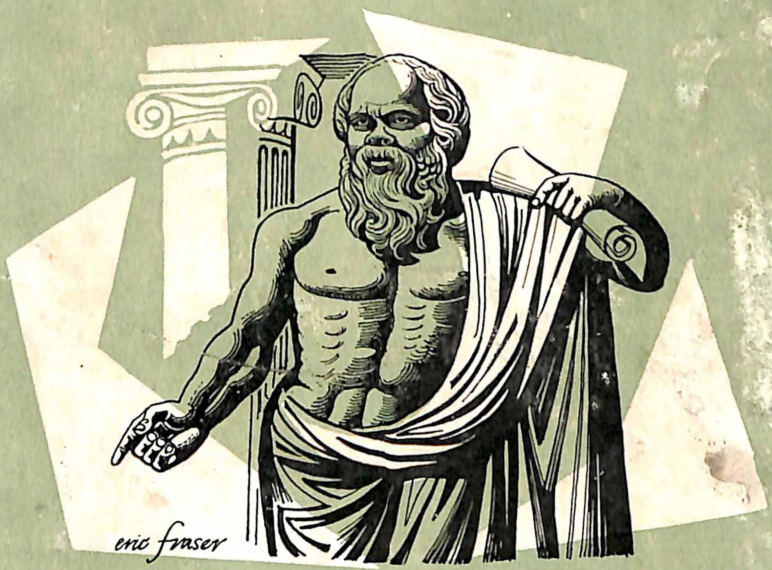
PLATO

The Trial and Death of Socrates

Euthyphro · Apology · Crito · Phaedo



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PLATO

Born at Athens, 428–427 B.C. After the death of Socrates (399) he travelled in Greece, Egypt and Italy. About 387 he returned to Athens and founded the Academy, over which he presided for the remainder of his life, except for two visits to Sicily on political business (367 and 361). He died in 348–347 B.C.

PLATO

The Trial and Death of Socrates

EUTHYPHRO • APOLOGY • CRITO • PHAEDO

TRANSLATED WITH
AN INTRODUCTION BY
JOHN WARRINGTON

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TO

MOTHER

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INTRODUCTION

SOCRATES was born at Athens in 469 B.C., and, except for three short periods of military service during the Peloponnesian War, he seldom if ever went beyond the city boundaries. At the age of about nineteen he became interested in the cosmological speculation of the Ionian school, which had reached Athens with Anaxagoras some thirteen years earlier. But this youthful passion for physical science led to disillusionment, and he turned to the elements of moral philosophy. The success of his dialectical method in this field won him a large following, and by 439 he already enjoyed a widespread reputation for wisdom. He kept no school and took no fees; he scorned the pretensions of professional sophists—with whom he was nevertheless ranked in popular estimation; and he claimed to have no knowledge beyond that of his own ignorance.[1] His informal teaching, however, roused his younger contemporaries to the need of knowing themselves, and he thereby promoted the authority of the intellect, the law of definite individual knowledge above all political motives or party ties.

But the enthusiasm thus stirred among a small minority was not shared by the ordinary run of his fellow citizens, who came to regard him as a 'crank', and in 423 he was mercilessly ridiculed in *The Clouds* [2] of Aristophanes.

[1] 'A modesty which,' says F. L. Lucas, 'unfortunately, he is sometimes very far from preserving in the pages of Plato.' (*Greek Drama for Everyman*, 1954.)

[2] *See* the superb translation of this play by F. L. Lucas, op. cit.

Socrates, however, held his course. His indifference to ridicule is illustrated by Aelian's story [1] that during the first performance of *The Clouds*, overhearing some foreigners whisper, 'Who is Socrates?' he stood up for the audience to see, and so remained until the end of the play. Nor was he more responsive to the voice of popular clamour; in 406 he allowed himself to be elected to the Boule, where he refused to lend his voice to the condemnation of the victorious admirals after Arginusae.

The year 404 witnessed the downfall of Athens; and as she strove to recover her self-respect and political strength ridicule of Socrates turned to suspicion, fear and rage. An attack upon established ways and beliefs always provokes such reactions, especially in small communities. At the height of her power and glory Athens had turned upon Anaxagoras, because of his novel views, and had driven him into exile. Now, in the years of her humiliation, many of her leading citizens came to look upon the teaching of Socrates as a direct menace to the State. Personal animosities unknown to us may also have been at work. At all events, in 399 Socrates was indicted on the twofold charge of impiety and corruption of the youth. The first count accused him of denying the gods worshipped by the State; the second represented him as encouraging young men to criticize the existing order. Tried by a court of 501 dicasts, he was found guilty and condemned to death.[2] The execution was delayed for thirty days on account of the Delian festival of Apollo; during that time Socrates refused to avail himself of plans made for his escape, and drank the hemlock at sunset one evening in the springtime of that year.

The value of Socrates' contribution to philosophy has

[1] *Var. Hist.* ii. 13.

[2] The procedure need not be described here. It is made clear in the *Apology* and footnotes thereto.

been much disputed. Some have attributed to him a great deal of Plato's doctrine; but this view is rejected by most authorities, and indeed Socrates himself denied that he had any positive theories to teach. Nevertheless it may safely be maintained that he founded the spiritual view of knowledge and conduct. He defined the soul as that in man which has knowledge and ignorance, good and bad. Thus for the first time intelligence is distinguished from sensation, and the soul identified with the normal consciousness or character of man. Moreover Socrates declared the immortality of the soul, and it was but a step from this discovery to the doctrine that goodness is knowledge. The Socratic method of 'examination in arguments' or 'Socratic irony' was in itself not new; it had already been employed by Zeno of Elaea against the Pythagorean geometry. What was new was its application by Socrates to questions of ethics and aesthetics. Socrates believed that he had a divine mission to convince men of their ignorance by question and answer, examining systematically the fundamental hypotheses from which discussions of conduct and morality arose, and insisting on a strict definition of terms. In this method he may be regarded as the forerunner of formal logic.

The dialogues contained in this volume arise from four episodes in the trial and death of Socrates. Socrates comes to the offices of the King-Archon to attend to some preliminaries of his trial. Here he meets Euthyphro, who is bringing a charge of manslaughter against his father in the interests of 'holiness', i.e. proper religious observances and the will of the gods, about which he claims to know more than anyone else. This claim results in a discussion of holiness, which is the dialogue's principal theme; but the real purpose of *Euthyphro* is to teach correct methods of thinking. Two definitions of holiness put forward by Euthyphro are rejected. A third, 'service of the gods', is not challenged by

Socrates; but he fails to elicit from Euthyphro the *purpose* of that service. We do, however, obtain a hint in the *Apology* (30) of Plato's view, when he makes Socrates declare that his life has been spent in trying to persuade men to care above all else for the perfection of their own souls. Consequently *Euthyphro* is sometimes considered as a kind of scientific justification of Socrates' attitude in the *Apology*.

This last-named work, perhaps the most familiar and best loved of Plato's writings, is Socrates' defence of his career. It is followed by two short supplementary speeches: one after the verdict, which must have appeared to the court an example of outrageous contempt; the other after sentence, surely one of the most moving utterances ever penned. The *Apology* requires little or no comment, except an answer to this question: Is it substantially the speech made by Socrates before his judges, or is it entirely the fruit of Plato's mind? Three considerations incline me to the belief that the first alternative is correct, although there can be little doubt that Socrates' words poured forth with something less than the consummate artistry with which Plato has invested them. First, the procedure of an Athenian court is strictly observed, and the manner of speech is entirely Socratic in the light of information supplied both by Plato and by Xenophon. Second, the work contains nothing inconsistent with what we know of Socrates, and nothing characteristic of Plato's later teaching. Third, the purpose of the *Apology* is to glorify the memory of Socrates; and that end could scarcely be achieved by offering a purely fictitious composition as the record of a speech which must have been well remembered by many readers and which Plato himself was known to have heard.

The setting of *Crito* is the prison where Socrates is awaiting execution. Here the conversation is altogether imaginary; Plato was not present, and it bears the marks

of his peculiar literary and dialectical skill. We may, however, accept a number of facts as historical. We may safely believe that Crito, the intimate and lifelong friend of Socrates, made repeated efforts to persuade him to escape. Again, Socrates' refusal to comply with his friend's urgent request must have been dictated by his view of duty—the subject of this dialogue. It is therefore reasonable to suppose, as Fowler says, that 'the doctrine that injustice is always wrong and that we must not requite injustice with injustice is really Socratic, and that the exalted patriotism and sublime serenity of mind portrayed by Plato . . . were really exhibited in the last days, as in the previous life, of the master whom he delighted to honour'.[1]

The inculcation of correct methods of thinking, mentioned above with reference to *Euthyphro*, is characteristic of most of Plato's dialogues. The close and repetitive reasoning to which this purpose gives rise will often seem to an educated reader of today unnecessary, tedious and sometimes even confusing. It must, however, be borne in mind that Plato was guiding the first footsteps of our race along an unfamiliar path, a path which was to lead man to heights that have been abandoned in this age of intellectual aberration. Considered therefore in its setting of time and circumstance, *Phaedo* must be recognized as an achievement of consummate grandeur, quite apart from the closing pages, which are a literary masterpiece in their own right.

The scene of this great dialogue is once again the prison; the conversation is represented as taking place between sunrise and sunset on the last day of Socrates' life. It is commonly believed that the purpose of *Phaedo* is to demonstrate the immortality of the soul. But the evidence put forward in support of this view is not compelling. It is far more likely that the ultimate purpose is to popularize the

[1] Introduction to *Crito*, 1914.

Ideal theory with its two closely interlocking doctrines of *anamnesis* (recollection) and the Forms or Ideas as sole causes of all things and the sole objects of knowledge. The question of the soul's immortality is the framework upon which the theory is gradually erected and upon which it is finally displayed. It does not, however, on that account lose its importance as the focal point in a splendid intellectual achievement; for Plato's discussion and solution of the problem is a landmark on man's voyage to eternity.

JOHN WARRINGTON.

1963.

THE FOLLOWING WORKS OF PLATO ARE IN EVERYMAN'S LIBRARY:

Euthyphro, Apology, Crito and Phaedo, in *The Trial and Death of Socrates* (No. 457).

The Republic (No. 64).

The Laws (No. 275).

Parmenides, Theaitetos, The Sophist and The Statesman, in *Parmenides and Other Dialogues* (No. 456).

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EUTHYPHRO

B 457

EUTHYPHRO

CHARACTERS

EUTHYPHRO · SOCRATES

Scene: Athens. Portico of the King-Archon [1]

[St. I, p. 2.] EUTHYPHRO. Why Socrates, what has happened all of a sudden to make you leave your haunts in the Lyceum and hang about here in the King-Archon's portico? Surely you haven't an action before him, as I have?

SOCRATES. We Athenians, Euthyphro, do not call it an action, but an indictment.

EUTH. What? Then somebody must have brought an indictment against you; I'm not going to suggest that you've brought one against anyone else.

SOCR. Certainly I haven't.

EUTH. But someone else against you?

SOCR. Exactly.

EUTH. Who is he?

SOCR. I'm not very well acquainted with the man myself, Euthyphro; he's apparently young and unknown. His name, however, is Meletus, I believe; and he belongs to the deme of Pittheus. Maybe you remember a Pitthian Meletus—with long hair, a scanty beard and a hooked nose.

[1] The King-Archon took cognizance of all indictments for impiety, and all cases of homicide came before him in the first instance. (*See* Aristotle, *Ath. Con.* 57.)

EUTH. I don't remember him, Socrates. But what's the indictment he has brought against you?

SOCR. What's the indictment? No mean one in my view. He's done very well to get a grasp of so important a matter at his age. He claims, you see, to know how the youth are being corrupted and who is responsible. Seeing my ignorance and that I am corrupting his fellows, he comes to the State, like a boy to his mother, to accuse me; so he must be a wise man. Moreover, he seems to me the only one of our citizens who goes about things in the right way; for the right way is to take care of the young men first, to make them as good as possible, just as a farmer looks to his young plants first, and the rest afterwards. Meletus then is no doubt first [3] weeding out those of us who corrupt the budding generation, as he maintains. Having done that he will concern himself with the older men, and thereby of course bring innumerable priceless blessings upon the State—at least that is the natural consequence of the beginning he has made.

EUTH. I hope it may be so, Socrates; but I fear the opposite may result. For it seems to me that he begins by injuring the State at its very core when he sets out to harm you. Tell me, though, what does he say you do that corrupts the young?

SOCR. My good friend, things that are absurd at first hearing. He says I'm a maker of gods; he says he has indicted me for the sake of the old gods in whom I do not believe and in whose place I have erected new ones.

EUTH. I understand, Socrates; it is because you claim to be constantly visited by that 'divine mentor'. So he has brought this indictment against you for making innovations in religion, and he is going into court to slander you, knowing that the people lend a ready ear to such charges. Why, they even laugh at me and say I'm crazy whenever

I address the Assembly on religious matters and foretell the future for their benefit—despite the fact that every one of my prognostications has come true. Ah well, they are jealous of all such men as ourselves; we mustn't be upset by that—no, we must come to grips with them.

SOCR. My dear Euthyphro, being laughed at doesn't matter at all. Athenians, I fancy, don't concern themselves greatly with a man they think clever, so long as he refrains from imparting his clever notions to others. It's when they think he is making others like himself that they get angry with him, either through jealousy, as you say, or for some other reason.

EUTH. I'm not particularly keen on testing their sentiments towards me in the matter.

SOCR. No; they doubtless regard you as reserved and unwilling to impart your wisdom. But I'm afraid my love of men makes them think not only that I pour out my ideas in a torrent of words for the benefit of anyone and everyone without payment, but that I would even pay something myself in order to secure a listener. Now if, as I was just saying, they were going to ridicule me, as you say they do you, it would not be at all unpleasant to pass the time in court laughing and jesting; but if they are in earnest, none but a soothsayer like yourself can foresee how this business will end.

EUTH. Well Socrates, perhaps it will come to nothing, and you will bring your case to a satisfactory conclusion, as I think I shall mine.

SOCR. What exactly is your case, Euthyphro? Are you defending or prosecuting?

EUTH. Prosecuting.

SOCR. Whom?

EUTH. [4] Someone whose prosecution at my hands is considered sheer madness.

SOCR. Why? Are you prosecuting someone with wings?

EUTH. He'd have his work cut out trying to fly; he's quite an old man.

SOCR. Who is he?

EUTH. My father.

SOCR. Your father, my good man?

EUTH. Indeed yes.

SOCR. But what is the charge, I mean what is the case about?

EUTH. Manslaughter, Socrates.

SOCR. Heracles! Really, Euthyphro, most people don't know where right lies; I fancy it's not everyone who can rightly do such a thing, unless he's already far advanced in wisdom.

EUTH. Yes Socrates, he needs to be *very* far advanced.

SOCR. Was the person killed by your father a relative? But of course he was; you'd never bring this charge of manslaughter on a stranger's account.

EUTH. How ridiculous, Socrates, that you should think it makes any difference whether the victim was a stranger or a relative, and fail to see that the only thing that matters is whether the killer's action was justified or not. If it *was* justified he should go free; but if it was *not*, one's duty is to proceed against him, even if he shares one's hearth and eats at one's table. The pollution is the same if you associate knowingly with such a man and do not purify both yourself and him by proceeding against him. In this case the dead man was a hired servant of mine, and when we were farming at Naxos he was working there on our estate. Well, he got drunk, flew into a temper with one of our slaves and knifed him. So my father tied him up hand and foot, flung him into a ditch and sent a man here to ask the religious adviser what he ought to do next. Meanwhile he completely ignored the man lying

there bound; he thought that since the fellow was a homicide anyway, it would not matter if he died. And that is exactly what happened to him; he died of hunger and cold and his bonds before the messenger returned from the adviser. Now my father and the rest of the family are indignant because I am prosecuting my father for manslaughter on account of one who was himself guilty of homicide. They say Father did not actually kill him; and they argue that, even if he had done so, the fact would remain that the dead man himself was guilty of homicide, and therefore I ought not to trouble myself about such a creature, because it is unholy for a son to bring a charge of manslaughter against his own father. That, Socrates, goes to show how little they understand the divine law in respect of holiness and unholiness.

SOCR. But good heavens, Euthyphro, do you think your knowledge of the divine law and of holiness and unholiness is so accurate that in a case such as you have described you are not afraid of committing an unholy act yourself by prosecuting your father?

EUTH. I should be of no use, Socrates, [5] and Euthyphro would differ in no way from the common run of men, if I lacked precise knowledge about all such things.

SOCR. Then the best thing for me, my fine fellow, is to become your pupil and, before the suit with Meletus is heard, to challenge him and say that I have all along thought it very important to have a grasp of divine law and that now, since he says I am doing wrong by acting carelessly and making religious innovations, I have become your pupil. 'Meletus,' I might say, 'if you acknowledge that Euthyphro is wise in such matters, then believe that I too hold correct opinions, and do not bring me to trial. If, on the other hand, you do not acknowledge that, then bring a suit against him, my

teacher, rather than me; charge him with corrupting the old, his father and me, which he does by teaching me and by correcting and punishing his father.' If Meletus will not grant my request, either releasing me from the indictment or bringing it against you instead, I could repeat in court what I said in my challenge to him.

EUTH. I can assure you, Socrates, that if he ventured to indict me I would certainly find his weak spot, and the court would find itself trying him rather than me.

SOCR. I know it, dear friend, and that is why I'm anxious to become your pupil; I'm aware that neither this fellow Meletus nor anyone else seems to notice you at all, but he has seen through me so easily and with such a piercing eye that he has indicted me for impiety. Anyhow, in the name of Zeus, tell me what you just now claimed to know so well. What do you say is the nature of piety and impiety, in relation both to manslaughter and to other things? Is not holiness identical in every action, and unholiness the opposite of all holiness—always identical, so that anything unholy possesses some one characteristic quality?

EUTH. Undoubtedly, Socrates.

SOCR. Tell me then, what do you say holiness is, and what unholiness?

EUTH. Well, I say holiness is what I am doing now, prosecuting a wrongdoer whether for manslaughter, sacrilege or any such crime, and whether that wrongdoer happens to be one's father, mother or anyone else. Not to prosecute him would be unholy. And, Socrates, see what strong evidence I can offer you—evidence I have already urged upon others—that this is established and right, viz. that we ought not to let one who has behaved impiously go unpunished, no matter who he may be. [6] While believing that Zeus is the best and most just of the gods, men agree

that he put his father in bonds for having wickedly devoured his children, and that Cronus in turn emasculated *his* father for similar reasons. Yet they are annoyed with me because I take action against my father when he has done wrong; so they are inconsistent in what they say about the gods and about me.

SOCR. Surely, Euthyphro, this is the reason why I am faced with an indictment, because when I hear such stories about the gods I find it hard to accept them. And therefore, probably, people will say I am in the wrong. Now if these tales are acceptable to you, who know so much about such things, I suppose we others must fall into step with you. What indeed are we to say, who confess we know nothing about them? But tell me, in the name of Zeus Philios,[1] do you honestly believe these things happened?

EUTH. Yes, and still more wonderful things than these, Socrates—things which the majority of men do not know.

SOCR. So you believe there really was civil war among the gods, and dreadful feuds and battles and many other things of the kind, such as are narrated by the poets and represented in complicated designs by the great artists in our shrines and especially on the embroidered robe carried up to the Acropolis at the great Panathenaea?[2] Shall we agree that these things are true, Euthyphro?

EUTH. Not these alone, Socrates; as I said just now, I will, if you like, tell you many other things about the gods,

[1] Zeus as the god of friendship.

[2] The Panathenaea was an annual Athenian festival in honour of Athena, held in the late summer. Every fourth year it was celebrated with extraordinary splendour and was called the Great Panathenaea. This latter included a magnificent procession which ascended the Acropolis to offer the goddess a newly woven saffron robe (*peplos*). The procession is depicted on the Parthenon frieze in the British Museum.

which I know very well will astonish you when you hear them.

SOCR. I dare say. But you can tell me those things at your leisure some other time. Try for the moment to let me have a more satisfactory answer to the question I asked you a little while ago. You see, my friend, you did not give me sufficient information earlier on, when I asked what holiness was; you merely described as holy your present action in prosecuting your father for manslaughter.

EUTH. Well, what I said was true, Socrates.

SOCR. Maybe. But Euthyphro, you surely recognize many other things as holy.

EUTH. And so they are.

SOCR. Yes, but please bear in mind that this is not what I asked you; I was not inviting you to name one or two of many holy actions, but to tell me the essential characteristic whereby *all* holy acts are holy. After all, you agreed that all unholy acts were unholy and all holy ones holy by virtue of a single characteristic. Or don't you remember.

EUTH. I remember.

SOCR. Tell me then what this characteristic is. I want to keep it before my eyes and use it as a model, so that, according as you or someone else does agree or does not agree with it, I may call an act holy or unholy.

EUTH. If that is the kind of explanation you want, Socrates, I will let you have it.

SOCR. That is just what I want.

EUTH. Very well then, what is dear to the gods is holy, [7] and what is not dear to them is unholy.

SOCR. Splendid, Euthyphro; now you have answered as I asked you to answer. However, I am not yet sure that what you say is true, though you will doubtless prove it to be so.

EUTH. Indeed I will.

SOCR. Come then, let us examine our statement. A thing or a person dear to the gods is holy, while a thing or a person hateful to the gods is unholy; and the holy and the unholy, so far from being the same, are the exact opposites of one another. Is that not what we said?

EUTH. It is.

SOCR. And it seems to be correct?

EUTH. I think so, Socrates.

SOCR. Good. Now if I'm not mistaken, Euthyphro, we also said that the gods disagree and quarrel among themselves, and that they entertain mutual hatreds.

EUTH. Yes, we said that.

SOCR. But what are the subjects of that disagreement which engenders enmity and anger? Let us look at the problem in this way. If you and I were to disagree about a numerical problem—which of two numbers, for example, were the greater—would our disagreement make us enemies and breed in us mutual anger, or should we not quickly settle the matter by recourse to arithmetic.

EUTH. Of course we should.

SOCR. Again, surely, if we were to disagree about the relative size of certain objects, we should quickly put an end to the disagreement by recourse to measurement.

EUTH. True.

SOCR. And we should, I imagine, come to terms about relative weights by weighing.

EUTH. Naturally.

SOCR. But suppose we found ourselves at loggerheads about something upon which we could not reach agreement, and to such an extent as to become enemies and angry with each other: what would that thing be? Perhaps you cannot say offhand; but let me make a suggestion. Would not our disagreement turn upon right

and wrong, noble and ignoble, good and bad? Are not those the matters about which you and I and other people become enemies, when we do so become, because we differ about them and can reach no satisfactory agreement?

EUTH. Yes, Socrates, those are just the matters about which we might become enemies.

SOCR. And what about the gods, Euthyphro? If they disagree at all, must not these same matters be the objects of their disagreement?

EUTH. Inevitably.

SOCR. According to what you say then, my noble Euthyphro, some of the gods think some things are right or wrong, and noble or ignoble, and good or bad, while others disagree; for they would not quarrel among themselves unless they disagreed about these matters. Is that so?

EUTH. You are perfectly correct.

SOCR. Then presumably the gods in each group love the things they consider good and right, and hate the opposites of these things.

EUTH. Certainly.

SOCR. But you say that the same things are looked upon as right by some of them and as wrong by others; and it is [8] because they disagree about such things that they quarrel and make war upon one another. Is not that what you said?

EUTH. It is.

SOCR. Apparently then the same things are both hated and loved by the gods; so the same things must be both dear and hateful to the gods.

EUTH. So it seems.

SOCR. On that reckoning, Euthyphro, the same things must be both holy and unholy.

EUTH. I suppose they must.

SOCR. Then, sir, you did not answer my question. I did not ask what is at once both holy and unholy; but one must infer from your reply that what is dear to the gods is also hateful to them. And so, Euthyphro, it would not be surprising if, in punishing your father as you are now doing, you were performing an act that is pleasing to Zeus but hateful to Cronus and Uranus, pleasing to Hephaestus but hateful to Hera, and so forth.

EUTH. But I think, Socrates, that none of the gods disagrees with any other about this; none of them, I mean, holds that a man guilty of culpable homicide ought not to pay the penalty.

SOCR. How about men, Euthyphro? Did you ever hear anyone argue that he who had killed another without justification, or committed any other misdeed, ought not to pay the penalty?

EUTH. Yes indeed. Men are continually arguing these matters, especially in the courts. They do very many things that are wrong; and then, by way of defence, they leave nothing undone or unsaid in order to escape the penalty.

SOCR. Certainly, Euthyphro; but do they admit they have done wrong, and claim exemption from the penalty *notwithstanding their admission*?

EUTH. Oh no, they don't do that.

SOCR. In which case there *is* something they leave undone and unsaid. They do not, I fancy, dare to contend that they ought not to pay the penalty even though they have actually done wrong. Surely what they say is that they have not done wrong at all, do they not?

EUTH. True enough.

SOCR. Very well, isn't the same thing true of the gods when, as you maintain, they quarrel about right and

wrong? Isn't it that some say others have done wrong, while others say they have not? Surely, my dear fellow, no god or man ventures to say that he who has done wrong ought not to pay the penalty.

EUTH. Yes, you're right there, Socrates, in the main.

SOCR. But I think, Euthyphro, those who dispute (men and gods alike, if gods really do so) are at variance about individual acts. When they disagree about a given act, some say it was right, and others that it was wrong. Isn't that so?

EUTH. Certainly.

SOCR. [9] Well, here is a case in which a servant committed homicide; he was trussed up by his victim's master, and died as a result before the master had learned from the advisers what he ought to do with him. Come now, dear Euthyphro. Help me to grow wiser by informing me what evidence you have that the gods think that the servant lost his life wrongfully, and that it is right on account of such a man for a son to proceed against his father and accuse him of manslaughter. Do try to enlighten me as regards this affair; try to show me clearly that all the gods definitely believe this conduct is right, and if you manage to do so I will glorify your wisdom as long as I live.

EUTH. That is a tall order, Socrates; though I *could* prove it to you beyond a shadow of doubt.

SOCR. I see; you think I'm not so quick in the uptake as a jury, whom you're obviously going to convince that such acts are wrong and that all the gods detest them.

EUTH. Of course I am, Socrates, that is, if they will give me a hearing.

SOCR. They'll give you a hearing all right if they find you're a good speaker. But something occurred to me while you were talking. I said to myself: 'If Euthyphro

were to prove incontrovertibly that all the gods look upon such a death as wrongful, what would I have learned from Euthyphro as to what holiness and unholiness are?' Granted that the deed in question must be hateful to the gods, the fact remains, as we saw just now, that holiness and its opposite are not defined in this way; for we saw that what is hateful to the gods is also dear to them. So I excuse you from any discussion of the point, Euthyphro. If you like, we'll assume that all the gods think it wrong and detest it. But let us now emend our definition and say that whatever all the gods hate is unholy, whatever they all love is holy and what some love and others hate is neither or both. Shall we agree then to accept this now as definition of our holiness and unholiness?

EUTH. What is to prevent us, Socrates?

SOCR. Nothing, so far as I am concerned, Euthyphro. But consider your own position; ask yourself whether by adopting that definition you will most easily teach me what you promised.

EUTH. Well, I should say that what all the gods love is holy, and that what they all hate is unholy.

SOCR. Then shall we test the truth of this statement also, or shall we let it go and simply accept it on the authority of ourselves and others, recognizing it as true on the basis of mere assertion?

EUTH. We must examine it. Nevertheless I still believe it to be correct.

SOCR. We shall soon see, my friend. [10] Just consider this question: Is that which is holy loved by the gods because it is holy, or is it holy because it is loved by the gods?

EUTH. I don't know what you mean, Socrates.

