asiatics than Europeans, do not rebel against a despotic government. Such royalties have the nature of tyrannies because the people are by nature slaves; but there is no danger of their being overthrown, for they are hereditary and legal. Wherefore also their guards are such as a king and not such as a tyrant would employ, that is to say, they are composed of citizens, whereas the guards of tyrants are mercenaries. For kings rule according to law over voluntary subjects, but tyrants over involuntary; and the one are guarded by their fellow-citizens the others are guarded against them.

There was a third (3) which existed in ancient Hellas, called dictatorship. This may be defined generally as an elective tyranny, which, like the barbarian monarchy, is legal, but differs from it in not being hereditary ...These forms of government have always had the character of tyrannies, because they possess despotic power, but inasmuch as they are elective and acquiesced in by their subjects, they are kingly.

(4) There is a fourth species of kingly rule - that of the heroic times - which was hereditary and legal, and was exercised over willing subjects. For the first chiefs were benefactors of the people in arts or arms ...

(5) There is a fifth form of kingly rule in which one has the disposal of all, just as each nation or each state has the disposal of public matters; this form corresponds to the control of a household. For as household management is the kingly rule of a house, so kingly rule is the household management of a city, or of a nation, or of many nations.

XV

Of these forms we need only consider two, the Lacedaemonian and the absolute royalty; for most of the others lie between them, having less power than the last, and more than the first. Thus the inquiry is reduced to two points: first, is it advantageous to the state that there should be a perpetual general, and if so, should the office be confined to one family, or open to the citizens in turn? Secondly, is it well that a single man should have the supreme power in all things?

The first question falls under the head of laws rather than of constitutions; for perpetual generalship might equally exist under any form of government, so that this matter may be dismissed for the present. The other kind of royalty is a sort of constitution; this we have now to consider, and briefly to run over the difficulties involved in it.

We will begin by inquiring whether it is more advantageous to be ruled by the best man or by the best laws. The advocates of royalty maintain that the laws speak only in general terms, and cannot provide for circumstances; and that for any science to abide by written rules is absurd. In Egypt the physician is allowed to alter his treatment after the fourth day, but if sooner, he takes the risk. Hence it is clear that a government acting according to written laws is plainly not the best.

Yet surely the ruler cannot dispense with the general principle which exists in law; and this is a better ruler which is free from passion than that in which it is innate. Whereas the law is passionless, passion must ever sway the heart of man. Yes, it may be replied, but then on the other hand an individual will be better able to deliberate in particular cases.

The best man, then, must legislate, and laws must be passed, but these laws will have no authority when they miss the mark, though in all other cases retaining their authority. But when the law cannot determine a point at all, or not well, should the one best man or should all decide? According to our present practice assemblies meet, sit in judgment, deliberate, and decide, and their judgments an relate to individual cases. Now any member of the assembly, taken separately, is certainly inferior to the wise man. But the state is made up of many individuals. And as a feast to which all the guests contribute is better than a banquet furnished by a single man, so a multitude is a better judge of many things than any individual.

Again, the many are more incorruptible than the few; they are like the greater quantity of water which is less easily corrupted than a little. The individual is liable to be overcome by anger or by some other passion, and then his judgment is necessarily perverted; but it is hardly to be supposed that a great number of persons would all get into a passion and go wrong at the same moment.

Let us assume that they are the freemen, and that they never act in violation of the law, but fill up the gaps which the law is obliged to leave. Or, if such virtue is scarcely attainable by the multitude, we need only suppose that the majority are good men and good citizens, and ask which will be the more incorruptible, the one good ruler, or the many who are all good? Will not the many?

But, you will say, there may be parties among them, whereas the one man is not divided against himself. To which we
may answer that their character is as good as his. If we call the
rule of many men, who are all of them good, aristocracy, and the
rule of one man royalty, then aristocracy will be better for states
than royalty, whether the government is supported by force or
not, provided only that a number of men equal in virtue can be
found.

The first governments were kingships, probably for this
reason, because of old, when cities were small, men of eminent
virtue were few. ... But when many persons equal in merit arose,
no longer enduring the preeminence of one, they desired to have a
commonwealth, and set up a constitution. The ruling class soon
deteriorated and enriched themselves out of the public treasury;
riches became the path to honor, and so oligarchies naturally
grew up. These passed into tyrannies and tyrannies into
democracies; for love of gain in the ruling classes was always
tending to diminish their number, and so to strengthen the
masses, who in the end set upon their masters and established
democracies. Since cities have increased in size, no other form of
government appears to be any longer even easy to establish.

Even supposing the principle to be maintained that kingly
power is the best thing for states, how about the family of the
king? Are his children to succeed him? If they are no better than
anybody else, that will be mischievous. But, says the lover of
royalty, the king, though he might, will not hand on his power
to his children. That, however, is hardly to be expected, and is
too much to ask of human nature. There is also a difficulty about
the force which he is to employ; should a king have guards about
him by whose aid he may be able to coerce the refractory? If not,
how will he administer his kingdom?

Even if he be the lawful sovereign who does nothing
arbitrarily or contrary to law, still he must have some force
wherewith to maintain the law. In the case of a limited monarchy
there is not much difficulty in answering this question; the king
must have such force as will be more than a match for one or
more individuals, but not so great as that of the people ...

XVI

At this place in the discussion there impedes the inquiry
respecting the king who acts solely according to his own will.
The so-called limited monarchy, or kingship according to law, as
I have already remarked, is not a distinct form of government, for
under all governments, as, for example, in a democracy or
aristocracy, there may be a general holding office for life, and one
person is often made supreme over the administration of a state.

Now, absolute monarchy, or the arbitrary rule of a sovereign
over an the citizens, in a city which consists of equals, is thought
by some to be quite contrary to nature; it is argued that those
who are by nature equals must have the same natural right and
worth, and that for unequal have an equal share, or for equals
to have an uneven share, in the offices of state, is as bad as for
different bodily constitutions to have the same food and clothing.
Wherefore it is thought to be just that among equals every one be
ruled as well as rule, and therefore that each should have a turn.

We thus arrive at law; for an order of succession implies law.
And the rule of the law, it is argued, is preferable to that of any
individual. On the same principle, even if it be better for certain
individuals to govern, they should be made only guardians and
ministers of the law. For magistrates there must be - this is
admitted; but then men say that to give authority to any one man
when all are equal is unjust. Nay, there may indeed be cases
which the law seems unable to determine, but in such cases can a
man? Nay, it will be replied, the law trains officers for this
express purpose, and appoints them to determine matters which
are left undecided by it, to the best of their judgment. Further, it
permits them to make any amendment of the existing laws which
experience suggests. Therefore he who bids the law rule may be
deemed to bid God and Reason alone rule, but he who bids man
rule adds an element of the beast; for desire is a wild beast, and
passion perverts the minds of rulers, even when they are the best of
men.

The law is reason unaffected by desire. We are told that a
patient should call in a physician; he will not get better if he is
doctor out of a book. But the parallel of the arts is clearly not
in point; for the physician does nothing contrary to rule from
motives of friendship; he only cures a patient and takes a fee;
whereas magistrates do many things from spite and partiality.
And, indeed, if a man suspected the physician of being in league
with his enemies to destroy him for a bribe, he would rather have
recourse to the book. But certainly physicians, when they are
sick, call in other physicians, and training-masters, when they are
in training, other training-masters, as if they could not judge
judge truly about their own case and might be influenced by their
feelings.

Hence it is evident that in seeking for justice men seek for
the mean or neutral, for the law is the mean. Again, customary
laws have more weight, and relate to more important matters,
than written laws, and a man may be a safer ruler than the written
law, but not safer than the customary law.

Again, it is by no means easy for one man to superintend
many things; he will have to appoint a number of subordinates,
and what difference does it make whether these subordinates
always existed or were appointed by him because he needed
them? If, as I said before, the good man has a right to rule
because he is better, still two good men are better than one ...

And at this day there are magistrates, for example judges,
who have authority to decide some matters which the law is
unable to determine, since no one doubts that the law would
command and decide in the best manner whatever it could. But
some things can, and other things cannot, be comprehended
under the law, and this is the origin of the next question -
whether the best law or the best man should rule. For matters of
detail about which men deliberate cannot be included in
legislation.

Nor does any one deny that the decision of such matters
must be left to man, but it is argued that there should be many
judges, and not one only. For every ruler who has been trained
by the law judges well; and it would surely seem strange that a
person should see better with two eyes, or hear better with two
ears, or act better with two hands or feet, than many with many;
indeed, it is already the practice of kings to make to themselves
many eyes and ears and hands and feet. For they make colleagues
of those who are the friends of themselves and their governments.
They must be friends of the monarch and of his government; if
not his friends, they will not do what he wants; but friendship
implies likeness and equality; and, therefore, if he thinks that his
friends ought to rule, he must think that those who are equal to
himself and like himself ought to rule equally with himself.
These are the principal controversies relating to monarchy.

XVII

But may not all this be true in some cases and not in
others? For there is by nature both a justice and an advantage
appropriate to the rule of a master, another to kingly rule, another
to constitutional rule; but there is none naturally appropriate to
Having arrived at these conclusions, we must proceed to speak of and the same good showed ruled, persons, and this question, preeminence whole or this must hint at government; superior man, right man weighs, or at least, to the best, (for the absolutely best must suit that which is by nature best and best furnished with the means of life), and also what common form of training is adapted to the great majority of men (4). And if a man does not desire the best habit of body, or the greatest skill in gymnastics, which might be attained by him, still the trainer or the teacher of gymnastic should be able to impart any lower degree of either (3). The same principle equally holds in medicine and shipbuilding, and the making of clothes, and in the arts generally. Hence it is obvious that government too is the subject of a single science, which has to consider what government is best and of what sort it must be, to be most in accordance with our aspirations, if there were no external impediment, and also what kind of government is adapted to particular states. For the best is often unattainable, and therefore the true legislator and statesman ought to be acquainted, not only with (1) that which is best in the abstract, but also with (2) that which is best relatively to circumstances. We should be able further to say how a state may be constituted under any given conditions (3); both how it is originally formed and, when formed, how it may be longest preserved; the supposed state being so far from having the best constitution that it is unprovided even with the conditions necessary for the best; neither is it the best under the circumstances, but of an inferior type. He ought, moreover, to know (4) the form of government which is best suited to states in general; for political writers, although they have excellent ideas, are often impractical. We should consider, not only what form of government is best, but also what is possible and what is easily attainable by all.

There are some who would have none but the most perfect; for this many natural advantages are required. Others, again, speak of a more attainable form, and, although they reject the constitution under which they are living, they extol some one in particular, for example the Lacedaemonian. Any change of government which has to be introduced should be one which men, starting from their existing constitutions, will be both willing and able to adopt, since there is quite as much trouble in the reformation of an old constitution as in the establishment of a new one, just as to unlearn is as hard as to learn. And therefore, in addition to the qualifications of the statesman already mentioned, he should be able to find remedies for the defects of existing constitutions, as has been said before. This he cannot do unless he knows how many forms of government there are.

It is often supposed that there is only one kind of democracy and one of oligarchy. But this is a mistake; and, in order to avoid such mistakes, we must ascertain what differences there are in the constitutions of states, and in how many ways they are combined. The same political insight will enable a man to know which laws are the best, and which are suited to different constitutions; for the laws are, and ought to be, relative to the constitution, and not the constitution to the laws.

A constitution is the organization of offices in a state, and determines what is to be the governing body, and what is the end of each community. But laws are not to be confounded with the
principles of the constitution; they are the rules according to which the magistrates should administer the state, and proceed against offenders. So that we must know the varieties, and the number of varieties, of each form of government, if only with a view to making laws. For the same laws cannot be equally suited to all oligarchies or to all democracies, since there is certainly more than one form both of democracy and of oligarchy.

II

... Of kingly rule and of aristocracy, we have already spoken, for the inquiry into the perfect state is the same thing with the discussion of the two forms thus named, since both imply a principle of virtue provided with external means. We have already determined in what aristocracy and kingly rule differ from one another, and when the latter should be established.

In what follows we have to describe the so-called constitutional government, which bears the common name of all constitutions, and the other forms, tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy. It is obvious which of the three perversions is the worst, and which is the next in badness. That which is the perversion of the first and most divine is necessarily the worst. And just as a royal rule, if not a mere name, must exist by virtue of some great personal superiority in the king, so tyranny, which is the worst of governments, is necessarily the farthest removed from a well-constituted form; oligarchy is little better, for it is a long way from aristocracy, and democracy is the most tolerable of the three.

A writer [Plato] who preceded me has already made these distinctions, but his point of view is not the same as mine. For he lays down the principle that when all the constitutions are good (the oligarchy and the rest being virtuous), democracy is the worst, but the best when all are bad. Whereas we maintain that they are in any case defective, and that one oligarchy is not to be accounted better than another, but only less bad.

Not to pursue this question further at present, let us begin by determining

(1) how many varieties of constitution there are (since of democracy and oligarchy there are several);
(2) what constitution is the most generally acceptable, and what is eligible in the next degree after the perfect state; and besides this what other there is which is aristocratical and well-constituted, and at the same time adapted to states in general;
(3) of the other forms of government to whom each is suited. For democracy may meet the needs of some better than oligarchy, and conversely. In the next place

(4) we have to consider in what manner a man ought to proceed who desires to establish some one among these various forms, whether of democracy or of oligarchy; and lastly,
(5) having briefly discussed these subjects to the best of our power, we will endeavor to ascertain the modes of ruin and preservation both of constitutions generally and of each separately, and to what causes they are to be attributed.

III

The reason why there are many forms of government is that every state contains many elements. In the first place we see that all states are made up of families, and in the multitude of citizen there must be some rich and some poor, and some in a middle condition; the rich are heavy-armed, and the poor not. Of the common people, some are husbandmen, and some traders, and some artisans. There are also among the notables differences of wealth and property - for example, in the number of horses which they keep, for they cannot afford to keep them unless they are rich. And therefore in old times the cities whose strength lay in their cavalry were oligarchies, and they used cavalry in wars against their neighbors... Besides differences of wealth there are differences of rank and merit, and there are some other elements which were mentioned by us when in treating of aristocracy we enumerated the essentials of a state. Of these elements, sometimes all, sometimes the lesser and sometimes the greater number, have a share in the government.

It is evident then that there must be many forms of government, differing in kind, since the parts of which they are composed differ from each other in kind. For a constitution is an organization of offices, which all the citizens distribute among themselves, according to the power which different classes possess, for example the rich or the poor, or according to some principle of equality which includes both. There must therefore be as many forms of government as there are modes of arranging the offices, according to the superiorities and differences of the parts of the state.

There are generally thought to be two principal forms... For aristocracy is considered to be a kind of oligarchy, as being the rule of a few, and the so-called constitutional government to be really a democracy... But in either case the better and more exact way is to distinguish, as I have done, the one or two which are true forms, and to regard the others as perversions, whether of the most perfectly tempered mode or of the best form of government: we may compare the severer and more overpowering modes to the oligarchical forms, and the more relaxed and gentler ones to the democratic.

IV

It must not be assumed, as some are fond of saying, that democracy is simply that form of government in which the greater number are sovereign, for in oligarchies, and indeed in every government, the majority rules; nor again is oligarchy that form of government in which a few are sovereign. Suppose the whole population of a city to be 1300, and that of these 1000 are rich, and do not allow the remaining 300 who are poor, but free, and in an other respects their equals, a share of the government; no one will say that this is a democracy. In like manner, if the poor were few and the masters of the rich who outnumber them, no one would ever call such a government, in which the rich majority have no share of office, an oligarchy. Therefore we should rather say that democracy is the form of government in which the free are rulers, and oligarchy in which the rich; it is only an accident that the free are the many and the rich are the few....

And yet oligarchy and democracy are not sufficiently distinguished merely by these two characteristics of wealth and freedom. Both of them contain many other elements, and therefore we must carry our analysis further, and say that the government is not a democracy in which the freemen, being few in number, rule over the many who are not free... Neither is it a democracy when the rich have the government because they exceed in number... But the form of government is a democracy when the free, who are also poor and the majority, govern, and an oligarchy when the rich and the noble govern, they being at the same time few in number.

... [S]tates, as I have repeatedly said, are composed, not of one, but of many elements. One element is the food-producing class, who are called husbandmen; a second, the mechanics who
practice the arts without which a city cannot exist.... Third are the traders, who are engaged in buying and selling. A fourth class is that of the serfs or laborers. The warriors make up the fifth class, and they are as necessary as any of the others, if the country is not to be the slave of every invader. For how can a state which has any title to the name be of a slavish nature? The state is independent and self-sufficing, but a slave is the reverse of independent.

[Hence we see that this subject, though ingeniously, has not been satisfactorily treated in the Republic.] Socrates ... does not admit into the state a military class until the country has increased in size, and is beginning to encroach on its neighbor's land, whereupon they go to war. Yet there must be some who will dispense justice and determine what is just. ... The higher as well as the lower elements are to be equally considered parts of the state, and if so, the military element at any rate must be included. There are also the wealthy who minister to the state with their property; these form the seventh class. The eighth class is that of magistrates and of officers; for the state cannot exist without rulers. And therefore some must be able to take office and to serve the state, either always or in turn.

There only remains the class of those who deliberate and who judge between disputants; we were just now distinguishing them. If presence of all these elements, and their fair and equitable organization, is necessary to states, then there must also be persons who have the ability of statesmen.

Different functions appear to be often combined in the same individual; for example, the warrior may also be a husbandman, or an artisan; or, again, the councilor a judge. And all claim to possess political ability, and think that they are quite competent to fill most offices. But the same persons cannot be rich and poor at the same time. For this reason the rich and the poor are regarded in an especial sense as parts of a state. Again, because the rich are generally few in number, while the poor are many, they appear to be antagonistic, and as the one or the other prevails they form the government. Hence arises the common opinion that there are two kinds of government—democracy and oligarchy.

I have already explained that there are many forms of constitution, and to what causes the variety is due. Let me now show that there are different forms both of democracy and oligarchy, as will indeed be evident from what has preceded. For both in the common people and in the notables various classes are included; of the common people, there are husbandmen, artisans, traders, seafarers (some engaged in war, others in trade, as ferrymen or as fishermen.) In many places any one of these classes forms quite a large population. ... To the classes already mentioned may be added day-laborers ... and there may be other classes as well. The notables again may be divided according to their wealth, birth, virtue, education, and similar differences.

Of forms of democracy first comes that which is said to be based strictly on equality. In such a democracy the law says that it is just for the poor to have no more advantage than the rich; and that neither should be masters, but both equal. For if liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost. And since the people are the majority, and the opinion of the majority is decisive, such a government must necessarily be a democracy. Here then is one sort of democracy.

There is another, in which the magistrates are elected according to a certain property qualification, but a low one; he who has the required amount of property has a share in the government, but he who loses his property loses his rights. Another kind is that in which all the citizens who are under no disqualification share in the government, but still the law is supreme. In another, everybody, if he be only a citizen, is admitted to the government, but the law is supreme as before. A fifth form of democracy, in other respects the same, is that in which, not the law, but the multitude, have the supreme power, and supersede the law by their decrees. This is a state of affairs brought about by the demagogues. For in democracies which are subject to the law the best citizens hold the first place, and there are no demagogues; but where the laws are not supreme, there demagogues spring up.

For the people becomes a monarch, and is many in one; and the many have the power in their hands, not as individuals, but collectively. Homer says that “it is not good to have a rule of many,” but whether he means corporate rule, or the rule of many individuals, is uncertain. At all events this sort of democracy, which is now a monarch, and no longer under the control of law, seeks to exercise monarchical sway, and grows into a despot; the flatterer is held in honor; this sort of democracy being relatively to other democracies what tyranny is to other forms of monarchy.

The spirit of both is the same, and they alike exercise a despotic rule over the better citizens. The decrees of the demos correspond to the edicts of the tyrant; and the demagogue is to the one what the flatterer is to the other. Both have great power; the flatterer with the tyrant, the demagogue with democracies of the kind which we are describing. The demagogues make the decrees of the people override the laws, by referring all things to the popular assembly. And therefore they grow great, because the people have an things in their hands, and they hold in their hands the votes of the people, who are too ready to listen to them.

Further, those who have any complaint to bring against the magistrates say, ‘Let the people be judges’; the people are too happy to accept the invitation; and so the authority of every office is undermined.

Such a democracy is fairly open to the objection that it is not a constitution at all; for where the laws have no authority, there is no constitution. The law ought to be supreme over all, and the magistrates should judge of particulars, and only this should be considered a constitution. So that if democracy be a real form of government, the sort of system in which all things are regulated by decrees is clearly not even a democracy in the true sense of the word, for decrees relate only to particulars.

These then are the different kinds of democracy.

V

Of oligarchies, too, there are different kinds: one is where the poor, although they form the majority, have no share in the government ... Another sort is when there is a qualification for office, but a high one, and the vacancies in the governing body are filled by co-optation. If the election is made out of all the qualified persons, a constitution of this kind inclines to an aristocracy, if out of a privileged class, to an oligarchy. Another sort of oligarchy is when the son succeeds the father. There is a fourth form, likewise hereditary, in which the magistrates are supreme and not the law. Among oligarchies this is what tyranny is among monarchies, and the last-mentioned form of democracy among democracies; and in fact this sort of oligarchy receives the name of a dynasty (or rule of powerful families). These are the different sorts of oligarchies and democracies.

It should, however, be remembered that in many states the constitution which is established by law, although not
democratic, owing to the education and habits of the people may be administered democratically, and conversely in other states the established constitution may incline to democracy, but may be administered in an oligarchical spirit. This most often happens after a revolution: for governments do not change at once; at first the dominant party are content with encroaching a little upon their opponents. The laws which existed previously continue in force, but the authors of the revolution have the power in their hands.

VI

... So, there are many different kinds of democracies and of oligarchies. For it is evident that either all the classes whom we mentioned must share in the government, or some only and not others...

[details omitted - JN]

VII

There are still two forms besides democracy and oligarchy; one of them is universally recognized and included among the four principal forms of government, which are said to be (1) monarchy, (2) oligarchy, (3) democracy, and (4) the so-called aristocracy or government of the best. But there is also a fifth, which retains the generic name of polity or constitutional government; this is not common, and therefore has not been noticed by writers who attempt to enumerate the different kinds of government; like Plato, in their books about the state, they recognize four only.

The term 'aristocracy' is rightly applied to the form of government which is described in the first part of our treatise; for that only can be rightly called aristocracy which is a government formed of the best men absolutely, and not merely of men who are good when tried by any given standard. In the perfect state the good man is absolutely the same as the good citizen; whereas in other states the good citizen is only good relatively to his own form of government.

... VIII

I have yet to speak of the so-called polity and of tyranny. I put them in this order, not because a polity or constitutional government is to be regarded as a perversion any more than the above mentioned aristocracies. The truth is, that they are under short of the most perfect form of government, and so they are reckoned among perversions; but the really perverted forms are perversions of these, as I said in the original discussion. Last of all I will speak of tyranny, which I place last in the series because I am inquiring into the constitutions of states, and this is the very reverse of a constitution.

... Polity or constitutional government may be described generally as a fusion of oligarchy and democracy; but the term is usually applied to those forms of government which incline towards democracy, and the term aristocracy to those which incline towards oligarchy, because birth and education are commonly the accompaniments of wealth. Moreover, the rich already possess the external advantages the want of which is a temptation to crime, and hence they are called noblemen and gentlemen. And inasmuch as aristocracy seeks to give predominance to the best of the citizens, people say also of oligarchies that they are composed of noblemen and gentlemen. Now it appears to be an impossible thing that the state which is governed by the best citizens but by the worst should be well-governed, and equally impossible that the state which is ill-governed should be governed by the best.

But we must remember that good laws, if they are not obeyed, do not constitute good government. Hence there are two parts of good government; one is the actual obedience of citizens to the laws, the other part is the goodness of the laws which they obey; they may obey bad laws as well as good. And there may be a further subdivision; they may obey either the best laws which are attainable to them, or the best absolutely.

The distribution of offices according to merit is a special characteristic of aristocracy, for the principle of an aristocracy is virtue, as wealth is of an oligarchy, and freedom of a democracy. In all of them there of course exists the right of the majority, and whatever seems good to the majority of those who share in the government has authority.

Now in most states the form called polity exists, for the fusion goes no further than the attempt to unite the freedom of the poor and the wealth of the rich, who commonly take the place of the noble. But as there are three grounds on which men claim an equal share in the government, freedom, wealth, and virtue (for the fourth or good birth is the result of the two last, being only ancient wealth and virtue), it is clear that the admixture of the two elements, that is to say, of the rich and poor, is to be called a polity or constitutional government; and the union of the three is to be called aristocracy or the government of the best, and more than any other form of government, except the true and ideal, has a right to this name.

Thus, polities and aristocracies are, plainly, not very unlike.

IX

... There is a true union of oligarchy and democracy when the same state may be termed either a democracy or an oligarchy; those who use both names evidently feel that the fusion is complete. Such a fusion there is also in the mean; for both extremes appear in it. ...

In a well attempted polity there should appear to be both elements and yet neither; also the government should rely on itself, and not on foreign aid, and on itself not through the good will of a majority - they might be equally well-disposed when there is a vicious form of government - but through the general willingness of all classes in the state to maintain the constitution.

Enough of the manner in which a constitutional government, and in which the so-called aristocracies ought to be framed.

X

Of the nature of tyranny I have still to speak, in order that it may have its place in our inquiry - although there is not much to be said about it. ...

When speaking of royalty we also spoke of two forms of tyranny, which are both according to law, and therefore easily pass into royalty. Among barbarians there are elected monarchs who exercise a despotic power;...they are, as I said before, royal, in so far as the monarch rules according to law over willing subjects; but they are tyrannical in so far as he is despotic and rules according to his own fancy. There is also a third kind of tyranny, which is the most typical form, and is the counterpart of the perfect monarchy. This tyranny is just that arbitrary power of an individual which is responsible to no one, and governs all
alike, whether equals or better, with a view to its own advantage, not to that of its subjects, and therefore against their will. No freeman, if he can escape from it, will endure such a government.

XI

We have now to inquire what is the best constitution for most states, and the best life for most men, neither assuming a standard of virtue which is above ordinary persons, nor an education which is exceptionally favored by nature and circumstances, nor yet an ideal state which is an aspiration only, but having regard to the life in which the majority are able to share, and to the form of government which states in general can attain... And in fact the conclusion at which we arrive respecting all these forms rests upon the same grounds. For if what was said in the Ethics is true, that the happy life is the life according to virtue lived without impediment, and that virtue is a mean, then the life which is in a mean, and in a mean attainable by every one, must be the best. And the same principles of virtue and vice are characteristic of cities and of constitutions; for the constitution is in a figure the life of the city.

Now in all states there are three elements: one class is very rich, another very poor, and a third in a mean. It is admitted that moderation and the mean are best, and therefore it will clearly be best to possess the gifts of fortune in moderation; for in that condition of life men are most ready to follow rational principle.

But he who greatly excels in beauty, strength, birth, or wealth, or on the other hand who is very poor, or very weak, or very much disgraced, finds it difficult to follow rational principle. Of these two the one sort grow into violent and great criminals, the others into rogues and petty rascals. And two sorts of offenses correspond to them, the one committed from violence, the other from roguery.

Again, the middle class is least likely to shrink from rule, or to be overambitious for it; both of which are injuries to the state. Again, those who have too much of the goods of fortune, strength, wealth, friends, and the like, are neither willing nor able to submit to authority. The evil begins at home; for when they are boys, by reason of the luxury in which they are brought up, they never learn, even at school, the habit of obedience. On the other hand, the very poor, who are in the opposite extreme, are too degraded. So that the one class cannot obey, and can only rule despotically; the other knows not how to command and must be ruled like slaves. Thus arises a city, not of freemen, but of masters and slaves, the one despising, the other envying; and nothing can be more fatal to friendship and good fellowship in states than this: for good fellowship springs from friendship; when men are at enmity with one another, they would rather not even share the same path.

But a city ought to be composed, as far as possible, of equals and similars; and these are generally the middle classes. Wherefore the city which is composed of middle-class citizens is necessarily best constituted in respect of the elements of which we say the fabric of the state naturally consists. And this is the class of citizens which is most secure in a state, for they do not, like the poor, covet their neighbors' goods; nor do others covet theirs, as the poor covet the goods of the rich; and as they neither plot against others, nor are themselves plotted against, they pass through life safely. ...

Thus it is manifest that the best political community is formed by citizens of the middle class, and that those states are likely to be well-administered in which the middle class is large, and stronger if possible than both the other classes, or at any rate than either singly; for the addition of the middle class turns the scale, and prevents either of the extremes from being dominant. Great then is the good fortune of a state in which the citizens have a moderate and sufficient property ...

The mean condition of states is clearly best, for no other is free from faction; and where the middle class is large, there are least likely to be factions and dissensions. For a similar reason large states are less liable to faction than small ones, because in them the middle class is large; whereas in small states it is easy to divide all the citizens into two classes who are either rich or poor, and to leave nothing in the middle. And democracies are safer and more permanent than oligarchies, because they have a middle class which is more numerous and has a greater share in the government; for when there is no middle class, and the poor greatly exceed in number, troubles arise, and the state soon comes to an end. ...

There is another reason - the poor and the rich quarrel with one another, and whichever side gets the better, instead of establishing a just or popular government, regards political supremacy as the prize of victory, and the one party sets up a democracy and the other an oligarchy. ... For these reasons the middle form of government has rarely, if ever, existed, and among a very few only. ...

What then is the best form of government, and what makes it the best, is evident; and of other constitutions, since we say that there are many kinds of democracy and many of oligarchy, it is not difficult to see which has the first and which the second or any other place in the order of excellence, now that we have determined which is the best. For that which is nearest to the best must of necessity be better, and that which is furthest from it worse, if we are judging absolutely and not relatively to given conditions: I say 'relatively to given conditions,' since a particular government may be preferable, but another form may be better for some people.

XII

... The more perfect the admixture of the political elements, the more lasting will be the constitution. Many even of those who desire to form aristocratical governments make a mistake, not only in giving too much power to the rich, but in attempting to overreach the people. There comes a time when out of a false good there arises a true evil, since the encroachments of the rich are more destructive to the constitution than those of the people.

XIII

[On the evils of oligarchies:]

(1) The assemblies are thrown open to all, but either the rich only are fined for nonattendance, or a much larger fine is inflicted upon them. (2) ... those who are qualified by property cannot decline office upon oath, but the poor may. (3) In the law courts the rich, and the rich only, are fined if they do not serve, the poor are let off with impunity...; concerning (4) the possession of arms, and (5) gymnastic exercises, they legislate in a similar spirit. For the poor are not obliged to have arms, but the rich are fined for not having them; and in like manner no penalty is inflicted on the poor for nonattendance at the gymnasia, and consequently, having nothing to fear, they do not attend, whereas the rich are liable to a fine, and therefore they take care to attend.

These are the devices of oligarchical legislators, and in democracies they have counter devices. They pay the poor for
attending the assemblies and the law-courts, and they inflict no penalty on the rich for nonattendance. It is obvious that he who would duly mix the two principles should combine the practice of both, and provide that the poor should be paid to attend, and the rich fined if they do not attend, for then all will take part; if there is no such combination, power will be in the hands of one party only.

The government should be confined to those who carry arms. As to the property qualification, no absolute rule can be laid down, but we must see what is the highest qualification sufficiently comprehensive to secure that the number of those who have the rights of citizens exceeds the number of those excluded. Even if they have no share in office, the poor, provided only that they are not outraged or deprived of their property, will be quiet enough.

But to secure gentle treatment for the poor is not an easy thing, since a ruling class is not always humane. And in time of war the poor are apt to hesitate unless they are fed; when fed, they are willing enough to fight. ...

Ancient constitutions, as might be expected, were oligarchical and royal; their population being small they had no considerable middle class; the people were weak in numbers and organization, and were therefore more contented to be governed.

I have explained why there are various forms of government ... and what is the best form of government, speaking generally and to whom the various forms of government are best suited.

XIV

... All constitutions have three elements, concerning which the good lawgiver has to regard what is expedient for each constitution. When they are well-ordered, the constitution is well-ordered, and as they differ from one another, constitutions differ. There is (1) one element which deliberates about public affairs; secondly (2) that concerned with the magistrates - the question being, what they should be, over what they should exercise authority, and what should be the mode of electing to them; and thirdly (3) that which has judicial power.

The deliberative element has authority in matters of war and peace, in making and unmaking alliances; it passes laws, inflicts death, exile, confiscation, elects magistrates and audits their accounts. These powers must be assigned either all to all the citizens or all to some of them (for example, to one or more magistracies, or different causes to different magistracies), or some of them to all, and others of them only to some. That all things should be decided by all is characteristic of democracy; this is the sort of equality which the people desire.

But there are various ways in which all may share in the government ...

(details omitted... JN)

On the other hand, that some should deliberate about all is oligarchical. This again is a mode which, like the democratical, has many forms.

(details omitted - JN)

The opposite of what is done in constitutional governments should be the rule in oligarchies; the veto of the majority should be final, their assent not final, but the proposal should be referred back to the magistrates. Whereas in constitutional governments they take the contrary course; the few have the negative, not the affirmative power; the affirmation of everything rests with the multitude. These, then, are our conclusions respecting the deliberative, that is, the supreme element in states.

XV

Next we will proceed to consider the distribution of offices; this too, being a part of politics concerning which many questions arise: What shall their number be? Over what shall they preside, and what shall be their duration? Sometimes they last for six months, sometimes for less ... Shall they be for life or for a long term of years; or, if for a short term only, shall the same persons hold them over and over again, or once only? Also about the appointment to them - from whom are they to be chosen, by whom, and how? ....

What kinds of offices, and how many, are necessary to the existence of a state, and which, if not necessary, yet conduct to its well being are much more important considerations, affecting all constitutions, but more especially small states. For in great states it is possible, and indeed necessary, that every office should have a special function; where the citizens are numerous, many may hold office. ... But in small states it is necessary to combine many offices in a few hands, since the small number of citizens does not admit of many holding office: for who will there be to succeed them? ....

XVI

Of the three parts of government, the judicial remains to be considered, and this we shall divide on the same principle. There are three points on which the varieties of law-courts depend: The persons from whom they are appointed, the matters with which they are concerned, and the manner of their appointment. I mean, (1) are the judges taken from all, or from some only? (2) how many kinds of law-courts are there? (3) are the judges chosen by vote or by lot? ...

The first form, viz., that in which the judges are taken from all the citizens, and in which all causes are tried, is democratical; the second, which is composed of a few only who try all causes, oligarchical; the third, in which some courts are taken from all classes, and some from certain classes only, aristocratical and constitutional.

BOOK FIVE

I

THE DESIGN which we proposed to ourselves is now nearly completed. Next in order follow the causes of revolution in states, how many, and of what nature they are; what modes of destruction apply to particular states, and out of what, and into what they mostly change; also what are the modes of preservation in states generally, or in a particular state, and by what means each state may be best preserved: these questions remain to be considered.

In the first place we must assume as our starting-point that in the many forms of government which have sprung up there has always been an acknowledgment of justice and proportionate equality, although mankind fail attaining them, as I have already explained. Democracy, for example, arises out of the notion that those who are equal in any respect are equal in all respects; because men are equally free, they claim to be absolutely equal. Oligarchy is based on the notion that those who are unequal in one respect are in all respects unequal ... All these forms of government have a kind of justice, but, tried by an absolute standard, they are faulty; and, therefore, both parties, whenever their share in the government does not accord with their
preconceived ideas, stir up revolution.

Those who excel in virtue have the best right of all to rebel (for they alone can with reason be deemed absolutely unequal), but then they are of all men the least inclined to do so.

There is also a superiority which is claimed by men of rank; for they are thought noble because they spring from wealthy and virtuous ancestors. Here then, so to speak, are opened the very springs and fountains of revolution...

As I was saying before, men agree that justice in the abstract is proportion, but they differ in that some think that if they are equal in any respect they are equal absolutely, others that if they are unequal in any respect they should be unequal in all. Hence there are two principal forms of government, democracy and oligarchy; for good birth and virtue are rare, but wealth and numbers are more common. In what city shall we find a hundred persons of good birth and of virtue? Whereas the rich everywhere abound. That a state should be ordered, simply and wholly, according to either kind of equality, is not a good thing; the proof is the fact that such forms of government never last. ...

Still democracy appears to be safer and less liable to revolution than oligarchy. For in oligarchies there is the double danger of the oligarchs falling out among themselves and also with the people; but in democracies there is only the danger of a quarrel with the oligarchs. No dissension worth mentioning arises among the people themselves. And we may further remark that a government which is composed of the middle class more nearly approximates to democracy than to oligarchy, and is the safest of the imperfect forms of government.

II

... The universal and chief cause of this revolutionary feeling has been already mentioned; viz., the desire of equality, when men think that they are equal to others who have more than themselves; or, again, the desire of inequality and superiority, when conceiving themselves to be superior they think that they have not more but the same or less than their inferiors; pretensions which may and may not be just. Inferiors revolt in order that they may be equal, and equals that they may be superior. Such is the state of mind which creates revolutions.

... Other causes are insolence, fear, excessive predominance, contempt, disproportionate increase in some part of the state; causes of another sort are election intrigues, carelessness, neglect about trifles, dissimilarity of elements.

III

... Revolutions are effected in two ways, by force and by fraud. Force may be applied either at the time of making the revolution or afterwards. Fraud, again, is of two kinds; for (1) sometimes the citizens are deceived into acquiescing in a change of government, and afterwards they are held in subjection against their will. ... (2) In other cases the people are persuaded at first, and afterwards, by a repetition of the persuasion, their goodwill and allegiance are retained. The revolutions which effect constitutions generally spring from the above-mentioned causes.

V

And now, taking each constitution separately, we must see what follows from the principles already laid down. Revolutions in democracies are generally caused by the intemperance of demagogues, who either in their private capacity lay information against rich men until they compel them to combine (for a common danger unites even the bitterest enemies), or coming forward in public stir up the people against them. The truth of this remark is proved by a variety of examples. ...

... Changes also take place from the ancient to the latest form of democracy; for where there is a popular election of the magistrates and no property qualification, the aspirants for office get hold of the people, and contrive at last even to set them above the laws.

A more or less complete cure for this state of things is for the separate tribes, and not the whole people, to elect the magistrates.

These are the principal causes of revolutions in democracies.

VI

There are two patent causes of revolutions in oligarchies: (1) First, when the oligarchs oppress the people, for then anybody is good enough to be their champion ... (2) the personal rivalry of the oligarchs, which leads them to play the demagogue. ...

... Changes in the oligarchy also occur when the oligarchs waste their private property by extravagant living; for then they want to innovate, and either try to make themselves tyrants, or install some one else in the tyranny... But an oligarchy which is at unity with itself is not easily destroyed from within ...

Oligarchies, again, are overthrown when another oligarchy is created within the original one, that is to say, when the whole governing body is small and yet they do not all share in the highest offices. ... Oligarchy is liable to revolutions alike in war and in peace; in war because, not being able to trust the people, the oligarchs are compelled to hire mercenaries, and the general who is in command of them often ends in becoming a tyrant. And in time of peace, from mutual distrust, the two parties hand over the defense of the state to the army and to an arbiter between the two factions, who often ends the master of both. ...

VII

In aristocracies revolutions are stirred up when a few only share in the honors of the state ... revolutions will be most likely to happen when the mass of the people are of the high-spirited kind, and have a notion that they are as good as their rulers. ... or, when an individual who is great, and might be greater, wants to rule alone... .

Constitutional governments and aristocracies are commonly overthrown owing to some deviation from justice in the constitution itself; the cause of the downfall is, in the former, the ill-mingling of the two elements, democracy and oligarchy; in the latter, of the three elements, democracy, oligarchy, and virtue, but especially democracy and oligarchy. For to combine these is the endeavor of constitutional governments ...

... The only stable principle of government is equality according to proportion, and for every man to enjoy his own. ...

VIII

We have next to consider what means there are of preserving constitutions in general, and in particular cases. In the first place it is evident that if we know the causes which destroy constitutions, we also know the causes which preserve them; for opposites produce opposites, and destruction is the opposite of preservation.

In all well-tempered governments there is nothing which
should be more jealously maintained than the spirit of obedience
to law, more especially in small matters; for transgression creeps
in unperceived and at last ruins the state, just as the constant
recurrence of small expenses in time eats up a fortune. The
expense does not take place at once, and therefore is not
observed; the mind is deceived, as in the fallacy which says that
"if each part is little, then the whole is little." This is true in one
way, but not in another, for the whole and the all are not little,
although they are made up of littles.

In the first place, then, men should guard against the
beginning of change, and in the second place they should not rely
upon the political devices of which I have already spoken
invented only to deceive the people, for they are proved by
experience to be useless.

... It is a good thing to prevent the wealthy citizens, even if
they are willing from undertaking expensive and useless public
services, such as the giving of choruses, torch-races, and the like.
In an oligarchy, on the other hand, great care should be taken of
the poor, and lucrative offices should go to them; if any of the
wealthy classes insult them, the offender should be punished
more severely than if he had wronged one of his own class.

Provision should be made that estates pass by inheritance
and not by gift, and no person should have more than one
inheritance; for in this way properties will be equalized, and more
of the poor rise to competency.

It is also expedient both in a democracy and in an oligarchy
to assign to those who have less share in the government (i.e., to
the rich in a democracy and to the poor in an oligarchy) an
equality or preference in all but the principal offices of state.
The latter should be entrusted chiefly or only to members of the
governing class.

IX

There are three qualifications required in those who have to
fill the highest offices- (1) first of all, loyalty to the established
constitution; (2) the greatest administrative capacity; (3) virtue
and justice of the kind proper to each form of government; for, if
what is just is not the same in all governments, the quality of
justice must also differ.

... I have now discussed generally the causes of the
revolution and destruction of states, and the means of their
preservation and continuance.

X

I have still to speak of monarchy, and the causes of its
destruction and preservation. What I have said already respecting
forms of constitutional government applies almost equally to
royal and to tyrannical rule. For royal rule is of the nature of an
aristocracy, and a tyranny is a compound of oligarchy and
democracy in their most extreme forms; it is therefore most
injurious to its subjects, being made up of two evil forms of
government, and having the perversions and errors of both. ...

The appointment of a king is the resource of the better
classes against the people, and he is elected by them out of their
own number, because either he himself or his family excel in
virtue and virtuous actions; whereas a tyrant is chosen from the
people to be their protector against the notables, and in order to
prevent them from being injured. History shows that almost all
tyrants have been demagogues who gained the favor of the people
by their accusation of the notables....

And so, as I was saying, royalty ranks with aristocracy, for
it is based upon merit, whether of the individual or of his family,
or on benefits conferred, or on these claims with power added to
them. For all who have obtained this honor have benefited, or
had in their power to benefit, states and nations... The idea of a
king is to be a protector of the rich against unjust treatment, of
the people against insult and oppression. Whereas a tyrant, as has
often been repeated, has no regard to any public interest, except
as conducive to his private ends; his aim is pleasure, the aim of a
king, honor.

... And so, as I have already intimated, the beginnings of
change are the same in monarchies as in forms of constitutional
government; subjects attack their sovereigns out of fear or
contempt, or because they have been unjustly treated by them.

And of injustice, the most common form is insult, another
is confiscation of property. ... Monarchs have great wealth and
honor, which are objects of desire to all mankind. The attacks are
made sometimes against their lives, sometimes against the office;
where the sense of insult is the motive, against their lives. Any
sort of insult (and there are many) may stir up anger, and when
men are angry, they commonly act out of revenge, and not from
ambition. ...

... There are two chief motives which induce men to attack
tyrannies - hatred and contempt. Hatred of tyrants is inevitable,
and contempt is also a frequent cause of their destruction.

... In a word, all the causes which I have mentioned as
destroying the last and most unmixed form of oligarchy, and the
extreme form of democracy, may be assumed to affect tyranny;
indeed the extreme forms of both are only tyrannies distributed
among several persons.

... [T]here is an end to the king when his subjects do not
want to have him, but the tyrant lasts, whether they like him or
not. The destruction of monarchies is to be attributed to these
and the like causes.

XI

And they are preserved, to speak generally, by the opposite
causes; or, if we consider them separately, (1) royalty is preserved
by the limitation of its powers. The more restricted the functions
of kings, the longer their power will last unimpaired;...

As to (2) tyrannies, they are preserved in two most opposite
ways. One of them is the old traditional method in which most
tyrants administer their government. ... viz., that the tyrant
should shun off those who are too high; he must put to death men
of spirit; he must not allow common meals, clubs, education,
and the like; he must be upon his guard against anything which
is likely to inspire either courage or confidence among his
subjects; he must prohibit literary assemblies or other meetings
for discussion, and he must take every means to prevent people
from knowing one another (for acquaintance begets mutual
confidence). Further, he must compel all persons staying in the
city to appear in public and live at his gates; then he will know
what they are doing; if they are always kept under, they will learn
to be humble. In short, he should practice these and the like
Persian and barbaric arts, which all have the same object. A
tyrant should also endeavor to know what each of his subjects
says or does, and should employ spies, like the 'female
detectives' at Syracuse, and the eavesdroppers whom Hiero was in
the habit of sending to any place of resort or meeting; for the fear
of informers prevents people from speaking their minds, and if
they do, they are more easily found out.

Another art of the tyrant is to sow quarrels among the
citizens; friends should be embroiled with friends, the people with the notables, and the rich with one another. Also he should impoverish his subjects; he thus provides against the maintenance of a guard by the citizen and the people, having to keep hard at work, are prevented from conspiring. ...

Another practice of tyrants is to multiply taxes ... The tyrant is also fond of making war in order that his subjects may have something to do and be always in want of a leader.

And whereas the power of a king is preserved by his friends, the characteristic of a tyrant is to distrust his friends, because he knows that all men want to overthrow him, and they above all have the power.

Again, the evil practices of the last and worst form of democracy are all found in tyrannies. ...

It is characteristic of a tyrant to dislike every one who has dignity or independence; he wants to be alone in his glory, but any one who claims a like dignity or asserts his independence encroaches upon his prerogative, and is hated by him as an enemy to his power. Another mark of a tyrant is that he likes foreigners better than citizens, and lives with them and invites them to his table; for the one are enemies, but the Others enter into no rivalry with him.

Such are the notes of the tyrant and the arts by which he preserves his power; there is no wickedness too great for him. All that we have said may be summed up under three heads, which answer to the three aims of the tyrant. These are, (1) the humiliation of his subjects; he knows that a mean-spirited man will not conspire against anybody; (2) the creation of mistrust among them; for a tyrant is not overthrown until men begin to have confidence in one another; ... (3) the tyrant desires that his subjects shall be incapable of action, for no one attempts what is impossible, and they will not attempt to overthrow a tyranny, if they are powerless.

... But enough of these details; what should be the general policy of the tyrant is obvious. He ought to show himself to his subjects in the light, not of a tyrant, but of a steward and a king. He should not appropriate what is theirs, but should be their guardian; he should be moderate, not extravagant in his way of life; he should win the notables by companionship, and the multitude by flattery. For then his rule will of necessity be nobler and happier, because he will rule over better men whose spirits are not crushed, over men to whom he himself is not an object of hatred, and of whom he is not afraid. His power too will be more lasting. His disposition will be virtuous, or at least half virtuous; and he will not be wicked, but half wicked only.

XII

Yet no forms of government are so short-lived as oligarchy and tyranny. The tyranny which lasted longest was that of Orthagoras and his sons at Sicily; this continued for a hundred years. The reason was that they treated their subjects with moderation, and to a great extent observed the laws; and in various ways gained the favor of the people by the care which they took of them. ...
as the scrutiny of accounts, the constitution, and private contracts; that the assembly should be supreme over all causes, or at any rate over the most important, and the magistrates over none or only over a very few.

... The next characteristic of democracy is payment for services; assembly, law courts, magistrates, everybody receives pay, when it is to be had; or when it is not to be had for all, then it is given to the law-courts and to the stated assemblies, to the council and to the magistrates ... And whereas oligarchy is characterized by birth, wealth, and education, the notes of democracy appear to be the opposite of these - low birth, poverty, mean employment.