SOCR. Then I will try to explain. We describe a thing as being carried and as carrying, as being led and as leading,

as being seen and as seeing. Now you understand, don't you, that in all such expressions the two parts differ from one another in meaning, and how they differ?

EUTH. I think I understand.

SOCR. Again, we conceive of a thing being loved and of a thing loving, and the two are different?

EUTH. Of course.

SOCR. Now tell me, is a thing which is carried a carried thing because one carries it, or for some other reason?

EUTH. No, for that reason.

SOC. And a thing which is led is led because one leads it, and a thing which is seen is so because one sees it?

EUTH. Certainly.

SOCR. One does not, therefore, see it because it is a seen thing; on the contrary, it is a seen thing because one sees it. Nor does one lead it because it is a led thing; it is a led thing because one leads it. Nor again does one carry it because it is a carried thing; no, it is a carried thing because one carries it. Is it clear now, Euthyphro, what I am trying to say? I am trying to say this, that if anything *becomes*, or *undergoes*, it does not become because it is in a state of becoming, but it is in this latter state because it becomes; and it does not undergo because it is a thing which undergoes, but because it undergoes it is a thing which undergoes. But perhaps you don't agree.

EUTH. Oh yes, I agree.

SOCR. Is not that which is loved a thing which is either becoming or undergoing something?

EUTH. Undoubtedly.

SOCR. And is this case like the ones mentioned earlier: its lovers do not love it because it is a beloved thing, but it is a beloved thing precisely because they love it?

EUTH. Manifestly.

SOCR. Now, Euthyphro, what about that which is holy?

It is loved by all the gods, is it not, according to what you said?

EUTH. I think so.

SOCR. But that which is dear to the gods is dear to and loved by them because they love it.

EUTH. Of course.

SOCR. Then that which is dear to the gods and that which is holy are not identical, but differ one from the other.

EUTH. How is that, Socrates?

SOCR. Because we are agreed that the holy is loved because it is holy, i.e. that it is not holy by virtue of the fact that it is loved; are we not?

EUTH. Yes.

SOCR. But we are agreed that what is dear to the gods is dear to them because they love it (i.e. by reason of this love), not that they love it because it is dear.

EUTH. Quite right.

SOCR. But now, my good Euthyphro, if that which is dear to the gods and that which is holy were identical, [11] then (*a*) if the holy were loved because it is holy, that which is dear to the gods would be loved because it is dear; and (*b*) if that which is dear to the gods is dear because it is loved, then that which is holy would be holy because it is loved. As it is, you see that the opposite is the case, which shows that the two are entirely different from one another. For the one is lovable from the fact that it is loved, while the other is loved because it is in itself lovable. Now if you'll excuse me, Euthyphro, when I asked you what holiness is you were unwilling to pin down its essence; you simply mentioned something that has happened to this holiness, viz. that it is loved by all the gods. But you have not as yet told me what it *actually is*. Please then don't hide it from me, but begin again and tell me what holiness is, irrespective of whether it is loved

by the gods or anything else happens to it; we shan't fall out about that. Tell me frankly now, what is holiness and what is unholiness?

EUTH. Really, Socrates, I just don't know how to explain what I mean. No matter what statement we put forward, somehow or other it keeps shifting its ground and won't stay put.

SOCR. Your statements, Euthyphro, are like the works of my ancestor Daedalus,[1] and if I were the one who made or put them forward you would doubtless laugh at me and say that because of my relationship to him my verbal works run away and will not remain in place. As it is—well, the statements are yours; so some other jest is required, for they won't stay still, as you yourself see.

EUTH. I think the jest is quite appropriate, Socrates. After all, I am not the one who causes these statements to move about; *you* are the Daedalus—so far as I am concerned they would not have moved an inch.

SOCR. Apparently then, my friend, I am a more cunning artist than Daedalus. He made only his own works move, whereas I, it seems, set in motion the works of others as well as my own. And the most exquisite thing about my art is that I am clever against my will; for I would rather have my works remain fixed and stable than possess the craftsmanship of Daedalus and Tantalus' wealth into the bargain. But enough of this. Since you appear to be lazy I will lend you a hand myself and so enable you to instruct me on the subject of holiness. Now don't give up before having a try; just see whether you don't think that everything holy is right.

EUTH. I certainly do.

SOCR. Well, is everything right also holy? [12] Or is all

[1] Socrates' father was a sculptor, as was the legendary Daedalus whose statues were so lifelike that they moved about.

that is holy right, and not all that is right holy, but part of it holy and part something else?

EUTH. I don't follow you, Socrates.

SOCR. And yet you are as much younger than me as you are wiser; but as I said, you are become lazy through your wealth of wisdom. Wake up now, my friend; it is not hard to understand what I say. I mean the opposite of what the poet [1] said who wrote:

> Zeus the creator, who brought all this to be,
> Thou wilt not name; for where there's fear there's respect.

Now I disagree with him. Shall I tell you how?

EUTH. Do, by all means.

SOCR. I cannot see that 'where there's fear there's respect'. After all, many who fear disease, poverty and the like have no *respect* for the objects of their dread. Don't you think so too?

EUTH. Indeed yes.

SOCR. But I do think that where there's respect there's fear. Doesn't everyone who feels respect and shame about any act also dread the reputation for wickedness?

EUTH. Yes, he does.

SOCR. It is not correct therefore to say 'where there's fear there's respect'. On the other hand, where there's respect there's fear; but respect is not *everywhere* where fear is, since fear, I think, is more comprehensive than respect. Respect, you see, is a part of fear, just as the odd is part of number, so that it is not true to say that where there's number there's the odd, whereas it *is* true to say that where there's the odd there's number. Perhaps you follow me now, do you?

EUTH. Perfectly.

[1] Stasinus, reputed author of the *Cypria*, part of the Homeric Cycle.

SOCR. It was something of this sort that I had in mind just now when I asked whether there's holiness where there's right, or right where there's holiness. Holiness is not *everywhere* where there's right, for holiness is a part of the right. Do we agree here, or do you think otherwise?

EUTH. No, I agree; I think the statement is correct.

SOCR. Now observe the next point. If holiness is a part of the right, we must surely discover *what* part thereof it is. Well, if you asked me about one of the things I mentioned a few moments ago, e.g. what part of number the even was, and what kind of a number it was, I would say: 'That which is not indivisible by two, but divisible by two.' Or don't you agree?

EUTH. Oh yes, I agree.

SOCR. Now it's your turn to try to teach me what part of the right holiness is. I want to be able to tell Meletus not to wrong me any more or indict me for impiety, since I have now been fully instructed by you as to what is and what is not pious or holy.

EUTH. Very well. In my opinion, Socrates, piety or holiness is that part of the right which is concerned with attention to the gods, and that the remaining part is that which is concerned with the service of men.

SOCR. I think you are correct, Euthyphro; [13] but there is a small point about which I still need information, for I have yet to learn what you mean by 'attention' to the gods. You can hardly mean the same kind of attention as is paid to other things.[1] We say, for example, that not everyone knows how to attend to horses, but only a skilled horseman, do we not?

EUTH. Certainly.

SOCR. Horsemanship then is the art of attending to horses.

[1] i.e. attention in the sense of 'management' or 'looking after'.

EUTH. Yes.

SOCR. And not everyone knows how to attend to hounds, but only the huntsman.

EUTH. Quite so.

SOCR. Then the huntsman's art is the art of attending to hounds.

EUTH. Yes.

SOCR. And the oxherd's art is the art of attending to oxen.

EUTH. Exactly.

SOCR. And holiness or piety is the art of attending to the gods, Euthyphro. Is that what you mean?

EUTH. Indeed I do.

SOCR. Well, is attention always directed to the same end? I mean something like this: It aims at some good or benefit to its object; in the case of horses, for instance, you find they are benefited and improved when attended to by the horseman's art—or don't you think so?

EUTH. Sure I do.

SOCR. And hounds are benefited by the huntsman's art, oxen by the oxherd's and so forth. Or do you think that attention is ever directed to the injury of its object?

EUTH. By Zeus! no I don't.

SOCR. But to the benefit of that object?

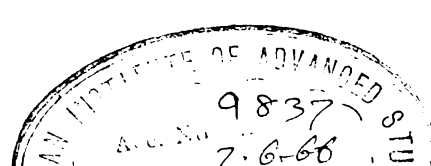
EUTH. Naturally.

SOCR. Then holiness, since it is the art of attending to the gods, is a benefit to the gods and makes them better? And you would agree that when you perform a holy act you are making one of the gods better?

EUTH. Heavens, no!

SOCR. Of course not, Euthyphro; I myself do not imagine that is what you meant. In fact I asked what you meant by 'attention to the gods' just because I did not think you meant anything of the sort.

EUTH. Quite right, Socrates; that is not what I meant.



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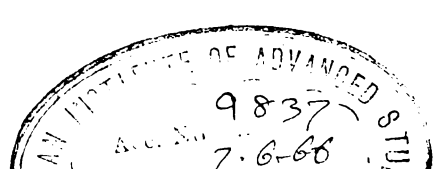

SOCR. Good. Well, what kind of attention to the gods is holiness?

EUTH. The kind, Socrates, that slaves pay to their masters.

SOCR. I understand. You mean it's a kind of service to the gods.

EUTH. Precisely.

SOCR. Now can you tell me what result the art that serves the physician serves to produce? Health, isn't it?

EUTH. Yes.

SOCR. Well then, what is it that the art that serves shipbuilders serves to produce?

EUTH. Obviously a ship, Socrates.

SOCR. And that which serves housebuilders serves to produce a house?

EUTH. Yes.

SOCR. Then tell me, my friend, what would the art that serves the gods serve to accomplish? It is clear that you know, for you say you know more than anyone else about matters concerning the gods.

EUTH. And what I say is true, Socrates.

SOCR. Then in the name of Zeus, what on earth is that magnificent result which the gods accomplish by using us as servants?

EUTH. They accomplish many fine results, Socrates.

SOCR. [14] Yes, and so do military commanders, dear friend; and the principal one is not far to seek. Victory, isn't it?

EUTH. Of course.

SOCR. Farmers also, I think, accomplish many fine results, chief of which is food from the land.

EUTH. Certainly.

SOCR. But how about the many fine results accomplished by the gods? What is the main result of their work?

EUTH. I told you a while ago, Socrates, that it takes a

long time to acquire full and accurate knowledge. However, I tell you simply that if one knows how to say and do what is pleasing to the gods, in praying and sacrificing, that is holiness, and such things are the salvation both of individual families and of states. The opposite of what is pleasing to the gods is impious, and that overturns and destroys everything.

SOCR. You might, had you so wished, Euthyphro, have given a much more concise answer to the main part of my question. But it is clear that you are not anxious to instruct me. You came near to giving me what I sought, but then swerved aside; if you had in fact given me the answer I should at last have obtained from you all the information I need about holiness. All the same, a questioner must follow the lead provided by the person he is questioning. What then do you say the holy, or holiness, is? That it is a science, so to speak, of sacrifice and prayer?

EUTH. Quite.

SOCR. Well, isn't sacrifice the making of gifts to the gods, and prayer the asking of gifts from them?

EUTH. Perfectly true, Socrates.

SOCR. Then according to this definition holiness must be a science of giving and asking.

EUTH. You understand my meaning exactly, Socrates.

SOCR. Yes, my friend, for I am eager for your wisdom, and give my mind to it, so that nothing you say shall fall to the ground. But tell me, what is this service of the gods? Do you say that it consists in asking from them and giving to them?

EUTH. I do.

SOCR. Would not the right way of asking be to ask them for what we need from them?

EUTH. What else?

SOCR. And the right way of giving, to present them with what they need from us? There's no point in giving someone what he doesn't need.

EUTH. Quite right, Socrates.

SOCR. Then holiness must be an act of barter between gods and men?

EUTH. Yes, barter, if you like to call it so.

SOCR. I don't like to call it so unless it *is* so. But tell me, what advantage do the gods derive from the gifts they receive from us? Everyone knows what they give, [15] since we have nothing good that does not come from them. But how do they benefit from what we give to them? Or have we so much the better of them in our bartering that we get all good things from them and they nothing from us?

EUTH. Really, Socrates, you don't imagine, do you, that the gods derive any advantage from our gifts to them?

SOCR. Well then, Euthyphro, what may these gifts of ours to the gods be?

EUTH. What else than honour and praise and, as I said before, gratitude?

SOCR. Then, Euthyphro, holiness is gratifying to the gods, but not advantageous or precious to them?

EUTH. I think it is precious above all things.

SOCR. So, once again, holiness is that which is dear to the gods.

EUTH. Certainly.

SOCR. That being your view, how can you be surprised if your words will not stay put but go wandering about? And can you accuse me of being the Daedalus who makes them walk, when you yourself are much more skilful than Daedalus and make them go round in a circle? Do you not see that our definition has come back to the point from which it started? For you remember, I suppose,

that a while ago we found that holiness and what is dear to the gods were not the same, but different from each other; or don't you remember?

EUTH. Yes, I remember.

SOCR. Then don't you realize that you are now saying that what is precious to the gods is holy? And is not this what is dear to the gods?

EUTH. Of course.

SOCR. Then either our recent argument was wrong, or if that was right we are wrong now.

EUTH. So it seems.

SOCR. Well, we must start again from the beginning and inquire what holiness is; I shall not be willing to abandon the search until I learn. Don't spurn me now, but think carefully and do your utmost to tell me the truth; for *you* know, if anyone does, and like Proteus [1] you must be detained until you speak. For unless you had clear knowledge of holiness and unholiness you would surely not have ventured to prosecute your aged father for manslaughter on account of a servant. You would have been afraid to risk the anger of the gods, in case your conduct should be wrong, and would have been ashamed in the sight of men. But as it is, I am sure you think you know what is holy and what is not. So tell me, most excellent Euthyphro, and do not hide what is in your mind.

EUTH. Some other time, Socrates. I'm in rather a hurry now and it's time for me to go.

SOCR. Oh, my friend, this is terrible! You go away leaving me cast down from the high hope I entertained of learning from you what is holy and what is not, and of escaping

[1] A marine demi-god who possessed the gift of prophecy. Each day at noon he rose from the sea and slept in the shade of rocks. There is was necessary to lay hold of him; but he immediately assumed every possible shape in quick succession, and only if the inquirer hung on would he resume his original form and prophesy.

Meletus' indictment by showing [16] him that I had been made wise by Euthyphro about matters divine and was no longer through ignorance behaving carelessly and making innovations in respect of them, and that I would henceforward lead a better life.

THE APOLOGY OF SOCRATES

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Scene: a law court at Athens

1. *During the Trial*

[St. I, p. 17.] SOCRATES. I do not know, gentlemen, how you feel after listening to my accusers. As for myself, I almost forgot my own identity, so convincingly did they talk; yet there is hardly a word of truth in what they have said. I was particularly amazed, however, by one of the many lies they told—when they urged you to take care not to be deceived by me, because I was a cunning speaker. I thought it the most shameless part of their conduct that they were not ashamed at the prospect of my forthwith showing them up as liars by the evidence of fact, when I prove myself to be not in the least a 'cunning speaker'—unless of course they apply those words to one who speaks the truth, in which case I agree that I am an orator, though not in their style.

As I say, they have said little or nothing that is true. But you shall hear from me nothing but the truth; not, mark me, gentlemen, speeches finely decked with words and phrases, as theirs are, nor carefully arranged, but you will hear things uttered impromptu in such words as may occur to me. I trust that what I say is just, and let none of you expect anything else; for it would indeed be unfitting for a man of my age to come before you like a youngster composing a set speech. Gentlemen, I adjure you not to be surprised and upset if you hear me defend

myself in the language I have been accustomed to use at the bankers' tables in the Agora, where many of you have listened to me, and elsewhere. The fact is that this is the first time I have appeared in court, although I am now seventy years old; I am therefore a complete stranger to the manner of speech here. If I were really a foreigner you would of course excuse me if I spoke in the dialect and that manner [18] to which I had been brought up. Very well then, I think it fair to ask you in the present circumstances to disregard the style of my speech—which, though it might be better, might also be worse—and simply consider carefully whether or not my words are just; for to do that is the peculiar excellence of a judge, while an orator's excellence is to speak the truth.

To begin with, it is right and proper that I should defend myself against the charges brought forward by my earliest critics, and then deal with the matters alleged by the official prosecution. Your ears have been assailed by many critics who have been speaking for a long time now—years and years, in fact—but saying nothing true. I fear them more than Anytus and the rest, dangerous though the latter are; for they got hold of most of you in childhood and thus convinced you of their lying allegations. 'There is a man called Socrates,' they used to say, 'a clever man, one who ponders upon the sky above, who has investigated all that lies beneath the earth, and who makes the weaker argument the stronger.' These people, gentlemen, who have spread this rumour, are my really dangerous accusers; for their hearers have come to think that anyone who studies such things does not believe in gods. Then again, these critics are so numerous and have been levelling their accusations at me for so long; worse still, they talked to you at an age when you would most readily believe them—some of you in youth, most

of you in childhood—and since nobody came forward to stand up for me, their case went by default. But the most unreasonable thing of all is this, that one cannot identify them by name, unless one of them happens to write comedies.[1] Now it is particularly difficult to refute those who won over your minds by means of envy and slander, whether directly or through the agency of others who had already been convinced. It is quite impossible, you see, to bring a single one of them here and subject him to cross-examination; no, I am obliged in making my defence to fight, as it were, with mere shadows and to cross-question without obtaining an answer. Do please then bear in mind, as I say, that my accusers fall into two groups: those who have only recently taken a hand, and those who, as I was just now saying, raised their voices against me long ago. Do please also bear in mind that I must begin by defending myself against this second group; for it was their accusations that reached your ears first and much more forcibly than those of my later critics. Well then, gentlemen, I must offer some defence, [19] and must try in the short time at my disposal to rid you of this prejudice which has been instilled into you over so long a period. I hope I may be able to do so and succeed in my defence, for such a result would benefit us all. I do realize on the other hand that my task is difficult; I am well aware of its nature. Nevertheless, God's will be done; the law must be obeyed, and I must make my defence.

Now let us go to the root of the matter and ask this question: What is the charge that has made me the object of false prejudice and upon which Meletus relied when he brought this suit against me? What did those who

[1] The reference is to the *Connus* of Ameipsias and *The Clouds* of Aristophanes (423 B.C.).

aroused the prejudice say to arouse it? I must, as it were, read their affidavit as if they were plaintiffs: 'Socrates is a criminal busybody, seeking to understand what abides in heaven and beneath the earth, making the weaker argument the stronger and teaching others to do likewise.' That is the kind of thing they said; indeed you yourselves have witnessed as much in Aristophanes' play [1]—Socrates carried about proclaiming that he was treading on air, and talking a great deal of other nonsense, about which I know absolutely nothing at all. I say this, gentlemen, not to disparage those who may be learned in such matters—heaven forbid I should ever be called upon to defend myself against Meletus on so grave a charge—but because I have no part in such things. My witnesses are the majority of you now here. Many of you have listened to me talking; I ask them to decide among themselves and openly declare whether anyone has ever heard me so much as refer to such matters. If they will do so you will discover that these and similar allegations are mere vulgar gossip.

No indeed, not one of these accusations is true. Nor is the suggestion that I make money by undertaking to teach others; though I think it would be no small accomplishment to have the educational skill possessed by Gorgias of Leontini, Prodicus of Ceos and Hippias of Elis.[2] Each of these individuals, gentlemen, can visit any State and there persuade young men to abandon the company of their fellow citizens [20] (with any of whom they can associate free of charge), to become their pupils, and be glad to pay money for the privilege of doing so.

There is another wise man here, a Parian, whom I discovered to be in town—Callias, son of Hipponicus, who

[1] *The Clouds.*
[2] Three famous sophists of the fifth century B.C.

has spent more on sophists than anyone else. Happening to meet him, and remembering he has two sons, I asked him a question. 'Callias,' I said, 'if your two sons had been two colts or two calves we should be able to hire someone to handle them, someone who would turn them into first-rate colts or calves; and he would be a horse-trainer or a cattle-farmer. Seeing, however, that they are human beings, to whose care do you propose to entrust them? Who understands the kind of excellence appropriate to a man and a citizen? They are your sons, and I believe therefore that you must have given the matter some consideration. Have you or have you not', I said, 'anyone in mind?' 'Indeed I have,' said he. 'Who is he,' said I; 'where does he come from, and what does he charge for his teaching?' 'Evenus of Paros,' he said; 'his price is five minae.' I thought what a lucky man Evenus must be if he really possessed this art and taught so reasonably. I myself would be vain and put on airs if I were all that accomplished; but, gentlemen, I am *not.*

Now someone may take me up and ask: 'But what *is* the matter with you, Socrates? Why the prejudice against you? All this rumour and criticism is not the result merely of your achievements being greater than those of the average man. Tell us what the trouble is then, and save us from coming to a rash decision in this case.' Well, that seems to me a fair question, and I will try to explain what it is that has given rise to my reputation and stirred the prejudice against me. Pay attention, therefore. Maybe some of you will think I am joking; be assured, however, that I shall tell you the absolute truth.

The fact is, gentlemen, that I have acquired this reputation simply and solely on account of a certain brand of wisdom. What kind of wisdom is this? Perhaps just

human wisdom, in respect of which it is possible that I am wise. Those other people,[1] of whom I was speaking a little while ago, may be wise with some *superhuman* wisdom; I really don't know what to say, for I have no part in it, and anyone who says I have is lying with a view to rousing prejudice against me. Now gentlemen, no noisy interruptions, please, even though I seem to be boasting; the words I utter are not mine. I am going to refer you to a speaker of great authority. As witness of my wisdom—if such it can be called—I shall present to you the God of Delphi. You know Chaerephon, I believe; [21] he was a close friend of mine since boyhood days, and as a member of your democratic party he shared your recent exile and return.[2] You know too the kind of man Chaerephon was, how impetuous in everything he undertook. Well, he once went to Delphi and made so bold as to ask the oracle this question—quiet now, please, gentlemen! He asked whether there was anyone wiser than Socrates; and the Pythia [3] replied that there was no one wiser. Chaerephon himself is dead, but his brother here will bear you witness to the truth of that event.

Now see why I tell you the story: it will help to explain the prejudice against me. When I learned of the oracle I thought to myself: 'What on earth does the god mean; what riddle is he propounding? I know well that I am not wise in the slightest degree, so what does he mean by declaring me the wisest of all men? He certainly cannot be lying, for to do so would be contrary to his very nature.' For a long time I was at a loss as to his meaning;

[1] Gorgias, Prodicus and the rest, all famous sophists.
[2] This refers to the restoration of democracy at Athens in 404 B.C., when the exiles, led by Thrasybulus, returned and overthrew the oligarchical government of the Thirty.
[3] The priestess of Apollo at Delphi, who spoke the oracles.

then with great reluctance I proceeded to investigate the matter somewhat as follows.

I approached one of those who had a reputation for wisdom, thinking that there if anywhere I should prove the oracle wrong and be able to tell the god: 'This man is wiser than I, but you said I was the wisest.' I need not tell you the man's name, gentlemen, but he was a politician. At all events this is what happened. As I talked with him I found that he was not really wise, although many others (and not least himself) considered him to be so. I then tried to convince him that he was not wise, despite his own opinion. As a result I became hateful to him and to many of those present; and as I went away I thought to myself: 'I *am* wiser than this man; neither of us really knows anything worth knowing, but *he* thinks he knows something when in fact he does not, whereas *I*, knowing nothing at all, make no pretence of doing so.' From him I went to another of those who were reported to be even wiser than he, received the same impression as before, and made myself unpopular both with him and with many of his friends.

After that I went from one to another, unhappy and apprehensive because I could see that I was hated, but believing it my duty to put the god's business before everything else. Consequently my investigation of the oracle's meaning led me perforce into the company of all who were reputed to know anything. And by the Dog, gentlemen—[22] for I must speak the truth—this, I do declare, was my experience: those with the greatest reputation seemed to me to be almost the most deficient, while those of less renown seemed endowed with a higher degree of good sense. I must tell you then about my wandering as I performed what I may call my Herculean Labours in an endeavour to prove the oracle

irrefutable. From the politicians I went to the authors of tragedy, dithyramb and the rest, thinking to receive from them incontrovertible evidence that I was less learned than they. So I took up those of their works that seemed to have been most carefully constructed, and I tried to discover what they meant, hoping at the same time to learn something from them. Now I am ashamed, gentlemen, to tell you the truth, but still it must be told. For there was hardly a man present, one might say, who would not talk better than they about the works they themselves have composed. So in the case of the poets also I quickly perceived that what they wrote was the fruit not of wisdom, but of nature and inspiration. The experience of the poets, in fact, is obviously very much akin to that of the prophets and givers of oracles, who make many fine utterances but do not understand a word of what they say. At the same time I became aware that their skill as poets has led them to the false belief that they are the wisest of men in all other respects as well. I left them, therefore, convinced that I was superior to them in the same way as I excelled the representatives of public life.

Finally I went to the craftsmen, conscious of knowing practically nothing, but confident of discovering that they know many fine things. Nor was I disappointed; they did know what I did not, and to that extent they were wiser than I. And yet, gentlemen, they appeared to me to have the same failing as the poets: each of them was expert at his trade, and for that reason he believed himself very wise in all other matters of consequence. Indeed this folly of theirs obscured their wisdom as craftsmen, and I asked myself on behalf of the oracle whether I should prefer to be as I am, neither wise with their wisdom nor foolish with their folly, or to be in both respects as

they are. I replied through myself to the oracle that it was better for me to be as I am.

Now, gentlemen, as a result of this investigation [23] I am become the object of much bitter and determined hostility; there is a lot of prejudice against me and I am called a sophist. For whenever I convict someone else of ignorance those listening to me think I am learned in the matters under discussion. But the fact is, gentlemen, that real wisdom belongs most probably to the god, and that his oracle means this: 'Human wisdom is of little or no value.' It is clear that he is not referring to me in particular, but merely uses my name by way of example, as if to say: 'The wisest of you mortals is the one who, like Socrates, recognizes himself as truly of no account in respect of wisdom.'

I have therefore till this very day been going about seeking and questioning at the god's behest anyone, whether citizen or foreigner, who I think is wise; and whenever such a man does not appear to me to be so, I lend support to my opinion by *demonstrating* that he is not wise. And because I am thus busily engaged I have no time for any public business worth mentioning or for my own affairs; indeed my service to the god has reduced me to penury.

Furthermore young men of leisure, members of the wealthiest class, volunteer to follow me about; they enjoy hearing people cross-examined, often imitate me and finally undertake to question others. When they get to that stage, I imagine they find a whole host of people who think they know something but in fact know little or nothing; with the result that their victims are angry with me instead of with themselves, declaring that 'Socrates is a most abominable person and is corrupting youth'. If anyone asks them 'by doing or teaching what?'

they do not know and have nothing to say; but in order not to reveal their perplexity they have recourse to phrases that are handy for use against all philosophers, talking about 'things in the air and things beneath the earth', 'not believing in the gods' and 'making the weaker argument the stronger'. For they would not, I fancy, care to admit the hard fact that they are being shown up as pretending to know but knowing nothing. And so, jealous of their reputation, determined, and speaking with one persuasive voice about me, they have long been filling your ears with vehement slander. Three angry men of their number have attacked me: Meletus on behalf of the poets, Anytus on behalf of the craftsmen [24] and Lycon on behalf of the orators.[1] Accordingly, as I said at the beginning of my speech, I should be surprised if I were able to eradicate this prejudice from your minds in so short a time when it has grown so great. There you have the truth, gentlemen; I speak without the slightest concealment or prevarication. And yet I am fairly sure I am making myself hated by doing just that; which is also evidence that I speak the truth—that the prejudice against me and its causes are such as I have described. Whether you investigate this matter now or later on, you will find that I am right.