Another note is that no magistracy is perpetual, but if any such have survived some ancient change in the constitution it should be stripped of its power, and the holders should be elected by lot and no longer by vote.

These are the points common to all democracies; but democracy and demos in their truest form are based upon the recognized principle of democratic justice, that all should count equally; for equality implies that the poor should have no more share in the government than the rich, and should not be the only rulers, but that all should rule equally according to their numbers.

And in this way men think that they will secure equality and freedom in their state.

III

Next comes the question, how is this equality to be obtained? ...

Democrats say that justice is that to which the majority agree, oligarchs that to which the wealthier class; in their opinion the decision should be given according to the amount of property.

In both principles there is some inequality and injustice. For if justice is the will of the few, any one person who has more wealth than all the rest of the rich put together, ought, upon the oligarchical principle, to have the sole power - but this would be tyranny; or if justice is the will of the majority, as I was before saying, they will unjustly confiscate the property of the wealthy minority. To find a principle of equality which they both agree we must inquire into their respective ideas of justice.

Now they agree in saying that whatever is decided by the majority of the citizens is to be deemed law. Granted: but not without some reserve; since there are two classes out of which a state is composed - the poor and the rich - that is to be deemed law, on which both or the greater part of both agree; and if they disagree, that which is approved by the greater number, and by those who have the higher qualification. For example, suppose that there are ten rich and twenty poor, and some measure is approved by six of the rich and is disapproved by fifteen of the poor, and the remaining four of the rich join with the party of the poor, and the remaining five of the poor with that of the rich; in such a case the will of those whose qualifications, when both sides are added up, are the greatest, should prevail. If they turn out to be equal, there is no greater difficulty than at present, when, if the assembly or the courts are divided, recourse is had to the lot, or to some similar expedient.

But, although it may be difficult in theory to know what is just and equal, the practical difficulty of inducing those to forbear who can, if they like, encroach, is far greater, for the weaker are always asking for equality and justice, but the stronger care for none of these things.

IV

Of the four kinds of democracy ... the best material of democracy is an agricultural population; there is no difficulty in forming a democracy where the mass of the people live by agriculture or tending of cattle. Being poor, they have no leisure, and therefore do not often attend the assembly, and not having the necessaries of life they are always at work, and do not covet the property of others. ...

The last form of democracy, that in which all share alike, is one which cannot be borne by all states, and will not last long unless well regulated by laws and customs. The more general causes which tend to destroy this or other kinds of government have been pretty fully considered. In order to constitute such a democracy and strengthen the people, the leaders have been in the habit of including as many as they can, and making citizens not only of those who are legitimate, but even of the illegitimate, and of those who have only one parent a citizen, whether father or mother; for nothing of this sort comes amiss to such a democracy. This is the way in which demagogues proceed.

Whereas the right thing would be to make no more additions when the number of the commonalty exceeds that of the notables and of the middle class - beyond this not to go. When in excess of this point, the constitution becomes disorderly, and the notables grow excited and impatient of the democracy... Fresh tribes and brotherhoods should be established; the private rites of families should be restricted and converted into public ones; in short, every contrivance should be adopted which will mingle the citizens with one another and get rid of old connections.

Again, the measures which are taken by tyrants appear all of them to be democratic; such, for instance, as the license permitted to slaves (which may be to a certain extent advantageous) and also that of women and children, and the allowing everybody to live as he likes. Such a government will have many supporters, for most persons would rather live in a disorderly than in a sober manner.

V

The mere establishment of a democracy is not the only or principal business of the legislator ... for any state, however badly constituted, may last one, two, or three days; a far greater difficulty is the preservation of it. The legislator should therefore endeavor to have a firm foundation according to the principles already laid down concerning the preservation and destruction of states; he should guard against the destructive elements, and should make laws, whether written or unwritten, which will contain all the preservatives of states. He must not think the truly democratical or oligarchical measure to be that which will give the greatest amount of democracy or oligarchy, but that which will make them last longest.

The demagogues of our own day often get property confiscated in the law-courts in order to please the people. But those who have the welfare of the state at heart should counteract them, and make a law that the property of the condemned should not be public and go into the treasury but be sacred. Thus offenders will be as much afraid, for they will be punished all the same, and the people, having nothing to gain, will not be so ready to condemn the accused.

Care should also be taken that state trials are as few as possible, and heavy penalties should be inflicted on those who bring groundless accusations...
VI

From these considerations there will be no difficulty in seeing what should be the constitution of oligarchies. ... The first and best tempered of oligarchies is akin to a constitutional government. In this there ought to be two standards of qualification; the one high, the other low; the lower qualifying for the humbler yet indispensable offices and the higher for the superior ones. He who acquires the prescribed qualification should have the rights of citizenship. The number of those admitted should be such as will make the entire governing body stronger than those who are excluded, and the new citizen should be always taken out of the better class of the people. ... The populousness of democracies generally preserves them ... whereas the preservation of an oligarchy clearly depends on an opposite principle, viz., good order.

VII [omitted]

VIII

Next in order follows the right distribution of offices, their number, their nature, their duties, of which indeed we have already spoken. No state can exist not having the necessary offices, and no state can be well administered not having the offices which tend to preserve harmony and good order.

In small states, as we have already remarked, there must not be many of them, but in larger there must be a larger number, and we should carefully consider which offices may properly be united and which separated.

First among necessary offices is that which has the care of the market; a magistrate should be appointed to inspect contracts and to maintain order. For in every state there must inevitably be buyers and sellers who will supply one another's wants; this is the readiest way to make a state self-sufficient and so fulfill the purpose for which men come together into one state.

A second office of a similar kind undertakes the supervision and embellishment of public and private buildings, the maintaining and repairing of houses and roads, the prevention of disputes about boundaries, and other concerns of a like nature. ...another, of a similar kind, has to do with the same matters without the walls and in the country... Besides these three there is a fourth office of receivers of taxes, who have under their charge the revenue which is distributed among the various departments... Another officer registers all private contracts, and decisions of the courts, all public indictments, and also all preliminary proceedings. ...

Yet another, of which the duties are the most necessary and also the most difficult, viz., that to which is committed the execution of punishments, or the exaction of fines from those who are posted up according to the registers; and also the custody of prisoners. The difficulty of this office arises out of the odium which is attached to it... Still the office is necessary ... It is an office which, being so unpopular, should not be entrusted to one person, but divided among several taken from different courts. ... [similarly with] the jailorship ... good men do all they can to avoid it, and worthless persons cannot safely be trusted with it ... different magistrates acting in turn should take charge of it. ...

There are likewise magistracies characteristic of states which are peaceful and prosperous, and at the same time have a regard to good order: such as the offices of guardians of women, guardians of the law, guardians of children, and directors of gymnastics; also superintendents of gymnastic and Dionysiac contests, and of other similar spectacles. Some of these are clearly not democratic offices; for example, the guardianships of women and children-the poor, not having any slaves, must employ both their women and children as servants.

... BOOK SEVEN

I

HE who would duly inquire about the best form of a state ought first to determine which is the most eligible life; while this remains uncertain the best form of the state must also be uncertain; for, in the natural order of things, those may be expected to lead the best life who are governed in the best manner of which their circumstances admit.

We ought therefore to ascertain, first of all, which is the most generally eligible life, and then whether the same life is or is not best for the state and for individuals.

Assuming that enough has been already said in discussions outside the school concerning the best life, we will now only repeat what is contained in them. Certainly no one will dispute the propriety of that partition of goods which separates them into three classes, viz., external goods, goods of the body, and goods of the soul, or deny that the happy man must have all three. For no one would maintain that he is happy who has not in him a particle of courage or temperance or justice or prudence, who is afraid of every insect whichutters past him, and will commit any crime, however great, in order to gratify his lust of meat or drink, or sacrifice his dearest friend for the sake of a penny, and is as feeble and false in mind as a child or a madman.

These propositions are almost universally acknowledged as soon as they are uttered, but men differ about the degree or relative superiority of this or that good. Some think that a very moderate amount of virtue is enough, but set no limit to their desires of wealth, property, power, reputation, and the like.

To them we reply by an appeal to facts, which easily prove that mankind do not acquire or preserve virtue by the help of external goods, but external goods by the help of virtue, and that happiness, whether consisting in pleasure or virtue, or both, is more often found with those who are most highly cultivated in their mind and in their character, and have only a moderate share of external goods, than among those who possess external goods to a useless extent but are deficient in higher qualities; and this is not only matter of experience, but, if reflected upon, will easily appear to be in accordance with reason. For, whereas external goods have a limit, like any other instrument, and all things useful are of such a nature that where there is too much of them they must either do harm, or at any rate be of no use, to their possessors; by contrast, every good of the soul, the greater it is, is also of greater use, if the epithet useful as well as noble is appropriate to such subjects.

... Again, it is for the sake of the soul that goods external and goods of the body are eligible at all, and all wise men ought to choose them for the sake of the soul, and not the soul for the sake of them.

Let us acknowledge then that each one has just so much of happiness as he has of virtue and wisdom, and of virtuous and wise action. God is a witness to us of this truth, for he is happy and blessed, not by reason of any external good, but in himself and by reason of his own nature. And herein of necessity lies the difference between good fortune and happiness; for external goods
come of themselves, and chance is the author of them, but no one is just or temperate by or through chance.

In like manner, and by a similar train of argument, the happy state may be shown to be that which is best and which acts rightly; and rightly it cannot act without doing right actions, and neither individual nor state can do right actions without virtue and wisdom. Thus the courage, justice, and wisdom of a state have the same form and nature as the qualities which give the individual who possesses them the name of just, wise, or temperate.

... Let us assume then that the best life, both for individuals and states, is the life of virtue, when virtue has external goods enough for the performance of good actions. If there are any who controvert our assertion, we will in this treatise pass them over, and consider their objections hereafter.

II

There remains to be discussed the question whether the happiness of the individual is the same as that of the state, or different. Here again there can be no doubt - no one denies that they are the same. For those who hold that the well-being of the individual consists in his wealth, also think that riches make the happiness of the whole state, and those who value most highly the life of a tyrant deem that city the happiest which rules over the greatest number; while they who approve an individual for his virtue say that the more virtuous a city is, the happier it is.

Two points here present themselves for consideration: first (1), which is the more eligible life, that of a citizen who is a member of a state, or that of an alien who has no political ties; and again (2), which is the best form of constitution or the best condition of a state, either on the supposition that political privileges are desirable for all, or for a majority only?

Since the good of the state and not of the individual is the proper subject of political thought and speculation, and we are engaged in a political discussion, while the first of these two points has a secondary interest for us, the latter will be the main subject of our inquiry.

Now it is evident that the form of government is best in which every man, whoever he is, can act best and live happily. But even those who agree in thinking that the life of virtue is the most eligible raise a question, whether the life of business and politics is or is not more eligible than one which is wholly independent of external goods, I mean than a contemplative life, which by some is maintained to be the only one worthy of a philosopher. For these two lives - the life of the philosopher and the life of the statesman - appear to have been preferred by those who have been most keen in the pursuit of virtue, both in our own and in other ages.

Which is the better is a question of no small moment; for the wise man, like the wise state, will necessarily regulate his life according to the best end. There are some who think that while a despotic rule over others is the greatest injustice, to exercise a constitutional rule over them, even though not unjust, is a great impediment to a man's individual wellbeing. Others take an opposite view, holding that the true life of man is the practical and political, and that every virtue admits of being practiced, quite as much by statesmen and rulers as by private individuals.

Others, again, are of opinion that arbitrary and tyrannical rule alone consists with happiness ... And in all nations which are able to gratify their ambition military power is held in esteem. In some nations there are even laws tending to stimulate the warlike virtues, as at Carthage, where we are told that men obtain the honor of wearing as many armlets as they have served campaigns. ...

Yet to a reflecting mind it must appear very strange that the statesman should be always considering how he can dominate and tyrannize over others, whether they will or not. How can that which is not even lawful be the business of the statesman or the legislator? Unlawful it certainly is to rule without regard to justice, for there may be might where there is no right.

The other arts and sciences offer no parallel: a physician is not expected to persuade or coerce his patients, nor a pilot the passengers in his ship. Yet most men appear to think that the art of despotic government is statesmanship, and what men affirm to be unjust and inexpedient in their own case they are not ashamed of practicing towards others; they demand just rule for themselves, but where other men are concerned they care nothing about it. Such behavior is irrational; unless the one party is, and the other is not, born to serve, in which case men have a right to command, not indeed all their fellows, but only those who are intended to be subjects...

And surely there may be a city happy in isolation, which might also be well-governed ... but such a city would not be constituted with any view to war or the conquest of enemies - all that sort of thing must be excluded. Hence we see very plainly that warlike pursuits, although generally to be deemed honorable, are not the supreme end of all things, but only means.

And the good lawyer should inquire how states and races of men and communities may participate in a good life, and in the happiness which is attainable by them. ...

III

Let us now address those who, while they agree that the life of virtue is the most eligible, differ about the manner of practicing it. For some renounce political power, and think that the life of the freeman is different from the life of the statesman and the best of all; but others think the life of the statesman best. The argument of the latter is that he who does nothing cannot do well, and that virtuous activity is identical with happiness.

To both we say: you are partly right and partly wrong. The first class are right in affirming that the life of the freeman is better than the life of the despot; for there is nothing grand or noble in having the use of a slave, in so far as he is a slave; or in issuing commands about necessary things. But it is an error to suppose that every sort of rule is despotic like that of a master over slaves, for there is as great a difference between the rule over freemen and the rule over slaves as there is between slavery by nature and freedom by nature, about which I have said enough at the commencement of this treatise.

And it is equally a mistake to place inactivity above action, for happiness is activity, and the actions of the just and wise are the realization of much that is noble.

But perhaps some one, accepting these premises, may still maintain that supreme power is the best of all things, because the possessors of it are able to perform the greatest number of noble actions. ...

There might be some truth in such a view if we assume that robbers and plunderers attain the chief good. But this can never be; their hypothesis is false. For the actions of a ruler cannot really be honorable, unless he is as much superior to other men as a husband is to a wife, or a father to his children, or a master to his slaves. And therefore he who violates the law can never recover by any success, however great, what he has already lost in departing from virtue.
For equals the honorable and the just consist in sharing alike, as is just and equal. But that the unequal should be given to equals, and the unlike to those who are like, is contrary to nature, and nothing which is contrary to nature is good. If, therefore, there is any one superior in virtue and in the power of performing the best actions, him we ought to follow and obey, but he must have the capacity for action as well as virtue.

If we are right in our view, and happiness is assumed to be virtuous activity, the active life will be the best, both for every city collectively, and for individuals. Not that a life of action must necessarily have relation to others, as some persons think, nor are those ideas only to be regarded as practical which are pursued for the sake of practical results, but much more the thoughts and contemplations which are independent and complete in themselves; since virtuous activity, and therefore a certain kind of action, is an end, and even in the case of external actions the directing mind is most truly said to act.

... [T]here are many ways in which the sections of a state act upon one another. The same thing is equally true of every individual. If this were otherwise, God and the universe, who have no external actions over and above their own energies, would be far enough from perfection. Hence it is evident that the same life is best for each individual, and for states and for mankind collectively.

IV

Thus far by way of introduction. In what has preceded I have discussed other forms of government; in what remains the first point to be considered is what should be the conditions of the ideal or perfect state; for the perfect state cannot exist without a due supply of the means of life. And therefore we must presuppose many purely imaginary conditions, but nothing impossible. There will be a certain number of citizens, a country in which to place them, and the like. As the weaver or shipbuilder or any other artisan must have the material proper for his work (and in proportion as this is better prepared, so will the result of his art be nobler), so the statesman or legislator must also have the materials suited to him. First among the materials required by the statesman is population: he will consider what should be the number and character of the citizens, and then what should be the size and character of the country. Most persons think that a state in order to be happy ought to be large; but even if they are right, they have no idea what is a large and what a small state. For they judge of the size of the city by the number of the inhabitants; whereas they ought to regard, not their number, but their power.

A city too, like an individual, has a work to do; and that city which is best adapted to the fulfillment of its work is to be deemed greatest.... And even if we reckon greatness by numbers, we ought not to include everybody, for there must always be in cities a multitude of slaves and sojourners and foreigners; but we should include those only who are members of the state, and who form an essential part of it. The number of the latter is a proof of the greatness of a city; but a city which produces numerous artisans and comparatively few soldiers cannot be great, for a great city is not to be confounded with a populous one.

Moreover, experience shows that a very populous city can rarely, if ever, be well governed; since all cities which have a reputation for good government have a limit of population. We may argue on grounds of reason, and the same result will follow. For law is order, and good law is good order; but a very great multitude cannot be orderly: to introduce order into the unlimited is the work of a divine power - of such a power as holds together the universe. Beauty is realized in number and magnitude, and the state which combines magnitude with good order must necessarily be the most beautiful. To the size of states there is a limit, as there is to other things, plants, animals, implements; for none of these retain their natural power when they are too large or too small, but they either wholly lose their nature, or are spoiled. ...

In like manner a state when composed of too few is not, as a state ought to be, self-sufficing; when of too many, though self-sufficing in all mere necessaries, as a nation may be, it is not a state, being almost incapable of constitutional government... A state, then, only begins to exist when it has attained a population sufficient for a good life in the political community: it may indeed, if it somewhat exceed this number, be a greater state. But, as I was saying, there must be a limit.

What should be the limit will be easily ascertained by experience. For both governors and governed have duties to perform; the special functions of a governor to command and to judge. But if the citizens of a state are to judge and to distribute offices according to merit, then they must know each other's characters; where they do not possess this knowledge, both the election to offices and the decision of lawsuits will go wrong. When the population is very large they are manifestly settled at haphazard, which clearly ought not to be. Besides, in an over-populous state foreigners and metics will readily acquire the rights of citizens, for who will find them out? Clearly then the best limit of the population of a state is the largest number which suffices for the purposes of life, and can be taken in at a single view. Enough concerning the size of a state.

V

Much the same principle will apply to the territory of the state: every one would agree in praising the territory which is most entirely self-sufficing; and that must be the territory which is all-producing, for to have all things and to want nothing is sufficiency. In size and extent it should be such as may enable the inhabitants to live at once temperately and liberally in the enjoyment of leisure. ... [and be easy to defend...]

VI [omitted]

VII

Having spoken of the number of the citizens, we will proceed to speak of what should be their character. ... Those who live in a cold climate and in Europe are full of spirit, but wanting in intelligence and skill; and therefore they retain comparative freedom, but have no political organization, and are incapable of ruling over others. Whereas the natives of Asia are intelligent and inventive, but they are wanting in spirit, and therefore they are always in a state of subjection and slavery. But the Hellenic race, which is situated between them, is likewise intermediate in character, being high-spirited and also intelligent. Hence it continues free, and is the best-governed of any nation, and, if it could be formed into one state, would be able to rule the world.

... VIII

... The members of an association have necessarily some one thing the same and common to all, in which they share equally
or unequally for example, food or land or any other thing. But where there are two things of which one is a means and the other an end, they have nothing in common except that the one receives what the other produces. [Thus,] the house and the builder have nothing in common, but the art of the builder is for the sake of the house.

And so states require property, but property, even though living beings are included in it, is no part of a state; for a state is not a community of living beings only, but a community of equals, aiming at the best life possible.

Now, whereas happiness is the highest good, being a realization and perfect practice of virtue, which some can attain, while others have little or none of it, the various qualities of men are clearly the reason why there are various kinds of states and many forms of government; for different men seek after happiness in different ways and by different means, and so make for themselves different modes of life and forms of government.

We must see also how many things are indispensable to the existence of a state, for what we call the parts of a state will be found among the indispensables: food; arts, for life requires many instruments; arms, to maintain authority both against disobedient subjects and against external assailants; revenue, both for internal needs, and for the purposes of war; a care of religion, commonly called worship; and most necessary of all there must be a power of deciding what is for the public interest, and what is just in men's dealings with one another. These are the services which every state may be said to need.

For a state is not a mere aggregate of persons, but a union of them sufficing for the purposes of life; and if any of these things be wanting, it is as we maintain impossible that the community can be absolutely self-sufficing. A state then should be framed with a view to the fulfillment of these functions.

IX

... Now, since we are here speaking of the best form of government, i.e., that under which the state will be most happy (and happiness, as has been already said, cannot exist without virtue), it clearly follows that in the state which is best governed and possesses men who are just absolutely, and not merely relatively to the principle of the constitution, the citizens must not lead the life of mechanics or tradesmen, for such a life is ignoble, and inimical to virtue. Neither must they be husbandsmen, since leisure is necessary both for the development of virtue and the performance of political duties.

Again, there is in a state a class of warriors, and another of councilors, who advise about the expedient and determine matters of law, and these seem in an especial manner parts of a state. Now, should these two classes be distinguished, or are both functions to be assigned to the same persons? Here again there is no difficulty in seeing that both functions will in one way belong to the same, in another, to different persons. To different persons in so far as these i.e., the physical and the employments are suited to different primes of life, for the one requires mental wisdom and the other strength.

...The very best thing of all would be that the husbandsmen should be slaves taken from among men who are not all of the same race and not spirited ... I will hereafter explain what is the proper treatment of slaves, and why it is expedient that liberty should be always held out to them as the reward of their services.

XI, XII [omitted]

Returning to the constitution itself, let us seek to determine out of what and what sort of elements the state which is to be happy and well-governed should be composed. There are two things in which all which all well-being consists: one of them is the choice of a right end and aim of action, and the other the discovery of the actions which are means towards it...

Sometimes the right end is set before men, but in practice they fail to attain it; in other cases they are successful in all the means, but they propose to themselves a bad end; and sometimes they fail in both. ...

The happiness and well-being which all men manifestly desire, some have the power of attaining, but to others, from some accident or defect of nature, the attainment of them is not granted; for a good life requires a supply of external goods, in a less degree when men are in a good state, in a greater degree when they are in a lower state. Others again, who possess the conditions of happiness, go utterly wrong from the first in the pursuit of it.

But since our object is to discover the best form of government, that, namely, under which a city will be best governed, and since the city is best governed which has the greatest opportunity of obtaining happiness, it is evident that we must clearly ascertain the nature of happiness.

We maintain, and have said in the Ethics, if the arguments there adduced are of any value, that happiness is the realization and perfect exercise of virtue, and this not conditional, but absolute. And I used the term 'conditional' to express that which is indispensable, and 'absolute' to express that which is good in itself. Take the case of just actions; just punishments and chastisements do indeed spring from a good principle, but they are good only because we cannot do without them - it would be better that neither individuals nor states should need anything of the sort - but actions which aim at honor and advantage are absolutely the best. The conditional action is only the choice of a lesser evil; whereas these are the foundation and creation of good.

A good man may make the best even of poverty and disease, and the other ills of life; but he can only attain happiness under the opposite conditions... This makes men fancy that external goods are the cause of happiness, yet we might as well say that a brilliant performance on the lyre was to be attributed to the instrument and not to the skill of the performer.

It follows then from what has been said that some things the legislator must find ready to his hand in a state, others he must provide. And therefore we can only say: May our state be constituted in such a manner as to be blessed with the goods of which fortune disposes (for we acknowledge her power): whereas virtue and goodness in the state are not a matter of chance but the result of knowledge and purpose.

A city can be virtuous only when the citizens who have a share in the government are virtuous, and in our state all the citizens share in the government...

There are three things which make men good and virtuous; these are nature, habit, and rational principle. In the first place, every one must be born a man and not some other animal; so, too, he must have a certain character, both of body and soul. But some qualities there is no use in having at birth, for they are altered by habit, and there are some gifts which by nature are made to be turned by habit to good or bad. Animals lead for the most part a life of nature, although in lesser particulars some are influenced by habit as well. Man has rational principle, in addition, and man only. Wherefore nature, habit, rational
principle must be in harmony with one another; for they do not always agree; men do many things against habit and nature, if rational principle persuades them that they ought. We have already determined what natures are likely to be most easily molded by the hands of the legislator. All else is the work of education; we learn some things by habit and some by instruction.

XIV

Since every political society is composed of rulers and subjects let us consider whether the relations of one to the other should interchange or be permanent. For the education of the citizens will necessarily vary with the answer given to this question. Now, if some men excelled others in the same degree in which gods and heroes are supposed to excel mankind in general (having in the first place a great advantage even in their bodies, and secondly in their minds), so that the superiority of the governors was undisputed and patent to their subjects, it would clearly be better that once for all the one class should rule and the other serve. But since this is unattainable, ... it is obviously necessary on many grounds that all the citizens alike should take their turn of governing and being governed.

Equality consists in the same treatment of similar persons, and no government can stand which is not founded upon justice. For if the government be unjust every one in the country unites with the governed in the desire to have a revolution, and it is an impossibility that the members of the government can be so numerous as to be stronger than all their enemies put together. Yet that governors should excel their subjects is undeniable. How all this is to be effected, and in what way they will respectively share in the government, the legislator has to consider. ...

Nature herself has provided the distinction when she made a difference between old and young within the same species, of whom she fitted the one to govern and the other to be governed. No one takes offense at being governed when he is young, nor does he think himself better than his governors, especially if he will enjoy the same privilege when he reaches the required age.

We conclude that from one point of view governors and governed are identical, and from another different. And therefore their education must be the same and also different. For he who would learn to command well must, as men say, first of all learn to obey. As I observed in the first part of this treatise, there is one rule which is for the sake of the rulers and another rule which is for the sake of the ruled; the former is a despotic, the latter a free government. ...

Many apparently menial offices are an honor to the free youth by whom they are performed; for actions do not differ as honorable or dishonorable in themselves so much as in the end and intention of them. But since we say that the virtue of the citizen and ruler is the same as that of the good man, and that the same person must first be a subject and then a ruler, the legislator has to see that they become good men, and by what means this may be accomplished, and what is the end of the perfect life.

Now the soul of man is divided into two parts, one of which has a rational principle in itself, and the other, not having a rational principle in itself, is able to obey such a principle. And we call a man in any way good because he has the virtues of these two parts. In which of them the end is more likely to be found is no matter of doubt to those who adopt our division; for in the world both of nature and of art the inferior always exists for the sake of the better or superior, and the better or superior is that which has a rational principle. This principle, too, in our ordinary way of speaking, is divided into two kinds, for there is a practical and a speculative principle. This part, then, must evidently be similarly divided.

And there must be a corresponding division of actions; the actions of the naturally better part are to be preferred by those who have it in their power to attain to two out of the three or to all, for that is always to every one the most eligible which is the highest attainable by him. The whole of life is further divided into two parts, business and leisure, war and peace, and of actions some aim at what is necessary and useful, and some at what is honorable. And the preference given to one or the other class of actions must necessarily be like the preference given to one or other part of the soul and its actions over the other: war for the sake of peace, business for the sake of leisure, things useful and necessary for the sake of things honorable.

All these points the statesman should keep in view when he frames his laws; he should consider the parts of the soul and their functions, and above all the better and the end; he should also remember the diversities of human lives and actions. For men must be able to engage in business and go to war, but leisure and peace are better; they must do what is necessary and useful, but what is honorable is better.

On such principles children and persons of every age which requires education should be trained. Whereas even the Hellenes of the present day who are reputed to be best governed, and the legislators who gave them their constitutions, do not appear to have framed their governments with a regard to the best end, or to have given them laws and education with a view to all the virtues, but in a vulgar spirit have fallen back on those which promised to be more useful and profitable.

... How ridiculous is the result, if, when they are continuing in the observance of laws and no one interferes with them, they have lost the better part of life! ... [T]he government of freemen is nobler and implies more virtue than despotic government. Neither is a city to be deemed happy or a legislator to be praised because he trains his citizens to conquer and obtain dominion over their neighbors, for there is great evil in this.

On a similar principle any citizen who could, should obviously try to obtain the power in his own state... No such principle and no law having this object is either statesmanlike or useful or right. For the same things are best both for individuals and for states, and these are the things which the legislator ought to implant in the minds of his citizens.

Neither should men study war with a view to the enslavement of those who do not deserve to be enslaved; but first of all they should provide against their own enslavement, and in the second place obtain empire for the good of the governed, and not for the sake of exercising a general despoticism, and in the third place they should seek to be masters only over those who deserve to be slaves. Facts, as well as arguments, prove that the legislator should direct all his military and other measures to the provision of leisure and the establishment of peace. For most of these military states are safe only while they are at war, but fall when they have acquired their empire; like unused iron they lose their temper in time of peace. And for this the legislator is to blame, he never having taught them how to lead the life of peace.

XV

Leisure and cultivation may be promoted, not only by those virtues which are practiced in leisure, but also by some of those which are useful to business. For many necessaries of life have to be supplied before we can have leisure.

Therefore a city must be temperate and brave, and able to
endure: for truly, as the proverb says, “There is no leisure for slaves,” and those who cannot face danger like men are the slaves of any invader. Courage and endurance are required for business and philosophy for leisure, temperance and justice for both, and more especially in times of peace and leisure, for war compels men to be just and temperate, whereas the enjoyment of good fortune and the leisure which comes with peace tend to make them insolent. Those then who seem to be the best-off and to be in the possession of every good, have special need of justice and temperance... There is no difficulty in seeing why the state that would be happy and good ought to have these virtues.

If it be disgraceful in men not to be able to use the goods of life, it is peculiarly disgraceful not to be able to use them in time of leisure - to show excellent qualities in action and war, and when they have peace and leisure to be no better than slaves. ...

... Now, in men rational principle and mind are the end towards which nature strives, so that the birth and moral discipline of the citizens ought to be ordered with a view to them. As the soul and body are two, we see also that there are two parts of the soul, the rational and the irrational, and two corresponding states - reason and appetite. And as the body is prior in order of generation to the soul, so the irrational is prior to the rational. The proof is that anger and wishing and desire are implanted in children from their very birth, but reason and understanding are developed as they grow older. Wherefore, the care of the body ought to precede that of the soul, and the training of the appetitive part should follow: none the less our care of it must be for the sake of the reason, and our care of the body for the sake of the soul.

XVI

Since the legislator should begin by considering how the frames of the children whom he is rearing may be as good as possible, his first care will be about marriage- at what age should his citizens marry, and who are fit to marry? ... Women should marry when they are about eighteen years of age, and men at seven and thirty; then they are in the prime of life, and the decline in the powers of both will coincide. Further, the children, if their birth takes place soon, as may reasonably be expected, will succeed in the beginning of their prime, when the fathers are already in the decline of life, and have nearly reached their term of threescore years and ten.

... What constitution in the parent is most advantageous to the offspring is a subject which we will consider more carefully when we speak of the education of children, and we will only make a few general remarks at present. The constitution of an athlete is not suited to the life of a citizen, or to health, or to the procreation of children, any more than the valetudinarian or exhausted constitution, but one which is in a mean between them. A man's constitution should be inured to labor, but not to labor which is excessive or of one sort only, such as is practiced by athletes; he should be capable of all the actions of a freeman. These remarks apply equally to both parents.

Women who are with child should be careful of themselves; they should take exercise and have a nourishing diet. The first of these prescriptions the legislator will easily carry into effect by requiring that they shall take a walk daily to some temple, where they can worship the gods who preside over birth. Their minds, however, unlike their bodies, they ought to keep quiet, for the offspring derive their natures from their mothers as plants do from the earth.

As to the exposure and rearing of children, let there be a law that no deformed child shall live, but that on the ground of an excess in the number of children, if the established customs of the state forbid this (for in our state population has a limit), no child is to be exposed, but when couples have children in excess, let abortion be procured before sense and life have begun; what may or may not be lawfully done in these cases depends on the question of life and sensation.

And now, having determined at what ages men and women are to begin their union, let us also determine how long they shall continue to beget and bear offspring for the state; men who are too old, like men who are too young, produce children who are defective in body and mind; the children of very old men are weakly. The limit then, should be the age which is the prime of their intelligence, and this ... is about fifty; at four or five years or later, they should cease from having families; and from that time forward only cohabit with one another for the sake of health; or for some similar reason.

As to adultery, let it be held disgraceful, in general, for any man or woman to be found in any way unfaithful when they are married, and called husband and wife. If during the time of bearing children anything of the sort occur, let the guilty person be punished with a loss of privileges in proportion to the offense.

XVII

After the children have been born, the manner of rearing them may be supposed to have a great effect on their bodily strength. ...

... To accustom children to the cold from their earliest years is also an excellent practice, which greatly conduces to health, and hardens them for military service. ...

The next period lasts to the age of five; during this no demand should be made upon the child for study or labor, lest its growth be impeded; and there should be sufficient motion to prevent the limbs from being inactive. This can be secured, among other ways, by amusement, but the amusement should not be vulgar or tiring or effeminate.

The Directors of Education, as they are termed, should be careful what tales or stories the children hear, for all such things are designed to prepare the way for the business of later life, and should be for the most part imitations of the occupations which they will hereafter pursue in earnest.

... Those Directors should have an eye to their bringing up, and in particular should take care that they are left as little as possible with slaves. For until they are seven years old they must live at home; and therefore, even at this early age, it is to be expected that they should acquire a taint of meanness from what they hear and see. Indeed, there is nothing which the legislator should be more careful to drive away than indecency of speech; for the light utterance of shameful words leads soon to shameful actions. The young especially should never be allowed to repeat or hear anything of the sort.

And since we do not allow improper language, clearly we should also banish pictures or speeches from the stage which are indecent. Let the rulers take care that there be no image or picture representing unseemly actions, except in the temples of those Gods at whose festivals the law permits even ribaldry, and whom the law also permits to be worshipped by persons of mature age on behalf of themselves, their children, and their wives. But the legislator should not allow youth to be spectators of comedy until they are of an age to sit at the public tables and to drink strong wine; by that time education will have armed them against the evil influences of such representations. ...
BOOK EIGHT

I

NO ONE will doubt that the legislator should direct his attention above all to the education of youth; for the neglect of education does harm to the constitution. The citizen should be molded to suit the form of government under which he lives. ... The character of democracy creates democracy, and the character of oligarchy creates oligarchy; and always the better the character, the better the government.

Again, for the exercise of any faculty or art a previous training and habitation are required; clearly therefore for the practice of virtue. And since the whole city has one end, it is manifest that education should be one and the same for all, and that it should be public, and not private - not as at present, when every one looks after his own children separately, and gives them separate instruction of the sort which he thinks best; the training in things which are of common interest should be the same for all. Neither must we suppose that any one of the citizens belongs to himself, for they all belong to the state, and are each of them a part of the state, and the care of each part is inseparable from the care of the whole. ...

II

That education should be regulated by law and should be an affair of state is not to be denied, but what should be the character of this public education? As things are, there is disagreement about the subjects; mankind are by no means agreed about the things to be taught, whether we look to virtue or the best life. Neither is it clear whether education is more concerned with intellectual or with moral virtue.

The existing practice is perplexing; should the useful in life, or should virtue, or should the higher knowledge, be the aim of our training? All three opinions have been entertained. ...

There can be no doubt that children should be taught those useful things which are really necessary, but not all useful things; for occupations are divided into liberal and illiberal; and to young children should be imparted only such kinds of knowledge as will be useful to them without vulgarizing them. And any occupation, art, or science, which makes the body or soul or mind of the freeman less fit for the practice or exercise of virtue, is vulgar; wherefore we call those arts vulgar which tend to deform the body, and likewise all paid employments, for they absorb and degrade the mind. ...

III

The customary branches of education are in number four; they are (1) reading and writing, (2) gymnastic exercises, (3) music, to which is sometimes added (4) drawing. Of these, reading and writing and drawing are regarded as useful for the purposes of life in a variety of ways, and gymnastic exercises are thought to infuse courage. Concerning music a doubt may be raised - in our own day most men cultivate it for the sake of pleasure, but originally it was included in education, because nature herself, as has been often said, requires that we should be able, not only to work well, but to use leisure well... Leisure is better than occupation and is its end; and therefore the question must be asked, what ought we to do when at leisure?

Clearly we ought not to be amusing ourselves, for then amusement would be the end of life. [Thus], we should introduce amusements only at suitable times, and they should be our medicines, for the emotion which they create in the soul is a relaxation, and from the pleasure we obtain rest. But leisure of itself gives pleasure and happiness and enjoyment of life, which are experienced, not by the busy man, but by those who have leisure.

This pleasure, however, is regarded differently by different persons, and varies according to the habit of individuals; the pleasure of the best man is the best, and springs from the noblest sources. There are branches of learning and education which we must study merely with a view to leisure spent in intellectual activity, and these are to be valued for their own sake; whereas those kinds of knowledge which are useful in business are to be deemed necessary, and exist for the sake of other things.

And therefore our fathers admitted music into education, not on the ground either of its necessity or utility, for it is not necessary, nor indeed useful in the same manner as reading and writing... There remains, then, the use of music for intellectual enjoyment in leisure; which is in fact evidently the reason of its introduction, this being one of the ways in which it is thought that a freeman should pass his leisure ...

It is evident, then, that there is a sort of education in which parents should train their sons, not as being useful or necessary, but because it is liberal or noble...

Further, it is clear that children should be instructed in some useful things - for example, in reading and writing - not only for their usefulness, but also because many other sorts of knowledge are acquired through them. With a like view they may be taught drawing, not in order that they may not be imposed upon in the buying or selling of articles, but perhaps rather because it makes them judges of the beauty of the human form. To be always seeking after the useful does not become free and exalted souls. ...

IV

... It is an admitted principle, that gymnastic exercises should be employed in education, and that for children they should be of a lighter kind, avoiding severe diet or painful toil, lest the growth of the body be impaired. The evil of excessive training in early years is strikingly proved by the example of the Olympic victors; for not more than two or three of them have gained a prize both as boys and as men; their early training and severe gymnastic exercises exhausted their constitutions. When boyhood is over, three years should be spent in other studies; the period of life which follows may then be devoted to hard exercise and strict diet. Men ought not to labor at the same time with their minds and with their bodies; for the two kinds of labor are opposed to one another; the labor of the body impedes the mind, and the labor of the mind the body.

V

Concerning music there are some questions which we may now resume and carry further; and our remarks will serve as a prelude to this or any other discussion of the subject. It is not easy to determine the nature of music, or why any one should have a knowledge of it. Shall we say, for the sake of amusement and relaxation, like sleep or drinking, which are not good in themselves, but are pleasant? Or shall we argue that music conduces to virtue, on the ground that it can form our minds and habituate us to true pleasures as our bodies are made by gymnastic to be of a certain character? Or shall we say that it contributes to the enjoyment of leisure and mental cultivation, which is a third alternative?
Now obviously youths are not to be instructed with a view to their amusement, for learning is not amusement, but is accompanied with pain. Neither is intellectual enjoyment suitable to boys of that age, for it is the end, and that which is imperfect cannot attain the perfect or end.

But perhaps it may be said that boys learn music for the sake of the amusement which they will have when they are grown up. If so, why should they learn to play themselves, and not, like the Persian and Median kings, enjoy the pleasure and instruction which is derived from hearing others? ...

And even granting that music may form the character, the objection still holds: why should we learn ourselves? Why cannot we attain true pleasure and form a correct judgment from hearing others? Or again, if music should be used to promote cheerfulness and refined intellectual enjoyment, the objection still remains - why should we learn ourselves instead of enjoying the performances of others? ...

The first question is whether music is or is not to be a part of education. Of the three things mentioned in our discussion, which does it produce - education or amusement or intellectual enjoyment? - For it may be reckoned under all three, and seems to share in the nature of all of them.

Amusement is for the sake of relaxation, and relaxation is of necessity sweet, for it is the remedy of pain caused by toil; and intellectual enjoyment is universally acknowledged to contain an element not only of the noble but of the pleasant, for happiness is made up of both. All men agree that music is one of the pleasantest things, whether with or without songs; as Musaeus says, “Song to mortals of all things the sweetest.”

Hence and with good reason it is introduced into social gatherings and entertainments, because it makes the hearts of men glad: so that on this ground alone we may assume that the young ought to be trained in it. For innocent pleasures are not only in harmony with the perfect end of life, but they also provide relaxation. ...

But music is pursued, not only as an alleviation of past toil, but also as providing recreation. And who can say whether, having this use, it may not also have a nobler one? In addition to this common pleasure, felt and shared in by all (for the pleasure given by music is natural, and therefore adapted to all ages and characters), may it not have also some influence over the character and the soul? It must have such an influence if characters are affected by it. And that they are so affected is proved in many ways, and not least by the power which the songs of Olympus exercise; for beyond question they inspire enthusiasm, and enthusiasm is an emotion of the ethical part of the soul.

Besides, when men hear imitations, even apart from the rhythms and tunes themselves, their feelings move in sympathy. Since then music is a pleasure, and virtue consists in rejoicing and loving and hating aright, there is clearly nothing which we are so much concerned to acquire and to cultivate as the power of forming right judgments, and of taking delight in good dispositions and noble actions. Rhythm and melody supply imitations of anger and gentleness, and also of courage and temperance, and of all the qualities contrary to these, and of the other qualities of character, which hardly fall short of the actual affections, as we know from our own experience, for in listening to such strains our souls undergo a change. ...

Again, figures and colors are not imitations, but signs, of moral habits, indications which the body gives of states of feeling. The connection of them with morals is slight, but in so far as there is any, young men should be taught to look... at the work of any painter or sculptor who expresses moral ideas. On the other hand, even in mere melodies there is an imitation of character, for the musical modes differ essentially from one another, and those who hear them are differently affected by each....

Enough has been said to show that music has a power of forming the character, and should therefore be introduced into the education of the young. The study is suited to the stage of youth, for young persons will not, if they can help, endure anything which is not sweetened by pleasure, and music has a natural sweetness. There seems to be in us a sort of affinity to musical modes and rhythms, which makes some philosophers say that the soul is a tuning, others, that it possesses tuning.

VI

Should children should be themselves taught to sing and play or not? Clearly there is a considerable difference made in the character by the actual practice of the art. It is difficult, if not impossible, for those who do not perform to be good judges of the performance of others. Besides, children should have something to do, and the rattle of Archytas, which people give to their children in order to amuse them and prevent them from breaking anything in the house, was a capital invention, for a young thing cannot be quiet. ... We conclude then that they should be taught music in such a way as to become not only critics but performers....

The right measure will be attained if students of music stop short of the arts which are practiced in professional contexts, and do not seek to acquire those fantastic marvels of execution which are now the fashion in such contests, and from these have passed into education. Let the young practice even such music as we have prescribed, only until they are able to feel delight in noble melodies and rhythms, and not merely in that common part of music in which every slave or child and even some animals find pleasure...

Thus then we reject the professional instruments and also the professional mode of education in music (and by professional we mean that which is adopted in contests), for in this the performer practices the art, not for the sake of his own improvement, but in order to give pleasure, and that of a vulgar sort, to his hearers. For this reason the execution of such music is not the part of a freeman but of a paid performer, and the result is that the performers are vulgarized, for the end at which they aim is bad. The vulgarity of the spectator tends to lower the character of the music and therefore of the performers...

VII

... We accept the division of melodies proposed by certain philosophers into ethical melodies, melodies of action, and passionate or inspiring melodies, each having, as they say, a mode corresponding to it. But we maintain further that music should be studied, not for the sake of one, but of many benefits, that is to say, with a view to (1) education, (2) purgation (the word ‘purgation’ we use at present without explanation, but when hereafter we speak of poetry, we will treat the subject with more precision); music may also serve (3) for enjoyment, for relaxation, and for recreation after exertion. It is clear, therefore, that all the modes must be employed by us, but not all of them in the same manner. ...

- THE END -
St. Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-430)  
Selections from The City of God  
[the translation is from series 1, vol. 2 of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, published 1886-1890 and in the public domain]

Background: In A.D. 410, Alaric and the Goths sacked the city of Rome, very destructively. (This event is generally regarded as the beginning of the end for the Roman Empire in the west.) Augustine says that the various pagans in Rome blamed the Christians for this disaster. He intends here to be replying to their “blasphemies and errors.” In the process, he composed 25 Books, ranging widely, including many bits of considerable philosophical interest. To us is of interest as the first major effort by a first-rate mind to address the subject of politics vis-a-vis a monotheistic, and therefore, as we might put it, a monolithic religion, one which of course claims that our first loyalty should be to God - that is to say, that religion’s idea of god, as against all the others.

The idea that there are “two cities”, one of god, the other of man, can be traced to an incident in the Christian New Testament, in which Christ is asked by the Philistines: [Gospel of St. Mark, Ch. 12, vs. 14-17]: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar; or shall we not give it? [Christ,] knowing their wiliness, saith to them: Why tempt you me? bring me a penny that I may see it.

And they brought it him. And he saith to them: Whose is this image and inscription? They say to him, Caesar's.

And Jesus answering, said to them: Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him."

The point was an extremely important one, and these verses especially are the source for the view generally accepted by Christians that the state has a legitimate place in human affairs, despite the fundamental superiority and authority of the church. It is of great interest whether Augustine succeeds here, and more generally whether any such religion can do so.

These selections are by Gerald Schlabach of St. Thomas University, Minnesota. I have cut them down a bit further from the original, which is on line at http://personal.sltom.edu/gwschlabach/docs/city.htm#14.28 - J.N.]

Preface: In which [Augustine] explains his design in undertaking this work.

The glorious city of God is my theme in this work.... I have undertaken its defence against those who prefer their own gods to the Founder of this city -- a city surpassingly glorious, whether we view it as it still lives by faith in this fleeting course of time, and sojourns as a stranger in the midst of the ungodly, or as it shall dwell in the fixed stability of its eternal seat, which it now with patience waits for, expecting until “righteousness shall return unto judgment,” and it obtain, by virtue of its excellence, final victory and perfect peace. A great work this, and an arduous; but God is my helper. For I am aware what ability is requisite to persuade the proud how great is the virtue of humility, which raises us, not by a quite human arrogance, but by a divine grace, above all earthly dignities that totter on this shifting scene. ...

And therefore, as the plan of this work we have undertaken requires, and as occasion offers, we must speak also of the earthly city, which, though it be mistress of the nations, is itself ruled by its lust of rule.

Book I, Chap. 1: Of the adversaries of the name of Christ, whom the barbarians for Christ's sake spared when they stormed the city.

For to this earthly city belong the enemies against whom I have to defend the city of God. Many of them, indeed, being reclaimed from their ungodly error, have become sufficiently creditable citizens of this city; but many are so inflamed with hatred against it, and are so ungrateful to its Redeemer for His signal benefits, as to forget that they would now be unable to utter a single word to its prejudice, had they not found in its sacred places, as they fled from the enemy's steel, that life in which they now boast themselves. Are not those very Romans, who were spared by the barbarians through their respect for Christ, become enemies to the name of Christ? The reliquaries of the martyrs and the churches of the apostles bear witness to this; for in the sack of the city they were open sanctuary for all who fled to them, whether Christian or Pagan.... ... Therefore ought they to give God thanks, and with sincere confession flee for refuge to His name, that so they may escape the punishment of eternal fire -- they who with lying lips took upon them this name, that they might escape the punishment of present destruction. For of those whom you see insolently and shamelessly insulting the servants of Christ, there are numbers who would not have escaped that destruction and slaughter had they not pretended that they themselves were Christ's servants. Yet now, in ungrateful pride and most impious madness, and at the risk of being punished in everlasting darkness, they perversely oppose that name under which they fraudulently protected themselves for the sake of enjoying the light of this brief life.

Book I, Chap. 8: Of the advantages and disadvantages which often indiscriminately accrue to good and wicked men.

Will some one say, Why, then, was this divine compassion extended even to the ungodly and ungrateful? Why, but because it was the mercy of Him who daily "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” For though some of these men, taking thought of this, repent of their wickedness and reform, some, as the apostle says, “despising the riches of His goodness and long-suffering, after their hardness and impenitent heart, treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelatıon of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds:” nevertheless does the patience of God still invite the wicked to repentance, even as the scourge of God educates the good to patience. And so, too, does the mercy of God embrace the good that it may cherish them, as the severity of God arrests the wicked to punish them. To the divine providence it has seemed good to prepare in the world to come for the righteous good things, which the unrighteous shall not enjoy; and for the wicked evil things, by which the good shall not be tormented. But as for the good things of this life, and its ills, God has willed that these should be common to both; that we might not too eagerly covet the things which wicked men are seen equally to enjoy, nor

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shrink with an unseemly fear from the ills which even good men often suffer.