So much then for my defence against the charges long since brought against me. Next I will try to refute Meletus—the good and patriotic Meletus, as he styles himself—and those who seconded him. Once again therefore let us turn to *their* affidavit, as if they were a different set of accusers. It is more or less as follows: it states that Socrates does wrong by corrupting the youth and not believing in the gods recognized by the State, but in other new spiritual beings.

[1] These are presumably the 'politicians' mentioned above.

That is the accusation. Let us examine it point by point. Meletus says I do wrong by corrupting the youth. But I, gentlemen, say that he does wrong inasmuch as he jests in earnest, light-heartedly involving people in a lawsuit, pretending to be zealous and concerned about things in which he was never interested at all. That this is a fact I will try to make plain to you also.

Here, Meletus, tell me: don't you consider it of great importance that the youth should be as good as possible?

MELETUS. I do.

SOCR. Come now, tell these gentlemen who it is that makes them better. You obviously know, since you make it your concern; you claim to have found one who corrupts them, so you bring me before this court and accuse me. Very well then, speak up: who is it that makes them better? Tell the court who does that. There you are, Meletus, you are silent and cannot tell. But don't you think your silence a disgrace and sufficient proof of my declaration that you never yet gave the matter a thought? Let us have it now, my good man: who makes them better?

MEL. The laws.

SOCR. But that, sir, is no answer to my question. I want to know what *man* makes them better; what *man*, who must first have knowledge of the laws.

MEL. These gentlemen, Socrates, the judges.

SOCR. What do you mean, Meletus? Are these gentlemen capable of educating the youth, and do they make them better?

MEL. Certainly.

SOCR. All of them, or only some of them?

MEL. All.

SOCR. Well said, by Hera, you've named a fine host of helpers. But how about [25] these people who have come to hear the trial: do *they* make them better, or not?

MEL. Yes, they do.

SOCR. And how about members of the Boule? [1]

MEL. Yes, members of the Boule as well.

SOCR. And finally, Meletus, as regards the Ecclesia: its members, of course, do not corrupt our youth, do they? So presumably they make them better.

MEL. Exactly.

SOCR. Well then, it appears that all Athenian citizens, except myself, turn our young men into paragons of virtue; I alone corrupt them. Is that what you mean?

MEL. Most decidedly that is what I mean.

SOCR. You have condemned me to great unhappiness! But tell me something: do you consider that horses are improved by the entire human race and spoiled by one solitary individual. Or do you take just the opposite view, that one person, a trainer (or at most a mere handful of his kind), is capable of improving them, whereas most people who use horses regularly spoil them? Is not this latter view correct in the case both of horses and of all other animals? It certainly is, whether or not you and Anytus agree. Oh yes, it would indeed be a happy state of affairs if one man alone corrupted the youth and everyone else did them good. However, Meletus, you show clearly enough that you never gave our young men a thought; you make it quite plain that you have never concerned yourself with those matters on account of which you now hale me into court. Furthermore, be so kind as to tell us whether it is better to live among good citizens or bad. Answer, man! I am not asking you a

[1] This was the Athenian Council of the Five Hundred. Its principal duties were to discuss and prepare measures for submission to the Ecclesia (popular assembly), and to summon meetings of the latter. *See* Aristotle's *Athenian Constitution*, 44–9 (Everyman's Library, No. 605).

difficult question. Do not the bad exert some evil influence upon those who are their constant companions, and the good some beneficial influence?

MEL. Certainly.

SOCR. Is there anyone then who prefers to be injured by his associates rather than benefited? Answer, my dear sir; the law bids you answer. Is there anyone who prefers to be injured?

MEL. Of course not.

SOCR. Come then, do you drag me here on a charge of corrupting the youth and ruining them voluntarily or involuntarily?

MEL. Voluntarily, I say.

SOCR. What then, Meletus? Are you at your age so much wiser than I at my age that whereas you have recognized that bad men always do some harm to those nearest them, and the good some good, I have reached such a depth of ignorance that I do not even know that if I make any one of my associates bad I am in danger of suffering some harm from him, and therefore perpetuate this great evil voluntarily as you say? I don't believe it, Meletus, nor do I think anyone else on earth does. [26] Either I *do not* corrupt the youth or, if I *do*, I do so involuntarily—which makes you a liar in either event. Suppose I corrupt them involuntarily: the law is that instead of being haled before a court for involuntary errors one should be taken for private admonition and instruction. That is what you should have done with me; for if I am told about it, I shall obviously cease from what I am doing involuntarily. But you avoided associating with and instructing me; rather than do that you bring me here, whither the law summons those who need punishment, not instruction.

Well then, gentlemen, it is clear, as I said, that Meletus

never cared a jot for these things. Nevertheless, Meletus, tell us by what means you hold me to be corrupting the youth. According to the terms of your indictment it is by teaching them to believe not in the gods recognized by the State, but in other new spiritual beings. Do you say that it is by teaching this that I corrupt them?

MEL. That is definitely what I say.

SOCR. Then, Meletus, for the sake of those very gods now in question, be still more explicit for the benefit both of myself and of these gentlemen. I want to know whether your point is (*a*) that I teach that there *are* gods (and am therefore not guilty of atheism), but (*b*) that those gods are not the ones in whom the State believes—that you have indicted me for believing in gods other than those recognized by the State. Or do you maintain (*c*) that I don't believe in gods at all, and that I teach this unbelief to other people?

MEL. That is what I maintain—that you don't believe in gods at all.

SOCR. Meletus, you astonish me. Why do you say this? Do I not believe that the sun and moon are gods, as the rest of mankind believes?

MEL. By Zeus, no! He says, gentlemen, that the sun is a stone and the moon earth.

SOCR. Do you realize you are insulting these gentlemen, my dear Meletus? Do you so despise them and think them so illiterate as not to know that the works of Anaxagoras are full of such utterances? [1] Learn them from me, indeed! Why, it is sometimes possible to buy them

[1] Anaxagoras of Clazomenae (*c.* 500–428 B.C.), a philosopher of the Ionian school, settled at Athens *c.* 463 B.C. Socrates was at one time interested in his physical theories, but was quickly disillusioned. Anaxagoras' statement that the sun was a red-hot stone and the moon earth led to an accusation of impiety, and he was obliged to leave Athens.

in the Orchestra for a drachma [1] (and dear at that); anyone who did so would laugh at Socrates if he claimed them as his own, especially as they are so absurd. But for heaven's sake, do you really think I believe that there is no such thing as a god?

MEL. That, by Zeus, is just what you do believe.

SOCR. You are untruthful, Meletus, even, it appears to me, in your own eyes. Gentlemen, it is my opinion that this fellow is overweening and lacks self-control; that presumption, intemperance and rashness have caused him to bring this indictment. [27] He is like a man who uses a riddle to make a test: 'Will Socrates the wise', he says, 'recognize that I am playing the fool and contradicting myself, or will I manage to deceive him and others who hear me?' For he manifestly contradicts himself in the indictment, as if to say 'Socrates is guilty of not believing in gods, but does believe in gods'. Now surely that is playing the fool.

Help me then, gentlemen, to discover why he appears to take this view. Meletus, you must give us answers to our questions. And as for you, gentlemen, I beg of you once again not to interrupt if I argue my case in the way I have always done.

Now, Meletus, is there a man on earth who believes that there are human affairs but no human beings? If so, let him answer straightforwardly, gentlemen. Is there anyone who does not believe there is such a thing as a horse, but does believe in equestrianism? Is there anyone who does not believe there is such a thing as a flautist, but does believe that there is such a thing as the art of playing the flute? Of course not, my dear sir; I tell you

[1] From this it appears that the orchestra of the theatre, at times other than the annual dramatic festivals, was frequented by booksellers. The drachma was worth about 8*d.* of our money.

and the whole court no, regardless of whether or not you are willing to reply. But do at least give me an answer to *this* question: Is there anyone who believes in the existence of spiritual beings but does not believe in spirits?

MEL. There is not.

SOCR. Thank you for a grudging answer squeezed from you by the court. Well, you say that I believe in spiritual beings, new or old, and teach that belief; so according to your statement I do believe in spiritual beings at any rate, and you swore to that in your indictment. But if I believe in spiritual beings it is absolutely inevitable that I believe also in spirits. Isn't that so? It is; I infer your agreement from the fact that you don't answer. But do we not take spirits to be gods or the offspring of gods? Yes or no?

MEL. Certainly.

SOCR. Then if, as you admit, I believe in spirits, and spirits are a kind of gods, here we have that silly riddle which I say you employ when you declare that I do not believe in gods, and yet do believe in gods, since I believe in spirits. Likewise, assuming spirits to be bastard children of gods, by nymphs or some other class of females if you like, what man would believe that there are children of gods but no gods? It would be just as absurd as believing that there are offspring of horses and asses, namely mules, but no horses or asses. Yes, Meletus, you must certainly have brought this indictment either by way of testing our intelligence or because you were at a loss for any real crime with which to charge me. There is, however, no device whereby you can convince any man with a grain of sense that it is possible for one and the same individual to believe in spiritual or divine entities and not to believe in spirits or gods.

[28] And so, gentlemen, I do not think much argument is required, beyond what I have already said, to prove myself not guilty of the charges brought against me by Meletus in his indictment. Be assured that I was speaking the truth earlier on when I said that many people had conceived an intense hatred of me. If I am eventually condemned, it will be due not to Meletus or Anytus, but to this widespread prejudice and dislike. Many a good man has been condemned because of prejudice, and I think many another will be thus condemned; I am not likely to be the last of them. Someone, indeed, may ask me: 'Are you not ashamed, Socrates, of having acted in such a way that your life is now at stake?' To that question I should be entitled to make this reply: 'Sir, you are wrong if you think that even the most insignificant of men ought to consider the choice between life and death rather than the morality of his actions. According to your argument all the demigods who died at Troy would be in the wrong. The son of Thetis,[1] for example, showed an utter contempt of danger rather than incur the stigma of disgrace. When his wrath moved him to slay Hector, his heavenly mother said to him something like this, I believe: 'If you avenge the death of your friend Patroclus and kill Hector you yourself will die. As Homer puts it, "Straightway," she says, "after Hector, death is appointed for thee." [2] When he heard these words, he made light of danger and death, fearing much more to live as a coward, and not to avenge those dear to him. "Straightway then", said he, "let me die having punished the villain; I'll not stay here to be jeered at beside the curved ships and burden the earth." [3] Do you think he considered danger and death?'

Gentlemen, the fact indeed is that wherever a man is

[1] Achilles. [2] *Iliad* xviii. 96. [3] Cf. ibid. 98–104.

stationed, either by his commanding officer, or by his own free choice in the belief that it is best for him to occupy that position, there he must, I think, stay, fearing neither death nor anything else more than disgrace. Take my own case. At Potidaea, at Amphipolis and at Delium [1] I remained like everyone else at the post assigned to me by the officers whom you had appointed, and ran the risk of death. It would therefore have been a most shameful act on my part if, being fully convinced that the god had given me a station with orders to spend my life as a philosopher, examining myself and others, I had deserted my post through fear of death or anything else whatsoever. [29] Yes, if I disobeyed the oracle, feared death and believed myself wise, which I am not, it would have been a heinous crime, for which I might justly be summoned before a court of law. To fear death, gentlemen, is nothing else than to think one is wise when one is not. It is thinking one knows what one does not; for no one can tell whether death be not the very greatest of all human blessings, and yet it is feared as though it were the greatest of evils. Now to think one knows what one does not is surely the most culpable form of ignorance. In taking this view, gentlemen, it may be that I am different from the majority of men; if I were to declare myself wiser in any respect it would be upon the grounds that I do not know much about the Underworld, and therefore do not claim to know. I do know, however, that it is shamefully wicked to do wrong by disobeying one who is better than I, be he god or man. So I shall never shirk or fear anything which I am unable with certainty to describe either as good or as evil, but only such things as I know are bad. Anytus has urged that either (*a*) I ought not to have been brought to trial at all, or (*b*) now that I *have* been brought

[1] Three military operations of the Peloponnesian War.

to trial I must inevitably suffer death, because my acquittal would mean the ruin of your sons through practising what I teach. Well, you may not be convinced by what he says, and may let me go free. You may say to me: 'This time, Socrates, we will not do what Anytus asks. We will let you go, but upon the sole condition that you no longer spend your time in this sort of inquiry or in philosophical studies; if you are caught doing so again you shall die.' If you should propose to free me on that condition, I should reply as follows: 'Gentlemen, I respect and love you, but I shall obey the god rather than you; so long as I live and am able to continue I shall never abandon philosophy or cease from exhorting you and pointing out the truth to any one of you whom I happen to meet. "Most excellent sir," I shall say in my usual way, "you are a citizen of Athens, the greatest of states and the most celebrated for wisdom and power; are you not ashamed then to concern yourself with the acquisition of enormous wealth, or with reputation and honour, and yet to care nothing for wisdom, truth and the perfecting of your soul?"' If any such man disputes the point and says he does care, I shall not let him go, nor shall I move on. No, I shall question and examine and cross-examine him; and if I find he does not possess virtue, but claims to do so, I shall rebuke him [30] for regarding what is most important as of least account and caring more for what is of less worth. This I shall do to whomsoever I meet, young and old, alien and citizen, but above all to you citizens inasmuch as you are more closely related to me. Be assured that this charge is laid upon me by the god. Nay, I believe that no greater good was ever accomplished in Athens than my service of the god. For I go about doing nothing else than urging you, young and old, not to care for your persons or property more

than (or even as much as) for the perfecting of your souls; and I tell you that virtue is not derived from wealth, but that virtue itself is the source of wealth and all other goods, both for the individual and for the State. If by saying these things I corrupt the youth, these things must be injurious; but if anyone maintains that I say something different, his statement is untrue. Therefore I tell you, gentlemen, do what Anytus advocates or not, condemn or acquit me, in the certain knowledge that I shall not alter my conduct, even though I am to die a thousand deaths.

No uproar now, gentlemen; continue to refrain from interrupting me and listen to what I have to say, for I believe you will profit by the hearing. I am going to tell you certain things at which you might perhaps cry out; but don't do so, please. If you put to death a man such as I claim to be, you will do more harm to yourselves than to me. It is impossible for Meletus or Anytus to injure me, for I believe it is not in the order of things that a better man should be injured by a worse. He might, of course, kill me, banish me or deprive me of citizen rights; and he may think that by doing so he would do me serious harm, but I do not. I think he does himself far more harm by doing what he is doing now—seeking to kill a man unjustly. And so, gentlemen, I must needs defend myself on this occasion not for my own sake, as might be imagined, but for yours, lest in condemning me you sin against the god by your treatment of the gift he gave you. For if you put me to death you will not easily find another who, to use a rather undignified simile, attaches himself to the State like a gadfly to a horse, which, though a large and noble beast, is sluggish on account of its size and needs to be aroused by stinging. I think the god has fastened me upon the State in some such capacity, and I

go about rousing, [31] urging and reproaching each one of you, constantly alighting on you everywhere the whole day long. Such another is not likely to come your way, gentlemen; so if you will take my advice you will spare me. Annoyed perhaps, like someone awakened from a snooze, you may hit out, as Anytus has done, and easily destroy me; then you would pass the remainder of your life in slumber, unless the god, in his concern for you, should send someone else to apply the goad. Here is one consideration from which you might recognize me as being what I claim to be—a sort of heaven-sent gift. For many years now I have neglected all my private concerns and have been ready to lay aside my own affairs, and have constantly busied myself in your interest, coming to each of you like a father or an elder brother and imploring you to care for virtue. Now that is not characteristic of mere man. If I derived any profit from this by way of emolument for my exhortations, there would be some sense in it. But you can see for yourselves that in point of fact my accusers, though charging me with everything else in this shameless way, have not been able to attain such a peak of shamelessness as to produce a single witness to testify that I have ever exacted or requested payment from anyone. I think my very poverty is sufficient evidence that I speak the truth.

It may appear strange that I go about prying into other people's affairs to give this advice in private, but do not openly venture into your Assembly and advise the State. Well, the reason for this, as you have often heard me declare in many places, is that I am visited by something divine and spiritual, something which Meletus ridiculed in his indictment. I have had this experience from childhood upwards; it is a sort of voice that comes to me, and when it comes it never urges me forward, but always

holds me back from doing what I have a mind to do. This it is which prevents my taking any part in public life. And I think this opposition is a very good thing; for you may be quite sure, gentlemen, that if I had undertaken a political career I should have been put to death long ago and should have benefited neither you nor myself. Now don't be angry with me for telling the truth; the fact is that no man will escape disaster who bravely opposes you or any other citizen body and saves his country from a host of wrongs that violate her laws. [32] If a man intends to stand up for the right, and hopes to preserve his life for even a little while, he must remain a private citizen and take no part in public life.

I will offer you cogent proof of that in the shape not of mere words, but of actions—which you hold in greater esteem. Listen then to an account of something within my own experience; it will convince you that I would never agree to do anything wrong through fear of death, even though such refusal cost me my life. The story I am going to tell you is ordinary and commonplace, but true. Only once, gentlemen, did I hold political office, and then I was a member of the Boule.[1] It happened that my tribe was the presiding committee when you sought to pass collective rather than individual judgment upon ten officers who had failed to pick up the victims of a naval action [2]—an illegal proceeding, as all of you later

[1] In 406 B.C.

[2] The Athenian Boule, or city council, consisted of five hundred members chosen annually by lot, fifty from each tribe. Each group of fifty served for a fixed period as *prutancis*, i.e. a presiding or superintending committee of the whole council. In 406 B.C. the Athenian admiral Conon defeated a Spartan fleet off the islands of Arginusae. Towards the end of the battle a storm arose, and the Athenian commanders ran for shelter without attempting to rescue the crews of twelve sinking ships. Those of them who returned home were tried for dereliction of duty and put to death.

recognized. At that time I was the sole member of the committee who opposed a course of action that ran counter to the laws. Well, the orators were ready to arrest and impeach me, and you clamoured for them to do so; but I thought it my duty to run any risk with law and justice on my side rather than fall in with your unlawful purpose through fear of imprisonment or death. That was before the abolition of democracy. After the establishment of oligarchy [1] the Thirty ordered me and four others to put in an appearance at the Council Chamber,[2] bringing with us Leon of Salamis for execution. They gave many such orders to others besides ourselves, hoping thereby to implicate as many as possible in their crimes. On that occasion too my deeds proclaimed no less eloquently than my words that I didn't care a damn for death—if you'll excuse the colloquialism—but was at infinite pains to do nothing unjust or unholy. For that Government, powerful as it was, could not scare me into committing an injustice. When we left the City Hall my four companions went to Salamis and arrested Leon, but I went off home; and I might well have been put to death for it, if the Government had not been overthrown. Of these facts you have many witnesses.

Do you believe I could have reached such an age if I had been in public life and acted as a good man should, supporting justice and considering it of the highest importance? Definitely not, gentlemen; nor indeed could anyone else have done so. [33] You will find, however, that throughout my private life, as during my brief public career, I have always been the same as I am now,

[1] 404 B.C.

[2] The *tholos*, a circular building whose floor has recently been uncovered on ths site of the Agora. See *Everyman's Classical Atlas* p. 108.

never falling into step with any man when duty forbade, not even with one of those whom slander describes as my pupils. In actual fact I never was any man's teacher. In the event of someone, young or old, desiring to hear me speak in pursuit of my mission I have never objected. Nor do I charge a fee for my conversation, withholding it unless paid; no, I offer myself alike to rich and poor; I ask questions, and whoever wishes may answer and hear what I say. Whether any such person turns out good or bad I cannot be rightly held responsible, for I never promised or gave a word of instruction to anyone. If any man claims to have heard or learned privately anything from me which everyone else did not, be assured that he is lying.

Why is it then that some people like to spend much of their time in my company? You have heard the reason, gentlemen; I have told you the whole truth. It is because they enjoy listening to the examination of those who believe themselves wise but are not; the experience is not devoid of entertainment. But, as I say, I have been commanded to do this by the god through oracles and dreams and in every way that divine authority ever bade any man to do anything whatever. This, gentlemen, is true and easily tested. For if I am in process of corrupting some of our youth, and have already corrupted others, surely those of them who have grown up should have come forward to accuse and punish me, if they are aware that I ever gave them any bad advice when they were young. Or, in the event of their not feeling inclined to do so, some of their relations—fathers or brothers or other kinsmen—should have come and declared the fact that I have done harm to members of their families. Yes, I see many of them present: first Crito here, a man of my own age and deme, and father of Critobulus, who is also present;

then there is Lysanias the Sphettian, father of Aeschines,[1] who is likewise with us; Antiphon of Cephisus too, father of Epigenes. There are others here present whose brothers used to take part in my conversations: Nicostratus, son of Theozotides and brother of Theodotus—the latter of whom is dead, and so could not prevent him by entreaties; Paralus, son of Demodocus and brother of Theages; [34] Adeimantus, son of Ariston, whose brother is Plato here; and Aeantodorus, whose brother Apollodorus is also in court. Oh, I could mention to you many others, from among whom Meletus should have produced one witness in the course of his speech. If he forgot it then, let him do so now; I invite him to say whether he has any such evidence. No, gentlemen, you will find that exactly the opposite is true: all are prepared to back me up—me, the man who corrupts and ruins their relatives, as Meletus and Anytus claim. Now those who have been themselves corrupted might conceivably have some motive for taking my side. But their relations are not corrupted and are already well on in years; so what reason could *they* have, except the right and just reason, that they know Meletus to be lying and me to be telling the truth?

Well, gentlemen, this is about all I have to say in my defence. Maybe one of your number has stood his trial on a less serious charge than this; and when he remembers how he begged and implored the judges with a flood of tears, and sought to arouse their compassion by bringing forward his children with a host of friends and relations, he will perhaps feel some antagonism towards me because I will do no such thing, notwithstanding the mortal danger that confronts me. Someone with these thoughts

[1] Aeschines of Sphettos, an orator, to be distinguished from his great namesake, the antagonist of Demosthenes.

in mind, I say, may be harshly disposed towards me and may cast his vote in anger. Now I don't really suppose there is one of you who feels like that; but if there should be, I think I should be speaking fairly in saying to him: 'My good sir, I too have relations, for I am, as Homer puts it, "not born of an oak or a rock",[1] but of human beings.' Indeed yes, I have relations; indeed, gentlemen, I have three sons, one nearly grown up and two still mere boys. Nevertheless I shall bring none of them here in support of my plea for acquittal. And why not? Not because I am defiant, gentlemen, or lack respect for you. Whether or not I face death boldly is another matter; but for the sake of my good name and yours and that of the whole State, I think it would be wrong of me at my age to herd my family into court. Besides, there is my reputation, deserved or not; the general view is that [35] Socrates is in some way superior to the ordinary run of men. Imagine how disgraceful it would be if those of you who are considered to excel in wisdom or courage, or indeed any other virtue whatsoever, were to act in such a way. Do you know, I have often seen quite distinguished men behave in the most extraordinary fashion when on trial, as if they thought that acquittal meant immortality and looked upon death as an appalling fate. In my view such persons are a disgrace to Athens; a foreigner might come to the conclusion that those of our citizens who are renowned for virtue, and whom they themselves honour with official rank and other marks of esteem, are in fact no better than women. No, gentlemen, we who have any reputation at all ought not to indulge in such behaviour, and you must not tolerate our doing so; you must make it clear that you will be far more ready to

[1] *Odyssey* xix. 163.

condemn a man who stages these pathetic scenes in your presence, and makes Athens ridiculous, than one who holds his peace.

Apart, however, from reputation, gentlemen, I think it wrong to grovel before a judge or to seek acquittal by begging; one should rather inform and convince him. A judge does not sit to dispense favours, but to administer justice; indeed he is bound by oath *not* to oblige defendants at his own sweet will, but to give judgment according to the laws. We must not, therefore, habituate you to breaking your oaths, nor must you make a practice of behaving so; divine law forbids either of us to do that. I ask you therefore, gentlemen, not to expect from me here conduct which I regard as neither honourable nor just nor pious, especially when impiety is the very charge brought against me by this fellow Meletus. For it is clear that if I compelled you to violate your oath by means of persuasion and supplication, I would be teaching you to disbelieve in the existence of gods, and my very defence would declare my own unbelief in them. But this is far from being the case; I do believe in them, gentlemen, more than any of my accusers, and I leave you and the god to decide my case as may be best for me and for you.

2. *After the Verdict of Guilty*

I am not grieved, gentlemen, [36] at this vote of condemnation you have cast against me, and that for many reasons—among them the fact that it came as no surprise to me. I am much more amazed by the apportionment of votes; I expected that the majority against me would be larger than this. It seems in fact that a mere thirty votes on the other side would have meant my

acquittal.[1] I think then that so far as Meletus is concerned I have actually been acquitted; and *more* than acquitted, for it is clear that if Anytus and Lycon had not come forward to accuse me he would have been fined a thousand drachmas for failing to secure a fifth part of the votes.

So the man proposes the penalty of death, does he? Well, gentlemen, what shall I propose as the alternative?[2] Surely that which I deserve. Well now, what do I deserve to suffer or be fined? My offence is that I have not kept silent upon the lessons I have learned from life; I have scorned what most men cherish—money-making and the administration of their property, military command and mob-leadership, and all the various political offices, cabals and backstairs intrigue. Thinking myself really too honourable a man to meddle in such affairs without disaster, I have refrained from those activities wherein I should have been of no use to you or to myself, and have spent my time conferring upon each of my fellow citizens individually what I regard as the greatest of all blessings. I have tried to persuade each of you to care for himself, for his own moral and intellectual improvement, rather than for any of his belongings; for the State itself rather than for its possessions; and so on. What then is due to such a man as I? Some benefit, gentlemen, if I am to be rewarded strictly in accordance with my deserts; and that

[1] Cases involving religion were tried before the heliastic court, consisting of six thousand citizens chosen by lot, six hundred from each of the ten tribes. This court, however, was almost always divided into smaller, even-numbered groups ranging from two hundred to a thousand. One additional member was added to avoid a tie. Socrates was tried by a court of 501.

[2] Since Athenian law prescribed no penalty for the crime alleged against Socrates, the rule was that, as soon as a verdict of guilty had been returned, the accused should suggest an alternative penalty to the one demanded by the prosecution. The court had to choose between the two, and were not allowed to compromise.

benefit should be such as befits me. Now what is fitting for a poor man who is your benefactor, and who needs leisure to exhort you? There is nothing, gentlemen, more suitable than that such a man be provided with free meals in the City Hall? That would be far more appropriate in my case than it is when one of you has won a two- or four-horse chariot race at the Olympic games. For while the charioteer makes you *seem* happy I make you *really* happy; besides, he doesn't want for food, whereas I am needy. So if I must propose a penalty in accordance with my deserts, [37] I propose maintenance in the City Hall.

Perhaps you think that in saying this, as in what I said about grovelling to one's judges, I am speaking in a spirit of bravado; but this is not so, gentlemen. The truth is rather that I know full well that I have never voluntarily wronged any man; but I cannot convince *you* of this, for we have talked together only a little while. I believe if you had a law, as some other states have, that cases involving capital punishment should not be decided in one day, but only after several days, you would be convinced; as things are, it is not easy to purge you of strong prejudice in a short time. Accordingly, since I myself am convinced that I have wronged no one, I am certainly not going to wrong myself by admitting that I deserve to suffer harm and proposing for myself any such penalty. Why should I? To escape the penalty proposed by Meletus? No; as I say, I don't know whether it is a good or an evil. Then shall I choose instead something that I know to be an evil? What penalty shall I propose? Imprisonment? But why should I live in prison a slave to any government that happens to be in power? What about a fine, with imprisonment until it is paid? No, that would amount to the same thing, for I have no money with which to pay. Exile then? Perhaps you would agree to that as my penalty. Ah, I

must indeed be possessed by a great love of life if I am so irrational as not to recognize that others will not readily tolerate my criticism and conversation if you, my fellow citizens, so far from being able to endure them, find me so irksome and disagreeable that you are now seeking to be rid of me. No, gentlemen, indeed they will not. A fine life I should lead if I went into exile at my age, wandering from one city to another and always being driven out! For I know full well that, no matter where I go, young men will listen to my talk as they have done here. If I repel them, they will themselves persuade their elders to banish me; and if I do not, their fathers and other relations will oust me for their sakes.