There is, too, a very great difference in the purpose served both by those events which we call adverse and those called prosperous. For the good man is neither uplifted with the good things of time, nor broken by its ills; but the wicked man, because he is corrupted by this world's happiness, feels himself punished by its unhappiness. Yet often, even in the present distribution of temporal things, does God plainly evince His own interference. For if every sin were now visited with manifest punishment, nothing would seem to be reserved for the final judgment; on the other hand, if no sin received now a plainly divine punishment, it would be concluded that there is no divine providence at all. And so of the good things of this life: if God did not by a very visible liberality confer these on some of those persons who ask for them, we should say that these good things were not at His disposal; and if He gave them to all who sought them, we should suppose that such were the only rewards of His service; and such a service would make us not godly, but greedy rather, and covetous. ...

Book I, Chap. 10: That the saints lose nothing in losing temporal goods.

These are the considerations which one must keep in view, that he may answer the question whether any evil happens to the faithful and godly which cannot be turned to profit. Or shall we say that the question is needless, and that the apostle is vaporing when he says, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God?”

They lost all they had. Their faith? Their godliness? The possessions of the hidden man of the heart, which in the sight of God are of great price? Did they lose these? For these are the wealth of Christians, to whom the wealthy apostle said, “Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

They, then, who lost their worldly all in the sack of Rome, if they owned their possessions as they had been taught by the apostle, who himself was poor without, but rich within - that is to say, if they used the world as not using it - could say in the words of Job, heavily tried, but not overcome: “Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; as it pleased the Lord, so has it come to pass: blessed be the name of the Lord.” ....

But some good and Christian men have been put to the torture, that they might be forced to deliver up their goods to the enemy. They could indeed neither deliver nor lose that good which made themselves good. If, however, they preferred torture to the surrender of the mammon of iniquity, then I say they were not good men. Rather they should have been reminded that, if they suffered so severely for the sake of money, they should endure all torment, if need be, for Christ's sake; that they might be taught to love Him rather who enriches with eternal felicity all who suffer for Him, and not silver and gold, for which it was pitiable to suffer, whether they preserved it by telling a lie or lost it by telling the truth. For under these tortures no one lost Christ by confessing Him, no one preserved wealth by denying its existence. So that possibly the torture which taught them that they should set their affections on a possession they could not lose, was more useful than those possessions which, without any useful fruit at all, disquieted and tormented their anxious owners....

Book I, Chap. 29: What the servants of Christ should say in reply to the unbelievers who cast in their teeth that Christ did not rescue them from the fury of their enemies.

The whole family of God, most high and most true, has therefore a consolation of its own - a consolation which cannot deceive, and which has in it a surer hope than the tottering and falling affairs of earth can afford. They will not refuse the discipline of this temporal life, in which they are schooled for life eternal; nor will they lament their experience of it, for the good things of earth they use as pilgrims who are not detained by them, and its ills either prove or improve them. As for those who insolunt in them in their trials, and when ills befall them say, “Where is thy God?” we may ask them where their gods are when they suffer the very calamities for the sake of avoiding which they worship their gods, or maintain they ought to be worshipped; for the family of Christ is furnished with its reply: our God is everywhere present, wholly everywhere: not confined to any place. He can be present unperceived, and be absent without moving; when He exposes us to adversities, it is either to prove our perfections or correct our imperfections; and in return for our patient endurance of the sufferings of time, He reserves for us an everlasting reward. But who are you, that we should deign to speak with you even about your own gods, much less about our God, who is “to be feared above all gods? For all the gods of the nations are idols; but the Lord made the heavens.”

Book I, Chap. 30: That those who complain of Christianity really desire to live without restraint in shameful luxury.

... For why in your calamities do you complain of Christianity, unless because you desire to enjoy your luxurious license unrestrained, and to lead an abandoned and profligate life without the interruption of any uneasiness or disaster? For certainly your desire for peace, and prosperity, and plenty is not prompted by any purpose of using these blessings honestly, that is to say, with moderation, sobriety, temperance, and piety; for your purpose rather is to run riot in an endless variety of sottish pleasures, and thus to generate from your prosperity a moral pestilence which will prove a thousandfold more disastrous than the fiercest enemies....

Book I, Chap. 33: That the overthrow of Rome has not corrected the vices of the Romans.

Oh infatuated men, what is this blindness, or rather madness, which possesses you?... Depraved by good fortune, and not
chastened by adversity, what you desire in the restoration of a peaceful and secure state, is not the tranquillity of the commonwealth, but the impunity of your own vicious luxury. ... You have missed the profit of your calamity; you have been made most wretched, and have remained most profligate.

Book I, Chap. 34: Of God's clemency in moderating the ruin of the city.

And that you are yet alive is due to God, who spares you that you may be admonished to repent and reform your lives. It is He who has permitted you, ungrateful as you are, to escape the sword of the enemy, by calling yourselves His servants, or by finding asylum in the sacred places of the martyrs....

Book I, Chap. 35: Of the sons of the Church who are hidden among the wicked, and of false Christians within the Church.

... [A]s long as she is a stranger in the world, the city of God has in her communion, and bound to her by the sacraments, some who shall not eternally dwell in the lot of the saints. Of these, some are not now recognized; others declare themselves, and do not hesitate to make common cause with our enemies in murmuring against God, whose sacramental badge they wear. These men you may to-day see thronging the churches with us, to-morrow crowding the theatres with the godless. But we have the less reason to despair of the reclamation even of such persons, if among our most declared enemies there are now some, unknown to themselves, who are destined to become our friends. In truth, these two cities are entangled together in this world, and intermixed until the last judgment effects their separation.

I now proceed to speak, as God shall help me, of the rise, progress, and end of these two cities; and what I write. I write for the glory of the city of God, that, being placed in comparison with the other, it may shine with a brighter lustre.

Book V, Chap. 12: By what virtues the ancient Romans merited that the true God, although they did not worship him, should enlarge their empire.

Wherefore let us go on to consider what virtues of the Romans they were which the true God, in whose power are also the kingdoms of the earth, condescended to help in order to raise the empire, and also for what reason He did so. ...

The ancient and primitive Romans, though their history shows us that, like all the other nations, with the sole exception of the Hebrews, they worshipped false gods, and sacrificed victims, not to God, but to demons, have nevertheless this commendation bestowed on them by their historian, that they were “greedy of praise, prodigal of wealth, desirous of great glory, and content with a moderate fortune.” Glory they most ardently loved: for it they wished to live, for it they did not hesitate to die. Every other desire was repressed by the strength of their passion for that one thing. At length their country itself, because it seemed inglorious to serve, but glorious to rule and to command, they first earnestly desired to be free, and then to be mistress. ...

[N]ext to liberty, the Romans so highly esteemed domination, that it received a place among those things on which they bestowed the greatest praise. These arts they exercised with the more skill the less they gave themselves up to pleasures, and to enervation of body and mind in coveting and amassing riches, and through these corrupting morals, by extorting them from the miserable citizens and lavishing them on base stage-players. Hence these men of base character, who abounded when Sallust wrote and Virgil sang these things, did not seek after honors and glory by these arts, but by treachery and deceit. ...

And what is meant by seeking the attainment of glory, honor, and power by good arts, is to seek them by virtue, and not by deceitful intrigue; for the good and the ignoble man alike desire these things, but the good man strives to overtake them by the true way. The way is virtue, along which he presses as to the goal of possession--namely, to glory, honor, and power.

Now that this was a sentiment engrained in the Roman mind, is indicated even by the temples of their gods; for they built in very close proximity the temples of Virtue and Honor, worshipping as gods the gifts of God. Hence we can understand what they who were good thought to be the end of virtue, and to what they ultimately referred it, namely, to honor; for, as to the bad, they had no virtue though they desired honor, and strove to possess it by fraud and deceit. Praise of a higher kind is bestowed upon Cato, for he says of him “The less he sought glory, the more it followed him.” We say praise of a higher kind; for the glory with the desire of which the Romans burned is the judgment of men thinking well of men. And therefore virtue is better, which is content with no human judgment save that of one's own conscience. ... For there is no true virtue except that which is directed towards that end in which is the highest and ultimate good of man....

But, of the two great Romans of that time, Cato was he whose virtue was by far the nearest to the true idea of virtue. ... “I do not think,” he says, “that it was by arms that our ancestors made the republic great from being small. Had that been the case, the republic of our day would have been by far more flourishing than that of their times, for the number of our allies and citizens is far greater; and, besides, we possess a far greater abundance of armor and of horses than they did. But it was other things than these that made them great, and we have none of them: industry at home, just government without, a mind free in deliberation, addicted neither to crime nor to lust. Instead of these, we have luxury and avarice, poverty in the state, opulence among citizens; we laud riches, we follow laziness; there is no difference made between the good and the bad; all the rewards of virtue are got possession of by intrigue. And no wonder, when every individual consults only for his own good, when ye are the slaves of pleasure at home, and, in public affairs, of money and favor, no wonder that an onslaught is made upon the unprotected republic.” ...

... But the great things which were then achieved were accomplished through the administration of a few men, who were good in their own way. And by the wisdom and forethought of these few good men, which first enabled the republic to endure these evils and mitigated them, it waxed greater and greater. And this the same historian affirms, when he says that, reading and hearing of the many illustrious achievements of the Roman people in peace and in war, by land and by sea, he wished to understand what it was by which these great things were specially sustained. For he knew that very often the Romans had with a
small company contended with great legions of the enemy; and he knew also that with small resources they had carried on wars with opulent kings. And he says that, after having given the matter much consideration, it seemed evident to him that the pre-eminent virtue of a few citizens had achieved the whole, and that explained how poverty overcame wealth, and small numbers great multitudes. But, he adds, after that the state had been corrupted by luxury and indolence, again the republic, by its own greatness, was able to bear the vices of its magistrates and generals. Wherefore even the praises of Cato are only applicable to a few; for only a few were possessed of that virtue which leads men to pursue after glory, honor, and power by the true way - that is, by virtue itself.

Book V, Chap. 15: Concerning the temporal reward which God granted to the virtues of the Romans.

...For as to those who seem to do some good that they may receive glory from men, the Lord also says, “Verily I say unto you, they have received their reward.” So also these despised their own private affairs for the sake of the republic, and for its treasury resisted avarice, consulted for the good of their country with a spirit of freedom, addicted neither to what their laws pronounced to be crime nor to lust. By all these acts, as by the true way, they pressed forward to honors, power, and glory; they were honored among almost all nations; they imposed the laws of their empire upon many nations; and at this day, both in literature and history, they are glorious among almost all nations. There is no reason why they should complain against the justice of the supreme and true God - ” they have received their reward.”

Book V, Chap. 16: Concerning the reward of the holy citizens of the celestial city, to whom the example of the virtues of the Romans are useful.

But the reward of the saints is far different, who even here endured reproaches for that city of God which is hateful to the lovers of this world. That city is eternal. There none are born, for none die. There is true and full felicity - not a goddess, but a gift of God. Thence we receive the pledge of faith whilst on our pilgrimage we sigh for its beauty. There rises not the sun on the good and the evil, but the Sun of Righteousness protects the good alone. There no great industry shall be expended to enrich the public treasury by suffering privations at home, for there is the common treasury of truth. And, therefore, it was not only for the sake of recompensing the citizens of Rome that her empire and glory had been so signally extended, but also that the citizens of that eternal city, during their pilgrimage here, might diligently and soberly contemplate these examples, and see what a love they owe to the supernal country on account of life eternal, if the terrestrial country was so much beloved by its citizens on account of human glory.

Book X, Chap. 1: That the Platonists themselves have determined that God alone can confer happiness either on angels or men, but that it yet remains a question whether those spirits whom they direct us to worship, that we may obtain happiness, wish sacrifice to be offered to themselves, or to the one God only.

It is the decided opinion of all who use their brains, that all men desire to be happy. But who are happy, or how they become so, these are questions about which the weakness of human understanding stirs endless and angry controversies, in which philosophers have wasted their strength and expended their leisure. To adduce and discuss their various opinions would be tedious, and is unnecessary. The reader may remember what we said in the eighth book, while making a selection of the philosophers with whom we might discuss the question regarding the future life of happiness, whether we can reach it by paying divine honors to the one true God, the Creator of all gods, or by worshipping many gods, and he will not expect us to repeat here the same argument, especially as, even if he has forgotten it, he may refresh his memory by perusal. For we made selection of the Platonists, justly esteemed the noblest of the philosophers, because they had the wit to perceive that the human soul, immortal and rational, or intellectual, as it is, cannot be happy except by partaking of the light of that God by whom both itself and the world were made; and also that the happy life which all men desire cannot be reached by any who does not cleave with a pure and holy love to that one supreme good, the changeable God. But ... even these philosophers, whether accommodating to the folly and ignorance of the people, or, as the apostle says, “becoming vain in their imaginations,” supposed or allowed others to suppose that many gods should be worshipped, so that some of them considered that divine honor by worship and sacrifice should be rendered even to the demons....

Book XI, Chap. 1: Of this part of the work, wherein we begin to explain the origin and end of the two cities.

The City of God we speak of is the same to which testimony is borne by that Scripture ... where it is written, “Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.” ... [From these we learn] that there is a city of God, and its Founder has inspired us with a love which makes us covet its citizenship. To this Founder of the holy city the citizens of the earthly city prefer their own gods ..., and so reduced to a kind of poverty-stricken power, eagerly grasp at their own private privileges, and seek divine honors from their deluded subjects ...

I will endeavor to treat of the origin, and progress, and deserved destinies of the two cities (the earthly and the heavenly, to wit), which, as we said, are in this present world commingled, and as it were entangled together.

Book XII, Chap. 1 - That the nature of the angels, both good and bad, is one and the same.

It has already, in the preceding book, been shown how the two cities originated among the angels. ... [It is not incongruous and unsuitable to speak of a society composed of angels and men together; so that there are not four cities or societies - two, namely, of angels, and as many of men - but rather two in all, one composed of the good, the other of the wicked, angels or men indifferently. That the contrary propensities of good and bad angels have arisen, not from a difference in their nature and origin, since God,
the good Author and Creator of all essences, created them both, but from a difference in their wills and desires, it is impossible to doubt. While some steadfastly continued in that which was the common good of all, namely, in God Himself, and in His eternity, truth, and love; others, being enamored rather of their own power, as if they could be their own good, lapsed to this private good of their own, from that higher and beatific good which was common to all, and, bartering the lofty dignity of eternity for the inflation of pride, the most assured verity for the slyness of vanity, uniting love for factious partisanship, they became proud, deceived, envious. The cause, therefore, of the blessedness of the good is adherence to God. And so the cause of the others' misery will be found in the contrary, that is, in their not adhering to God. Wherefore, if when the question is asked, why are the former blessed, it is rightly answered, because they adhere to God; and when it is asked, why are the latter miserable, it is rightly answered, because they do not adhere to God - then there is no other good for the rational or intellectual creature save God only. ...

Book XIV, Chap. 13 - That in Adam's sin an evil will preceded the evil act.

Our first parents fell into open disobedience because already they were secretly corrupted; for the evil act had never been done had not an evil will preceded it. And what is the origin of our evil will but pride? For “pride is the beginning of sin.” And what is pride but the craving for undue exaltation? ... The wicked deed, then - that is to say, the transgression of eating the forbidden fruit - was committed by persons who were already wicked. That “evil fruit” could be brought forth only by “a corrupt tree.” But that the tree was evil was not the result of nature; for certainly it could become so only by the vice of the will, and vice is contrary to nature. Now, nature could not have been depraved by vice had it not been made out of nothing. Consequently, that it is a nature, this is because it is made by God; but that it falls away from Him, this is because it is made out of nothing. But man did not so fall away as to become absolutely nothing; but being turned towards himself, his being became more contracted than it was when he clave to Him who supremely is...

There is, therefore, something in humility which, strangely enough, exalts the heart, and something in pride which debases it. This seems, indeed, to be contradictory, that loftiness should debase and lowliness exalt. But pious humility enables us to submit to what is above us; and nothing is more exalted above us than God; and therefore humility, by making us subject to God, exalts us. But pride, being a defect of nature, by the very act of refusing subjection and revolting from Him who is supreme, falls to a low condition... And therefore it is that humility is specially recommended to the city of God as it sojourns in this world, and is specially exhibited in the city of God, and in the person of Christ its King; while the contrary vice of pride, according to the testimony of the sacred writings, specially rules his adversary the devil. And certainly this is the great difference which distinguishes the two cities of which we speak, the one being the society of the godly men, the other of the ungodly, each associated with the angels that adhere to their party, and the one guided and fashioned by love of self, the other by love of God.

Book XIV, Chap. 27: Of the angels and men who sinned, and that their wickedness did not disturb the order of God's providence.

The sins of men and angels do nothing to impede the “great works of the Lord which accomplish His will.” For He who by His providence and omnipotence distributes to every one his own portion, is able to make good use not only of the good, but also of the wicked. And thus making a good use of the wicked angel, who, in punishment of his first wicked volition, was doomed to an obduracy that prevents him now from willing any good, why should not God have permitted him to tempt the first man, who had been created upright, that is to say, with a good will? ...

All was brought about in such a manner, that neither did any future event escape God's foreknowledge, nor did His foreknowledge compel any one to sin, and so as to demonstrate in the experience of the intelligent creation, human and angelic, how great a difference there is between the private presumption of the creature and the Creator's protection. For who will dare to believe or say that it was not in God's power to prevent both angels and men from sinning? But God preferred to leave this in their power, and thus to show both what evil could be wrought by their pride, and what good by His grace.

Book XIV, Chap. 28: Of the nature of the two cities, the earthly and the heavenly.

Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the Lord. For the one seeks glory from men; but the greatest glory of the other is God, the witness of conscience. The one lifts up its head in its own glory; the other says to its God, “Thou art my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.” In the one, the princes and the nations it subdues are ruled by the love of ruling; in the other, the princes and the subjects serve one another in love, the latter obeying, while the former take thought for all. ... But in the other city there is no human wisdom, but only godliness, which offers due worship to the true God, and looks for its reward in the society of the saints, of holy angels as well as holy men, “that God may be all in all.”

Book XIX, Chap. 1 - That Varro has made out that two hundred and eighty-eight different sects of philosophy might be formed by the various opinions regarding the Supreme Good.

As I see that I have still to discuss the fit destinies of the two cities, the earthly and the heavenly, I must first explain, so far as the limits of this work allow me, the reasonings by which men have attempted to make for themselves a happiness in this unhappy life, in order that it may be evident, not only from divine authority, but also from such reasons as can be adduced to unbelievers, how the empty dreams of the philosophers differ from the hope which God gives to us, and from the substantial fulfillment of it which He will give us as our blessedness. Philosophers have expressed a great variety of, diverse opinions
regarding the ends of goods and of evils, and this question they have eagerly canvassed, that they might, if possible, discover what makes a man happy. For the end of our good is that for the sake of which other things are to be desired, while it is to be desired for its own sake; and the end of evil is that on account of which other things are to be shunned, while it is avoided on its own account. Thus, by the end of good, we at present mean, not that by which good is destroyed, so that it no longer exists, but that by which it is finished, so that it becomes complete; and by the end of evil we mean, not that which abolishes it, but that which completes its development.

These two ends, therefore, are the supreme good and the supreme evil; and, as I have said, those who have in this vain life professed the study of wisdom have been at great pains to discover these ends, and to obtain the supreme good and avoid the supreme evil in this life....

Book XIX, Chap. 4: What the Christians believe regarding the Supreme Good and Evil, in opposition to the philosophers, who have maintained that the Supreme Good is in themselves.

If, then, we be asked what the city of God has to say upon these points, and, in the first place, what its opinion regarding the supreme good and evil is, it will reply that life eternal is the supreme good, death eternal the supreme evil, and that to obtain the one and escape the other we must live rightly. And thus it is written, “The just lives by faith,” for we do not as yet see our good, and must therefore live by faith; neither have we in ourselves power to live rightly, but can do so only if He who has given us faith to believe in His help do help us when we believe and pray. As for those who have supposed that the sovereign good and evil are to be found in this life, and have placed it either in the soul or the body, or in both, or, to speak more explicitly, either in pleasure or in virtue, or in both; in repose or in virtue, or in both; in pleasure and repose, or in virtue, or in all combined; in the primary objects of nature, or in virtue, or in both - all these have, with a marvelous shallowness, sought to find their blessedness in this life and in themselves. Contempt has been poured upon such ideas by the Truth, saying by the prophet, “The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men” (or, as the Apostle Paul cites the passage, “The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise”) “that they are vain.”

For what flood of eloquence can suffice to detail the miseries of this life?

Book XIX, Chap. 6: Of the error of human judgments when the truth is hidden.

What shall I say of these judgments which men pronounce on men, and which are necessary in communities, whatever outward peace they enjoy? Melancholy and lamentable judgments they are, since the judges are men who cannot discern the consciences of those at their bar, and are therefore frequently compelled to put innocent witnesses to the torture to ascertain the truth regarding the crimes of other men. What shall I say of torture applied to the accused himself? He is tortured to discover whether he is guilty, so that, though innocent, he suffers most undoubted punishment for crime that is still doubtful, not because it is proved that he committed it, but because it is not ascertained that he did not commit it. Thus the ignorance of the judge frequently involves an innocent person in suffering. And what is still more unendurable—a thing, indeed, to be bewailed, and, if that were possible, watered with fountains of tears—is this, that when the judge puts the accused to the question, that he may not unwittingly put an innocent man to death, the result of this lamentable ignorance is that this very person, whom he tortured that he might not condemn him if innocent, is condemned to death both tortured and innocent. For if he has chosen, in obedience to the philosophical instructions to the wise man, to quit this life rather than endure any longer such tortures, he declares that he has committed the crime which in fact he has not committed. And when he has been condemned and put to death, the judge is still in ignorance whether he has put to death an innocent or a guilty person, though he put the accused to the torture for the very purpose of saving himself from condemning the innocent; and consequently he has both tortured an innocent man to discover his innoence, and has put him to death without discovering it.

If such darkness shrouds social life, will a wise judge take his seat on the bench or no? Beyond question he will. For human society, which he thinks it a wickedness to abandon, constrains him and compels him to this duty. And he thinks it no wickedness that innocent witnesses are tortured regarding the crimes of which other men are accused; or that the accused are put to the torture, so that they are often overcome with anguish, and, though innocent, make false confessions regarding themselves, and are punished; or that, though they be not condemned to die, they often die during, or in consequence of, the torture; or that sometimes the accusers, who perhaps have been prompted by a desire to benefit society by bringing criminals to justice, are themselves condemned through the ignorance of the judge, because they are unable to prove the truth of their accusations though they are true, and because the witnesses lie, and the accused endures the torture without being moved to confession. These numerous and important evils he does not consider sins; for the wise judge does these things, not with any intention of doing harm, but because his ignorance compels him, and because human society claims him as a judge. But though we therefore acquit the judge of malice, we must none the less condemn human life as miserable. And if he is compelled to torture and punish the innocent because his office and his ignorance constrain him, is he a happy as well as a guiltless man? Surely it were proof of more profound considerateness and finer feeling were he to recognize the misery of these necessities, and shrink from his own implication in that misery; and had he any piety about him, he would cry to God “From my necessities deliver Thou me.”

Book XIX, Chap. 10: The reward prepared for the saints after they have endured the trial of this life.

But not even the saints and faithful worshippers of the one true and most high God are safe from the manifold temptations and deceits of the demons. For in this abode of weakness, and in these wicked days, this state of anxiety has also its use, stimulating us to seek with keener longing for that security where peace is complete and unassailable. There we shall enjoy the gifts
of nature, that is to say, all that God the Creator of all natures has bestowed upon ours - gifts not only good, but eternal - not only of the spirit, healed now by wisdom, but also of the body renewed by the resurrection. There the virtues shall no longer be struggling against any vice or evil, but shall enjoy the reward of victory, the eternal peace which no adversary shall disturb. This is the final blessedness, this the ultimate consummation, the unending end. Here, indeed, we are said to be blessed when we have such peace as can be enjoyed in a good life; but such blessedness is mere misery compared to that final felicity. When we mortals possess such peace as this mortal life can afford, virtue, if we are living rightly, makes a right use of the advantages of this peaceful condition; and when we have it not, virtue makes a good use even of the evils a man suffers. ...