Someone may ask me: 'Socrates, can't you leave us and live quietly without talking?' Now to convince some of you that I cannot do so is the hardest of all tasks. If I say (*a*) that such conduct would be disobedience to the god, and that consequently it is impossible for me to remain silent, you will think I am jesting and will not believe me; [38] and you will believe me still less if I say (*b*) that to discourse every day upon virtue, and other topics about which you hear me talking and examining both myself and others, is the greatest benefit to mankind, and that life without debate is not worth living. Herein, gentlemen, I speak the truth, but it is not easy to convince you. Moreover, I am not used to regarding myself as worthy of an evil fate. If I had money I would have proposed the heaviest fine I could pay, for that would have done me no harm. But in point of fact I have none—unless you are willing to propose a fine that I could pay. I might perhaps pay you a mina of silver; [1] so I propose that penalty . . .[2]

[1] The mina was in bullion, weighing at Athens 431 gm.

[2] Presumably Plato and the others interrupted at this point and conferred with Socrates.

No, gentlemen, Plato here and Crito, Critobulus and Apollodorus tell me to propose a fine of thirty minas, and offer to go surety. So I propose a fine of that amount, guaranteed by these men who have ample resources.

3. *After Sentence of Death*

Gentlemen, you have stolen a short march on time; and your reward, conferred by those who seek to besmirch the name of Athens, will be the evil reputation of having slain Socrates, a sage. Yes, those who mean to reproach you will call me a wise man, even though I am not. Now if you had waited a little while, what you desired would have been fulfilled without your intervention; for you see my age, how far advanced in life and how close to death I am. I say this not to all of you, but to those who voted for my death. And here is something else I say to them. You may think, gentlemen, that I have been convicted through a lack of such arguments as would have moved you to acquit me, had I considered it right to stop at nothing, in word or deed, to secure acquittal. By no means. True, my conviction has resulted from a lack of something, not however a lack of arguments, but of brazen-faced impudence and of willingness to address to you such words as you would have liked most to hear. You would have liked to hear me wailing and lamenting, saying with appropriate gestures many things which, though you are accustomed to hear them from others, I believe to be unworthy of myself. But I did not think at the time that it was right for me, notwithstanding my peril, to do anything unworthy of a free man. Nor do I now regret having conducted my defence as I did; I would prefer to die after such a defence than to have

made the other sort and live. [39] Duty forbids me, as it forbids every man, whether on the battlefield or in a court of law, to seek escape from death regardless of the means employed. On the battlefield it is often clear that a man might save his life by throwing down his arms and begging his pursuers for mercy; and there are many other ways of avoiding death in perilous situations of every kind if one is prepared to stop at nothing. No, gentlemen, it is not difficult to escape death, it is much harder to escape wickedness, an enemy more fleet of foot than death. Here I am now, aged and slow, caught by the slower runner, and you, my accusers, clever and quick though you be, by the faster—wickedness. Now I shall depart, convicted by you and sentenced to death, while they go convicted by truth of villainous injustice. I abide by my doom, and they by theirs. Perhaps these things were inevitable; I do not consider them ill done.

And now I wish to prophesy to you by whom I stand condemned; for I have reached a point at which men are most inclined to prophesy, the days immediately preceding death. I say to you, gentlemen, to you who have destroyed me, that punishment will be visited upon you straightway after I am gone, a punishment far more grievous, by heaven, than the penalty of death which you have inflicted upon me. You have done this to me here because you hoped to escape the necessity of accounting for your lives, but I say that you will meet a very different fate. Those who will compel you to render an account will be far more numerous than ever before—men whom I held in check, though you knew it not; and they will be harsher inasmuch as they are younger, and you will suffer accordingly. For if you think that by putting men to death you will prevent anyone reproaching you for your misdeeds, you are mistaken. That way of escape is

virtually impossible, nor is it honourable; the easiest and most honourable way is not by persecuting others, but by perfecting yourselves. So with this prophecy I take my leave of you who have condemned me.

But while the authorities are busy, and before I go to the place where I must die, I should like to address those who voted for my acquittal and say something about these events. Stay a little, friends; there is no reason why we should not chat while time allows. [40] I think of you as friends, and I wish to show you the meaning of what has happened to me. My judges—and in calling you so I give your rightful name [1]—I have had a wonderful experience. Hitherto my customary visitant, that prophetic voice, has spoken to me very often and opposed me even in small matters, if I was about to do anything I should not. Now, as you yourselves see, this fate which might be thought, and is generally considered, the greatest of evils has overtaken me; yet the divine sign did not oppose me, either when I left home this morning, or when I entered the court—or indeed at any point of my speech, although it has often on previous occasions stopped me on the verge of some remark. No, in this present affair it has not opposed a single one of my words or actions. What then do I suppose is the reason? I will tell you. My condemnation is doubtless a good thing, and those of us who look upon death as an evil must be mistaken. I have received cogent proof of this; for the accustomed sign would undoubtedly have opposed me if I had not been going to experience some advantage.

Here is another point of view from which there is sound reason to believe that my condemnation is a good. The state of death is one of two things: either it is virtual

[1] The members of an Athenian court were known as *dikastai*, those who 'do justice'.

nothingness, so that the dead man has no consciousness of anything, or it is, as people say, a change, i.e. a migration of the soul from here to another place. If it is unconsciousness, like a sleep in which the sleeper does not even dream, death would be a wonderful gain. Suppose a man had to pick out that night in which he slept a dreamless sleep, and were to compare it with the other nights and days of his life; and then suppose he had to say, after due consideration, how many days and nights had passed more pleasantly than that night: I believe that the great King of Persia himself, let alone an ordinary individual, would conclude that they were few in comparison. If such is the nature of death, then, I count it a gain; for in that case all time seems to be no longer than one night. If, on the other hand, death is a sort of removal hence to some other home, and if we are rightly given to understand that all the dead are there, what greater blessing, my judges, could there be? Can the change of home be undesirable if one reaches [41] the Underworld, after leaving behind these self-styled judges, and finds the true judges who are said to administer justice there—Minos, Rhadamanthus, Aeacus, Triptolemus and all those other demigods who were just men in their lives? Again, what would not any of you give to enjoy the company of Orpheus, Musaeus, Hesiod and Homer? I am prepared to die many deaths if these things are true; for I myself should find the life there wonderful, when I met Palamedes, Telamonian Ajax and other men of old who lost their lives through an unjust judgment, and compared my experience with theirs. That, I think, would not be unplesant. But the greatest pleasure of all would be to spend my time as I have done here, studying and cross-questioning the inhabitants, to discover who among them is wise and who imagines he is though he is not.

What price, my judges, would not any of you pay to examine him [1] who led the great army against Troy, or Odysseus, or Sisyphus, or innumerable others, men and women, whom I might name? To associate and converse with them and examine them would be immeasurable bliss. At all events, folk there do not put men to death for doing so; for, if what we are told is true, everyone there is everlastingly immortal, besides being happier in other respects than we are here.

Yes, my judges, you too must entertain high hopes of death and must bear in mind this one truth, that no evil can befall a good man either in life or after death, and that the gods are not forgetful of his woes. Nor indeed has my present fate overtaken me by chance: I see clearly that it was better for me to die now and be delivered from trouble. That is why the sign made no effort to deter me, and I bear no grudge against those who accused or condemned me. It was not, however, with my welfare in mind that they did so, but because they thought to injure me; and to that extent they are blameworthy. Never mind, I make this request of them: When my sons reach manhood, gentlemen, punish them by troubling them as I have troubled you; if they seem to put money or anything else before virtue, or think themselves of consequence when they are not, rebuke them as I have rebuked you, because they care not for what they ought and believe themselves great men whereas in fact they are worthless. If you do this, [42] both I and my sons shall have received just treatment at your hands.

Well, now it is time to part. I go to die, and you to live; but which of us goes to the better lot is known to none but God.

[1] Agamemnon.

CRITO

CRITO

CHARACTERS OF THE DIALOGUE

SOCRATES · CRITO

Scene: The Prison at Athens

SOCRATES. What brings you here at this hour, Crito? Isn't it still quite early?

CRITO. Yes, very early.

SOCR. About what time?

CRITO. Just before dawn.

SOCR. I'm surprised the gaoler was willing to let you in.

CRITO. Oh, he's used to me now, Socrates. I come here so often; besides, I've done him a favour.

SOCR. Have you only just arrived?

CRITO. No, I've been here some time.

SOCR. Then why didn't you wake me immediately, instead of sitting quietly at my bedside?

CRITO. No, no, Socrates, I only wish I myself were not so sleepless and sorrowful. Do you know, I've been surprised at you for some time, noticing how sweetly you sleep; and I purposely refrained from waking you, so that you might pass the time as enjoyably as possible. I have often thought in days gone by, ever since you were a lad, that you were of a happy disposition, and now I'm quite convinced of it in this present misfortune, which you bear with such ease and equanimity.

SOCR. Well, Crito, it would be ridiculous if at my age I were disturbed by the prospect of death.

CRITO. Other men just as old as you, Socrates, become involved in similar misfortunes, but their age does nothing to prevent them from being disturbed by their impending fate.

SOCR. True. But why have you come so early?

CRITO. To bring sad news, Socrates; it will not, of course, upset you, but to all of us who are your friends it is grievously sad, and to none more grievously than to myself.

SOCR. What is this news? Has the ship come from Delos, on the arrival of which I am to die? [1]

CRITO. She hasn't exactly arrived, but I think she will do so today from the report of some men who have come from Sunium, where they disembarked. It is clear from what they say that the vessel will arrive today, and so tomorrow, Socrates, your life must end.

SOCR. Well, Crito, good luck to us! If this is the will of the gods, so be it. On the other hand, [44] I don't think she will come today.

CRITO. What makes you think so?

SOCR. I will tell you. My execution is appointed, is it not, for the day after the ship comes in?

CRITO. That is what the authorities say.[2]

SOCR. Well, I think she will berth not today but tomorrow. And I infer this from a dream I had earlier tonight; so perhaps your failure to wake me was a good thing.

CRITO. What was the dream?

[1] At any other time of year Socrates would have been put to death immediately after sentence; but his condemnation took place during the festival of Apollo, when an Athenian delegation travelled to Delos in a sacred ship, and until this vessel returned the execution of capital sentences was suspended.

[2] The authorities were the Eleven, a board of magistrates elected annually by lot. They had charge of prisoners in the state gaol and were responsible for the execution of capital sentences.

SOCR. I dreamed that a beautiful woman, fair of face and clothed in white, came and called to me in these words: 'Socrates, "on the third day thou wilt come to fertile Phthia".'[1]

CRITO. What a curious dream, Socrates.

SOCR. A clear one, at any rate, I think, Crito.

CRITO. Too clear indeed. But my dear Socrates, even at this late hour I beg of you to do what I ask and save yourself. Your death would be to me no mere isolated misfortune, but the loss of a friend such as I shall never find again. Besides, many men who are not well acquainted with us both will think I could have saved you if I had been willing to spend money, but that I would not take the trouble to do so. There is no more shameful reputation than that of considering one's purse before one's friends; few, however, will believe that all were anxious to help you escape from here, but that you refused.

SOCR. Crito, my dear man, why do we care so much about what people think? After all, the most reasonable men, whose opinion is worth more consideration, will take the view that things were done as they really will be done.

CRITO. But surely, Socrates, you must take some notice of public opinion; for the very trouble you are now in shows that the public is able to inflict not mere petty inconveniences but the greatest of all evils, if one is in its bad books.

SOCR. I only wish, Crito, that the people were able to bring about the greatest of evils; for then they would be able to accomplish the greatest good also, and all would be well. As things are, they can do neither; for they are unable to make a man wise or foolish, but merely do whatever occurs to them.

[1] *Iliad* ix. 363.

CRITO. That may well be. But tell me something, Socrates. Are you acting in this way out of consideration for me and your other friends? Are you afraid that, if you escape, the informers will make trouble for us by saying that we stole you away, with the result that we shall lose all our property or be heavily fined, and perhaps incur some additional penalty? [45] If you fear anything of that kind, put the thought out of your head; it is right and proper that we should run this risk—and a still greater one if necessary—provided we manage to save you. Now please do as I ask.

SOCR. Yes, Crito, I had that point in mind, and many others too.

CRITO. Well, don't fear the situation I envisaged. There are certain people who are willing to save you by getting you away from here, and we should not have to pay them any large sum for doing so. Besides, don't you see how venal these informers are, and that it would not take much money to silence them? Now my purse is at your service, and I believe it is ample enough. Furthermore, if your affection for me leads you to think that you ought not to spend my money, there are foreigners in Athens who are prepared to spend theirs. One of them, Simmias of Thebes, has brought sufficient funds for this very purpose; Cebes, too, and a whole host of others are ready. So, as I say, do not decline to save yourself through fear of hurting others financially. And don't be put off, either, by the prospect you mentioned in court of not knowing what to do with yourself if you went into exile. For you will be welcome in many other places, wherever you go; indeed, if you care to go to Thessaly, I have friends there who will make much of you and protect you against vexation from anyone in that part of the world.

Moreover, Socrates, it seems to me that what you are

proposing to do is not even right—betraying yourself when you might save yourself. You are anxious to bring upon yourself the very fate your enemies would wish, and to accomplish the very aim of those who sought to destroy you. In addition, I consider you to be abandoning your own sons. You have it in your power to rear and educate them. Instead you are going to go away and desert them; so far as you are concerned they will face an altogether uncertain future, and will probably meet with the usual fate of destitute orphans. No. It is a man's duty either to refrain from begetting children or to stand by them, bring them up and educate them. But you seem to me to be taking the line of least resistance, whereas you ought in fact to choose the course that a good and brave man would choose, especially as you have been claiming all your life that you cared for virtue. I am therefore ashamed both for you and for us, your friends. I am afraid, too, that people will think this business of yours has been handled from start to finish with some degree of cowardice on our part—the fact that the case came into court when it might have been avoided; the way in which the trial itself was conducted; and lastly, as the crowning folly of the whole affair, [46] our seemingly disgraceful lack of courage in letting slip this opportunity of saving you or of helping you to save yourself, despite our ability to do so if we had been of any use whatever. Take care, Socrates, that these suspicions do not bring disrepute, as well as disaster, upon yourself and us. Just consider—but no, the time for considering is past. There is only one possible scheme. Everything must be done during the coming night or not at all; there can be no delay. I beg you, Socrates, do as I say and don't refuse.

SOCR. My dear Crito, your zeal is admirable, if it proves to be justified; otherwise, the greater it is, the harder it

is to endure. We must therefore try to answer the question as to whether or not it is my duty to follow the course you propose; for I am still, as I have always been, a man who will accept no line of reasoning unless it appears, after due consideration, to be absolutely sound. Even after what has happened to me I cannot throw overboard the arguments I used to employ in days gone by; they seem to me hardly less valid than ever they did, and I hold them in the same reverence and esteem as heretofore. So be assured that unless we manage to produce better ones in the present circumstances, I shall not give way to you, not even if the power of the mob tries to intimidate me, as children are scared with tales of hobgoblins, by threatening you with even worse penalties—imprisonment, death or confiscation of property. How then can we study the question most reasonably? Shall we do so by considering first your remarks on the subject of what people may think, and asking ourselves whether we were right in the old days when we always used to maintain that some opinions deserved more respect than others? Must the answer be that we were right before I was condemned to death, but now it is clear that we used to talk merely for the sake of argument and our discussions were nothing more than childish nonsense? I want to go into this question with you, Crito, and see whether our former argument appears in a new light under present circumstances, and whether we ought to abandon or be guided by it. So far as I remember it used to be maintained by those who thought their words were backed by common sense that (to quote my own words) the opinion of some men deserved the highest respect and others none at all. Be honest now, Crito, do you not think this was a proper view? [47] For you, humanly speaking, are not destined for death tomorrow, and therefore present

circumstances are not likely to distort your judgment. Tell me then, don't you think we were correct in saying that we ought not to esteem all the opinions of men, but only some of them, and not those of all men, but only of some. What say you? Isn't this true?

CRITO. It is.

SOCR. Presumably then we ought to esteem the good opinions, and not the bad ones.

CRITO. Yes.

SOCR. And the good ones are those of men endowed with practical wisdom, and the bad ones those of men who are not?

CRITO. Of course.

SOCR. Come now, what used we to say about this? If a man is an athlete and makes athletics his career, does he take notice of everyone's opinions, favourable or otherwise; or is he concerned only with those of one person—his doctor or trainer?

CRITO. Only with those of the one person.

SOCR. In that case he ought to fear the blame and welcome the praise of that one man and not of the general public.

CRITO. Obviously.

SOCR. And he must act and train and eat and drink as is judged right by the one man who is his supervisor and understands what is required, not as everyone else thinks he should do.

CRITO. Agreed.

SOCR. Good. Now if he disobeys the one man and disregards his opinion, but takes notice of what is said by every Tom, Dick and Harry, who know nothing about the business, will he not suffer harm?

CRITO. He certainly will.

SOCR. And what is this harm? Whereabouts does it fall—I mean, what part of the disobedient man does it affect?

CRITO. Evidently his body; that is where the damage is done.

SOCR. Quite right. Then let us turn to just a few other cases: questions of right and wrong, disgrace and honour, good and bad, which we are now considering. Ought we to fear and follow the opinion of all and sundry or that of one man, assuming that there is such a person who understands them and for whom, above everyone else, we should entertain a respectful fear? If we do not follow him, shall we not do irremediable harm to that which we used to say is benefited by the right and ruined by the wrong? Or is that a false statement?

CRITO. No, Socrates, I think it is true.

SOCR. Well then, through yielding to the opinion of the ignorant we ruin something that is benefited by health and injured by disease. And that something is the body, is it not?

CRITO. Yes.

SOCR. Then is our life worth living when the body is utterly ruined?

CRITO. Indeed no.

SOCR. Of course not. But it is worth living when that is ruined which is injured by the wrong and improved by the right? Or do we imagine that that part of ourselves (whatever it be) [48] which is concerned with right and wrong is less important than the body?

CRITO. Certainly not.

SOCR. More important?

CRITO. Much more.

SOCR. In that case, my very good friend, we must take no notice at all of what the general public will say about us. What matters is the opinion of the one who understands right and wrong, i.e. of Truth herself. Consequently your initial approach to the question was all

wrong, when you began by saying that we ought to take account of what the general public thinks about the right, the honourable, the good and their opposites. It might be urged, of course, that the general public can put us to death.

CRITO. That is equally clear, Socrates; you are right.

SOCR. But, my friend, it seems to me that a line of argument similar to that which we have just concluded will apply if you ask yourself whether we still abide by the view that what we ought to consider most important is not mere living but living *well*.

CRITO. Yes, we still abide by it.

SOCR. And do we still hold that living well and living rightly are the same thing?

CRITO. We do.

SOCR. Then we agree that the question is whether or not it is right for me to try escaping from here without the permission of the Athenians. If it appears to be right, let us try it; if not, let us abandon the proposal. Now you mentioned something about spending money, about your reputation and about the education of my boys. Surely, Crito, these points are really the sort of considerations that might occupy the minds of those who think nothing of putting a man to death, and would with equal lack of sense bring him back to life if they could. I refer to the general public. Surely we must do as our argument requires and consider only the question we just raised: Shall we be doing right (*a*) by giving money and thanks to these people who will organize my escape from here, and (*b*) by escaping or furthering the escape ourselves; or shall we in fact be doing wrong? If it appears that we are not entitled to do these things, surely we ought to take no account of the fact that remaining here quietly means inevitable death, but must be prepared to suffer anything rather than do wrong.

CRITO. Evidently his body; that is where the damage is done.

SOCR. Quite right. Then let us turn to just a few other cases: questions of right and wrong, disgrace and honour, good and bad, which we are now considering. Ought we to fear and follow the opinion of all and sundry or that of one man, assuming that there is such a person who understands them and for whom, above everyone else, we should entertain a respectful fear? If we do not follow him, shall we not do irremediable harm to that which we used to say is benefited by the right and ruined by the wrong? Or is that a false statement?

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CRITO. I think what you say is true, Socrates; continue then and make clear what we ought to do.

SOCR. Let us, my good friend, study the question together. If you can contradict me at any point, do so and I will submit; but if you cannot, please make an end of telling me over and over again that it is my duty to get away from here without the consent of my fellow citizens. I am anxious to do what you want in this matter and not act contrary to your wishes. Now see if the beginning of the argument satisfies you, [49] and try to give an honest answer to my questions.

CRITO. Yes, I will try.

SOCR. Are we obliged to refrain from intentional wrongdoing in any shape or form, or are we entitled to do wrong in some ways though not in others. In other words, is it, as we often agreed in the old days, never right or honourable to do wrong; or have all our earlier conclusions become invalid in these last few days, showing that we old men, as we gravely chatter, failed all along to see that we were no better than children? Do we or do we not maintain that wrongdoing is inevitably an evil and a disgrace to the wrongdoer, whether we are called upon to endure greater or less grievous sufferings than hang over us at present?

CRITO. We do.

SOCR. Then we ought not to do wrong at all.

CRITO. Why, no.

SOCR. Nor even to requite wrong with wrong, as the world in general does, since we must not do wrong at all.

CRITO. Manifestly not.

SOCR. Well, Crito, ought one to do evil or not?

CRITO. Most certainly not, Socrates.

SOCR. Then is it right, or not right, to repay evil with evil, as the world at large thinks it is?

CRITO. Not right, without any doubt.

SOCR. For doing evil to people is the same thing as wronging them.

CRITO. True.

SOCR. So it follows that we ought neither to requite wrong with wrong nor to do evil to any man, no matter what he may have done to us. Be careful, Crito, that you do not, in agreeing to this, agree to something you do not believe; for I know the proposition is one that few believe or ever will believe. Those who believe it and those who do not, have no common ground of debate; in view of their different opinions they must necessarily despise one another. Consider therefore very carefully whether you agree with this opinion and make it your own. Let us start by assuming that it is never right to do wrong, to requite wrong with wrong or, when we suffer evil, to defend ourselves by doing evil in return. Maybe, though, you disagree and will not accept this as the starting-point of our discussion. For my part I have long held this belief, and I continue to do so. If you have arrived at any other conclusion go ahead and explain it; but if you still abide by our former view, hear the next point.

CRITO. I do abide by it and I agree with you. Go on then to your next point.

SOCR. It is this, or rather my next *question* is this: Ought a man to do what he has agreed to do, provided it is right, or may he go back on his word?

CRITO. He ought to keep his word.

SOCR. Well, now ask yourself whether or not by my escaping [50] from here without leave of the State we shall be harming the very last people to whom we owe such treatment, and whether or not we shall be standing by what we agreed was right.

CRITO. I cannot answer your question, Socrates, because I do not understand it.

SOCR. Look at it this way. Suppose that, just as I was on the point of running away (or whatever it should be called), the State, represented by her laws, were to come and ask me: 'Now then, Socrates, what are you up to? Is not this thing you are trying to do intended as an effort to destroy us, the laws, and demolish the whole fabric of the State? Do you imagine that a State can avoid destruction and continue to exist when decisions reached by the courts have no binding force but are invalidated and annulled by individuals?' What shall we say, Crito, in answer to this question? And indeed other questions of the same sort call for a reply; after all, there are many hard things one might say, especially if one were a rhetorician, about the undermining of that law which makes binding the decisions of the courts. Is our reply to be: 'The State has wronged us; the sentence was unjust'? Shall we say that, or what?

CRITO. Yes, by heaven, Socrates, that is just what we shall say.

SOCR. Suppose then the laws go on to ask: 'Socrates, was this the agreement between us, or did you agree to abide by the legal decisions of the State?' If I were surprised by what they said, they might perhaps continue: 'Don't be surprised by what we say, Socrates, but answer, since you are in the habit of employing the method of question and reply. Come now, what fault do you find with us and with the State, that you are seeking to destroy us? In the first place, did we not give you birth? Is it not through us that your father married your mother and begot you? Tell us, have you any criticism to make of the marriage laws?' 'I have no criticism,' I should say. 'Or with those that have to do with the rearing of a child after birth and

with his education, which you, like others, received? Did not those of us who preside over such matters give sound directions when we bade your father have you trained in literature, music and gymnastic?' 'You did,' I should say. 'Well then, having been born, nurtured and educated, can you say to begin with that you are not our offspring and our slave, you yourself and your ancestors as well? If this is so, do you think that right as between you and us is founded upon equality, so that you are justified in retaliating no matter what we choose to do to you? There was no such equality of right between you and your father or your master (if you had one), so that whatever treatment you received you might return it, answering back if you were rebuked, [51] striking back if you were struck, and so on. Do you think then that if we, your country and her laws, consider it right to destroy you, and resolve to do so, you will be entitled to undertake our destruction, so far as you can, and to claim that in acting thus you are doing right, you who really care for virtue? Or is your wisdom so defective that you cannot see that your country is more august and more to be revered, holier and in higher esteem both among gods and among intelligent men, than your mother and father and all your ancestors; that it is your duty to show her more respect, obedience and humility when she is angry than to your father; that you must either persuade her to alter her mind, or else endure whatever she commands, suffering in silence if she bids you suffer; that her will is to be done whether she orders you to be flogged or imprisoned, or leads you to war either to be wounded or to die; that you must not falter or give ground or abandon your post, but in war and in court and everywhere you must do whatever the State, your country, may direct, or prove to her by argument that another course is right;

and finally, that while it is impious to use violence against your father or mother, it is much worse to do so against your country?' What shall we say to this, Crito? Shall we say that the laws speak the truth, or not?

CRITO. I think they do.

SOCR. 'Observe then, Socrates,' perhaps the laws might say, 'that if what we say is true, what you are now trying to do is not right. For we brought you into the world, nurtured you and educated you, thereby giving you and every citizen a share of all the goods at our disposal. Nevertheless we proclaim, by the fact of our having offered the opportunity to any Athenian who cares to make use of it, that any adult citizen who, after seeing how the State and we her laws are administered, does not like us is free to take his property and go away wherever he pleases. None of us places the least obstacle or prohibition in the way of such action on the part of any one of you, whether he chooses to make his home in an Athenian colony or in some foreign country where he will live as an alien. We declare, on the other hand, that those of you who remain here, with full knowledge of how we administer justice and generally manage the State, have thereby entered into an agreement with us to do what we ordain. Moreover we declare that he who disobeys is guilty of a threefold wrong: he refuses submission to us who are his parents; he defies us who nurtured him; and after agreeing to do what we require he neither fulfils his undertaking [52] nor convinces us that we are in the wrong. For bear in mind, regarding this last point, we give him no peremptory order to do what we command: we allow him a choice of two things, either to convince us of error or to obey, yet he does neither.

'We maintain, Socrates, that you will incur this threefold reproach if you do what you have in mind, and you

not least of Athenians but more than most others.' If then I should ask 'How so?' they would surely be justified in retorting that I had made this agreement with them more emphatically than most other Athenians. 'Socrates,' they would say, 'we have compelling evidence that you were satisfied with ourselves and with the State; for you would never have spent more time within its boundaries than all other Athenians, had you not been better pleased with it than they. You never left Athens either to attend a festival or to go anywhere else, except on military service. Apart from that you never travelled, as most people do; you had no wish to become acquainted with other states or other legal systems, but were contented with us and our own State. Such is the measure of your preference for us and the firmness of your agreement to live in accordance with us; furthermore, you begat children here, showing you were satisfied. Again, even at your trial you could have proposed exile as your penalty, had you so wished; you might have done with the State's consent what you are now attempting to do without it. But no, you preened yourself, saying you were not troubled at the thought of having to die, and that you "preferred death to exile". And now the memory of those words arouses in you no sense of shame, nor have you the least respect for us, the laws, whom you are trying to destroy; by attempting to run away in defiance of the compacts and agreements you made to live according to our rules you are doing what the vilest slave would do. First therefore answer this question, whether or not we speak the truth when we say you agreed, not in words but by your conduct, to live as our subject.' What shall we say to this, Crito? Can we do anything but assent?