Book XIX, Chap. 12: That even the fierceness of war and all the disquietude of men make towards this one end of peace, which every nature desires.

Whoever gives even moderate attention to human affairs and to our common nature, will recognize that if there is no man who does not wish to be joyful, neither is there any one who does not wish to have peace. For even they who make war desire nothing but victory - desire, that is to say, to attain to peace with glory. For what else is victory than the conquest of those who resist us? and when this is done there is peace. It is therefore with the desire for peace that wars are waged, even by those who take pleasure in exercising their warlike nature in command and battle.

And hence it is obvious that peace is the end sought for by war. For every man sees peace by waging war, but no man sees war by making peace. For even they who intentionally interrupt the peace in which they are living have no hatred of peace, but only wish it changed into a peace that suits them better. They do not, therefore, wish to have no peace, but only one more to their mind. And in the case of sedition, when men have separated themselves from the community, they yet do not effect what they wish, unless they maintain some kind of peace with their fellow-conspirators. And therefore even robbers take care to maintain peace with their comrades, that they may with greater effect and greater safety invade the peace of other men. And if an individual happen to be of such unrivalled strength, and to be so jealous of partnership, that he trusts himself with no comrades, but makes his own plots, and commits depredations and murders on his own account, yet he remains some shadow of peace with such persons as he is unable to kill, and from whom he wishes to conceal his deeds. In his own home, too, he makes it his aim to be at peace with his wife and children, and any other members of his household; for unquestionably their prompt obedience to his every look is a source of pleasure to him. And if this be not rendered, he is angry, he chides and punishes; and even by this storm he secures the calm peace of his own home, as occasion demands. For he sees that peace cannot be maintained unless all the members of the same domestic circle be subject to one head, such as he himself is in his own house. And therefore if a city or nation offered to submit itself to him, to serve him in the same style as he had made his household serve him, he would no longer lurk in a brigand's hiding-places, but lift his head in open day as a king, though the same covetousness and wickedness should remain in him. And thus all men desire to have peace with their own circle whom they wish to govern as suits themselves. For even those whom they make war against they wish to make their own, and impose on them the laws of their own peace....

For the most savage animals encompass their own species with a ring of protecting peace. They cohabit, beget, produce, suckle, and bring up their young, though very many of them are not gregarious, but solitary - not like sheep, deer, pigeons, starlings, bees, but such as lions, foxes, eagles, bats. For what tigress does not gently purr over her cubs, and lay aside her ferocity to fondle them? What kite, solitary as he is when circling over his prey, does not seek a mate, build a nest, hatch the eggs, bring up the young birds, and maintain with the mother of his family as peaceful a domestic alliance as he can? How much more powerfully do the laws of man's nature move him to hold fellowship and maintain peace with all men so far as in him lies, since even wicked men wage war to maintain the peace of their own circle, and wish that, if possible, all men belonged to them, that all men and things might serve but one head, and might, either through love or fear, yield themselves to peace with him! It is thus that pride in its perversity apes God. It abhors equality with other men under Him; but, instead of His rule, it seeks to impose a rule of its own upon its equals. It abhors, that is to say, the just peace of God, and loves its own unjust peace; but it cannot help loving peace of one kind or other. For there is no vice so contrary to nature that it obliterates even the faintest traces of nature.

He, then, who prefers what is right to what is wrong, and what is well-ordered to what is perverted, sees that the peace of unjust men is not worthy to be called peace in comparison with the peace of the just. And yet even what is perverted must of necessity be in harmony with, and in dependence on, and in some part of the order of things, for otherwise it would have no existence at all....

Book XIX, Chap. 13: Of the universal peace which the law of nature preserves through all disturbances, and by which every one reaches his desert in a way regulated by the just judge.

The peace of the body then consists in the duly proportioned arrangement of its parts. The pettine of the irrational soul is the harmonious repose of the appetites, and that of the rational soul the harmony of knowledge and action. The peace of body and soul is the well-ordered and harmonious life and health of the living creature. Peace between man and God is the well-ordered obedience of faith to eternal law. Peace between man and man is well-ordered concord. Domestic peace is the well-ordered concord between those of the family who rule and those who obey. Civil peace is a similar concord among the citizens. The peace of the celestial city is the perfectly ordered and harmonious enjoyment of God, and of one another in God. The peace of all things is the tranquillity of order. Order is the distribution which allocates things equal and unequal, each to its own place. And hence, though the miserable, in so far as they are such, do certainly not enjoy peace, but are severed from that tranquillity of order in which there is no disturbance, nevertheless, inasmuch as they are deservedly and justly, miserable, they are by their very misery connected with order....
Book XIX, Chap. 14: Of the order and law which obtain in heaven and earth, whereby it comes to pass that human society is served by those who rule it.

The whole use, then, of things temporal has a reference to this result of earthly peace in the earthly community, while in the city of God it is connected with eternal peace. And therefore, if we were irrational animals, we should desire nothing beyond the proper arrangement of the parts of the body and the satisfaction of the appetites - nothing, therefore, but bodily comfort and abundance of pleasures, that the peace of the body might contribute to the peace of the soul. For if bodily peace be wanting, a bar is put to the peace even of the irrational soul, since it cannot obtain the gratification of its appetites. And these two together help out the mutual peace of soul and body, the peace of harmonious life and health. ... But, as man has a rational soul, he subordinates all this which he has in common with the beasts to the peace of his rational soul, that his intellect may have free play and may regulate his actions, and that he may thus enjoy the well-ordered harmony of knowledge and action which constitutes, as we have said, the peace of the rational soul. And for this purpose he must desire to be neither molested by pain, nor disturbed by desire, nor extinguished by death, that he may arrive at some useful knowledge by which he may regulate his life and manners. But, owing to the liability of the human mind to fall into mistakes, this very pursuit of knowledge may be a snare to him unless he has a divine Master, whom he may obey without misgiving, and who may at the same time give him such help as to preserve his own freedom. And because, so long as he is in this mortal body, he is a stranger to God, he walks by faith, not by sight; and he therefore refers all peace, bodily or spiritual or both, to that peace which mortal man has with the immortal God, so that he exhibits the well-ordered obedience of faith to eternal law.

But as this divine Master inculcates two precepts - the love of God and the love of our neighbor; and as in these precepts a man finds three things he has to love - God, himself, and his neighbor - and that he who loves God loves himself thereby, it follows that he must endeavor to get his neighbor to love God, since he is ordered to love his neighbor as himself. He ought to make his neighbor in behalf of his wife, his children, his household, all within his reach, even as he would wish his neighbor to do the same for him if he needed it; and consequently he will be at peace, or in well-ordered concord, with all men, as far as in him lies. And this is the order of this concord, that a man, in the first place, injure no one, and, in the second, do good to every one he can reach. Primarily, therefore, his own household are his care, for the law of nature and of society gives him readier access to them and greater opportunity of serving them. And hence the apostle says, “Now, if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” This is the origin of domestic peace, or the well-ordered concord of those in the family who rule and those who obey. For they who care for the rest rule - the husband the wife, the parents the children, the masters the servants; and they who are cared for obey - the women their husbands, the children their parents, the servants their masters. ...

Book XIX, Chap. 17: What produces peace, and what discord, between the heavenly and earthly cities.

But the families which do not live by faith seek their peace in the earthly advantages of this life; while the families which live by faith look for those eternal blessings which are promised, and use as pilgrims such advantages of time and of earth as do not fascinate and divert them from God, but rather aid them to endure with greater ease, and to keep down the number of those burdens of the corruptible body which weigh upon the soul. Thus the things necessary for this mortal life are used by both kinds of men and families alike, but each has its own peculiar and widely different aim in using them. The earthly city, which does not live by faith, seeks an earthly peace, and the end it proposes, in the well-ordered concord of civic obedience and rule, is the combination of men's wills to attain the things which are helpful to this life. The heavenly city, or rather the part of it which sojourns on earth and lives by faith, makes use of this peace only because it must, until this mortal condition which necessitates it shall pass away. Consequently, so long as it lives like a captive and a stranger in the earthly city, though it has already received the promise of redemption, and the gift of the Spirit as the earnest of it, it makes no scruple to obey the laws of the earthly city, whereby the things necessary for the maintenance of this mortal life are administered; and thus, as this life is common to both cities, so there is a harmony between them in regard to what belongs to it.

But, as the earthly city has had some philosophers whose doctrine is condemned by the divine teaching, and who, being deceived either by their own conjectures or by demons, supposed that many gods must be invited to take an interest in human affairs, and assigned to each a separate function and a separate department ... and as the celestial city, on the other hand, knew that one God only was to be worshipped, and that to Him alone was due that service which the Greeks call lateira, and which can be given only to a god, it has come to pass that the two cities could not have common laws of religion, and that the heavenly city has been compelled in this matter to dissent, and to become obnoxious to those who think differently, and to stand the brunt of their anger and hatred and persecutions, except in so far as the minds of their enemies have been alarmed by the multitude of the Christians and quelled by the manifest protection of God accorded to them.

This heavenly city, then, while it sojourns on earth, calls citizens out of all nations, and gathers together a society of pilgrims of all languages, not scrupling about diversities in the manners, laws, and institutions whereby earthly peace is secured and maintained, but recognizing that, however various these are, they all tend to one and the same end of earthly peace. It therefore is so far from rescinding and abolishing these diversities, that it even preserves and adopts them, so long only as no hindrance to the worship of the one supreme and true God is thus introduced. Even the heavenly city, therefore, while in its state of pilgrimage, avails itself of the peace of earth, and, so far as it can without injuring faith and godliness, desires and maintains a common agreement among men regarding the acquisition of the necessities of life, and makes this earthly peace bear upon the peace of
heaven; for this alone can be truly called and esteemed the peace of the reasonable creatures, consisting as it does in the perfectly ordered and harmonious enjoyment of God and of one another in God. When we shall have reached that peace, this mortal life shall give place to one that is eternal, and our body shall be no more this animal body which by its corruption weighs down the soul, but a spiritual body feeling no want, and in all its members subjected to the will. In its pilgrim state the heavenly city possesses this peace by faith; and by this faith it lives righteously when it refers to the attainment of that peace every good action towards God and man; for the life of the city is a social life.

Book XIX, Chap. 20: That the saints are in this life blessed in hope.

Since, then, the supreme good of the city of God is perfect and eternal peace, not such as mortals pass into and out of by birth and death, but the peace of freedom from all evil, in which the immortals ever abide; who can deny that that future life is most blessed, or that, in comparison with it, this life which now we live is most wretched, be it filled with all blessings of body and soul and external things? And yet, if any man uses this life with a reference to that other which he ardently loves and confidently hopes for, he may well be called even now blessed, though not in reality so much as in hope. But the actual possession of the happiness of this life, without the hope of what is beyond, is but a false happiness and profound misery. For the true blessings of the soul are not now enjoyed; for that is no true wisdom which does not direct all its prudent observations, manly actions, virtuous self-restraint, and just arrangements, to that end in which God shall be all and all in a secure eternity and perfect peace.

Book XIX, Chap. 21: Whether there ever was a Roman republic answering to the definitions of Scipio in Cicero's dialogue.

... Cicero ... defines a republic as the weal of the people. And if this definition be true, there never was a Roman republic, for the people's weal was never attained among the Romans. For the people, according to his definition, is an assemblage associated by a common acknowledgment of right and by a community of interests. And what he means by a common acknowledgment of right he explains at large, showing that a republic cannot be administered without justice. Where, therefore, there is no true justice there can be no right. For that which is done by right is justly done, and what is unjustly done cannot be done by right. For the unjust inventions of men are neither to be considered nor spoken of as rights; for even they themselves say that right is that which flows from the fountain of justice, and deny the definition which is commonly given by those who misconceive the matter, that right is that which is useful to the stronger party. Thus, where there is not true justice there can be no assemblage of men associated by a common acknowledgment of right, and therefore there can be no people, as defined by Scipio or Cicero; and if no people, then no weal of the people, but only of some promiscuous multitude unworthy of the name of people. Consequently, if the republic is the weal of the people, and there is no people if it be not associated by a common acknowledgment of right, and if there is no right where there is no justice, then most certainly it follows that there is no republic where there is no justice. Further, justice is that virtue which gives every one his due. Where, then, is the justice of man, when he deserts the true God and yields himself to impure demons? Is this to give every one his due? Or is he who keeps back a piece of ground from the purchaser, and gives it to a man who has no right to it, unjust, while he who keeps back himself from the God who made him, and serves wicked spirits, is just?

Book XIX, Chap. 24: The definition which must be given of a people and a republic, in order to vindicate the assumption of these titles by the Romans and by other kingdoms.

But if we discard this definition of a people, and, assuming another, say that a people is an assemblage of reasonable beings bound together by a common agreement as to the objects of their love, then, in order to discover the character of any people, we have only to observe what they love. Yet whatever it loves, if only it is an assemblage of reasonable beings and not of beasts, and is bound together by an agreement as to the objects of love, it is reasonably called a people; and it will be a superior people in proportion as it is bound together by higher interests, inferior in proportion as it is bound together by lower. According to this definition of ours, the Roman people is a people, and its weal is without doubt a commonwealth or republic. ... How it declined into sanguinary seditions and then to social and civil wars, and so burst asunder or rotted off the bond of concord in which the health of a people consists, history shows .... And yet I would not on this account say either that it was not a people, or that its administration was not a republic, so long as there remains an assemblage of reasonable beings bound together by a common agreement as to the objects of love. But what I say of this people and of this republic I must be understood to think and say of the Athenians or any Greek state, of the Egyptians, of the early Assyrian Babylon, and of every other nation, great or small, which had a public government. For, in general, the city of the ungodly, which did not obey the command of God that it should offer no sacrifice save to Him alone, and which, therefore, could not give to the soul its proper command over the body, nor to the reason its just authority over the vices, is void of true justice.

Book XIX, Chap. 25: That where there is no true religion there are no true virtues.

For though the soul may seem to rule the body admirably, and the reason the vices, if the soul and reason do not themselves obey God, as God has commanded them to serve Him, they have no proper authority over the body and the vices. For what kind of mistress of the body and the vices can that mind be which is ignorant of the true God, and which, instead of being subject to His authority, is prostituted to the corrupting influences of the most vicious demons? It is for this reason that the virtues which it seems to itself to possess, and by which it restrains the body and the vices that it may obtain and keep what it desires, are rather vices than virtues so long as there is no reference to God in the matter. For although some suppose that virtues which have a reference only to themselves, and are desired only on their own account, are yet true and genuine virtues, the fact is that even then
they are inflated with pride, and are therefore to be reckoned vices rather than virtues. For as that which gives life to the flesh is not derived from flesh, but is above it, so that which gives blessed life to man is not derived from man, but is something above him; and what I say of man is true of every celestial power and virtue what, soever.

Book XIX, Chap. 26: Of the peace which is enjoyed by the people that are alienated from God, and the use made of it by the people of God in the time of its pilgrimage.

Wherefore, as the life of the flesh is the soul, so the blessed life of man is God, of whom the sacred writings of the Hebrews say, “Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord.” Miserable, therefore, is the people which is alienated from God. Yet even this people has a peace of its own which is not to be lightly esteemed, though, indeed, it shall not in the end enjoy it, because it makes no good use of it before the end. But it is our interest that it enjoy this peace meanwhile in this life; for as long as the two cities are commingled, we also enjoy the peace of Babylon. For from Babylon the people of God is so freed that it meanwhile sojourns in its company. ... And the prophet Jeremiah, when predicting the captivity that was to befall the ancient people of God, ... counselled them also to pray for Babylonia, saying, “In the peace thereof shall ye have peace,” --the temporal peace which the good and the wicked together enjoy.\(^{13}\)

Book XIX, Chap. 27: That the peace of those who serve God

\(^{13}\)In October 539 BCE, the Persian king Cyrus took Babylon, the ancient capital of an oriental empire covering modern Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Israel. ...The subject provinces soon recognized Cyrus as their legitimate ruler. Since he was already lord of peripheral regions in modern Turkey and Iran (and Afghanistan?), it is not exaggerated to say that the conquest of Babylonia meant the birth of a true world empire. ... A remarkable aspect of the capture of Babylon is the fact that Cyrus allowed the Jews (who were exiled in Babylonia) to return home. In the archeological finding called “Cyrus' cylinder” - now in the British Museum - Cyrus describes how he conquers the old city. (namely: bloodlessly, and to general acclaim.) At the end of his story, Cyrus tells that he "returned the images of the sanctuaries to return home". This means that he gave the statues back to the temples of the subject people; the Babylonians had captured these imagines and kept them as hostages. This is the first known statement that the inhabitants of a state were free to worship the gods they wanted. Indeed, the Persian empire was remarkably free of religious persecution, and Cyrus might have said the same as the Prussian ruler Frederick the Great: "In my kingdom, everyone has the right to seek blessing in his own way". With some justification, the section on Cyrus' religious measures has been likened to a human rights charter. see: http://www.livius.org/ct-cz/cyrus_I/babylon05.html

[JN adds: after Alaric’s sack of Rome, the increasingly Christian laws were relaxed to permit pagan activities, but “by 415 the laws were back in force; and in 416 pagans were forbidden from the military, from the administration and from the judiciary.” Augustine probably had some influence on this tightening. No general religious freedom from him!]  

But the peace which is peculiar to ourselves we enjoy now with God by faith, and shall hereafter enjoy eternally with Him by sight. But the peace which we enjoy in this life, whether common to all or peculiar to ourselves, is rather the solace of our misery than the positive enjoyment of felicity. Our very righteousness, too, though true in so far as it has respect to the true good, is yet in this life of such a kind that it consists rather in the remission of sins than in the perfecting of virtues. Witness the prayer of the whole city of God in its pilgrim state, for it cries to God by the mouth of all its members, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” And this prayer is efficacious not for those whose faith is “without works and dead,” but for those whose faith “worketh by love.” For as reason, though subjected to God, is yet “pressed down by the corruptible body,” so long as it is in this mortal condition, it has not perfect authority over vice, and therefore this prayer is needed by the righteous. ...

Amidst these temptations, therefore, of all which it has been summarily said in the divine oracles, “Is not human life upon earth a temptation?” who but a proud man can presume that he so lives that he has no need to say to God, “Forgive us our debts?” And such a man is not great, but swollen and puffed up with vanity, and is justly resisted by Him who abundantly gives grace to the humble. ...

But, in that final peace to which all our righteousness has reference, and for the sake of which it is maintained, as our nature shall enjoy a sound immortality and incorruption, and shall have no more vices, and as we shall experience no resistance either from ourselves or from others, it will not be necessary that reason should rule vices which no longer exist, but God shall rule the man, and the soul shall rule the body, with a sweetness and facility suitable to the felicity of a life which is done with bondage. And this condition shall there be eternal, and we shall be assured of its eternity; and thus the peace of this blessedness and the blessedness of this peace shall be the supreme good.

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Page maintained by Gerald W. Schlabach,  
gwschlabach@stthomas.edu.

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St. Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225-1274)

Selections on Law and Government

[Adapted from the translation of Paul E. Sigmund, Norton Critical Edition of St. Thomas On Politics and Ethics. Slight modifications of the text are made to enhance readability; no modification of the substance is intended.]

1. (From Summa Contra Gentiles)

God Governs the Universe by his Providence

God is the end of all things... It follows that he governs and rules the universe by his providence.

When things are ordered to some end, they are subject to the direction of the one principally concerned with that end: as the activities of an army are directed to its end, victory, by the general who commands the whole. Since all things are ordered to the Divine Goodness, God must be the one who governs all.

2. From On Kingship

1. Men in Society Must Be under Rulers

When a thing is directed towards an end, and it is possible to go there in different ways, someone must indicate which is the best way to proceed. So a ship that moves with the shifting winds would never reach its destination if not guided by the skill of its helmsman.¹⁴ Now, man has an end toward which all his actions are directed, being an intelligent being; yet the diversity of his pursuits means that they proceed to their intended objectives in different ways. So man needs someone to direct him. Now, all are naturally endowed with the light of reason; and if men were intended to live alone, there would be no need for direction -- each would be his own king under God, and the light of reason from on high would suffice. But man is by nature a political and social animal; he lives in groups, and having no fur, claws, or the speed of flight, must secure things by the work of his hands. But by these he cannot provide for his life alone. So he must have association with his fellows.

Further, while animals are ruled by instinct, man has to reason things out. But it isn’t possible for one person alone to know everything by unaided reason. In society, people can help each other, different ones employing their reasons in different ways - as the use of language, which is unique to man, demonstrates.

Now, if many live together but each provides only what is convenient for himself, the group would break up unless one of them had the responsibility for the good of the whole. For private good and the common good are not the same: private divides the community, while common concerns unite it. So besides what moves each to his own private good, there must be something that moves everyone to the common good of the many. In each thing we find a superior part that rules; likewise in a group, there must be something that rules.

When things are ordered to some end, there is a right and a wrong way to proceed; likewise, then, with the government of a

³⁴ See Plato, p. 18 - no doubt where Aquinas gets this analogy.

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group. The proper end of a group of free men is different from that of a group of slaves, for a free man determines his own actions, whereas a slave, quia slave, belongs to another.¹⁵ So if a ruler directs his subjects to the common good, that is right because appropriate, whereas if he aims at his own good, that is tyranny, and is unjust and perverse.

The tyrant uses force to oppress instead of justice to rule. People can be oppressed also by a few, as in oligarchy, or by the mob, using the force of numbers to oppress the rich - thus even the whole people can be guilty of tyranny.

Since we must live together because we cannot acquire what we need if we remain separate, a social group is more perfect if it provides better for the necessities of life. Families can manage many of the needs of life, but only a city which is a perfect community contains all that is needful; or better yet a province, because of the need for common defense against enemies. In general, a king is one who rules over a whole city or province for the common good - it’s rather like a father ruling over the family.

2. Better One Ruler or Many?

The aim of any ruler should be to promote the welfare of those he is given to rule. That welfare is based on the preservation of its unity, in what we call peace - no peace, no beneficial life. So the most important responsibility of the ruler is to achieve unity in peace. That is as unquestionable as that a doctor must cure the sick. So the more effectively it preserves peace, the more useful a government will be. Clearly, though, that which is already itself one can promote unity better than a plurality. So government by one is better than by many.

A number of men could not move a ship in one direction unless all worked together. Besides, whatever accords with nature is best, and by nature government is by one, as the heart moves all the other parts of the body, and reason moves all the parts of the soul. Among bees there is one king, and in the universe, one God, the Maker and Ruler of all.

3. Just Rule by One is Best; Tyranny Worst

The tyrant despises the common good, seeking his private good and so oppressing his subjects, in different ways depending on which of his evil passions rules over him. The wise man advises us to avoid this kind of government. When the ruler departs from law, there is no security, everything is uncertain. No reliance can be placed on the will, not to mention the lust, of another. Tyrants work all sorts of evils, suspecting the good, fearing virtue, and thus preventing their subjects from achieving virtue or friendship - for with mutual distrust people can’t unite against him. Men hide from tyrants as from cruel beasts, and indeed, there is no difference between being subject to a tyrant or ravaged by a wild beast.

6. What to do about Tyranny?

A community must do its best to avoid giving the rule to one who will become a tyrant. But what do we do if he does become one?

If the tyranny is not extreme, it is better to tolerate it than to take action that may bring on many still worse dangers. Even if opposition to the tyrant prevails, there tend to be deep divisions

¹⁵ See Aristotle, on p. 27 (Politics, Bk. I, Ch. 4)
in the populace, which divides into rival groups. And the one who aids the community in overthrowing the tyrant, very often, becomes himself a still worse one.

What if the tyranny is unbearable? Some say that the brave should then risk death to rid the community of him. Yet this is not in accord with Apostolic teaching. St. Peter teaches us to be subject not only to good and temperate rulers, but to ill-tempered ones too. For consider that men who would make good assassins are unlikely to make good kings.

No, the best solution is not by private action of a few but by proceeding through public authority. The community together may depose the king or restrict his power; even if it agreed to obey him forever, this does not bind them if he abuses his power by becoming a tyrant.