CRITO. No, Socrates, we cannot.

SOCR. 'Surely then', they will say, 'you are violating your solemn compacts with us. And yet you were not led into making them by force or fraud. Nor were you compelled to make up your mind at short notice; you had seventy years in which to depart, if you did not like us and considered the agreements unfair. But no, you preferred neither Sparta nor Crete, which you always say are well governed, nor any other [53] Greek or barbarian state; in fact you have been away from Athens less than the lame, the blind and other cripples. This is an indication that you were more satisfied than other Athenians with our State and with ourselves, her laws. Will you not now stand by your agreement? You will if you take our advice, Socrates, and not make a fool of yourself by leaving the city.

'For consider, what good will you do to yourself or any of your friends by transgressing in this way and committing these errors? It is almost certain that your friends too will run the risk of banishment and the loss of their civic rights or their property. And if you yourself, Socrates, go to one of those states that are our nearest neighbours—Thebes or Megara, both of which are well governed—you will be received as an enemy of its constitution; all who cherish their own political system will look askance at you and regard you as a destroyer of their laws. You will confirm the view taken by the judges here, and your hosts will consider the verdict just. For he who sets out to destroy the laws must certainly be regarded as the ruin of thoughtless young men. Suppose you steer clear of well-governed states and highly civilized communities; will your life then be worth living? Suppose on the other hand that you do settle in some such place; will you have the nerve to carry on conversations—of what kind, Socrates? The same kind as you indulged

in here, arguing that virtue, justice, the laws and their dictates are man's most precious possessions? Don't you think that Socrates' conduct would be looked upon as quite disgraceful. You cannot but think it will. Perhaps you will avoid such localities and go to Crito's friends in Thessaly. It is a wild and lawless part of the world, and the people there may be amused to hear about the ludicrous way in which you escaped from prison in disguise, wrapped in a peasant's leathern cloak or whatever it is that runaways wear, to alter your appearance. But is no one going to say that you, an old man, who had probably but a short time yet to live, dared cling to life with such shameful avidity that you violated the most fundamental laws? Maybe not, provided you do not offend anyone; but if you do, Socrates, you will be the object of many a hard word. You will thus live in Thessaly as every man's inferior, doing nothing but eat and drink as if you had gone there to attend a banquet. What will become of those conversations about justice and virtue? [54] But perhaps you wish to live for the sake of your children, in order to bring them up and educate them. How so? Will you take them to Thessaly for their upbringing and education, making exiles of them as a further blessing at your hands? Suppose you don't do that, but leave them to be brought up here; will they receive a better upbringing and education if you are living, though absent, than they would do if you were dead? You say your friends will care for them. Will they do so if you go away to Thessaly, but not if you go away to the land of the dead? If those who claim to be your friends are worth their salt we must believe they will take care of them in either event.

'No, Socrates, be guided by us who watched over your infancy. Care not for your children nor for life nor for

anything else more than for righteousness, so that when you reach the land of the dead you may have all these things to say in your own defence before the rulers of that place. For clearly what you have in mind to do is not the more just or holier course of action; it will not profit you or any of your friends here, nor will it stand you in good stead beyond the grave. If you depart from the scene now, you will depart having suffered wrong not at the hands of us, the laws, but at those of men. If, however, you escape, dishonourably requiting wrong with wrong and evil with evil, violating your solemn agreements with us and injuring those whom you ought least to injure—yourself, your friends, your country and ourselves—why, then we shall be angry with you while you live, and when you eventually die our brothers the laws in Hades' realm will not receive you graciously, knowing that you did your level best to destroy us. Oh, do not let Crito persuade you to do what he says, but take our advice.'

I tell you, my dear friend, that this is what I seem to hear, as the Corybantes seem to hear the flutes; and the sound of these words re-echoes within me and prevents my hearing any others. I tell you I am at present sure that if you oppose these voices you will speak in vain. Even so, if you think there's any more that you can do, say on.

CRITO. No, Socrates, I have nothing to say.

SOCR. Then, Crito, let it be; let us act in this way since God leads us by this path.

PHAEDO

PHAEDO

CHARACTERS OF THE DIALOGUE

PHAEDO,[1] on a visit to Phlius in Argolis, describes to ECHECRATES [2] the last hours of SOCRATES in conversation with himself, APOLLODORUS, CEBES, SIMMIAS and CRITO. An incidental speaker is the servant of the Eleven.

[St. I, p. 57.] ECHECRATES. Phaedo, were you yourself with Socrates on the day when he drank the poison [3] in prison, or did you hear about it from someone else?

PHAEDO. I was there myself, Echecrates.

ECH. Ah, then you can tell us what he said before he died and the manner of his ending. I should be glad to hear. Nobody from Phlius ever goes to Athens nowadays; a long while ago someone came from there, but he could give us no definite information, except that Socrates drank poison and died.

PHAE. [58] Didn't you even hear about the circumstances of his trial?

ECH. Yes, someone told us about it, and we were surprised that the execution took place so long afterwards. Why was that, Phaedo?

PHAE. It was quite accidental, Echecrates. The stern of

[1] A native of Elis in Peloponnesus; taken prisoner and sold as a slave at Athens in 401 B.C. He obtained his freedom and became a disciple of Socrates. After the latter's death he returned to Elis and founded a school of philosophy, which was subsequently transferred by Menedemus to Eretria.

[2] Last of the Pythagoreans.

[3] Hemlock.

the ship which the Athenians send to Delos happened to be garlanded on the day before the trial.

ECH. What ship?

PHAE. The one that commemorates a traditional voyage to Crete made long ago by Theseus with fourteen youths and maidens, whose lives he saved together with his own. According to tradition, the Athenians made a vow to Apollo that if Theseus and his companions got back safely the State would send an annual mission to Delos, and from that day to this they have sent one every year in honour of the god. Now Athenian law prescribes that once the mission has begun the city must remain pure, and no one must suffer capital punishment until the ship returns from Delos; but sometimes, when contrary winds detain it, this takes a long time. The mission begins with the garlanding of the ship's stern by the priest of Apollo; and this ceremony took place, as I say, on the day before the trial. That is why Socrates spent a long time in prison between his trial and his death.

ECH. What happened at his death, Phaedo? What was said and done? Which of his friends were with him? Or did the authorities forbid their presence and oblige him to die alone?

PHAE. Not at all. Some of his friends were there—quite a number of them, in fact.

ECH. Well, if you are not too busy, do please tell us all about it with as much detail as possible.

PHAE. I have plenty of time and I will try to give you an account of what happened. Nothing pleases me more than to be reminded of Socrates, whether by speaking of him myself or by listening to someone else.

ECH. Depend upon it, Phaedo, you will be talking to men who feel as you do; so try to tell us everything as accurately as you can.

PHAE. Speaking for myself, I experienced some strange emotions that day. I was not filled with pity as I might naturally have been when present at the death of a friend. The man's words and whole bearing, Echecrates, showed me he was happy, meeting death so fearlessly and nobly. This convinced me that in departing for the Underworld he was not setting forth without divine protection, and that on arrival all would be well with him, [59] if ever it was with any man. And so I was by no means filled with pity, as might have been expected of me at a scene of mourning; nor on the other hand did I feel pleasure, although our conversation was as usual of philosophy. No, the strangest feeling came over me, an unaccustomed mixture of pleasure and pain, when I remembered that Socrates would very soon be gone. All of us there felt much the same, sometimes laughing and sometimes weeping, especially one of us, Apollodorus; you know him, of course, and the kind of man he is.

ECH. Indeed I do.

PHAE. He was quite unrestrained, and the others, including myself, were greatly upset.

ECH. Who were the others, Phaedo?

PHAE. Besides Apollodorus, the native Athenians were Critobulus and his father, Hermogenes and Epigenes, Aeschines and Antisthenes, Ctesippus of the deme Paeania, Menexenus and some others.[1] Plato, I think, was ill.

ECH. Were any foreigners present?

[1] Apollodorus was a native of Phalerum; Critobulus, the son of Crito; Hermogenes, probably identical with a speaker in *Cratylus*; Epigenes, son of the orator Antiphon; Aeschines of Sphettos (*see* p. 53, note 1); Antisthenes, founder of the Cynic school; Ctesippus, a young man of whom mention is made in *Euthydemus* and *Lysis*; Menexenus (son of Demophon), after whom Plato named one of his dialogues.

PHAE. Yes, Simmias, Cebes and Phaedonides from Thebes, and from Megara Eucleides [1] and Terpsion.

ECH. What? Were Aristippus [2] and Cleombrotus not there?

PHAE. No. I heard they were in Aegina.

ECH. Anyone else?

PHAE. I think these were about all.

ECH. Now then, tell us about the conversation.

PHAE. I will try to tell you everything from the beginning. I and others had paid regular visits to Socrates on previous days. We used to meet at daybreak in the court [3] where the trial took place, because it was near the prison. On each occasion we would idle away the time talking for some while until the prison opened, which was not until much later. As soon as it opened we used to go in to Socrates and spend most of the day with him. On this particular day we met somewhat earlier; for the previous evening, on leaving the gaol, we heard that the ship had arrived from Delos, so we agreed to forgather at the usual place as early in the morning as possible. When we arrived at the prison the gaoler who had always answered our knock came out and told us to wait and not go in until he told us. 'The Eleven',[4] he said, 'are releasing Socrates from his fetters and giving directions for his execution today.' Anyhow, after a short delay he came [60] and invited us inside. We entered and found Socrates just unchained and Xanthippe [5]—you've heard of her—with his little son in her arms sitting beside him. Well, when Xanthippe saw us she cried out and said the kind of things that women invariably do: 'Oh, Socrates, this is the last time your friends will speak to you or you to

[1] Founder of the Megarian school.
[2] Founder of the Cyrenaic school.
[3] This was an open-air enclosure.
[4] *See* page 68, note 2.
[5] Socrates' wife, a tiresome woman.

them.' Socrates glanced at Crito and said: 'Crito, let someone take her home.' Then some of Crito's people led her away screaming and beating her breast. Socrates sat up on his bed, flexed his leg and rubbed it with his hand; and as he rubbed he said: 'That thing which men call pleasure—what a strange thing it is, my friends. How curious its relationship to pain, which we recognize as its contrary: neither will visit a man at the same time as the other, and yet if he pursues the one and captures it he is generally obliged to grasp the other as well, as though the two were joined together in a single head. I think that if it had occurred to Aesop he would have composed a fable. Once upon a time, he might have said, pleasure and pain were at war, and God wished to reconcile them; but failing to do so, he fastened their heads together so that whenever one of them comes to visit a man the other follows after. It seems to be just like that with me: the fetter was causing me pain in the leg, and now pleasure seems to follow in its wake.'

At this point Cebes interrupted: 'By Zeus, Socrates, thanks for reminding me; various people have been asking me about your poems, the metrical versions of Aesop's fables and the hymn to Apollo. The day before yesterday Evenus [1] inquired how it was that you came to write these verses in prison, although you had never produced a line of poetry before. In case Evenus asks me again, as I know he will, would you mind telling me what to say by way of an answer?'

Socrates replied: 'Tell him the truth, Cebes; tell him I composed these verses not because I wished to rival him or his poems, which I knew would be no easy matter, but in order to test the meaning of certain dreams and to make sure that I neglected no duty in the event of their

[1] A native of Paros; he was a poet and sophist.

repeated command turning out to mean that I should cultivate the Muses in this way. Here is the gist of those dreams. The same one visited me often during my past life, sometimes in one form and sometimes in another, but always using these identical words: "Set to and cultivate the Muses, Socrates." Now I used to think [61] that it was urging and encouraging me to continue the occupation in which I was already engaged; I fancied that just as people encourage runners by cheering, so the dream was exhorting me to go on with what I was doing, that is to say, cultivate the Muses by devoting myself to philosophy, in which I was then engaged and which I took to be the highest form of such activity. After the trial, however, while the religious festival delayed my execution, I began to think that the recurrent dream might in fact be trying to bid me practise this art [1] which is commonly known as cultivation of the Muses. In that case I must set to work and not disobey; I thought it safer not to depart hence before making sure that I had done my duty by fulfilling the dream's behest and composing some verses. So first I wrote a hymn to the god whose festival was being celebrated. Then it occurred to me that the business of a real poet is to write stories rather than speeches; and since I am no original storyteller I took the fables of Aesop, which I knew by heart, and put into verse form the first that came to mind. So tell Evenus that, Cebes; say goodbye to him, and tell him, if he is wise, to follow me as soon as ever he can. I, it seems, am going today; that is what the Athenians direct.'

'Socrates!' exclaimed Simmias, 'fancy sending a message like that to Evenus! I've often met the fellow,

[1] i.e. literature, for which, as Aristotle tells us, the Greeks had no word.

and from what I've seen of him I should say he's most unlikely to take your advice if he can possibly help it.'

'Why?' said he. 'Isn't Evenus a philosopher.'

'I think so,' said Simmias.

'Then Evenus will be ready to take my advice, and so will every genuine devotee of philosophy. No doubt he will refrain from doing violence to himself, for they say that is not lawful.' As he spoke he put his feet down on the ground and remained sitting in that position during the remainder of the conversation.

Then Cebes asked him: 'Socrates, what do you mean when you say that it is not lawful to do violence to oneself, but that a philosopher would be ready to follow in the footsteps of the dying?'

'What, Cebes? Have you and Simmias, who are pupils of Philolaus, not heard about such matters?'

'Nothing definite, Socrates.'

'Well, I myself speak of them only from hearsay; but I have no objection to telling what I have heard. Indeed, it is surely most appropriate that a man bound for another world should talk about life beyond the grave and consider what we think of it. What else more fitting could one do between now and sunset?'

'What on earth makes people say it is not lawful to kill oneself, Socrates? When Philolaus was resident at Thebes I heard him say exactly what you just said, and I've heard from others too that one must not do such a thing; [62] but I never heard anyone explain why.'

'Don't lose heart,' he said, 'and you may perhaps obtain an explanation. You will perhaps think it strange that this alone of all laws admits of no exception, and never applies to man in the way that others do. It is sometimes and for some persons better to die than to

live; and it may seem extraordinary to you that those individuals for whom it is better to die cannot without impiety confer that blessing upon themselves, but must wait for some other benefactor.'

Cebes, smiling gently and speaking in the Theban dialect, replied that he thought it very strange indeed.

'Yes,' said Socrates, 'it must seem unreasonable put in that way, but there is assuredly some sense in it. According to esoteric teaching on this matter we men are, as it were, in custody and must not set ourselves free or run away. Now this seems to me a weighty doctrine and one that is not easily understood; but I do at any rate believe, Cebes, that it is correct to say that the gods are our guardians and that we men are among their belongings. Don't you think so too?'

'Yes,' said Cebes, 'I do.'

'Well then,' said he, 'if one of your chattels killed itself without your having indicated that you wished it to die, wouldn't you be angry with it and punish it if you could?'

'Certainly,' he replied.

'In which case it is surely not unreasonable to hold that a man must not kill himself until God imposes upon him some obligation to do so, such as has now been imposed upon me.'

'That', said Cebes, 'appears to make good sense. But you said a little while ago, Socrates, that philosophers ought to be ready and willing to die; and that seems odd if we were right in saying just now that the deity is our guardian and we are his chattels. No one would expect the wisest of men to be untroubled when leaving a service in which the gods, those best of governors, watch over them. A wise man certainly does not imagine that once he is free he can take better care of himself than they do.

A foolish man might think so, failing to realize how necessary it is to remain with a good master and not run away from him; he might, therefore, flee in defiance of sound sense, whereas an intelligent man would wish to be always with one who is better than himself. And yet, Socrates, if we look at it in this way, the contrary of what we just said seems natural, i.e. that the wise should be troubled at the prospect of death and the foolish rejoice.'

[63] When Socrates heard this he appeared to me delighted at Cebes' earnestness. Glancing at us, he said: 'Aha, Cebes is always on the track of arguments; he will not easily be convinced by whatever anyone says.'

'Well, Socrates,' remarked Simmias, 'this time I myself think that Cebes is right. What could be the aim of really wise men in running away from masters who are better than they and thoughtlessly cutting themselves adrift? It strikes me that Cebes' argument is a shot at you, because you are so willing to leave us and the gods, who are, as you yourself agree, good governors.'

'There is something in what you say,' he replied. 'I think you mean that I must defend myself against this accusation as if I were in a court of law.'

'We certainly do,' said Simmias.

'Well then,' said he, 'I will endeavour to put up a more convincing defence than I did before my judges. It would be wrong of me not to grieve at death if it were not that I am going to other good and wise gods, as well as to dead men who are better than those on earth—or rather if I did not *expect* to find myself among good men, for I should not care to assert this positively. But I would assert as positively as I would anything about such matters that I am going to gods who are good masters. For this reason, therefore, I not only refrain from grief, but have great hopes that there is something in store for

the dead, and, as the old belief maintains, something better for the good than for the wicked.'

'Surely', said Simmias, 'you don't mean to go away without opening your mind to us. It seems to me that all of us are entitled to a share of your thoughts; besides, if what you say manages to convince us it will serve as your defence.'

'Yes, I will try,' he answered. 'But first let us ask Crito there what he wants. I think he's been trying to get a word in for some time.'

'I only wanted to say, Socrates,' said Crito, 'that the man who is to adminster the poison keeps telling me to warn you to talk as little as possible. He says that talking is inclined to raise a man's temperature, and heat lessens the efficacy of the poison; sometimes he is obliged to make those who have talked too much drink twice or even three times the normal amount.'

'Never mind him,' said Socrates. 'Let him be ready to give me a double dose—or a triple if necessary.'

'I was fairly sure that was what you'd say,' remarked Crito, 'but he keeps bothering me.'

'Never mind him,' said Socrates. 'I wish now to tell you, my judges, the reason why I think a man who has really devoted his life to philosophy is naturally courageous [64] when he comes to die, and has high hopes that when he is dead he will attain the greatest blessings in the Beyond. So I will try to give you an explanation.

'Other people are not likely to be aware that those who approach philosophy in the right spirit are really concerned with nothing but dying and being dead. Now if this is true, it would be absurd to be anxious for this alone throughout their lives and then to be troubled when confronted with the very situation for which they had all along been so eagerly preparing.'

Simmias burst out laughing. 'By Zeus, Socrates, I don't feel much like laughing at present, but you made me laugh. I think the average man, hearing what you just said about philosophers, would say you were quite right. Our people at home, too, would entirely agree with you that philosophers desire death; and they would add that they know full well that philosophers deserve it!'

'And they would be speaking the truth, Simmias, except in the matter of knowing full well. For they do not know *how* real philosophers desire death, nor *how* they deserve it, nor *what kind* of death they wish and deserve. Let us then bid them good day and converse among ourselves. Do we believe there is such a thing as death?'

'Indeed we do,' replied Simmias.

'We believe, do we not, that death is the separation of the soul from the body, and that the state of being dead is the state in which the body and soul, being separated from one another, exist independently? Is death anything but that?'

'No, that is exactly what it is,' said he.

'Now, my friend, see if you agree with me; for if you do, I rather think we shall obtain more light upon our subject. Do you think it likely that a philosopher would care much about the so-called pleasures, e.g. eating and drinking?'

'Of course I don't, Socrates,' said Simmias.

'How about venereal pleasures?'

'Certainly not.'

'Well, do you think such a man would set great store by other bodily concerns, I mean such as possessing fine clothes and shoes and other personal ornaments? Do you think he would care about clothes, etc., except in so far as they are necessary; or would he despise them?'

'I think the *true* philosopher would despise them,' he answered.

'Altogether then you think that such a man would not be preoccupied with the body, but would do all in his power to ignore it and concentrate upon the soul?'

'I do.'

'In the first place then it is clear that in such matters the philosopher does more than any other men to separate [65] the soul from communion with the body?'

'It is.'

'Now, Simmias, most people undoubtedly imagine that a man who derives no pleasure from such things and has no part in them doesn't deserve to live, and that since he cares nothing for bodily pleasures he is virtually dead.'

'You are perfectly right there.'

'Now what about the acquisition of pure knowledge? Is the body a hindrance or not, if it is made to share in that work. What I mean is this: Are a man's sight and hearing reliable, or is it true, as the poets are always drumming into us, that we neither see nor hear anything accurately? And if these two senses are not reliable, don't you think that the other and inferior senses are unlikely to be so?'

'Certainly I do,' he replied.

'The question arises then,' said he: 'When does the soul attain to truth? For when it tries to consider anything in company with the body it is evidently deceived thereby.'

'True.'

'In thought then, if at all, something of reality is manifested to it. Do you agree?'

'Yes.'

'And it thinks best when it is untroubled by any such thing as sight or hearing, pain or pleasure; when it is alone by itself, so far as possible; when it takes leave of this body and, doing its best to avoid all association or contact therewith, reaches out towards reality.'

'That is so.'

'In this matter also then the soul of a philosopher utterly contemns the body, shunning it and striving to be alone by itself?'

'Evidently.'

'Now for the next point, Simmias. Do we believe there is such a thing as absolute justice, or not?'

'We certainly believe there is.'

'And absolute beauty and goodness?'

'Of course.'

'Well, did you ever see anything of the kind with your eyes?'

'Assuredly not,' he said.

'Or did you ever lay hold on them with any of the bodily senses? I am speaking of all such things as size, health, strength, and in short the essence whereby anything is what it is. Is their true nature contemplated by means of the body? Is it not rather the case that he who prepares himself most carefully to apprehend the essence of everything that comes under his notice will come nearest to the knowledge of it?'

'Certainly.'

'Will not this be done most perfectly by the man who approaches each thing, as far as possible, with the reason alone, not making sight work alongside it nor dragging in any other [66] of the senses to serve as an ally of thought? Such a man employs pure, absolute reason in his attempt to hunt down the pure, absolute essences of things, and removes himself as best he may from eyes, ears and, in a word, from every physical element of his being, because he feels that their companionship disturbs the soul and hinders it from attaining truth and wisdom. Is not this the man, Simmias, if anyone, who will attain to the knowledge of reality?'

'You couldn't say a truer word, Socrates,' said Simmias.

'In that case,' said he, 'true lovers of wisdom will surely think and talk among themselves somewhat like this: "There seems to be a short cut which leads us to the conclusion that so long as the body accompanies the rational element in our search, and so long as our soul is contaminated by such an evil, we shall never lay a firm hold upon what we desire, i.e. the truth. For the body keeps us constantly attentive to its need of sustenance, and the diseases to which we are subject are a further obstacle to our pursuit of truth. Moreover the body fills us with passions, desires and fears, and all sorts of fancies and foolishness, making it quite impossible for us, as the saying goes, to think at all. The body and its appetites are the sole cause of war, faction and open strife; for all wars are fought with a view to acquiring wealth, and it is for the sake of the body that we are impelled to seek riches. We are slaves to its service. And so, as a result of all this, we have no leisure for philosophy. But more unfortunate than anything else is the fact that if we do obtain a little leisure and turn to intellectual pursuits, the body is constantly interrupting our studies and disturbing us with noise and confusion, so as to prevent us from beholding truth. In fact we realize that if we are ever to know anything absolutely, we must be free from the body and contemplate reality with the eyes of the soul alone. When we are dead we shall doubtless enjoy the wisdom we desire and of which we claim to be enamoured, though not while we live. For reason tells us that if unclouded knowledge is impossible while we are in the flesh, one of two things must follow: either it cannot be acquired at all, or can be acquired only when we are dead and [67] the soul is at last independent of the body. So long as we live we shall, I think, be closest to knowledge when we

avoid, as far as we can, all intercourse and communion with the body other than such as is strictly necessary, and are not submerged in its nature, but keep ourselves pure from it until God sets us free. In that hour, sloughing off the inanity of the body and becoming pure, we shall, I think, be with the pure and have direct knowledge of all that is unsullied—the truth, the very truth. For it is impossible that the impure should lay hold upon the pure." Such words as these, I think, Simmias, all who are true lovers of knowledge must say to each other, and such must be their thoughts. Don't you agree?'

'I couldn't agree more, Socrates.'

'Then,' said Socrates, 'if this is true, my friend, I have every reason to believe that when I reach the place to which I am on my way, I shall there, if anywhere, attain fully to that which has been my principal aim and object throughout my life. Therefore the journey which I am now obliged to undertake is begun with high hope; and every man who believes that his mind has been made ready by purification can entertain an equal hope.'

'Of course,' said Simmias.

'And does not the purification consist, as we observed a little while ago, in the fullest possible separation of soul from body, in the habituation of the soul to recollection and withdrawal from every bodily sense, and in its living so far as possible, both now and hereafter, alone by itself, free from the body as from chains?'

'Yes, definitely,' said he.

'Now isn't the thing we call death a release or separation from the body?'

'Quite right,' he answered.

'But in our view true philosophers alone feel the constant urge to release the soul. Isn't the release and separation of soul from body their one concern?'

'Undoubtedly.'

'Then, as I remarked just now, it would be nonsensical for a man to spend his life trying to live as nearly in a state of death as he could, and then be worried by the approach of death.'

'It certainly would.'

'In fact then, Simmias,' he said, 'true philosophers train themselves for death, which is less formidable to them than to any other human beings. Look at it in this way. They are implacable foes of the body, and long to have the soul in isolation. It would surely, therefore, be worse than foolish if they were beset with fear when such isolation is on the verge of accomplishment, and experienced no joy at the prospect of going to a place where [68] they may hope to attain what they yearned for throughout their lives—I refer, of course, to wisdom—and to escape the companionship of that which they detested. Many men, after the death of their favourite wives or sons, have gladly made the journey to Hades in hope of seeing and being reunited there with those for whom they longed; and shall he who is really in love with wisdom and who is firmly convinced that he can find it nowhere else than in the land beyond the grave lament when he dies and not rejoice to go there? We cannot believe that, my friend, if he is really a philosopher; for he will be assured of finding wisdom pure and undefiled nowhere else than in the Beyond. This being so, would it not be the height of folly for such a man to fear death?'

'The very height of folly,' he replied.

'In that case,' said Socrates, 'when you see a man troubled at the prospect of death, is it not a clear sign that he was a lover not of wisdom but of the body. And the same man is also a lover of money or of honour—or of both.'

'You are perfectly right,' he said.

'Well, Simmias,' he went on to ask, 'isn't that which we call courage a peculiar characteristic of philosophers?'

'Definitely,' said he.

'And how about that which is commonly called self-control and which consists in not being dominated by the passions, in subduing them and in rigid propriety? Isn't self-control characteristic of those alone who despise the body and devote all their time to philosophy?'

'Without any possible doubt,' he answered.

'Yes,' said Socrates, 'if you care to ponder the "courage" and "self-control" of other men, you will find them to be mere mockeries.'

'How so, Socrates?'

'You know, don't you, that all other men reckon death among the great evils?'

'They certainly do.'

'And when brave men face death, isn't it through fear of greater evils?'

'That is so.'

'Then all except philosophers are brave through fear. But how absurd that courage should be due to cowardly dread.'

'Quite right.'

'And how about the puritanical type? Isn't their case the same? They are self-controlled, thanks to a kind of self-indulgence. You may say that this is impossible, but their silly restraint amounts in fact to little more than this; for they fear they may be deprived of certain pleasures which they desire, and so they refrain from some because they are under the dominion of others. Now [69] being ruled by pleasures is called self-indulgence, and these people conquer pleasures by yielding to other pleasures; which brings us back to more or less

what I said a moment ago—they are self-controlled by a kind of self-indulgence.'

'So it appears.'

'Dear Simmias, it is my belief that the exchange of pleasures for pleasures, pains for pains, fear for fear, greater for less, as if they were coins, is not the right way to acquire virtue. I consider that the only right coinage for which all these things should be exchanged is wisdom; it is by this medium alone that they must be bought and sold. Courage, self-control, justice and, in short, true virtue exist only with wisdom, whether pleasures, fears and other things of that kind be added or taken away. Virtue which consists in the exchange of such things for each other without wisdom is a mere painted imitation of virtue, being really slavish and having nothing healthy or true in it. Truth, on the other hand, is a purification from all these things, and self-control, justice, courage and wisdom itself are a kind of purification. Surely those who founded the Mysteries were not unenlightened; surely there was a hidden meaning in the declaration they made long ago that whoever goes uninitiated and unsanctified to the other world will wallow in mire, while he who arrives initiated and purified will dwell with the gods. There is a saying among devotees of the Mysteries that "the thyrsus-bearers are many, but the mystics few"; and these mystics are, I believe, none other than those who have been philosophers. Throughout my life I have done my best to leave nothing undone in my relentless effort to make myself one of them. Whether my effort has been well directed and successful, I believe I shall know clearly when I reach that other world, God willing, very soon. This then, Simmias and Cebes, is the defence I offer to show that it is reasonable for me not to be grieved or troubled at leaving you and my earthly

rulers, because I believe that there, no less than here, I shall find good rulers and friends. If I am more successful in convincing you by my defence than I was in convincing the Athenian court, it is well.'

When Socrates had finished speaking, Cebes answered and said: 'Socrates, [70] I agree with everything you say, but as regards the soul men are very prone to disbelief. They fear that when the soul leaves the body it no longer exists anywhere; that on the day the man dies it is destroyed and perishes; that as soon as it is separated by departure from the body it flies away, scattering like breath or smoke. If it exists anywhere at all by itself as a unit, freed from those evils which you just now enumerated, there would be good reason, Socrates, for the blessed hope that what you say is true. But some lengthy argument would surely be required to prove that when a man is dead his soul continues to exist and retains anything of its former intellectual capacity.'

'What you say, Cebes, is true,' replied Socrates. 'What shall we do then? Do you wish to go on debating this view of mine and see whether it is probable or not?'

'I do,' said Cebes; 'I should like to hear what you have to say.'

'Well,' said Socrates, 'I don't believe anyone who heard us talking here, even if he were a comic poet, would say that I am chattering and discussing matters that do not concern me. So if you like, let us make a thorough study of the problem.

'Let us begin by asking whether or not the souls of dead men are in Hades. We may recall an ancient tradition that they depart hence and return again, born from the dead. Now if this is true, if the living are reborn from the dead, our souls must *exist* among the dead, mustn't they?

For they couldn't be reborn if they didn't exist. And therefore incontrovertible evidence that the living are born only from the dead would be sufficient proof of the soul's continued existence; but if no such evidence is forthcoming some other line of argument would be needed.'

'Certainly,' Cebes answered.

'Now,' said he, 'if you want an easy solution, don't consider the question with regard to men only, but in respect of all animals and plants—in short, of all things that come to be. Let us see with regard to all such things whether it is not true that they are all generated from their opposites; the noble, for instance, is the opposite of the ignoble, the just of the unjust, and so forth in countless other instances. Let us ask ourselves whether everything that has an opposite is not inevitably generated from that opposite and from nothing else. For example, when a thing becomes greater, mustn't it have been smaller and then become greater?'

'Yes.'

[71] 'And if it becomes smaller mustn't it have been greater and then become smaller?'

'That is so,' he replied.

'And the weaker is generated from the stronger, and the slower from the quicker?'

'Exactly.'

'And the worse from the better, and the more just from the less just?'

'Of course.'

'Then,' said Socrates, 'we have established the fact that all things are generated in this way—one opposite from another?'

'Agreed.'

'Our next question then is whether between all these

pairs of opposites there is what may be called two kinds of generation, from A to B and back again from B to A. Between a larger thing and a smaller thing there is increment and diminution; by which I mean that one increases while the other decreases. Isn't that so?'

'Yes,' he said.

'And so too with analysis and synthesis, cooling and heating, and indeed with regard to every pair of opposites; even if in some cases we have no definite term whereby to describe the process, isn't it true that there must inevitably be generation from one opposite to the other?'

'Perfectly true,' he said.

'Well then,' said Socrates, 'is there anything that is the opposite of living, in the same way that being awake is the opposite of sleeping?'

'Of course there is,' said Cebes.

'What?'

'Being dead,' said he.

'Then life and death are generated from one another; and am I not right in saying that since they are two, the processes between them are likewise two?'

'You certainly are.'

'Now,' said Socrates, 'I will tell you about one of the two pairs I just mentioned and its intermediate processes; and I want you to tell me about the other. I say that one term is sleeping and the other is being awake. The latter is generated from the former, and *vice versa*—being awake from sleeping, and sleeping from being awake. The respective processes of generation are falling asleep and waking up. Do you agree, or not?'

'I most certainly do.'

To which Socrates replied: 'Tell me then on the same principle about life and death. Do you not hold that living is the opposite of being dead?'

'I do.'

'And that they are generated one from the other?'

'Yes.'

'Now what is it that is generated from the living?'

'The dead,' he answered.

'And what,' said Socrates, 'is generated from the dead?'

'There is only one possible answer—the living.'

'Very well then, Cebes, everything that has life—plants, brute beasts and human beings—is generated from what has died.'

'Obviously,' said he.

'In that case,' said Socrates, 'our souls exist in the Beyond.'

'Apparently they do.'

'And one of the two processes of generation between life and death is plain for all to see; everyone surely can observe the phenomenon of death.'

'Of course.'

'Well then,' asked Socrates, 'what is our next step? Are we to deny the opposite process and regard nature as one-sided in this case? Or must we grant that there is some generative process opposite to dying?'

'Certainly we must,' he said.

'What is that process?'

'Coming to life again.'

'Very good then,' said Socrates, 'if there is such a thing as [72] coming to life again, won't this be the process of generation from the dead to the living?'

'Indeed it will.'

'So these facts lead us to the conclusion that the living are generated from the dead no less than the dead from the living; and this fact appears to me sufficient proof that the souls of the dead exist in some place from which they return to life.'

'I think, Socrates, that this follows inevitably from our previous admissions.'

'Good. And now, Cebes, here is another method, surely, of proving that we did right in making those admissions. If generation were not a process from one opposite to another and back again—if it were not, so to speak, a circular motion but went forward continually in a straight line without turning back or curving—then, you know, all things would ultimately have the same form and be acted upon in the same way and cease to be generated at all.'

'How do you mean?' said he.

'What I mean', said Socrates, 'is not at all difficult to understand. For example, if the process of falling asleep existed, but not the opposite process of waking from sleep, the result, you know, would be to make Endymion's sleep sheer nonsense; he would obviously be nowhere, for everything else would be in the same state as he, fast asleep. Again, if all things were mixed together and never separated out from one another, the theory of Anaxagoras that "all things are together" would quickly be fulfilled. Likewise, dear Cebes, if all living things were to die, and were to remain in that condition without coming to life again, isn't it inevitable that all things would ultimately be dead and nothing alive? For if the living were generated from anything other than the dead, and then were to die, what means could prevent all living things from being ultimately swallowed up in death?'

'I can think of none, Socrates,' said Cebes. 'What you say seems to be altogether true.'

'In my view, Cebes,' said he, 'it is absolutely true. In making these admissions we are not deluded; the return to life is an actual fact, and it is also a fact that the

living are generated from the dead and that the souls of the dead exist.'

'Ah yes, and there's another point too,' rejoined Cebes. 'If it is true, Socrates, as you firmly maintain, that our learning is nothing else than recollection,[1] these facts about generation and death will provide yet one more argument that we must necessarily have learned at some previous time what we now remember. It would be impossible for us to do that unless [73] our souls existed somewhere before their incorporation in this human form; and so once again we are obliged to conclude that the soul is immortal.'

'Wait a moment, Cebes,' said Simmias; 'what were the proofs of this doctrine? Please refresh my memory; it's a little bit hazy just now.'

'Here,' replied Cebes, 'is a short but sound proof. When you question someone, provided you frame your questions properly, he will give you the correct answers every time; but he could not do this unless he had within himself some knowledge and right reason. The truth of what I say is shown most clearly if you confront him with mathematical diagrams or anything of that sort.'

'If you're not convinced by that explanation, Simmias,' interrupted Socrates, 'see if you don't agree when you look at it this way. Am I not right in saying that you cannot understand how what we call learning can be recollection?'

'It's not that I don't believe you,' said Simmias; 'what I want is the very thing we are talking about—recollection. Actually, Cebes' remarks are already enabling me to recollect and be convinced. Nevertheless I should like to hear what you were going to say.'

[1] For this doctrine *see* Plato's *Meno*.

'Listen then,' said he. 'We agree, I suppose, that if a man is to remember anything at all he must have known it at some previous time?'

'Certainly.'

'Then do we agree also that when knowledge becomes present in this way it is recollection? Let me explain. Suppose a man perceives something by means of hearing, sight or another of the senses; and suppose he not only knows that thing, but also conceives a mental image of some other thing, the knowledge of which is not the same as but different from that of the first thing perceived. In such a case have we not a right to say that he recollects the thing of which he conceives the mental image?'

'What do you mean?'

'Let me give an example. Knowledge of a man is different from knowledge of a lyre.'

'Naturally.'

'Well, you know, of course, that when a lover sees a lyre or a cloak or anything else that his beloved habitually uses, he perceives, e.g., the lyre and at the same time conceives a mental image of the boy to whom the lyre belongs. That is recollection, just as when one sees Simmias one is often reminded of Cebes. I could quote you countless such examples.'

'I'm sure you could, by Zeus,' said Simmias.

'Well,' continued Socrates, 'mayn't that sort of thing be described as recollection, especially when its object is something that has been long since forgotten through passage of time or through failure to give it a thought?'

'Certainly,' he replied.

'Now then,' said Socrates, 'can a person on seeing a picture of a horse or of a lyre be reminded of a man, or on seeing a picture of Simmias be reminded of Cebes?'

'Indeed he can.'

'And on seeing a picture of Simmias [74] he can be reminded of Simmias himself?'

'Yes,' said he.

'All these examples show then that recollection is caused by like things and also by unlike things, do they not?'

'Yes.'

'And when a man is prompted to recollection by like objects, will it not also inevitably occur to him either that this recollection affords a perfect likeness of the object recollected, or that it does not?'

'Inevitably,' he replied.

'Now ask yourself', Socrates went on, 'whether the following is true. We say that there is such a thing as equality. I am not referring to one piece of wood equal to another, or one stone to another, or anything of that kind; no, I mean something beyond that—equality in the abstract. Shall we or shall we not say there is such a thing?'

'We shall say there is,' said Simmias, 'most emphatically.'

'Do we know what it is?'

'Undoubtedly,' he answered.

'Whence did we derive the knowledge of it? Surely from such objects as we mentioned just now. Wasn't it from seeing equal pieces of wood, etc., that we derived a knowledge of abstract equality, which is something different from them? Or don't you think that it is something different? Look at the matter in this way. Do not equal stones and pieces of wood, while remaining the same, occasionally appear to us equal in one respect but not in another?'

'Agreed.'

'Well then, did absolute equals ever appear to you unequal, or equality inequality?'

'No, Socrates, never.'

'Consequently,' said he, 'those equal objects are not the same as abstract equality.'

'Definitely not, I should say, Socrates.'

'And yet from those equal objects,' said he, 'which are not the same as equality in the abstract, you have conceived and acquired knowledge of the latter?'

'Quite true,' he replied.

'And it is either like or unlike them?'

'Exactly.'

'It makes no difference at all,' said Socrates. 'Whenever the sight of A causes you to think of B, there you have recollection, no matter whether they are like or unlike.'

'Of course.'

'Now then,' said he, 'do the equal pieces of wood and so on strike us as being equal in the same way that abstract equality is equal, or do they somehow fall short of being like abstract equality?'

'They fall very far short of it,' was the reply.

'Presumably then we agree that when a man sees something and thinks: "This thing at which I am now looking tends to be like some other thing that exists, but falls short and is unable to rise to the level of being like that thing", he must of necessity have previous knowledge of the thing which he says the other imperfectly resembles. Isn't that so?'

'We cannot do otherwise than agree.'

'Was that our position with regard to equal objects and equality in the abstract?'

'It was.'

'Then we must have possessed knowledge of [75]

equality before we ever set eyes upon equal objects and thought to ourselves: "All these objects tend to resemble equality, but fall short of actually doing so."'

'That is true.'

'And we agree also that we have acquired such knowledge by the only possible means, namely sight, touch or another of the senses, all of which I consider as on a single footing.'

'Yes, Socrates, they are all alike for the purposes of our argument.'

'Then the senses alone can inform us that all sensible objects tend to absolute equality but fall short of it. Is that our view?'

'Yes.'

'Then before we began to see, hear or make use of any other sense we must somehow have acquired knowledge of abstract equality. Failing that, we should be unable to compare it with the equal objects of which we have sensible perception.'

'That follows from what we have already said, Socrates.'

'Now am I right in saying that we possess sight, hearing and so forth from the moment of birth?'

'Certainly.'

'But, we say, we must have acquired knowledge of equality before we possessed these senses.'

'Yes.'

'Then apparently we must have acquired it before we were born.'

'Apparently so.'

'Well, if we had acquired that knowledge before we were born, and were born with it, we surely knew before we were born and at the moment of birth not only equality, excess and deficiency, but *all* such abstractions. We are no more concerned at present with equality than with

absolute good, absolute justice, absolute holiness and, in short, with all upon which we set the seal of "absolute" in our system of dialectic. We must therefore have acquired knowledge of them all before we were born.'

'That is so.'

'Having acquired it then, and provided we have not forgotten it, we must always be born with knowledge of these entities, and must retain it throughout our lives; for to know is to have acquired knowledge and to have preserved it intact, while loss of knowledge is what we mean when we speak of forgetting it. Do you agree, Simmias?'

'Wholeheartedly, Socrates,' he said.

'I imagine, however, that if we acquired knowledge before we were born, lost it at birth and subsequently regained it by the exercise of our senses, the process which we call learning would really be the recovery of knowledge that is our own. Should we be right in calling this recollection?'

'Indeed we should.'

'Yes. [76] For we have recognized that it is possible for a man to perceive something with his eyes or ears or through some other sense and thereby to conceive a mental image of something else which had been forgotten but was associated with the object perceived, whether like it or not. Consequently, as I said, one of two things is true: either we are all born with knowledge of absolute equality, etc., and retain it throughout life; or else we do later on something described as "learning", i.e. we merely remember, and learning must then be recollection.'

'That is undoubtedly true, Socrates.'

'Which then do you choose, Simmias? Were we born with the knowledge, or do we subsequently recollect things of which we had acquired knowledge before birth?'

'I find it impossible to make a choice here and now, Socrates.'

'Well, here is another question, about which you have some sort of opinion and which you can therefore answer one way or the other. When a man knows, can he or can he not give an account of what he knows?'

'Of course he can, Socrates.'

'Do you think everyone can give an account of the matters we have just been discussing?'

'I wish they could,' said Simmias; 'but I'm afraid that this time tomorrow there will be no one left who can do so properly.'

'Then, Simmias, you are not of the opinion that all men understand these things?'

'By no means.'

'Then they recollect what they once knew?'

'Necessarily.'

'When did our souls acquire such knowledge? Surely not after we were born into this world.'

'Certainly not.'

'Previously then.'

'Yes.'

'In that case, Simmias, our souls existed independently and possessed intelligence before their embodiment in human form.'

'Unless, Socrates, we acquire these ideas of absolute equality, etc., at the moment of birth; we have yet to take account of that moment.'

'Very well, my friend, but when do we lose them? Certainly not at birth, as we agreed just now. Do we lose them at the moment of receiving them, or have you some other time to suggest?'

'No, Socrates, I haven't. I was talking nonsense unawares.'

'Then, Simmias,' said he, 'perhaps I can describe our situation like this. Assuming we are right in our constant claim that absolute beauty, absolute goodness and so forth exist, and that we refer all our sensations to these essences, which we recognize as having existed previously, of which we now possess concepts, and in the light of which we interpret our sensations, are we not compelled to infer that just as those abstractions exist, so our souls existed before we were born; but if those abstractions do *not* exist, our argument is of no avail? Is this the case? Is it equally certain that provided these entities exist our souls also existed before we were born, and that if they do not exist, neither did our souls?'

'It is perfectly clear to me, Socrates,' replied Simmias, 'that there is equal certainty; our reasoning proves beyond a shadow of doubt that [77] our souls existed before we were born and that the essences of which you speak likewise exist. For nothing is so apparent to me as the fact that all such things—absolute beauty, absolute goodness, etc.—have a most real existence, and I think the proof is adequate.'

'But how about Cebes?' asked Socrates. 'He too must be convinced.'

'He is fully convinced, I think,' said Simmias. 'He is the most resolutely incredulous of men, but I believe him to be completely satisfied that our souls existed before we were born. Nevertheless, Socrates, even I myself do not feel we have proved that they continue to exist after we have died; there still remains the common fear, mentioned by Cebes a little while ago, that when a man dies his soul is dispersed and accordingly ceases to exist. Assuming that the soul is constituted and brought into being from some source or other, and exists before it enters a human body, what is there to prevent it being

destroyed and ceasing to be once its residence in that body is ended?'

'You are right, Simmias,' said Cebes. 'It seems to me that we have proved only half of what is required, namely that our souls existed before we were born. We still have to show that they continue to exist after death, if our demonstration is to be complete.'

To which Socrates replied: 'Simmias and Cebes, you will find that it *has* been shown, if you take the conclusion that our souls exist before we are born together with our earlier conclusion that every living thing is generated from a dead thing. For if the soul exists before birth and cannot, when it comes to life and is born, arise from anything else than a state of death, must it not also exist after dying, since it must be born again? The proof you want, therefore, has already been provided. However, I think you and Simmias would like to carry the discussion a stage further. I suspect that you have the childish fear that when the soul departs from the body it will really be blown away and scattered by the wind, especially if a man happens to die during a gale and not in calm weather.'

Cebes smiled and said: 'Assume that we have that fear, Socrates, and try to convince us that it is unjustified; or rather, don't assume that *we* are afraid, but imagine that there is a child in us who entertains such fears. Let us try to persuade him not to be afraid of death as if it were a hobgoblin.'

'Ah,' said Socrates, 'you must sing charms over him every day until you exorcize his fear.'

[78] 'But where shall we find a good singer of such charms,' said he, 'now that you are leaving us, Socrates?'

'Greece, Cebes,' he replied, 'is a large country; it is inhabited by many good men, and by many foreign people too. You must make a thorough search among them all in

quest of such a charmer, sparing neither money nor toil; there is no more urgent cause in which you can spend your money. And you must seek among yourselves too; for I don't think you will easily find others better able to do what is required than you.'

'We'll do that,' said Cebes. 'But if you don't mind, let us get back to the point.'

'Gladly.'

'Excellent,' said he.

'Well then,' continued Socrates, 'we must surely ask ourselves some such question as this: What kind of thing naturally suffers dispersion; for what kind of thing might we naturally fear it, and again what kind of thing is not liable to it? We must then proceed to inquire to which class the soul belongs and base our hopes or fears for our souls upon the answers to these questions. Am I right?'

'Quite right,' he answered.

'Now isn't a compound naturally liable to dissolution by the very fact that it is composite? And if there is anything by nature unlikely to suffer dissolution, is it not something uncompounded?'

'I think', said Cebes, 'that is true.'

'Then is it not most probable that things which are always the same and unchanging are uncompounded, whereas things that are for ever changing are composite?'

'Yes, I think so.'

'Let us then', said he, 'go back to an earlier point in our discussion. Is the absolute essence, which is described in our dialectical system as true being, always the same or is it subject to change? Absolute equality, absolute beauty, any absolute existence, true beings—do these ever admit of any change whatever? Or does each absolute essence, since it is uniform and self-subsistent, remain the same and never in any way admit of any alteration?'

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'It must', said Cebes, 'necessarily remain the same, Socrates.'

'But how about the many individuals, e.g. men, horses, cloaks and other such things, which bear the same names as the essences in that they are called beautiful, equal and so forth? Are they always the same? Or are they altogether unlike the essences in that they are constantly changing in themselves, different from one another and, in a word, never the same?'

'The latter,' said Cebes; 'they are never the same.'

[79] 'And you can see them, touch them and so on, whereas those things which are always the same can be grasped by the operation of reason alone, because they are unseen and invisible?'

'That is quite true,' said he.

'Well,' continued Socrates, 'shall we posit two kinds of existence, one visible and the other invisible?'

'Yes, let's do that,' said Cebes.

'And that the invisible is always the same, and the visible for ever changing?'

'Let us posit that also,' he said.

'Now then,' said Socrates, 'do not we ourselves consist of body and soul?'

'Yes,' replied Cebes.

'To which class should we say the body is more similar and more closely akin?'

'To the visible,' said he; 'that much is clear to everyone.'

'And the soul? Is it visible or invisible?'

'Invisible—to man at any rate, Socrates.'

'But isn't it precisely with reference to human nature that we call things visible or invisible? Or do you think otherwise?'

'No, I agree with you.'

'Then what do we say about the soul? Can it or can it not be seen?'

'It cannot be seen.'

'Then it is invisible?'

'Yes.'

'The soul is consequently more like the invisible than the body is, and the body more like the visible.'

'Inevitably, Socrates.'

'Now we said some time ago that when the soul employs the body as an instrument of inquiry, whether by means of sight, hearing or any other of the senses (inquiry through the body being nothing else than inquiry through the senses), it is dragged by the body into a realm of things that never remain the same, where it totters about giddy and confused like a drunken man because of its contact with such things. Isn't that what we said?'

'We did indeed.'

'But when the soul embarks on its quest alone by itself, it sets off into the realm of the pure, the everlasting, the immortal and the unchanging. Being akin to these, alone and unhindered, it dwells always with them; there it enjoys rest from its wanderings and abides ever the same, unchanging in presence of the changeless, with which it has communion, Isn't that so?'

'Socrates,' said he, 'what you say is perfectly right and true.'

'Well then, once again, in the light of what we said earlier and of these last considerations, tell me to what class you think the soul is more alike and more closely akin.'

'I think, Socrates,' said he, 'that anyone, even the biggest bufflehead, would agree after this discussion that the soul bears an infinitely greater resemblance to that which is always the same than to that which is not.'

'And the body?'

'It is more like the other.'

'And now look at the matter from another point of view. [80] While the soul and the body are united, nature appoints one of them subject and servant, the other ruler and master. This being so, which do you think is like the divine, and which like the mortal? Don't you consider that the divine is naturally equipped to command and lead, the mortal to obey and serve?'

'Yes, I do.'

'Which then does the soul resemble?'

'Clearly, Socrates, the soul is like the divine and the body like the mortal.'

'Then surely, Cebes, it follows from all we have said that the soul is most like the divine and immortal, the intellectual and uniform, the indissoluble and always unchanging; whereas the body is most like the human and mortal, the multiform and unintellectual, the dissoluble and ever changing. Can we say anything, dear Cebes, to show that this is not so?'

'No, we cannot.'

'Well then, if that is the case, isn't it natural for the body to undergo speedy dissolution, and for the soul, on the contrary, to be virtually if not entirely indissoluble?'

'Of course.'

'You see then', he continued, 'that when a man dies the visible part of him, the body—which lies in the visible realm and is called a 'corpse', which is naturally liable to decay and dissolution—does not undergo these processes immediately, but remains for an appreciable time, and even for a very long time if death takes place when the body is in good condition and at an appropriate season. And when it does eventually decay, some parts of it, e.g. the bones, sinews, etc., are more or less indestructible. Isn't that true?'

'Yes.'

'The soul, on the other hand, the invisible part, goes to another place which is, like herself, noble and pure and invisible; she goes, in fact, to the realm of Hades, a good god and a wise, to whom my own soul (God willing) is soon to depart. Is this soul, I ask you, which has such a nature and such qualities, forthwith scattered and destroyed when she leaves the body, as most people say? Far from it, dear Simmias and Cebes. No indeed, here rather is the truth. Suppose she departs pure, trailing after her nothing of the body, with which she has never voluntarily associated during life, her constant study having been to shun the body and hold herself strictly aloof therefrom. In other words, suppose she has been a true devotee of philosophy and [81] has practised being in a state of death—unless, of course, you don't agree that real devotion to philosophy is the practice of death.'

'Oh yes, I agree to that.'

'Very well then, if the soul is thus disposed she departs into that which is like herself, into the invisible, the divine, immortal and wise. When she reaches her destination she is happy, freed from error and folly, fear and lust and all other human ills; as adherents of the Mysteries say, she "truly lives ever after with the gods". Is this our belief, Cebes, or not?'

'Indeed yes,' said Cebes.

'Suppose, on the other hand, that when she leaves the body she is defiled and impure, because she always treated the body as her friend and ally—pampering and loving it, fascinated by it and by its pleasures and desires, to such an extent that she thought that nothing was true except the corporeal, which one can touch and see, drink and eat, and use for venereal delights—and invariably hated and shunned what is dark and invisible to the eyes

but intelligible and accessible to philosophy. Suppose all that, and then say whether you think a soul thus disposed will depart pure and uncontaminated.'

'She most certainly will not,' said he.

'No; she will be interpenetrated, I imagine, by the corporeal, which familiarity and communion with the body have rendered part and parcel of her nature because the body has been her constant companion and the object of her solicitude.'

'Exactly.'

'Yes, my friend, we must regard the corporeal as burdensome, heavy, earthbound and visible. Such a soul, through fear of the invisible and of the world beyond the grave, is weighted down by the corporeal and continually dragged back into the visible realm; and there she flits about the monuments and tombs, where shadowy shapes have been seen, figures of those souls which left the body not in a state of purity but retaining something of the visible.'

'Quite likely, Socrates.'

'Indeed yes, Cebes. It is also likely that those are not the souls of the good, but of inferior men, and that they are doomed to wander about in such localities as punishment for their former evil way of life. They wander thus until, through desire for the corporeal which clings to them, they are once again imprisoned in a body. It is probable, too, that they are imprisoned in natures which correspond to the practices of their former life.'

'What do you mean by that, Socrates?'

'I mean, for example, that those who have indulged in gluttony, violence and drunkenness, without taking any steps to avoid them, are likely to pass into the bodies of asses and other such beasts. Don't you think so?'

[82] 'That seems more than likely.'

'And those who have followed the way of injustice, tyranny and robbery pass into the bodies of wolves, hawks or kites. Where else can we suggest that they go?'

'Undoubtedly', said Cebes, 'it is into such creatures that they pass.'

'Then', said he, 'it is clear where all the others go, each in accordance with its own habits.'

'Yes,' said Cebes, 'perfectly clear.'

'Surely then', continued Socrates, 'the most fortunate of such impure souls, those which go to the best place, are those of men who, by nature and habit, and not as the fruits of rational philosophy, have practised the social and civic virtues known as practical wisdom and justice.'

'How are these the happiest?'

'Why, isn't it likely that they pass again into some such social and gentle species as that of bees, wasps or ants; or into the human race itself, where worthy men spring from them?'

'Yes.'