14. *The King should follow God’s example*

To govern is to direct to the appropriate end. A ship is governed when the sailor guides it on its right course safely to port. If a thing is ordered to an end beyond itself, as a ship to its port, then it is the duty of the one who directs it not only to keep it safe but to bring it to the goal.

There is such a goal, external to man while he lives his mortal life: eternal beatitude with God, as awaits him after death. So further spiritual guidance is needed to direct man to the port of eternal life. This responsibility is exercised over the faithful by the ministers of the Church.

Similarly, for the end of a whole society. If that end were health, doctors would rule; if wealth, a business executive; if knowledge, a scholar. But the end of human society is the virtuous life. Now, kings rule over earthly things, priests spiritual ones. The pagans believed that the whole cult of the gods was to acquired temporal goods to serve the common good of society, and so their priests were subordinate to the king. But now, under the New Law [of Christ], kings should be subject to priests.

15. *The King Directs to the good Life*

It is the duty of the king to promote the good life of the community so that it leads to happiness in heaven... Being instructed under Divine Law, the king should ensure that the society under him lives well: he must establish, defend, and, once secured, foster improvement.

Two things are required for an individual to lead a good life: virtue, and a sufficiency of material goods necessary for virtuous action. But three are needed for the good life of a group: First, peace; Second, acting well by the community; Third, a sufficiency of the necessities for living well.

3. *From Summa Theologica*

90. *The Essence of Law*

Law is a measure of action by which one is led to act or refrain. This rule and measure is reason, the first principle of human action: it commands what is to be done to reach desired ends. If an act of will is to have the character of law, it must be guided by reason.

Every part is ordered to the whole, as imperfect to perfect. The individual is part of the perfect whole that is community. So law must concerns itself with the happiness of the community.

Not any one person can make law. To order something to the common good is the responsibility of the whole people, or of someone who represents the whole people. Now, private people can only give advice: but advice has no power of compulsion. Law, however, does. But that power of compulsion belongs to the whole people, or the public personage whose duty it is to exercise it by inflicting punishment. So making law belongs only to him.

In order for a law to have the binding force proper to legislation, it must be applied to those who are to be ruled; which requires that it be promulgated to them.

So here is our definition: Law is an ordination of reason for the common good, promulgated by the one who is in charge of the community.

91. *The Kinds of Law*

1. *Eternal*: The whole community of the universe, obviously, is governed by divine reason. And since the divine reason is not subject to time, but is eternal, this kind of law is Eternal law.

2. *Natural*: But everything participates in the eternal law, because it is imprinted upon them through their respective inclinations to their proper ends. The participation of rational creatures in the eternal law is called the Natural law.

3. *Human*: Human reason must proceed from the precepts of natural law, as from certain common and indemnifiable principles, to particular cases. Those dispositions are called Human laws.

4. *Divine*: Do we, after all this, need Divine Law, too? Yes: First, because we are ordered not only to natural ends but to the end of eternal bliss, which exceeds the capacity of the natural faculties. Second, because of the uncertainty of human judgment on some matters, calling for the certitude of Divine law. Third, we humans cannot make judgments about internal motivations that are hidden, but only about external, public actions. It is for God to rule over interior actions, too. Finally: humans can’t possibly detect every evil action. In order that no evil go unpunished, then, we must have a divine law which forbids all sin.

92. *The Effects of Law*

The intention of the legislator is the true good of people. So the law will make people good absolutely. But if it is not thus directed, but only at what is useful or pleasurable to himself, then such good will only be variably achieved.

A tyrannical law, in turn, since it is not in accordance with reason, is not a law in the strict sense at all, but rather, a perversion of law. It has the character of law only in that it exemplifies a superior’s dictates over his subjects, and is aimed at their obedience - which though a good, is not an absolute one, but only relative to a specific regime.
93. Eternal Law

God in his wisdom is the creator of all things, and governs all the action and motions of individual creatures; so the plan of his wisdom in doing so has the quality of law. Eternal law, then, is simply the rational plan for all things.

Human law has the quality of law in so far as it is in accordance with right reason, and in that respect is derived, of course, from the eternal law. If it deviates, it is unjust, and then has not the character of law but of an act of violence; it is only law insofar as it maintains the appearance of law because of the authority of its maker, which in that respect is derived from the eternal law.

94. Natural Law

Now, the precepts of natural law are related to practical reason as the first principles of demonstration are to theoretical reason. Both are self-evident. However, something can be said to be so in two ways: in itself, or relative to us. Propositions are intrinsically self-evident if their predicates are contained in their subjects, but someone might not know that: ‘Man is a rational being’ is self-evident, but one who didn’t know what a man was might not see this.

Good is the first thing apprehended by practical reason, which is directed toward action: it is “that which all things seek”. Thus the first precept of law is that good is to be done, and evil to be avoided. All the other precepts of the law of nature are based on this.

We have natural inclinations of three sorts: first, to preserve human life and prevent its destruction; second, to more specific ends that we still share with animals, such as the union of man and woman and the education of children; and third, to know the truth about God, and to live in society. The things that have to do with this third sort of inclination belong to the Natural Law: so, we should avoid ignorance, not offend our associates, and so on.

93.4: Is Natural Law the Same for All?

Well, yes: in its general principles, it is. But it pertains to actions, which are variable, and the more specific we get, the more variable. It is right and true for everyone to act in accordance with reason. Now a particular conclusion from this is that loans should be repaid. But what if someone wanted to use this repayment to make an unjust war? Then it is no longer right to repay it.

So: as far as general principles go, they are the same for all, but for particular conclusions, we will have variability and exceptions. And the corruption of reason among some people can lead them to consider things right that are expressly contrary to the law, too.

93.5 Change in the Natural Law?

The natural law can be changed in two ways. First, it could be added to, as we learn more that is useful to human life. But, second, what about change by subtraction? In its basic principles, this is clearly impossible, of course. But as to secondary precepts, particular aspects can change, and sometimes special circumstances could make its precepts impossible to observe.

95. Human Law

Some people are dissolute and prone to vice, and are not easily moved by words. They have to be restrained from doing evil by force and fear. That is the discipline of law, and laws that do just that are adopted to bring about peace and virtue.

St. Augustine pointed out that an unjust law is considered to be no law at all. So its quality as law depends on its justice. Every human law that is adopted has the quality of law to the extent that it is derived from natural law; insofar as it diverges, it is a corruption, not a real law.

But there are two ways in which something is derived from natural law: logically, and as a specific application of what is expressed in general terms. “Do no evil” follows logically, of course; “Do not kill”, however, is an easy inference given our natures and circumstances. And consider punishments: the law of nature calls for evildoers to be punished, but how much? That is a specific application, and such have force only from human law.

96. The Power and Range of Human Law
96.2: Should Law repress all vices?

Human law is framed for the mass of men. So it cannot prohibit every vice from which the perfectly virtuous abstain, but only the more serious ones from which the majority can abstain - especially those that result in harm to others, such as homicide, theft, and the like.

96.4 Does Human Law Oblige in Conscience?

A law may be unjust in two ways: First by being contrary to human good; second, to Divine good. Laws of the first kind do not bind in conscience, but should be obeyed in order to avoid scandal or disorder. But the second sort may on no account be obeyed.

96.5. Are All subject to the Law - even the ruler?

The ruler may be said to be above the law in its coercive force, since no one can coerce himself, and the law derives its coercive force only from the power of the ruler. There can be no one to impose a sentence on him. However, in the judgment of God, the prince too is not above the law but should carry it out of his own free will.

96.6 Is the Letter of the Law Binding?

The legislator cannot foresee every individual case. Suppose a city under siege has a law that the gates be kept closed, which is generally useful. But suppose the enemy is pursuing citizens on whom the city depends: it would be very harmful if the gates were not opened to them, even if that violates the letter of the law; for it protects the common interest, as the legislator intended.

Of course, this really is exceptional: if there is no immediate danger, then it is not up to the individual to decide what is or isn’t useful to the city. That is the sole responsibility of the
ruler, who has the authority. But necessity is not subject to law: if it calls and there is no time for proper procedures, we should act as it requires.

97. Change in the Law
97.1 Should Human Laws Ever Be Changed?
Of course! First, because reason progresses: when we learn better what is for the good of the community, the law should be changed accordingly. Or if circumstances change, then too different laws may be appropriate.

97.2 - For All possible Improvements?
The sheer fact of change can be adverse to the public welfare to some degree. Custom is very important, since things done contrary to it, even if not important, may yet be considered serious offenses; when a law is changed, its restraining power is lessened because custom is set aside. So law should be changed only when the common welfare is compensated for that harm. This happens either when a substantial and obvious benefit is insight, or when there is urgent necessity because the old law produces manifest injustice or proves very harmful.

97.3 Custom and the Force of Law
All law proceeds from the reason and will of the legislator. Clearly, human words can change law, for they reveal the motives and concepts of human reason. When something is done often, as it is by custom, that makes it seem the result of rational decision. In this sense, custom can have the power of law, abolish it, or interpret it.

The consent of the whole community which is demonstrated by customary observance is worth more than the authority of the ruler, who does not have his power except as a representative of the whole people. In a community that does not have the right to make its own laws, yet a custom that is tolerated by those who have the responsibility to make laws acquires the force of law.

Summa, Second Part of Part II
10. May unbelievers exercise government over the Faithful?
On the one hand, clearly the establishment of new dominion by unbelievers can in no way be permitted, for it endangers the faith. On the other hand, when we consider government that is already in existence, we must consider that dominion is a matter of human law, whereas the distinction of believers and unbelievers is a matter of divine law - which, though based on grace, does not abolish human law based on reason. So the difference between believers and unbelievers does not abolish government by unbelievers. Mind you, it is permissible for the Church to take their power away, but it does not always do so.

11. Are the Rites of Unbelievers to be Tolerated?
God, who is omnipotent and supremely good, permits some evils which he could have prevented, in those cases where, if he did, a still greater good might be taken away, or still worse evils follow. So also, human governments must tolerate some evils so as not to prevent other goods or to avoid yet worse evils. As Augustine says, “Suppress prostitution and the world will be torn apart by lust.” So unbelievers, though they sin by their rites, may be tolerated - e.g. the Jews observe rites which once prefigured the true faith. The rites of other unbelievers that have no truth or usefulness in them are, however, not to be tolerated, unless to avoid some evil such as scandal or discord, or even interference with the salvation of those who, if tolerated, will gradually be converted to the faith.

11. 3. May Heretics be Tolerated?
As for the heretics themselves, they have committed a sin that deserves not only excommunication by the church, but indeed, death. For it is a much more serious thing to corrupt the faith that sustains the life of the soul than, say, to counterfeit money which sustains temporal life. If it is just to execute counterfeiters, it is still more so to destroy heretics.

However, the church is merciful and desires the conversion of those who are in error. So she does not condemn them immediately, but only “after a first and second admonition”, as St. Paul teaches. But then, if after every opportunity the heretic remains stubborn, it is left for the secular judge to put him to death.

40. War
There are three conditions for a just war.
1. The ruler must have authority to make war. No private person has this right, but only him to whom the commonwealth is entrusted.

2. A just cause is required. Those against whom it is waged must deserve such a response: such as to avenge injuries or secure the return of what has been unjustly taken.

3. Those making the war must have right intention - to achieve some good or avoid some evil. Even if a war is initiated justly by legitimate authority, it can become unjust by evil intentions.

42. Sedition against Peace
It is manifest that sedition is opposed both to justice and to the common good. So it is by nature a mortal sin. However, tyrannical government is unjust for the same reason: it is directed not to the common good but to the private good of the ruler. To overthrow this kind of government, then, does not have the character of sedition, unless done so badly that society suf-fers more from the disorder than it did from the tyrant. Otherwise, we may say that it is the tyrant who is guilty of sedition, for he spreads discord and division in order to bring people under his evil control more readily. And that, of course, harms the community.

57.3 The Law of Nations and Natural Law
All men agree on the law of nations, so it would seem that the law of nations is the natural law. But it isn’t so simple. Natural law is that which by nature is appropriate in dealing with another person. This can take place in two ways: (1) simply in itself, as the relation of the male to the female is to have children by her, and the parents to nourish the child; or (2) Not in itself, but as a consequence of something else. E.g., in the case of property ownership: there is no reason in itself why this field should belong to one rather than another, but considering the
opportunity it provides for cultivation and peaceful use, it is appropriate that it belong to one and not another.

The law of nation departs from natural law in the sense of what is common to us all and to animals, say, for it is shared only by men. To consider something in the light of its consequences is natural to man, because dictated by natural reason. So it is that whatever natural reason has established among men is observed by all nations and is called the law of nations.

57.4. Paternal Law and Property Law

There are different sorts of distinctness among persons. When they are entirely distinct, as in the case of two men, neither of whom is subject to the other, then general justice unqualifiedly holds. But suppose the “other” isn’t entirely so, as the child to the parents, or the slave to his master, or, though this is not so obvious, the wife to the husband -- she is more distinct from him than the child or the slave from father or master. So there is more room for justice between husband and wife than between father and son or master and slave - though it is household justice, not political justice, as Aristotle says.

64. Homicide
64.3: Can a Private Person kill a Criminal?

It is permissible to kill a criminal, if this is necessary for the welfare of the community. But only the rulers have this right, not private persons.

64.5 Suicide

This is always totally wrong. First, everything loves itself, and so should naturally seek to preserve itself, not to injure itself. Second, man is part of the community, so if he kills himself, he harms the community. And thirdly, life is a gift of God to man, and subject to his power alone. Thus, one who takes his own life sins against God, too.

64.7. Killing in Self-Defense

An act can have two effects, one of which is intended, the other outside of the intention. Moral acts are classified by their intentions, not by their accidental features. Now, defending oneself has two effects: saving one’s own life, and killing the attacker. Saving one’s own life is clearly not illicit, for indeed we are commanded to do so. It could become illicit if the force used was not proportionate to the end. But if moderation is used in repelling violence, that is justified self-defense. We are not required to refrain from proportionate self-defense in order to avoid killing another, for we are obliged to provide for our own life, not that of another. But it is not lawful for a private person to intend to kill another -- only those in public authority may do that. So a soldier fighting against the enemy, or an officer of the law combating robbers, may do this, though not if motivated by private hatred.

66. Theft and Robbery
66.1 Is the Possession of External Goods Natural?

Well, no: from the point of view of their nature, external goods are not subject to any human power, but only to God. But on the other hand, if you look at it from the point of view of use, then in this respect we have a natural property right over external things, since we have reason and will that can turn such things to our benefit. Imperfect things are for the sake of the more perfect, after all. This natural dominion over the rest of creation, had by us because of our reason, makes us the image of God, as is manifest in the very creation of man.

66.2 Is private property legitimate?

We have two capacities in regard to external things. First, the power to care for and dispose of the, and second, the power to use them.

In the first interest, private property is obviously legitimate, for three reasons.

1. Everyone is more concerned to take care of what belongs only to him than of what belongs to everyone or to many, as we see from experience.

2. Human affairs are more efficiently organized if the proper care of each thing is an individual responsibility. Only confusion results of everyone takes care of everything, in disorganized fashion.

3. Peace is better preserved if each is content with his own property, whereas quarrels frequently arise among those who hold a thing in common.

Second was the power to use them. In this regard, what we should do is to make use of external things for the community good; and so we should be ready to share them with others in cases of necessity.

Community of goods is said to be part of the natural law only in the sense that the distribution of property is not a matter of natural law but of human agreement, which pertains to Human law. So it is not against natural law, but is something added to natural law by the inventiveness of human reason.

96.7 Theft and Necessity

In cases of necessity everything is common property, and so in the event of necessity, it is not a sin to take the property of another.

The natural order established by Providence is such that lower ranking things are meant to supply the necessities of men. So division and appropriation of property by human law does not prevent its being used for the needs of man. So what anyone has in superabundance ought to be used to support he poor. Still, since the needy are many and cannot all be supplied from the same source, the decision is left to each individual as to how to manage his property so as to supply the requirements of those in need. But if there is so urgent and clear a need that an immediate response must be made on the basis of what is available, as when a person is in imminent danger and can be helped in no other way - then a person may legitimately supply his need from the property of someone else. Strictly speaking, such a case won’t be theft.

77. May we make Profit?

There are two sort of business exchanges. One is natural and necessary, consisting in the exchange of one commodity for another, or for money needed to buy what is in turn needed for life. The other kind is of money for money, or money for goods,

 according to Aristotle, p. 28 - Bk. I, Ch. 10.
when this is not concerned with the needs of life but with making money. The first is praiseworthy, for it serves natural needs, but the second is rightly condemned since in itself it is motivated by greed, which has no limit. It follows that trade in itself has a certain quality of baseness since it does not of its own nature involve an honorable or necessary end.

So profit, which is the purpose of trade, isn’t necessarily vicious. Nothing prevents it from being directed to a necessary or honorable goal: e.g. to maintain one’s household or support the poor; or when profit as such is not the goal, but as a recompense for his labour.

78. Usury: [78.1] Is it sinful to charge interest?
Yes: for lending money is selling what does not exist, resulting in an inequality which is contrary to justice. Some things are consumed when used, as wine or meat. There the use of the thing cannot be considered separately from the thing itself: to give someone the use of it is to give him it. A loan in such cases would transfer ownership: you can’t both sell wine and, again, the use of wine. For the same reason, then, it is unjust to exact two payments for a loan of wine or what - one on the return of an equal amount of the thing, and the second as the price for using it. That’s what usury is.

Other things are not consumed when used: houses, say. There the use and the thing can be lent: one can own the house, another use it. It is legitimate for a man to receive payment for the use of his house and in addition to ask that it be returned.

But money is devised to facilitate exchange, as Aristotle says; so the proper use of money is its use or expenditure when exchanges are carried out. Thus it is wrong in itself to receive a payment for the use of a loan of money, that is, usury.

To receive interest from any man is evil, since we ought to consider all men as neighbors and brothers. Still, human laws leave some sins unpunished because of the imperfection of men who would otherwise lack many useful things if all sins were strictly prohibited by law. So it allows usury, not because it is just, but to avoid interference with the useful activities of many people.

104. Obedience
104.1 Is one person Obliged to obey another?
Just as in the order of nature, established by God, lower elements are subject to higher ones, so in human affairs, inferior are bound to obey their superiors. [104.5] - True, but ... in Everything? Well, no. There are two ways that a subject might not be obliged by the command of a superior. First, if it is contrary to the command of a still higher power. And second, if the superior exceeds his authority in this command. In matters relating to the internal motions of the will, a man is not obliged to obey another man, but only God. Our obligation to others is only in outward, bodily actions. So slaves, for instance, are not obliged to obey their masters in regard to whether they will remain virgins or marry, say. But in the area in which the commander is superior, as a soldier who has certain men under his command, or a master in the specific area in which the slave works for him, or a father over his son in regard to the management of the household, there is obligation.

150. Drunkenness
This is a sin if a person willingly and knowingly deprives himself of the use of his reason, which enables him to act virtuously and avoid sin.

152. Virginity
152.2 Is virginity lawful?
It follows right reason to use external goods in the measure that suits the body, and likewise with others. So if someone for the sake of contemplating truth gives up materials possessions that would otherwise be good for him, that is not a vice. Likewise, then, if someone abstains from bodily pleasures for similar purposes: that is in harmony with right reason. So holy virginity abstains from all sexual pleasure in order to be more free to contemplate the divine. Thus virginity is not a vice but worthy of praise.

We must all eat to stay alive, which is commanded. But as regards procreation, that involves the whole of the human race. It is sufficiently provided for if some engage in procreation, while others may abstain to devote themselves to the contemplation of the divine and the improvement and welfare of mankind.

92.1 Woman
Should there have been women, seeing that they are inferior to man? I say that it was necessary for woman to be made, as Scripture says, as a Helpmate to man, specifically in procreation, which man cannot do himself. A woman is not something misbegotten, but intended by nature to be directed to the work of procreation. Woman is, indeed, naturally subject to man because by nature man possesses more discernment of reason.

96.3 Equality in the State of Innocence
Would we all have been equal in the state of innocence? No: not only would there have been the difference of the sexes, but some would have advanced further in knowledge or goodness, some stronger, some taller or more beautiful. It’s just that there would be no defect or sin of either soul or body, even in those with lesser of such qualities.

96.4 Or One Lord over Another?
Clearly in the state of innocence, no one could be lord over another as a master over a slave. But there is another sense of lordship: one who has the office of governing and directing free men. In that sense, there could be such lordship. People cannot live in society unless someone is in authority to look after the common good; of course that should be the wisest and most just.

Supplement: Slavery (Qu. 52)
Slavery is against nature in one sense, as it is against nature for one rational being to have dominion over another. Yet unnatural things are appropriate as punishments, and slavery was introduced as a punishment for sin.
Niccolo Machiavelli  
(Florentine, 1469-1527)  
The Prince  
(published posthumously, 1532)  

[These snippets illustrate Machiavelli’s general drift rather than purporting to contain his systematic philosophical doctrine - for he scarcely has any such thing. It should be added that this book was almost certainly written in irony. Machiavelli had, for example, been imprisoned and tortured by the dedicatee. Even so, it has been taken seriously for centuries. JN]  

Dedication  [to Lorenzo the Magnificent]  

It is customary for those who wish to gain the favour of a prince to endeavour to do so by offering him gifts of those things which they hold most precious, or in which they know him to take especial delight. ... I have been unable to find among my possessions anything which I hold so dear or esteem so highly as that knowledge of the deeds of great men which I have acquired through a long experience of modern events and a constant study of the past.  

Thus, it is not in my power to offer you a greater gift than that of enabling you to understand in a very short time all those things which I have learnt at the cost of privation and danger in the course of many years.17 ... Nor will it, I trust, be deemed presumptuous on the part of a man of humble and obscure condition to attempt to discuss and direct the government of princes ...  

If Your Highness will deign to peruse it, you will recognize in it my ardent desire that you may attain to that grandeur which fortune and your own merits presage for you.  

V: How to Govern Cities or Dominions that, Previous to Being Occupied, Lived under Their Own Laws  

There are three ways of holding such Cities: first, to despoil them; second, to go and live there in person; third, to allow them to live under their own laws, taking tribute of them, and creating within the country a government composed of a few who will keep it friendly to you. This government being the creature of the prince, it knows that it cannot exist without his friendship and protection, and will do all it can to keep them. What is more, a city used to liberty can be more easily held by means of its citizens than in any other way, if you wish to preserve it.  

Ch. VI: Of New dominions which have been Acquired by One’s Own Arms and Ability  

Those who by the exercise of abilities such as these become princes, obtain their dominions with difficulty but retain them easily, and the difficulties which they have in acquiring their dominions arise in part from the new rules and regulations that they have to introduce in order to establish their position securely. It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things. For the reformer has enemies in all those who profit by the old order, and only  

17[Much of it suffered at the hands of Lorenzo. - JN]  

VIII Of Those Who Have Attained the Position of Prince by Villainy  

Agathocles the Sicilian rose not only from private life but from the lowest and most abject position to be King of Syracuse. The son of a potter, he led a life of the utmost wickedness through all the stages of his fortune -- but it was accompanied by such vigour of mind and body that he rose through the ranks of the militia to become praetor of Syracuse. Having got that far, he decided to become prince, by violence and without the support of the constitution. To this end, he called together one morning the people and senate, as if he had legitimate business for them, and at a signal had all the senators and the wealthiest of the people killed by his soldiers. After their death, he occupied and held rule over the city without any civil strife. Clearly, this man’s achievements were not due to fortune. Nor is it exactly what you’d call virtuous to kill fellow citizens, betray friends, be without faith, pity or religion; but by these methods one may indeed gain power, if not glory. Agathocles compares in qualities of the soul to the most renowned captains. Still, his barbarous cruelty and countless atrocities disqualify him from the list of the most famous.  

Well, how did Agathocles, and so many others like him, live securely for many years in their country, and defend it against external enemies, without being conspired against by their subjects? It’s a matter of exploiting one’s cruelties well or badly. Well done are the ones that are perpetrated just once, to secure one’s self, but not afterwards persisted in, being exchanged instead for measures as useful to the subjects as possible. Ill-committed cruelties, on the other hand, increase rather than diminish with time. It’s the perpetrators of the latter who will find it impossible to maintain themselves in power. Note well, then, that the conqueror must arrange to commit all his cruelties at once, so as not to have to recur to them every day, and so be able to reassure people and win them over by benefiting them. Whoever does otherwise is obliged to stand always with knife in hand, and can never depend on his subjects. While injuries should be done all at once, benefits, by contrast, should be granted little by little, so that they may be better enjoyed.  

18Moses, notoriously, was unarmed.
IX: Of the Civic Principality

Now we come to the case of a citizen who becomes prince by the favour of his fellow citizens. Doing this depends not entirely on merit or even fortune, but rather on cunning, assisted by fortune. One attains it with the help either of popular favour or favour of the aristocracy - every city has two opposite parties of this kind, arising from the populace’s desire to avoid oppression by the great, and of the great to oppress that population. From the conflict between them, we get one of three effects: absolute government, liberty, or license. The first is created by either party: the nobility, when seeing that it can’t resist the people, unite behind one of their number and make him prince; the populace, on the other hand, if unable to resist the nobility, try to create a prince in order to be protected by his authority. Depending on the nobility is more difficult, for then one is surrounded by people who think themselves one’s equals; but the popular favorite is all alone, with few or none ready to resist his orders. Besides that, it is impossible to satisfy the nobility by fair dealing and without inflicting injuries, whereas it is easy to satisfy the mass of the people this way. For the aim of the people is more honest than that of the nobility. Note too, though, that the prince can never insure himself against a hostile populace, because of their number, whereas he can against the hostility of the great, who are few. The worst that the people will do is abandon you, whereas from hostile nobles you get not only desertion but active opposition, and cunning opposition at that.

One who become prince by popular favour must maintain its friendship - but that’s not hard, for the people ask nothing but not to be oppressed. But one who becomes prince against popular will but by favor of the nobles, should above all try to gain the favour of the people - which will be easy if he protects them. People who expect evil and receive good feel a greater obligation to their benefactor, so this sort of prince can actually become even more popular than the sort who arises through popular favor in the first place. I conclude that it is necessary for a prince to possess the friendship of his people, for otherwise he has no resource in time of adversity.

XI: Concerning Ecclesiastical Principalities

It remains now to speak of ecclesiastical principalities, touching which all difficulties are prior to getting possession, because they are acquired either by capacity or good fortune, and they can be held without either; for they are sustained by the ordinances of religion, which are so all-powerful, and of such a character that the principalities may be held no matter how their princes behave and live. ...

Before Charles, King of France, passed into Italy, this country was under the dominion of the Pope, the Venetians, the King of Naples, the Duke of Milan, and the Florentines. These potentates had two principal anxieties: the one, that no foreigner should enter Italy under arms; the other, that none of themselves should seize more territory. Those about whom there was the most anxiety were the Pope and the Venetians. To restrain the Venetians the union of all the others was necessary, as it was for the defence of Ferrara; and to keep down the Pope they made use of the barons of Rome, who, being divided into two factions, Orsini and Colonna, had always a pretext for disorder, and, standing with arms in their hands under the eyes of the Pontiff, kept the pontificate weak and powerless. And although there might arise sometimes a courageous pope, such as Sixtus [IV], yet neither fortune nor wisdom could rid him of these annoyances. And the short life of a pope is also a cause of weakness; for in the ten years, which is the average life of a pope, he can with difficulty lower one of the factions; and if, so to speak, one pope should almost destroy the Colonna, another would arise hostile to the Orsini, who would support their opponents, and yet would not have time to ruin the Orsini. This was the reason why the temporal powers of the pope were little esteemed in Italy.

Pope Julius ... found the Church strong, possessing all the Romagna, the barons of Rome reduced to impotence, and, through the chastisements of Alexander, the factions wiped out; he also found the way open to accumulate money in a manner such as had never been practised before Alexander's time. Such things Julius not only followed, but improved upon, and he intended to gain Bologna, to ruin the Venetians, and to drive the French out of Italy. All of these enterprises prospered with him, and so much the more to his credit, inasmuch as he did everything to strengthen the Church and not any private person. He kept also the Orsini and Colonna factions within the bounds in which he found them; and although there was among them some mind to make disturbance, nevertheless he held two things firm: the one, the greatness of the church, with which he terrified them; and the other, not allowing them to have their own cardinals, who caused the disorders among them. For whenever these factions have their cardinals they do not remain quiet for long, because cardinals foster the factions in Rome and out of it, and the barons are compelled to support them, and thus from the ambitions of prelates arise disorders and tumults among the barons. For these reasons his Holiness Pope Leo found the pontificate most powerful, and it is to be hoped that, if others made it great in arms, he will make it still greater and more venerated by his goodness and infinite other virtues.

XII The Different Kinds of Militia and Mercenaries

We have already seen how necessary it is for a prince to have good foundations, otherwise he is certain to be ruined. The chief foundation of all states, old and new, are good laws and good arms. They go hand in hand: you can’t have good laws without good arms, and vice versa; so we’ll just speak of arms here.

Now, the prince’s forces can consist either of his own, or mercenaries, or auxiliaries, or a mixture. Mercenaries and auxiliaries are useless and dangerous, and no state can stand firm if it depends on them: they are disunited, ambitious, undisciplined, faithless, cowardly, and have no fear of God, and no faith with men. Ruin is deferred as long as the assault is postponed; in peace you are despoiled by them, and in war by the enemy. For they have no love or other motive to keep them in the field beyond their wage, which isn’t enough to make them die for you. They’re happy to be soldiers so long as you don’t make war, but when it comes, off they go - as current events in Italy illustrate painfully well.

To make this clearer, consider the mercenary captains. Either they are capable or they aren’t. If they are, you can rely on them, for they will always aspire to their own greatness; but if
they aren’t, they’ll generally ruin you. Experience shows that only princes and armed republics make great progress, whereas mercenary forces do nothing but harm.

XIII: Concerning Auxiliaries, Mixed Soldiery, And One's Own Auxiliaries, which are the other useless arm, are employed when a prince is called in with his forces to aid and defend, as was done by Pope Julius in the most recent times ... These arms may be useful and good in themselves, but for him who calls them in they are always disadvantageous; for losing, one is undone, and winning, one is their captive.

[examples:] Pope Julius II, ... wishing to get Ferrara, threw himself entirely into the hands of the foreigner. But his good fortune brought about a third event, so that he did not reap the fruit of his rash choice; because, having auxiliaries routed at Ravenna, and the Switzers having risen and driven out the conquerors (against all expectation, both his and others), it so came to pass that he did not become prisoner to his enemies, they having fled, nor to his auxiliaries, he having conquered by other arms than theirs...

The Emperor of Constantineople, to oppose his neighbours, sent ten thousand Turks into Greece, who, on the war being finished, were not willing to quit; this was the beginning of the servitude of Greece to the infidels.

Therefore, let him who has no desire to conquer make use of these arms, for they are much more hazardous than mercenaries, because with them the ruin is ready made; they are all united, all yield obedience to others; but with mercenaries, when they have conquered, more time and better opportunities are needed to injure you; they are not all of one community, they are found and paid by you, and a third party, which you have made their head, is not able all at once to assume enough authority to injure you.

In conclusion, with mercenaries dastardy is most dangerous; in auxiliaries, valour. The wise prince, therefore, has always avoided these arms and turned to his own; and has been willing rather to lose with them than to conquer with others, not deeming that a real victory which is gained with the arms of others.

...I conclude, therefore, that no principality is secure without having its own forces ... And it has always been the opinion and judgment of wise men that nothing can be so uncertain or unstable as fame or power not founded on its own strength. ...

XIV: The Duties of a Prince Regarding his Militia

A Prince should have no other aim or thought but war and its organization and discipline, for that is the only art that is necessary to one who commands, and it is of such virtue that it not only maintains those who are born princes, but often enables men of private fortune to attain to that rank. But princes who think more of luxury than of arms soon lose their state.

XV: Of the Things for which Men, and Especially Princes, are Praised or Blamed

Many have imagined republics and principalities which have never been seen or known to exist in reality; for how we live is so far removed from how we ought to live, that he who abandons what is done for what ought to be done will rather learn to bring about his own ruin than his preservation. A man who wishes to make a profession of goodness in everything must come to grief among so many who are not good. So the prince must learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge or not, according to the necessity of the case.

XVI: Of Liberality and Niggardliness

It is well to be considered liberal; yet liberality as the world understands it will injure you, for if used virtuously and in the right way, it won’t be known, and you will incur as much disgrace as if you had been niggardly. But one who wants to obtain the reputation of liberality must not fail to put on every kind of sumptuous display - which will consume all his means, and he will at last be compelled to impose heavy taxes and do everything possible to obtain money. That will make his subjects hate him; and by this liberality, having injured many and benefited few, he will also feel the first little disturbance and be endangered by every peril. And if he tries to change his ways, he’ll incur the charge of niggardliness.

So the prince, if he is prudent, must not object to being called miserly. In time, he will be thought more liberal, when it is seen that by his parsimony his revenue is sufficient, and that he can defend himself against those who make war on him and undertake enterprises without burdening his people - so that he really is liberal to all from whom he does not take, who are many, and niggardly to all to whom he does not give, who are few. In our time, nothing great has been done except by those called niggardly - the others were all ruined.

So a prince who wishes to avoid robbing his subjects must care little about having the reputation of a miser; this niggardliness is one of the vices that enable him to reign. But should anyone reply that there have been many princes, who have done great things with their armies and have been thought extremely liberal, I would answer by saying that the prince may either spend his own wealth and that of his own subjects, or the wealth of others. In the first case, he must be sparing, but for the rest he must not neglect to be very liberal. This liberality is necessary to a prince who marches with his armies and lives by plunder, sack, and ransom, and is dealing with the wealth of others, for without it, he would not be followed by his soldiers. And you may be very generous indeed with what is not the property of yourself or your subjects, for spending the wealth of others will not diminish your reputation; only spending your own resources will injure you.

Nothing destroys itself so much as liberality, for by using it you lose the power of using it, and become either poor and despicable, or rapacious and hated - the first things that a prince must guard against. So it is wiser to have the name of miser, which produces disgrace but not hatred, than to incur of necessity the name of being rapacious, which produces both disgrace and hatred.

XVII: Of Cruelty and Clemency, and Whether it is Better to be Loved or Feared

Every prince must desire to be considered merciful and not cruel. But he must take care not to misuse this mercifulness.
Cesare Borgia was considered cruel, but his cruelty brought order to the Romagna, united it, and reduced it to peace and fealty. So he was really much more merciful than the Florentine people who, to avoid the name of cruelty, allowed Pistoia to be destroyed. A Prince, then, must not mind incurring the charge of cruelty for the purpose of keeping his subjects united and faithful ...

Which is better? To be loved more than feared, or the reverse? The reply is that one ought to be both, but as it is difficult for the two to go together, it is much safer to be feared than loved. For it may be said of men in general that they are ungrateful, vellible dissemblers, anxious to avoid danger, covetous of gain; if you benefit them, they are entirely yours, offering their blood, their goods, their life, their children - when the necessity is remote; but when it approaches, they revolt. Any prince who relies solely on their words, is ruined. Still, a prince should make himself feared in such a way that if he does not gain love, he at any rate avoids hatred; above all, he must abstain from taking the property of others, for men forget more easily the death of their father than the loss of their patrimony.

But when he is with his army and has a large number of soldiers to control, then it is extremely necessary that he should not mind being thought cruel, for without this reputation he could not keep an army united or disposed to its duty.

**XVIII: In What Way Princes Must Keep Faith**

There are two methods of fighting: by law, and by force. The first method is that of men, the second of beasts; but as the first is often insufficient, one must have recourse to the second. The prince must know well how to use both. He must imitate the fox and the lion, for the lion cannot protect himself from traps, but the fox cannot defend himself from wolves. One must therefore be a fox to recognize traps, and a lion to frighten the wolves. Those wishing to be only lions do not understand this. Therefore, a prudent ruler ought not to keep faith when by so doing it would be against his interest, and when the reasons which made him bind himself no longer exist. If men were all good, this precept would not be a good one; but as they are bad, and would not observe their faith with you, so you are not bound to keep faith with them ...

A prince must take great care that nothing goes out of his mouth which is not full of five qualities: Mercy, faith, integrity, humanity, and religion. And nothing is more necessary than to seem to have this last quality, for men judge more by the eyes than by the hands, and every one can see, but very few have to feel. Everybody sees what you appear to be, few what you are; and in the actions of princes, from which there is no appeal, the end justifies the means. Let a prince therefore aim at conquering and maintaining the state, and the means will always be judged honourable and praised by all....

**XIX: That One Should Avoid Being Despised And Hated**

NOW, ... the prince must consider, as has been in part said before, how to avoid those things which will make him hated or contemptible; and as often as he shall have succeeded he will have fulfilled his part, and he need not fear any danger in other reproaches.

It makes him hated above all things, as I have said, to be rapacious, and to be a violator of the property and women of his subjects, from both of which he must abstain. And when neither their property nor honour is touched, the majority of men live content, and he has only to contend with the ambition of a few, whom he can curb with ease in many ways.

It makes him contemptible to be considered fickle, frivolous, effeminate, mean-spirited, irresolute, from all of which a prince should guard himself as from a rock; and he should endeavour to show in his actions greatness, courage, gravity, and fortitude; and in his private dealings with his subjects let him show that his judgments are irrevocable, and maintain himself in such reputation that no one can hope either to deceive him or to get round him.

That prince is highly esteemed who conveys this impression of himself, and he who is highly esteemed is not easily conspired against; for, provided it is well known that he is an excellent man and revered by his people, he can only be attacked with difficulty. For this reason a prince ought to have two fears, one from within, on account of his subjects, the other from without, on account of external powers. From the latter he is defended by being well armed and having good allies, and if he is well armed he will have good friends, and affairs will always remain quiet within when they are quiet without, unless they should have been already disturbed by conspiracy; and even should affairs outside be disturbed, if he has carried out his preparations and has lived as I have said, as long as he does not despair, he will resist every attack, as I said Nabis the Spartan did.

... As experience shows, many have been the conspiracies, but few have been successful; because he who conspires cannot act alone, nor can he take a companion except from those whom he believes to be malcontents, and as soon as you have opened your mind to a malcontent you have given him the material with which to content himself, for by denouncing you he can look for every advantage; so that, seeing the gain from this course to be assured, and seeing the other to be doubtful and full of dangers, he must be a very rare friend, or a thoroughly obstinate enemy of the prince, to keep faith with you.

And, to reduce the matter into a small compass, I say that, on the side of the conspirator, there is nothing but fear, jealousy, prospect of punishment to terrify him; but on the side of the prince there is the majesty of the principality, the laws, the protection of friends and the state to defend him; so that, adding to all these things the popular goodwill, it is impossible that any one should be so rash as to conspire. For whereas in general the conspirator has to fear before the execution of his plot, in this case he has also to fear the sequel to the crime; because on account of it he has the people for an enemy, and thus cannot hope for any escape.

Endless examples could be given on this subject...

For this reason I consider that a prince ought to reckon conspiracies of little account when his people hold him in esteem; but when it is hostile to him, and bears hatred towards him, he ought to fear everything and everybody. And well-ordered states and wise princes have taken every care not to drive the nobles to desperation, and to keep the people satisfied and
contented, for this is one of the most important objects a prince can have.

... [N]ote that, whereas in other principalities the ambition of the nobles and the insolence of the people only have to be contended with, the Roman emperors had a third difficulty in having to put up with the cruelty and avarice of their soldiers, a matter so beset with difficulties that it was the ruin of many; for it was a hard thing to give satisfaction both to soldiers and people; because the people loved peace, and for this reason they loved the unassuming prince, whilst the soldiers loved the warlike prince who was bold, cruel, and rapacious, which qualities they were quite willing he should exercise upon the people, so that they could get double pay and give vent to their greed and cruelty. Hence it arose that those emperors were always overthrown who, either by birth or training, had no great authority, and most of them, especially those who came new to the principality, recognizing the difficulty of these two opposing humours, were inclined to give satisfaction to the soldiers, caring little about injuring the people. Which course was necessary, because, as princes cannot help being hated by someone, they ought, in the first place, to avoid being hated by every one, and when they cannot compass this, they ought to endeavour with the utmost diligence to avoid the hatred of the most powerful. Therefore, those emperors who through inexperience had need of special favour adhered more readily to the soldiers than to the people; a course which turned out advantageous to them or not, accordingly as the prince knew how to maintain authority over them.

... And here it should be noted that hatred is acquired as much by good works as by bad ones, therefore, as I said before, a prince wishing to keep his state is very often forced to do evil; for when that body is corrupt whom you think you have need of to maintain yourself — it may be either the people or the soldiers or the nobles — you have to submit to its humours and to gratify them, and then good works will do you harm.

Turning now to the opposite characters of Commodus, Severus, Antoninus Caracalla, and Maximinus, you will find them all cruel and rapacious — men who, to satisfy their soldiers, did not hesitate to commit every kind of iniquity against the people; and all, except Severus, came to a bad end; but in Severus there was so much valour that, keeping the soldiers friendly, although the people were oppressed by him, he reigned successfully; for his valour made him so much admired in the sight of the soldiers and people that the latter were kept in a way astonished and awed and the former respectful and satisfied. And because the actions of this man, as a new prince, were great, I wish to show briefly that he knew well how to counterfeit the fox and the lion, which natures, as I said above, it is necessary for a prince to imitate.

... I will bring this discourse to a conclusion by saying that princes in our times have this difficulty of giving inordinate satisfaction to their soldiers in a far less degree, because, notwithstanding one has to give them some indulgence, that is soon done; none of these princes have armies that are veterans in the governance and administration of provinces, as were the armies of the Roman Empire; and whereas it was then more necessary to give satisfaction to the soldiers than to the people, it is now more necessary to all princes, except the Turk and the Soldan, to satisfy the people rather than the soldiers, because the people are the more powerful. ...

**XXV: What Fortune Can Effect In Human Affairs, And How To Withstand Her**

... Many men have had, and still have, the opinion that the affairs of the world are in such wise governed by fortune and by God that men with their wisdom cannot direct them and that no one can even help them; and because of this they would have us believe that it is not necessary to labour much in affairs, but to let chance govern them. This opinion has been more credited in our times because of the great changes in affairs which have been seen, and may still be seen, every day, beyond all human conjecture. Sometimes pondering over this, I am in some degree inclined to their opinion. Nevertheless, not to extinguish our free will, I hold it to be true that Fortune is the arbiter of one-half of our actions, but that she still leaves us to direct the other half, or perhaps a little less.

I compare her to one of those raging rivers, which when in flood overflows the plains, sweeping away trees and buildings, bearing away the soil from place to place; everything flies before it, all yield to its violence, without being able in any way to withstand it; and yet, though its nature be such, it does not follow therefore that men, when the weather becomes fair, shall not make provision, both with defences and barriers, in such a manner that, rising again, the waters may pass away by canal, and their force be neither so unrestrained nor so dangerous. So it happens with fortune, who shows her power where valour has not prepared to resist her, and thither she turns her forces where she knows that barriers and defences have not been raised to constrain her ...

But confining myself more to the particular, I say that a prince may be seen happy to-day and ruined to-morrow without having shown any change of disposition or character. This, I believe, arises firstly from causes that have already been discussed at length, namely, that the prince who relies entirely upon fortune is lost when it changes. I believe also that he will be successful who directs his actions according to the spirit of the times, and that he whose actions do not accord with the times will not be successful. Because men are seen, in affairs that lead to the end which every man has before him, namely, glory and riches, to get there by various methods; one with caution, another with haste; one by force, another by skill; one by patience, another by its opposite; and each one succeeds in reaching the goal by a different method. One can also see of two cautious men the one attain his end, the other fail; and similarly, two men by different observances are equally successful, the one being cautious, the other impetuous; all this arises from nothing else than whether or not they conform in their methods to the spirit of the times. This follows from what I have said, that two men working differently bring about the same effect, and of two working similarly, one attains his object and the other does not.

Changes in estate also issue from this, for if, to one who governs himself with caution and patience, times and affairs converge in such a way that his administration is successful, his fortune is made; but if times and affairs change, he is ruined if he does not change his course of action. But a man is not often found sufficiently circumspect to know how to accommodate himself to the change, both because he cannot deviate from what
nature inclines him to, and also because, having always prospered by acting in one way, he cannot be persuaded that it is well to leave it; and, therefore, the cautious man, when it is time to turn adventurous, does not know how to do it, hence he is ruined; but had he changed his conduct with the times fortune would not have changed.

... I conclude therefore that, fortune being changeful and mankind steadfast in their ways, so long as the two are in agreement men are successful, but unsuccessful when they fall out. For my part I consider that it is better to be adventurous than cautious, because fortune is a woman, and if you wish to keep her under it is necessary to beat and ill-use her; and it is seen that she allows herself to be mastered by the adventurous rather than by those who go to work more coldly. She is, therefore, always, woman-like, a lover of young men, because they are less cautious, more violent, and with more audacity command her.

XXVI: An Exhortation To Liberate Italy From The Barbarians

HAVING carefully considered the subject of the above discourses, and wondering within myself whether the present times were propitious to a new prince, and whether there were the elements that would give an opportunity to a wise and virtuous one to introduce a new order of things which would do honour to him and good to the people of this country, it appears to me that so many things concur to favour a new prince that I never knew a time more fit than the present.

And if, as I said, it was necessary that the people of Israel should be captive so as to make manifest the ability of Moses; that the Persians should be oppressed by the Medes so as to discover the greatness of the soul of Cyrus; and that the Athenians should be dispersed to illustrate the capabilities of Theseus: then at the present time, in order to discover the virtue of an Italian spirit, it was necessary that Italy should be reduced to the extremity she is now in, that she should be more enslaved than the Hebrews, more oppressed than the Persians, more scattered than the Athenians; without head, without order, beaten, despoiled, torn, overrun; and to have endured every kind of desolation... so that Italy, left as without life, waits for him who shall yet heal her wounds and put an end to the ravaging and plundering of Lombardy, to the swindling and taxing of the kingdom and of Tuscany, and cleanse those sores that for long have festered. It is seen how she entreats God to send someone who shall deliver her from these wrongs and barbarous insolencies. It is seen also that she is ready and willing to follow a banner if only someone will raise it.

Nor is there to be seen at present one in whom she can place more hope than in your illustrious house, with its valour and fortune, favoured by God and by the Church of which it is now the chief, and which could be made the head of this redemption.

... With us there is great justice, because that war is just which is necessary, and arms are hallowed when there is no other hope but in them. Here there is the greatest willingness, and where the willingness is great the difficulties cannot be great if you will only follow those men to whom I have directed your attention. Further than this, how extraordinarily the ways of God have been manifested beyond example: the sea is divided, a cloud has led the way, the rock has poured forth water, it has rained manna, everything has contributed to your greatness; you ought to do the rest. God is not willing to do everything, and thus take away our free will and that share of glory which belongs to us.

... Here there is great valour in the limbs whilst it fails in the head. Look attentively at the duels and the hand-to-hand combats, how superior the Italians are in strength, dexterity, and subtlety. But when it comes to armies they do not bear comparison, and this springs entirely from the insufficiency of the leaders, since those who are capable are not obedient, and each one seems to himself to know, there having never been any one so distinguished above the rest, either by valour or fortune, that others would yield to him. Hence it is that for so long a time, and during so much fighting in the past twenty years, whenever there has been an army wholly Italian, it has always given a poor account of itself...

If, therefore, your illustrious house wishes to follow those remarkable men who have redeemed their country, it is necessary before all things, as a true foundation for every enterprise, to be provided with your own forces, because there can be no more faithful, truer, or better soldiers. And although singly they are good, altogether they will be much better when they find themselves commanded by their prince, honoured by him, and maintained at his expense. Therefore it is necessary to be prepared with such arms, so that you can be defended against foreigners by Italian valour.

... This opportunity, therefore, ought not to be allowed to pass for letting Italy at last see her liberator appear. Nor can one express the love with which he would be received in all those provinces which have suffered so much from these foreign scourings, with what thirst for revenge, with what stubborn faith, with what devotion, with what tears. What door would be closed to him? Who would refuse obedience to him? What envy would hinder him? What Italian would refuse him homage? To all of us this barbarous dominion stinks. Let, therefore, your illustrious house take up this charge with that courage and hope with which all just enterprises are undertaken...