'No one who has not been a philsopher and who is not wholly pure when he departs this life is permitted to associate with the gods on his arrival in the other world. Only the lover of knowledge may do that. It is for this reason, dear Cebes and Simmias, that true lovers of wisdom firmly and successfully resist the impulses of all bodily desires, not because they fear poverty or loss of property, as most men in their love of money do; nor is it because they fear the dishonour or disgrace of wickedness, like those who esteem honour and power.'

'No, that would be unworthy of them, Socrates,' said Cebes.

'Of course it would,' said he. 'And therefore, Cebes, those who are concerned for their own souls, and do not live as slaves of the body, turn their backs upon all these

people as upon men who know not whither they are going, and do not walk in their ways. They themselves believe that philosophy, with its powers of deliverance and purification, must not be resisted, and so they turn and follow no matter where it leads.'

'How do they do that, Socrates?'

'I will tell you,' he replied. 'Lovers of knowledge are aware that when philosophy first takes possession of the soul, the latter is firmly attached and welded to the body and is obliged to look out upon reality through the body as through prison bars, not with its own unimpeded vision, and is wallowing in abysmal ignorance. Philosophers realize, moreover, that the most terrible thing about this imprisonment is the fact that it is caused by the physical appetites, so that the prisoner [83] is his own chief gaoler. Lovers of knowledge, then, I say, perceive that philosophy, on taking possession of the soul in this state, encourages her gently and endeavours to set her free. It warns her that information provided by the eyes, ears and other organs of sense is utterly unreliable; it urges her to remain aloof from them, except in so far as their use is unavoidable; it exhorts her to collect and concentrate herself within herself, and to trust nothing except herself and her own abstract thought of abstract existence. It also assures her that there is no truth in that which she discovers by other means and which varies with the various objects wherein it appears, since everything of that kind is visible and apprehended by the senses, whereas the soul herself sees that which is invisible and apprehended by the intellect. Now the soul of a true philosopher maintains that she must not resist this deliverance. And therefore she does her best to stand aloof from pleasures and appetites, griefs and fears, considering that anyone subjected to the violence of such feelings suffers not only

sickness and the cost of his indulgence, as might be expected, but also the greatest and ultimate evil, of which he takes no account.'

'What is this evil, Socrates?' asked Cebes.

'The fact that every man's soul, when greatly pleased or pained by anything, is constrained to believe that the source of this emotion is clearly defined and unquestionably true. In fact, however, it is not. Such sources of emotion are visible objects, are they not?'

'Certainly.'

'And is not the soul when thus affected wholly enslaved by the body?'

'Why?'

'Because every pleasure or pain nails her, so to speak, to the body, riveting her to and making her part and parcel of the body, so that she accepts as true whatever the body declares is true. Because she has the same beliefs and pleasures as the body she is compelled to adopt corresponding habits and a corresponding way of life; she can therefore never go forth in purity to the Beyond, but must set out upon her journey with bodily defilement. Consequently she sinks at once into another body, becomes rooted therein like seed in the ground, and therefore has no communion with the divine, the pure, the absolute.'

'You are perfectly right there, Socrates,' said Cebes.

'This, Cebes, is the reason why true lovers of knowledge are courageous and self-restrained; not for worldly reasons. [84] But perhaps you don't agree.'

'I most certainly do.'

'Of course you do. The soul of a philosopher would not reason as other men; she would not think herself entitled to accept the freedom conferred by philosophy and then enslave herself once more to pleasure and pain,

thus undertaking profitless toil like Penelope untangling the web. No, his soul believes she must obtain release from these emotions, must follow reason and ever abide therein, contemplating that which is true and divine and not a mere matter of opinion, and making that her only nourishment. She believes that she must follow this path so long as life endures, and then at death pass on to that which is akin to herself, and be free from human ills. A soul thus nurtured is not likely to fear that when she is severed from the body she will be torn asunder and vanish into nothingness, blown apart by the winds, and be no longer anywhere.'

When Socrates had finished speaking there was a long silence, and he himself, like most of us, was apparently spellbound by his own words. Cebes and Simmias, however, chatted for a little while until Socrates noticed them and said:

'Do you think I've covered the ground sufficiently? There is still much that may be questioned and many points remain wide open to attack, if anyone cares to study the matter exhaustively. If you have anything else in mind, I have no objection. But if you feel at all doubtful with regard to the matters we have been discussing, don't hesitate to say so. Go ahead and debate them between yourselves, if you feel there is anything more you can contribute to the subject; but make me a party to the discussion if you think you can make better progress in my company.'

Simmias replied: 'I will tell you the truth, Socrates. For some time we two have been in doubt. We have been trying to persuade one another to ask you something, because we wish to hear your answer; but we have hesitated to trouble you for fear that you might not like such a question in your present plight.'

When Socrates heard that, he laughed gently and said: 'My word, Simmias, I should have a hard task to persuade the world at large that I do not consider my present situation a misfortune, when I cannot even overcome *your* fear that I am more churlish than I need to be. You seem to think me less of a prophet than the swans, who, when they sense the approach of death, sing a longer and more beautiful song [85] than they have ever done before, a hymn of joy that they are going to the god whose servants they are. Men, being terrified of death, misrepresent the swans as singing in sorrow, in mourning for their own departure. They overlook the fact that no bird sings when it is hungry or cold or suffers in any way at all; no, not even the nightingale, the swallow or the hoopoe, whose song is said to be a lament.[1] I don't believe they sing for grief, nor do the swans; because these latter are Apollo's birds, I believe they are endowed with prophetic vision and, having foreknowledge of the blessings that await them in the Beyond, they sing and rejoice on that day more than ever before. Yes, and I believe that I myself am a fellow servant of the swans, that I am sacred to the same god and have received from our lord a gift of prophecy no whit inferior to theirs, and that I depart this life with as little grief as they. So don't worry about me; go ahead and ask whatever questions you like.'

'Good,' said Simmias. 'I will tell you what my difficulty is, and then Cebes will explain why *he* doesn't agree with everything you have said. I think, Socrates, as perhaps you do yourself, that it is very difficult if not impossible to understand these matters fully in this life. On the other hand, failure to make an exhaustive test of every theory concerning them, no matter how much time and labour it may involve, is the mark of a weakling. A man

[1] A reference to the legend of Tereus.

must do one of two things. Either he must manage to discover the truth about these matters or, if that is impossible, he must take whatever human theory is best (i.e. hardest to disprove) and, embarking on it as upon a raft, sail it through the perilous seas of life. Those are his alternatives—unless, of course, he can make the voyage aboard some more seaworthy vessel in the shape of divine revelation, and ride the waves with greater safety and security. Therefore I am no longer ashamed to put my questions, since you invite me to do so, and I shall not have myself to blame hereafter for not saying now what is in my mind. Socrates, when I consider what you have told me separately or as one of a pair with Cebes, it does not seem quite satisfactory.'

Socrates answered him: 'Maybe you are right, my friend. But tell me in what way you find it unsatisfactory.'

'In this,' said he, 'that one might apply the same argument to harmony and a lyre with its strings. One might say that harmony is invisible and incorporeal, and something very beautiful, [86] nay, almost divine, in a well-tuned lyre, but that the lyre itself and its strings are corporeal, composite, earthy and akin to mortality. Now suppose someone smashes the lyre or severs the strings, and then uses your argument to show that the harmony cannot have perished and must therefore still exist. It is unthinkable that the perishable lyre and its strings should continue in existence, and that the harmony, which is akin to the imperishable divine, should cease to exist before that which is perishable. Our man would therefore say that the harmony must still exist somewhere, and that the wooden frame and the strings must rot away before anything can affect it. And I fancy, Socrates, that it must have occurred to your own mind that the following represents more or less our belief as to the nature of

the soul. The body is strung and held together by heat, cold, moisture, dryness and the like, and the soul is a harmony, i.e. a correct admixture of those same elements. Now if the soul is a harmony, it follows that when the body is too much relaxed or overstrained by sickness or other defects, the soul must of necessity perish, no matter how divine it is, like musical and all other artistic harmonies, and the remains of each body will continue to exist until at long last they are burnt or decay. What then shall we reply to such a claim, that the soul, being compounded of the same elements as is the body, must be the first to perish in what is called death?'

Socrates, with that eager look he so often used to wear, smiled at us and said: 'Simmias has scored a point there. If any of you can spot the answer to this perfectly sound objection more readily than I can, why not let him have it? However, I think before replying to him we ought to hear what fault Cebes finds with our argument; that will give us time to consider what to say, and then, having heard them both, we can either agree with them if they sound convincing, or, if they don't, we can proceed to argue in defence of my own theory. Come, Cebes, tell us what your trouble is.'

'Yes, I will,' said Cebes. 'I take the view that your theory remains unconfirmed, that it is still open to the objection I put forward earlier. [87] I don't deny that it has been very cleverly and, if I may say so without offence, conclusively shown that the soul existed before it entered the bodily form; but it does not seem to me to have been proved that it will continue to exist when we die. I don't agree with Simmias' objection that the soul is not stronger and more lasting than the body, for I think it far superior in both respects. "Why then", it may be argued, "do you still disbelieve when you see that

when a man dies the weaker part of him still exists? Don't you think the stronger part must necessarily endure for the same length of time?" Well, now see whether my reply to that makes sense. I think I may, like Simmias, best express myself in a figure. One might as well say of an old weaver who has died: "The man has not perished but is safe and sound somewhere," and offer as proof of this the fact that a cloak which he himself wove and used to wear is still intact. If this argument proved unacceptable to one's opponent, he might ask which lasts longer, a man or a cloak that is subject to wear and tear; and on receiving the answer that a man lasts much longer, he would consider it proved beyond doubt that the man was safe, because that which was less enduring had not perished. But I don't think this is the case, Simmias; please listen carefully to what I say. A man who argues in that way is talking nonsense, as anyone can see. For though our weaver having woven, worn out and thus endured longer than many such cloaks, perished before the last one to come from his loom, that certainly doesn't make a man weaker than and inferior to a cloak. I think this figure is an adequate symbol of the soul's relation to the body: it would be quite appropriate to say likewise about them that the soul lasts a long while, but the body is weaker and lasts a shorter time. And one might go on to say that each soul outwears many bodies, especially if the man lives many years. For if the body is in a state of flux and perishes while the man is still alive, and the soul is for ever wearing anew that which wears out, then when the soul perishes she must inevitably be wearing her last raiment, which alone will survive her; and when the soul has perished the body will forthwith reveal its natural weakness and will quickly vanish in decay. And so we are not yet justified in feeling sure, on the strength

of your argument, Socrates, that our souls will exist somewhere after we are dead. [88] For even if we went so far as to grant your adherents not only that our souls existed before we were born, but also that there is nothing to prevent some of them from continuing to exist and from being born and dying again many times after we are dead, because the soul is by nature so strong that it can endure repeated births—even then, I say, we cannot grant that it does not suffer by its many births and does not finally perish altogether in one of its deaths, though it might be granted that no one can foretell the particular death and the particular dissolution of the body which brings destruction to the soul. Now if this is so, anyone who feels confident in face of death has little grounds for doing so, unless he can prove that the soul is absolutely imperishable and immortal. Otherwise a man about to die must always fear that his soul will perish utterly in the impending dissolution of his body.'

All of us, as we told one another afterwards, were very uncomfortable listening to this conversation; for we had been thoroughly convinced by the previous argument, and now they seemed to be throwing us once again into uncertainty and distrust, not only as we looked back to the earlier discussion, but also at the prospect of whatever was yet to come. They made us fear that our judgment was worthless or that no certainty could be attained in this matter.

ECH. Good heavens, Phaedo, I sympathize with you. After listening to you I am inclined to ask myself what argument we can ever again rely upon; Socrates' exposition was perfectly convincing, and now here it is discredited. The doctrine that the soul is a kind of harmony has always enthralled me, as it still does; and your mention of it reminded me that I had always hitherto accepted it.

Now I must begin over again and try to find another argument to convince me that when a man dies his soul does not perish with him. So do please tell us how Socrates reacted to the situation: did he, like the rest of you on your own admission, show any embarrassment, or did he calmly defend his theory? And was his defence a success or failure? Tell us everything with as much detail as you can.

PHAE. Echecrates, I have often wondered at Socrates, but I never admired him more than then. [89] That he had an answer ready was perhaps to be expected; but what astonished me more about him was first the kindly, gentle and respectful way he listened to the young men's criticisms, secondly his immediate awareness of the effect their words had upon us, and lastly the skill with which he treated us and, as it were, rallied us at the moment of our defeat and headlong flight, compelling us to face about and join him in his examination of his argument.

ECH. How did he do that?

PHAE. I will tell you. I was sitting at his right hand on a low stool beside his couch, which was a good deal higher than my seat. He stroked my head, gathered the hair on the back of my neck into his hand—he had a habit now and then of playing with my hair—and said: 'Tomorrow, Phaedo, I suppose you will cut off this beautiful hair.' [1]

'Very likely, Socrates,' I replied.

'Not if you take my advice.'

'What shall I do then?' I inquired.

'You will cut it off today, and I will cut mine, if our theory is slain and we cannot revive it. If I were you and found myself worsted in this argument, I would take an oath, like the Argives, not to let my hair grow until I had

[1] A sign of mourning.

renewed the fight and won a victory over Simmias and Cebes.'

'But', I replied, 'it is said that even Heracles is no match for two.'

'Well,' said he, 'call upon me to help you, as your Iolaus, while daylight remains.'

'I call upon you to help me then,' said I, 'not as Heracles invoking Iolaus, but as Iolaus invoking Heracles.'

'It makes no difference,' said he. 'But first let us be on our guard against a danger.'

'What sort of danger?' I asked.

'The danger of becoming misologists or haters of argument, as people become misanthropists or haters of mankind; for no worse evil can befall a man than to conceive a hatred of argument. Misology and misanthropy have similar origins. The latter arises from placing too much trust in someone without being worldly wise. X thinks Y is perfectly sound, sincere and reliable, but soon afterwards discovers him to be base and false. Then the same thing happens in his relations with Z; and after a succession of these experiences, especially if he becomes disillusioned with those whom he had reason to consider his nearest and dearest friends. X ends by becoming involved in one quarrel after another and by hating everybody on the assumption that there is no good in anyone at all. Haven't you noticed that?'

'Yes indeed,' I answered.

'Well,' he continued, 'isn't it plain that if a man undertakes to go among men without understanding human nature he will end in that state of mind? If he possessed such understanding he would approach them with knowledge of the fact that [90] whereas there are very few good and very few bad men, those who are neither one nor the other are legion.'

'What do you mean?' I asked.

'I mean', he replied, 'exactly what I might say in referring to the large and the small. Do you think there is anything more rare than to come across a man (or a dog or some other creature) who is very tall or very short, very fast or very slow, very ugly or very beautiful, very fair or very dark? Haven't you noticed that the extremes in all these instances are few and far between, whereas examples between the two are numerous?'

'I certainly have.'

'And don't you think that if someone offered a prize for wickedness very few would be entitled to claim it?'

'I should imagine so.'

'You would be right,' he said. 'But it is not in that respect that arguments resemble men; I was merely following your lead in what I have just been saying. Here now is where the similarity lies. Suppose a man without skill in argument trusts the reliability of a particular argument but later comes to the conclusion (rightly or not) that it is false. You know that if this happens to him often enough, especially if he has spent his time in disputation, he will come to believe himself the wisest of men and that he alone has discovered that there is nothing sound or sure in argument or anything else, but that all things turn and turn about like the waters of the Euripus, and nothing is stable for any length of time.'

'Certainly,' I said, 'that is very true.'

'Now, Phaedo,' said he, 'there are certain arguments that appear to be sometimes true and sometimes false. Assuming there is a reliable method of argument which can be learned, it would be a sorry business if a man, because he has met with some of those arguments, were not to blame himself or his own lack of skill, but were to end in his vexation by choosing to throw the blame upon

the arguments, and were to hate and ridicule them for the rest of his life, and be deprived of the truth, i.e. the knowledge of reality.'

'By Zeus,' I said, 'it would indeed be a bad business.'

'First then,' continued Socrates, 'let us be on our guard against this; let us not admit into our souls the idea that no argument is sound. Let us far rather assume that we ourselves are not yet in sound condition and that we must strive manfully and resolutely to become so, you and the others for the sake of the life that lies ahead of you, [91] I because of my impending death. As regards myself, I fear I am not at present taking a philosophical view of this particular question; I am contentious like those uneducated folk who, when engaged in an argument, care nothing for the truth of the matter under discussion, but are anxious only to impose their own beliefs upon the audience. I fancy I differ from such people here and now only to this extent: my purpose is not, except as a secondary aim, to make what I say seem true to my hearers, but firmly to convince myself. Oh, my beloved friend, see how self-centred I am. If what I say happens to be true, I profit by believing it; whereas if there be no future for me after death—well, at any rate I shall not be a nuisance to my friends by tearfulness in these last hours. At all events, my present ignorance will not last: the possibility of such an evil will soon be gone. And so, Simmias and Cebes, I approach the argument with my mind thus prepared. Oblige me by taking little notice of Socrates and concentrating upon the truth. If you think that what I say is true, accept it; if not, oppose me with every argument you can command, lest in my eagerness I deceive both myself and you and fly away like a bee, leaving my sting implanted in you.

'Come on then, let us get to work. First let me refresh

my memory, in case I have forgotten anything. Simmias, I think, has doubts and fears that the soul, though more divine and nobler than the body, may perish first, being of the nature of a harmony. Cebes, so far as I remember, agreed with me that the soul is more enduring than the body, but maintained that none could know that the soul, after wearing out many bodies, did not itself ultimately perish upon leaving the body. He claimed death to be the destruction of the soul, since the body is continually perishing. Are those the points, Simmias and Cebes, that we have to consider?'

They both agreed that those were the points.

'Now,' said he, 'do you reject all our previous arguments or only some of them?'

'Only some of them,' they replied.

'What do you think', he asked, 'about the argument in which we maintained that learning is recollection, and that therefore our souls must have existed somewhere [92] before they were imprisoned in the body?'

Cebes answered: 'For my part I found it extraordinarily convincing, and I still accept it more readily than any other argument.'

'I too', said Simmias, 'feel just as he does; I should be astonished if I ever thought otherwise in this connection.'

Socrates continued: 'My Theban friend, you must inevitably think otherwise if you hold fast to your view that a harmony is a compound and that the soul is a harmony made up of elements that are strung like harp strings in the body. Surely you will not be prepared to say that a composite harmony existed before its destined elements, will you?'

'Indeed no, Socrates.'

'But don't you see', said he, 'that this is just what you do say when you maintain that the soul exists before it

enters the bodily form of a man, and that it is composed of things that do not yet exist? For harmony is not what your figure represents it as being. The lyre, its strings and their sounds come into being untuned; the harmony is the last of all to be created and the first to perish. So how can you reconcile this theory with the doctrine of recollection?'

'I simply cannot do so,' said Simmias.

'And yet', said Socrates, 'the latter ought to be reconcilable with that of harmony above all others, if you are going to be consistent.'

'Yes, it ought,' said Simmias.

'Well, in point of fact it is impossible to reconcile the two. So which do you prefer, the theory that knowledge is recollection or that the soul is a harmony?'

'The first without hesitation, Socrates,' he replied. 'I adopted the other without formal demonstration, merely because it seemed attractive and not improbable—which accounts for its wide popularity. I am aware that arguments erected on a base of mere probability are deceptive; unless we are on our guard against them they lead us hopelessly astray, in geometry as in everything else. But the theory that knowledge is recollection rests upon a proposition altogether worthy of acceptance; for we agreed that our souls before entering our bodies existed just as does the very essence that is called absolute Being. Now I am persuaded that I have acknowledged the existence of this essence for good and sufficient reasons; so I cannot accept, either from myself or from anyone else, the statement that the soul is a harmony.'

'How about looking at it from yet another standpoint then, Simmias?' asked Socrates. 'Do you think a harmony or any other composite [93] can be in any state other than that of its constituent elements?'

'Certainly not.'

'Presumably then it can be neither active nor passive otherwise than they are.'

He agreed.

'Therefore a harmony cannot be expected to take precedence of its constituent elements, but must follow their lead.'

Again Simmias accepted the conclusion.

'That being so, the movement, sound or any other function of a harmony can never be at variance with its elements, can they?'

'Indeed they can't,' said he.

'Well then, is not every harmony by nature a harmony to the extent of its organization?'

'I don't understand,' said Simmias.

'Would it not,' explained Socrates, 'be a more complete and perfect harmony if it were organized (assuming that possible) to a greater extent, i.e. more fully, as such, and a less complete and perfect harmony if organized as such in an inferior degree?'

'Certainly.'

'But is this true of the soul? Is any soul in the very smallest degree more (or less) really and truly a soul than any other?'

'No, of course not.'

'Well now,' continued Socrates, 'we say of one soul that it is good, in other words that it possesses sound sense and virtue, and of another that it is bad, i.e. is full of folly and wickedness. Is that true?'

'Yes, quite true.'

'Well, how will those who take the soul to be a harmony describe this virtue and this wickedness in the soul? Will they say: "Here you have a different kind of harmony—a discord. The good soul is itself a harmony,

and has within it another kind of harmony, whereas the bad soul is itself discordant and includes no other harmony"?'

'I don't exactly know,' replied Simmias; 'but they would obviously say something like that.'

'But we agreed', said Socrates, 'that no soul is more (or less) a soul than another; and that is equivalent to agreeing that none is either more (or less) fully a harmony than another, isn't it?'

'Yes.'

'But does that which is no more and no less organized as a harmony have any greater or any less degree of harmony, or an equal degree?

'An equal.'

'Then a soul, since it is neither more nor less a soul than any other, is neither more nor less organized as a harmony.'

'That is so.'

'And therefore can have no greater degree of discord or of harmony?'

'No.'

'And consequently again one soul can have no greater degree of wickedness or of virtue than another, granted that wickedness is discord and virtue harmony?'

'No.'

'Or rather, Simmias, to be precise, no soul will have any wickedness at all, if the soul is a harmony; [94] for if harmony be harmony and nothing else, it could have no share in discord.'

'Certainly not.'

'Then the soul, being soul and nothing else, could have no share in wickedness.'

'Obviously it couldn't, if what you've said is right.'

'According to this argument then, if all souls are by

nature equally souls, all souls of all living creatures will be equally good.'

'Apparently.'

'Well,' said Socrates, 'do you believe this is true? Do you think our line of reasoning would have led us to this conclusion if the theory that the soul is a harmony were correct?'

'No, I don't.'

'Do you agree that the soul opposes the affections of the body? I mean, for instance, doesn't the soul, when the body is hot and thirsty, hungry, etc., incline it in the opposite direction by urging it not to drink, not to eat and so forth?'

'Yes, it does.'

'Didn't we agree earlier that if the soul were a harmony it could never give forth a sound at variance with the tensions, relaxations, vibrations and other conditions of the elements which compose it, but that it would always follow their lead?'

'Oh yes, of course we did,' he replied.

'Yet now we discover that the soul operates in exactly the opposite way. It takes precedence of the elements of which it is said to consist, and opposes them in almost everything throughout our lives. It tyrannizes over them in every way, sometimes inflicting stern and painful punishment (e.g. by means of medicine and gymnastics), and sometimes a less drastic sort; sometimes threatening and sometimes admonishing; in short, addressing the desires, passions and fears as if it were distinct from them and they from it, as Homer shows us in the *Odyssey* when he says of Odysseus:

> He beat his breast and thus rebuked his heart:
> "Be bold, my heart, thou once dared worse than this." [1]

[1] xx. 17–18.

Do you believe that when he wrote those words he thought of the soul as a harmony subject to corporeal affections, and not rather as something whose business it was to lead and control them, something in fact far more divine than a harmony?'

'By Zeus, Socrates, I believe he did think of it as superior to the body's affections and more divine than a harmony.'

'Then, my good friend, it will never do for us to say that the soul is a harmony; otherwise we shall neither agree with [95] the divine Homer nor be consistent with ourselves.'

'Too true,' said he.

'Very well,' said Socrates, 'the Theban goddess Harmonia seems to have been fairly gracious to us; but how, Cebes—I mean by what line of argument—shall we find favour in the sight of Cadmus?'

'I'm quite sure', said Cebes, 'you will find a way. You certainly directed that argument against harmony with consummate skill and beyond all my expectations. While Simmias was explaining his difficulty I wondered who on earth would be able to withstand the force of his reasoning; and it therefore seemed to me all the more extraordinary that his line gave way as soon as you attacked. So I shall not now be surprised if Cadmus' argument meets with the same fate.'

'My friend,' said Socrates, 'don't boast, lest some evil eye rout the impending argument. But that is a matter for God; meanwhile let us in Homeric fashion "charge the foe" and test the validity of your remarks. What you require amounts simply to a proof that man's soul is indestructible and immortal; if it is not, you say, a philosopher is a misguided fool when he says with confidence that he will fare better in the Beyond than if he had

led a different sort of life. You say also that to prove the soul strong and godlike, and as having existed before we took human form, may be evidence not of immortality, but only of the soul's longevity, of its having existed somewhere an immeasurably long time before our entry into this world, and of its having known and done various things. You maintain that it is none the more immortal on this account; that its very entrance into the human body was the start of its dissolution, a disease as it were; and that it lives in toil on earth, and finally perishes in what we call death. Finally, you say it makes no difference whether a soul enters a body once or many times, so far as concerns the dread each of us entertains; for anyone but a fool must tremble at the prospect of death if he does not know and cannot prove that the soul is immortal. That, I think, Cebes, is about the sum total of what you mean. I have purposely restated it in order to make sure that no point escapes us and to enable you, if you so desire, to raise further difficulties or reduce their present number.'

'I have nothing to add or to subtract,' said Cebes. 'What you have just said is a perfect summary of my meaning.'

Socrates paused for some while, absorbed in thought. Then he said: 'You are asking no small question, Cebes; it will involve us in an exhaustive study of the cause of generation and decay. [96] Perhaps you would like me to tell you of my own experience in this field; then, if you consider anything I say at all useful, you can employ it in solving your difficulty.'

'Oh yes,' said Cebes, 'please do that.'

'Listen then and I will tell you. When I was a young man, Cebes, I was an enthusiastic devotee of the branch of wisdom known as natural science. I thought it was a

glorious achievement to know the causes of everything, why each thing comes into being, why it continues in being and why it perishes. I was always worrying myself over such questions as these: Does heat, by undergoing a sort of fermentation, give rise to animal life, as some people say? Is blood, or air, or fire the instrument of our thinking; or is it the brain alone that supplies the sensations of hearing, sight and smell, and do memory and opinion arise from these, and does knowledge proceed from memory and opinion in a state of rest? Again, I tried to discover how these things perish, and I studied celestial and earthly phenomena until I eventually made up my mind that I was wholly unfitted by nature for this kind of research. And I will give you adequate proof of that. I was so completely blinded by my studies that I lost the knowledge which I, and others too, had until then thought I possessed; I forgot what I had formerly believed myself to know about many things, including the cause of man's growth. Hitherto I had believed it was plain to everyone that man grows through eating and drinking; for when his flesh derives additional flesh, and his bones additional bone, and so on, from the food he eats, a small mass becomes greater and a small man large. Don't you think that's reasonable?'

'Yes,' said Cebes.

'Now just listen to this too. When I saw a tall man standing beside a short one, I thought I was sure enough that he was, say, taller by a head than the other; or that one horse stood so many hands higher than another. Turning to even more obvious examples than those, I used to think that ten were more than eight because the latter had been increased by two, and that a two-cubit rule was longer than a one-cubit rule because it exceeded the latter by half its own length.'

'What do you think about them now?' asked Cebes.

'By heaven,' said he, 'I don't pretend to understand the cause of any of them; why, when a unit is added to another unit I daren't even say which of them has become two—the one that has been added or the one to which it has been added—[97] or whether each of them has become two by the addition of each to the other. It amazes me that so long as each of them was separate from the other, each was a unit and they were not then two, but when they were brought alongside each other the juxtaposition was the cause of their becoming two. Nor can I yet believe that if a unit is divided, the division causes it to become two; for this is the opposite of the cause that produced two in the former case. *Then* two resulted from the *approach* and *addition* of one unit to another unit, whereas *now* two arises from the *separation* and *removal* of one unit from another. I no longer believe that the road of natural science leads one to know even how unity is generated or, in a word, how anything whatever is generated or is destroyed or exists; so I no longer follow that path, but have another and secret way of my own.

'What happened was this. I once heard someone reading from a book which he said was by Anaxagoras. The author declared that Intelligence is the cause of universal order. I was delighted with this theory of cause; it seemed to me somehow fitting that Mind should be the cause of all things. I thought: "If this is so, if Mind produces universal order, it must dispose all things for the best. So if a man wishes to discover the cause of a particular thing's generation, dissolution or existence, he must find out what sort of existence, or passive state of any kind, or activity is best for it. And therefore as regards that particular thing, and other things as well, a man need only look to what is best; for then he will necessarily

know what is inferior." That was what I told myself, and I was overjoyed to think that I had found in Anaxagoras a teacher after my own heart. I thought he would tell me whether the earth is flat or round, and then go on to explain the inevitable cause of it, reveal to me the nature of the best and why it is best for the earth to be as it is; I expected, for instance, that if he said that the earth is at the centre of the universe, he would proceed to show that it is best for it to be there. [98] I resolved that if he made all this clear, I would no longer look for any other kind of cause. I determined that I would employ the same means to find out about the sun and moon and stars, their relative speeds, their revolutions and other changes, and why the active or passive condition of each is for the best. For I never imagined that, when Anaxagoras said they were ordered by Intelligence, he would introduce any cause for them other than that it is best for them to be as they are. Consequently, when he assigned the cause of individual things and of the universe as a whole, I thought his next step would be an explanation of what is best for each and what is good for all in common. All my hopes were fixed upon Anaxagoras; eagerly I took up his works and read them as quickly as I could, expecting to learn without delay all about the best and the worst.

'Alas, my friend, I was speedily disillusioned. As my reading advanced I saw that the man made no use of Intelligence; he failed indeed to assign any genuine causes for universal order, but talked about such absurdities as air, ether and water. It all seemed to me very much as if someone were to say that whatever Socrates does is the result of intelligence, and then, in trying to state the causes of a particular action on my part, were to say: "He is now sitting on that couch for the following reasons. His body is composed of bones and sinews; the

bones are hard and jointed, while the sinews are capable of contraction or relaxation and, together with the flesh and skin that contains them all, are laid around the bones; and therefore, as the bones are slung loose in their ligaments, the sinews, by relaxing and contracting, enable him to bend his limbs, and that is the cause of his sitting there with his legs bent." Or again, it is as if someone were to posit voice, air, hearing and so on as causes of our chatting with one another, and omit the true causes, which are that since the Athenians decided it was best to condemn me, I am satisfied that it is best for me to sit here, and that it is right for me to stay and suffer whatever penalty they order. [99] For, by heaven, I fancy these bones and sinews of mine would long since have been in Megara or Boeotia, borne thither by a sense of what was best, did I not consider it better and nobler to endure any penalty inflicted by the State rather than to escape and run away. It is utterly absurd to describe bones and suchlike as "causes". True enough, I couldn't have carried out what I considered right unless I had bones, sinews and the rest; but to say that these things are the *cause* of my doing what I do, and that I act with intelligence but not from the choice of what is best, would be an extremely slipshod way of talking. Anyone who talks like that is unable to distinguish between the cause and the conditions indispensable if it is to produce its effect. It seems to me that when the majority of people describe an indispensable condition as a "cause", they are, so to speak, groping in the dark, giving it a name which does not belong to it. Thus one man makes the earth remain in place beneath the heavens by girding it with a vortex, while another regards the earth as a saucer resting on a foundation of air. But they do not take account of the power which causes things to be placed as it is best for

them to be placed, and so far from thinking it possesses any divine force, they believe they can discover a new Atlas more mighty and all-embracing, never indeed giving a thought to the Good which must embrace and hold all things together. I would gladly have become the pupil of anyone who could teach me the nature of such a cause. But that was denied me; I was not able to learn it either from myself or from anyone else. Would you like me then, Cebes, to give you some account of my second voyage in search of the cause?'

'There's nothing I'd like better,' he replied.

'Well then,' continued Socrates, 'having abandoned the study of material things, I decided I must be careful to avoid the kind of harm suffered by many people who ruin their eyesight by looking up and gazing at the sun during an eclipse instead of watching its reflection in water or some other such surface. I foresaw the danger of my soul being blinded if I looked at reality with my eyes or tried to grasp it with any of the senses. I therefore came round to the view that I must have recourse to concepts and examine the truth of reality through that medium. Perhaps my metaphor is not quite satisfactory; [100] for I don't altogether admit that a man who studies reality by means of concepts is looking at mere reflections of it, any more than one who studies it in material things. However, that is the way I began. What I do in each case is to assume some principle that I judge to be firmly established; then, whatever seems consistent with it I regard as true, and whatever seems inconsistent as untrue. But please let me explain more clearly what I mean, for I don't think that at present you quite understand.'

'Not very clearly, certainly,' said Cebes.

'Well,' said Socrates, 'this is what I mean. It is nothing new; I've been saying it for years, and referred to it

earlier in our conversation. I am going to try to explain to you the nature of that cause which I have been studying; and by way of a start I shall revert to some well-worn topics and assume that there are such things as absolute beauty, absolute goodness, absolute greatness and so forth. If you grant as much and agree that these exist, I believe I shall explain cause to you and prove the immortality of the soul.'

'Take it as granted,' said Cebes, 'and go ahead.'

'Then,' said he, 'I wonder if you'll agree with my next point. I maintain that if anything other than absolute beauty is beautiful it is beautiful for no other reason than because it partakes of absolute beauty; and the same applies if a thing has any other quality. Do you accept this view of cause?'

'I do,' said Cebes.

'Good. But as for those other "causes", I just don't understand them; I can't see how they can be causes at all. If anyone tells me that what makes a thing beautiful is its exquisite colouring, its shape or anything else of the kind, I take no notice, because all such statements confuse me. I adhere simply and plainly and perhaps foolishly to the belief that nothing makes a thing beautiful but the presence or communion (call it which you please) of absolute beauty. As to how that presence or communion is effected I make no positive statement as yet, but I do stoutly maintain that beautiful things are rendered beautiful by absolute beauty. For I think this is the safest answer I can make to myself or to others; I don't think I shall ever be in danger of refutation if I stand fast by my assertion that beautiful things are beautiful by virtue of beauty. Do you agree?'

'I do.'

'And great things are great or greater by virtue of

greatness, and small things small or smaller by virtue of smallness?'

'Yes.'

'Then you would not, I presume, agree if you were told that A was greater or smaller than B by a head; you would persist in [101] upholding your view (i) that every greater thing is greater than another by nothing other than greatness, i.e. is greater by virtue of greatness, and (ii) that what is smaller is smaller by nothing other than smallness, i.e. is smaller by virtue of smallness. For you would, I think, be afraid that if you described a man as greater or smaller by a head you might meet with the retort, first that the greater is greater and the smaller is smaller by the same thing, and secondly that if the greater man is greater by a head, he is greater by something small—a monstrous situation. Wouldn't you be afraid of that retort?'

Cebes laughed and said: 'Yes, I certainly would.'

'Very well,' Socrates went on. 'Wouldn't you for the same reason be afraid to say that ten is more than eight by two, meaning that two is the *cause* of its being more? You would say, wouldn't you, that it is more by number, i.e. that number is the cause of its being more; and likewise that a two-cubit rule is greater than a one-cubit rule not by half its own length but by magnitude?'

'Certainly,' he replied.

'Well then, you would presumably avoid saying that if one is added to one or if one is halved, the addition or the division is the cause of two. You would protest that you know of no means whereby anything can come into existence other than by participating in the proper essence of the particular thing whose nature it shares; that therefore you admit no cause of the existence of two other than participation in duality—that in order to be two things must participate in duality—and whatever is to be one

must participate in unity. You would ignore the processes of addition, division and other such subtleties, leaving their explanation to one wiser than yourself. You would mistrust your own inexperience and would be frightened, as the saying goes, of your own shadows; so you would cling to that safe assumption of yours and answer as I have suggested. If someone attacked the hypothesis, you would take no notice of him and would give him no reply until you had examined the consequences to see whether they were mutually consistent. And when you had to give an explanation of your hypothesis, you would do so likewise by reference to what you believed to be the soundest of more fundamental hypotheses, and so on until you reached one that was adequate. In seeking for any aspect of reality and discussing the ultimate principle and its consequences, you would not become confused like those argumentative folk of whom scarcely a single one thinks or cares in the very slightest degree about these matters. Such people are so clever that they are well satisfied with themselves amid all the welter of their ideas; [102] but you, being a philosopher, will surely do as I have said.'

'That is perfectly true,' exclaimed Cebes and Simmias together.

ECH. By Zeus, Phaedo, they were right. He seems to have expressed himself with such amazing clarity that the veriest dunderhead could have understood him.

PHAE. No doubt about it, Echecrates, and everyone present thought so too.

ECH. Yes; your account makes us feel just the same although we were not there. But what happened next?

PHAE. So far as I remember, after all this had been admitted, after they had agreed that the various abstract qualities exist and those other things which participate in these derive their names from them, Socrates asked:

'In the light of what you say, do you not, when you describe Simmias as larger than Socrates, and smaller than Phaedo, imply that there is in Simmias both largeness and smallness?'

'Yes.'

'Well then,' said Socrates, 'you admit that the statement "Simmias is larger than Socrates" is not literally true. For Simmias is not larger than Socrates by virtue of being Simmias but by virtue of the largeness he happens to possess; nor is he larger than Socrates because Socrates is Socrates, but because Socrates possesses smallness relatively to his largeness.'

'True.'

'Again, he is not smaller than Phaedo because Phaedo is Phaedo, but because Phaedo has largeness relatively to the smallness of Simmias.'

'Exactly.'

'Simmias then is described as small and large because he stands midway between the two, exceeding the smallness of Socrates by being larger than he, and yielding to Phaedo the largeness that surpasses his own smallness.'

Smiling, he added: 'My words sound rather like phrases of a legal document, but the facts are more or less as I say.'

Simmias agreed.

'I am speaking in this way because I want you to share my view. It is perfectly clear to me not only that absolute largeness will never be both large and small, but also that the largeness in ourselves will never admit the small or allow itself to be exceeded. One of two things must occur: either it takes flight and withdraws on the approach of its opposite (smallness), or it has already ceased to exist by the time smallness approaches it. What it will *not* do is to receive and admit smallness in such a way as to

become other than it was. Consequently I have received and admitted smallness and am still the same small person as I was; but the largeness in me, because it is large, has not suffered itself to become small. Likewise the smallness in us will never become or be large, nor will any other opposite that remains what it was ever become or be also its own opposite. No, [103] it either departs or ceases to exist in the process of change.'

'That seems to me quite obvious,' said Cebes.

Then one of those present—I can't for the moment remember who it was—said: 'Heaven above! Aren't you now telling us the exact opposite of what we admitted earlier on when we agreed that the greater is generated from the less and *vice versa*, and that opposites are invariably generated from their opposites? Now we appear to be saying that this can never be so.'

Socrates listened with his head cocked on one side. 'Spoken like a man,' he said; 'but you fail to distinguish between my former statement and what I am telling you now. When I said that opposites are generated from opposites I was referring to material objects, whereas my present point is that the abstract concept of an opposite can never become its own opposite, either in the world around us or within ourselves. In the earlier case, my friend, we were talking about objects that possess opposite qualities and are called after them; but we are now concerned with those very opposites from whose immanence the material objects derive their names, and we maintain that they can never be generated from one another.' As he ended he looked at Cebes and said: 'How about you? Do any of our friend's objections worry you?'

'No, not this time; though I don't deny that objections often do baffle me.'

'Well,' said Socrates, 'we are agreed once for all on this, that an opposite can never be its own opposite.'

'Definitely,' said Cebes.'

'Now,' said he,' 'I wonder if you'll agree with what I'm going to say next. Is there something you call heat and something you call cold?'

'Yes.'

'Are they the same as fire and snow respectively?'

'Certainly not.'

'So heat is a different thing from fire, and cold from snow?'

'Yes.'

'But I suppose you believe—to use an earlier turn of phrase—that if snow melts it will no longer be what it was, namely snow, but will either withdraw on the approach of heat or cease to exist.'

'Certainly.'

'And likewise fire, when cold approaches it, will either withdraw or perish. It will never manage to admit cold and yet remain fire.'

'You're right,' said he.

'The fact is', continued Socrates, 'that in some such cases a right to the same name at all times and for ever belongs not only to the abstract idea, but also to something else, which is distinct therefrom but which always, whenever it exists, bears the stamp, so to speak, of the idea. Perhaps I can make my meaning clearer by some examples. In the field of number, oddness must always be called odd, mustn't it?'

'Of course.'

'What I am getting at is this: is oddness alone so called, or is there something else, which, [104] though not identical with oddness, has a perpetual right to the name "odd" in addition to its own, because it is of such a

nature that it is never separated from oddness? This is surely true, for instance, of the number 3 and many others. Take the case of 3; don't you think that while it may always be called by its own name it is also entitled to be called odd, although oddness is not the same thing as triplicity? Indeed 3, 5 and one-half of numbers in general are so constituted that each of them is odd though not identical with oddness. And in the same way 2, 4 and each number of that series are even, though not identical with evenness. Do you agree, or not?'

'Inevitably,' he replied.

'Now here is what I want you to understand clearly. My point is that the law of mutual exclusion applies not to abstract opposites alone, but to all things which, although not opposite to one another, always contain opposites. We find that these latter also exclude the form opposed to that which they contain, and when it approaches they either perish or withdraw. Is it not undeniable that 3 will submit to anything, even to annihilation, sooner than become even and yet remain 3?'

'It certainly is,' said Cebes.

'But 2 is not the opposite of 3.'

'No.'

'Then it is not only opposite forms that repel each other as they approach; certain others too will not endure the approach of opposites.'

'Quite true.'

'Shall we then', said Socrates, 'try to determine what those others are?'

'Yes, let us do that.'

'Will they be those which always compel anything of which they take possession not only to assume their form, but also that of some opposite?'

'What do you mean?' asked Cebes.

'Such things as we referred to just now. You know of course that those things of which 3 is an essential element must be not only 3 but also odd.'

'Certainly.'

'Now such a thing can never admit the form which is the opposite of that which gives rise to this result.'

'No, it can't.'

'But the result was produced by oddness.'

'Yes.'

'And the opposite of oddness is evenness.'

'Yes.'

'Then 3 will never admit evenness.'

'No.'

'Therefore 3 has no part in the even.'

'None at all.'

'Consequently 3 is uneven.'

'Yes.'

'What we have to determine then is what things, without being the opposites, nevertheless refuse to admit them. The number 3, for example, though not the opposite of evenness, nevertheless refuses to admit it, always opposing it with its opposite (oddness), [105] just as 2 always opposes oddness with evenness, fire coldness with heat, and so forth in many other instances. Now see if you find the following statement acceptable. Not only will an opposite not admit its opposite, but nothing which brings an opposite to that which it approaches will ever admit in itself the oppositeness of that which it brings. Let me refresh your memory; there is no harm in repetition. The number 5 will not admit evenness, nor will 10 (the double of 5) admit oddness. Now just as 10, though not itself an opposite, will not admit oddness, so also $\frac{1}{2}$ and other mixed fractions and

⅓ and other simple fractions will reject wholeness. Do you join me in agreeing to that?'

'Yes, I agree entirely,' he said; 'I'm with you there.'

'Then', said Socrates, 'please start over again. Don't answer me in my own words, but do as I do. I'm not satisfied with those "safe" answers of which I spoke a little while ago; they merely beg the question. If you ask me what causes a thing in which it resides to be hot, I shall not give you that safe but stupid answer "Heat". No, I can now supply you from what we have said with the much neater answer "Fire". Again, if you ask what causes a body in which it resides to be ill, I shall not say illness, but fever; and if you ask what causes a number in which it resides to be odd, I shall not say oddness, but the number 1 and so forth. Do you see what I mean?'

'Well enough,' he replied.

'Now tell me', said he, 'what causes the body in which it resides to be alive?'

'The soul.'

'Is this always the case?'

'Yes,' said he, 'of course.'

'Then if the soul takes possession of anything it always endows that thing with life?'

'Indeed yes.'

'Is there anything that can be called the opposite of life?'

'Yes.'

'What?'

'Death.'

'Now the soul, as we have already agreed, will never admit the opposite of that which it brings with it.'

'Definitely not,' said Cebes.

'Then what do we now call that which refuses to admit evenness?'

'Uneven.'

'How about those which refuse admission to justice and musicality?'

'We call them unjust and unmusical,' he replied.

'Well then, what do we call that which does not admit death?'

'Deathless or immortal,' he said.

'And the soul does not admit death?'

'No.'

'Then the soul is immortal.'

'Yes.'

'Good. Then shall we take that as proved?'

'Yes, and very satisfactorily, Socrates.'

'Well now, Cebes,' he went on, 'if the odd were necessarily imperishable, [106] wouldn't the number 3 be likewise imperishable?'

'Naturally.'

'And if that which is devoid of heat were imperishable, wouldn't snow remain unaffected, in other words unmelted, whenever heat were applied to it? For *ex hypothesi* it could not be destroyed, nor could it have admitted the heat and remained.'

'That is quite correct,' he said.

'Likewise, I think, if that which is devoid of coldness were imperishable, whenever anything cold approached fire the heat would never perish or be quenched, but would remain unaffected.'

'Inevitably,' he said.

'Surely the same applies to that which is immortal. If the latter is also imperishable, it cannot possibly be destroyed when death marches against it. For, as our reasoning has shown, it will not admit death and therefore cannot be dead, just as the number 3 and oddness, we said, cannot be even, or fire and the heat therein

cold. Someone may ask what it is that prevents the odd from becoming even at the approach of evenness; why does it rather perish and give place to evenness? Well, we can't retort that it does not perish; for the odd is not imperishable. If it *were* imperishable we could easily reply by saying that oddness and the number 3 depart on the approach of evenness; and we could give a similar answer, couldn't we, as regards fire, heat and so on?'

'Certainly.'

'And so too in the case of the immortal. If it is conceded that the immortal is imperishable, the soul would be imperishable as well as immortal; if not, some further argument is required.'

'In point of fact it is not required,' he said; 'for surely nothing can escape destruction if the immortal, which is everlasting, is perishable.'

'All, I think,' said Socrates, 'would agree that deity, the life principle and anything else immortal can never perish.'

'All men certainly would,' said he, 'and the gods, I imagine, would do so even more emphatically.'

'Very well then, since the immortal is also indestructible, mustn't the soul, if it is immortal, be imperishable too?'

'Inevitably.'

'So when death comes to a man the mortal part of him, apparently, dies, while the immortal part goes away unharmed and undestroyed, withdrawing before the onslaught of death.'

'Apparently.'

'Then, Cebes,' said he, [107] 'it is quite true that the soul is immortal and imperishable, and our souls will really exist in the Beyond.'

'For my part,' Cebes replied, 'I've nothing more to say against that; I cannot resist your arguments. But if Simmias or anyone else has anything to say, he would do well to remain silent no longer; I don't know to what time other than the present he could defer speaking if he wishes to say or hear anything more on the subject.'

'No,' said Simmias, 'I have no reason to doubt the conclusion, any more than has Cebes. But the subject is so vast, and I have such a poor opinion of human weakness, that I cannot help continuing to entertain some degree of uncertainty.'

'Furthermore, Simmias,' said Socrates, 'even though you feel quite satisfied with our initial assumptions, they demand a more careful examination. If you analyse them fully, you will, I think, agree with the argument stage by stage, so far as it is possible for man to do so. And if this is made clear you will seek no further.'

'True,' he said.

'Now, my friends,' said Socrates, 'it is right for us to bear in mind that if the soul is immortal we must care for it, not only with a view to this present time which we call life, but with a view to all time; if we fail to do so we are even now, I think, in dire peril. If death were an escape from everything, it would be a boon to the wicked, for it would mean release from the body and from their wickedness together with their souls. As things are, however, the soul is clearly immortal, and therefore there is no escape or salvation for it except through the medium of becoming as good and wise as possible. For the soul takes with it to the other world nothing but its nurture and training, which are said to benefit or injure the departed from the very commencement of his journey thither. There is a tradition that as soon as a man is dead his guardian spirit, under whose tutelage he spent

his life, leads him to a place where the dead are assembled. Then they are judged and set out for Hades with a guide whose duty it is to conduct thither those who come from this world. When they have there received their due and remained for an appointed time, another guide brings them back after many aeons. The outward journey is not as described by Telephas in Aeschylus' play of that name. [108] He says that a single direct path leads to the Underworld; but I don't think it can be either direct or single, otherwise there would be no need of guides, for no one can ever take the wrong turning on a single direct road. No, there would seem in fact to be many crossways and many windings; this I infer from the rites and ceremonies practised here on earth. Now the well regulated and wise soul makes the journey without any fuss, understanding what it is all about; but she who craves for the body, as I said before, flits about it for a long while in the visible world, until at last, after much resistance and many sufferings, she is led struggling away by her appointed guardian. Imagine this impure soul, foul with the guilt of repeated murder or other deeds akin to that and to the crimes of kindred souls. When she arrives at the meeting-place of the dead she is avoided and shunned by all; no one is prepared to act as her companion or guide, so she wanders about for a certain period, alone and utterly bewildered, after which she is borne by necessity to her fitting habitation. A soul, on the contrary, which has led a pure and upright life finds gods to serve as her companions and guides, and goes to occupy her proper abode. There are also many wonderful regions of the earth, and I have some authority for believing that the earth itself is neither in size nor in other respects as it is represented by professional cosmologists.'

'What do you mean, Socrates?' interrupted Simmias.

'I've heard a good deal about the earth myself, but never what you believe; so do please tell me all about it.'

'Well, Simmias, I don't think I need the art of Glaucus [1] to *tell* you what I believe. To prove it, however, is probably beyond the skill even of Glaucus, and I certainly cannot do so; besides, even if I had the necessary skill, I think death would cut me short before I could make an end. However, there's no reason why I shouldn't tell you what I believe about the shape and several regions of the earth.'

'Oh, that will be good enough,' said Simmias.

'I am convinced', began Socrates, 'that in the first place, if the earth is round and at the centre of the universe, it requires [109] neither air nor any other force of the kind to prevent it from falling. Its own equipoise and the homogeneous nature of the heavens all around suffice to hold it in place; for a body in equipoise and occupying the centre of a homogeneity will not tend to move in any one direction rather than another, but will always remain in the same position. This then is the first point of which I am convinced.'

'And rightly,' said Simmias.

'Secondly,' continued Socrates, 'I believe that the earth is very large; that we Greeks who dwell between the Pillars of Hercules and Phasis [2] live in a small part of it around the sea, like ants or frogs around a pond; and that numerous other peoples inhabit many other such regions. I maintain that in all quarters of the earth there

[1] A fisherman of Anthedon in Boeotia, who became a marine deity by eating part of a herb sown by Cronus. He was believed to pay annual visits to the coasts and islands of Greece, where fishermen and sailors awaited his prophecies.

[2] This is a remarkable specimen of geographical accuracy. The most westerly Greek settlement was Maenaca, a little east of Malaga. Colchian Phasis, on the Black Sea, was the most easterly.

are many hollows of widely differing shapes and sizes into which water, mist and air have flowed together; that the earth itself is pure and lies enclosed by the pure heaven of the stars, the heaven which astronomers call the ether; and that water, mist and air are the sediment of this heaven, and are constantly flowing together into the hollow places of the earth. Now we are not conscious of dwelling in the hollows, but think we live on the upper surface of the earth. It is as if a being living in the depths of the sea thought he lived on its surface. Imagine him down there: seeing the sun and stars through the water, he believes the sea is the sky; lazy and weak, he has never reached the surface of the sea, has never risen and lifted his head above the waves into our outer world to behold how much purer and more beautiful it is than his submarine world, and has never heard an eye-witness account of it. Now I believe that this is just the case with ourselves. We dwell in a hollow of the earth and think we dwell on its outer surface; we call the air heaven, and fancy it is the starry firmament. Once again, because of our sloth and helplessness, we cannot attain to the upper surface of the air. If a man were to climb up to the topmost region of the air, or grow wings and fly there, he could lift his head above it. Then, as fishes lift their heads out of the water and see the objects of our environment, so he would behold the objects of that distant world; and, if his nature were strong enough to endure the sight, he would recognize it as [110] the real heaven, the real light and the real earth. For this earth of ours, the rocks and all the region where we live, are damaged by corrosion, just as things in the sea are damaged by brine. Nothing of any worth grows in the sea. One may say there is nothing there, but only caverns, sand, endless mud and slime; and even where the earth does extend below water

it contains nothing whatever comparable with the glories of our world. And yet the objects in that world above would be found to excel even those of our own environment. May I give you a figurative account, Simmias, of the world that lies immediately below the heavens? It is well worth hearing.'

'By all means, Socrates,' exclaimed Simmias,' 'we should love you to do so.'

'Well then, my friend,' said Socrates, 'let me begin by saying that the earth when seen from above is said to look like those balls that are covered with twelve pieces of leather; it is divided into patches of various colours, of which those that we see here may be regarded as mere samples, such as painters use. But out there the whole earth is of such colours, which are much brighter and purer than ours. One part is purple of astonishing beauty, another golden, another white (whiter than chalk or snow) and so on—colour after colour more numerous and more beautiful than those we see here. For even the earth's hollows, filled with water and air, present an appearance of colour as they glisten amid the variety of the other colours, so that the whole produces one continuous effect of variety. And in that fair earth all things that grow—trees, flowers and fruits—are correspondingly beautiful. The mountains likewise and the rocks are smoother, more transparent and more splendidly coloured than ours. In fact, our precious stones—cornelians jaspers, emeralds and so forth—are mere chips of those; there all are like the ones we know, but even more beautiful. Why? Because there the stones are pure, not corroded and defiled as ours are with filth and brine by the vapours and liquids that flow together here, causing ugliness and disease in earth and rocks, animals and plants. The earth there is adorned with all these jewels and also

with gold, [111] silver and everything of the kind. Yea, there they are untarnished, abundant, large and everywhere, so that the earth is a sight to rejoice the hearts of those who gaze upon it. It is inhabited too by many animals, and by men also, some of whom dwell inland, others on the coasts of the air as we dwell around the sea, and others again on islands off the mainland in a sea of air. Briefly, air is to them what water and the sea are to us, and what air is to us the ether is to them. The seasons, too, are so temperate that people there suffer from no disease and live much longer than we do; moreover their sight, hearing and intelligence are as far superior to ours as air is purer than water and the ether than air. Again, they have groves and temples sacred to the gods, in which the gods really dwell; they converse with the gods in speech, prophecy and visions; they see the sun and moon and stars as they really are, and they are blessed accordingly in every other way.

'Such then is the nature of that earth as a whole and of its setting. The hollow places that engirdle it contain various different kinds of regions, some deeper and wider than the one in which we live, some deeper but narrower than ours, and some also less deep but wider. Now all these are interconnected by many subterranean channels of varying size; these form passages through which huge quantities of water flow from one to another as into mixing-bowls. There are also enormous rivers under the earth, flowing with hot and cold water; and much fire and great rivers of fire, and many streams of mud of varying thickness like the rivers of mud that flow ahead of the lava in Sicily, and lava itself. These fill the several regions as they happen to flow into one or another from time to time, and they are moved up and down by a sort of oscillation inside the earth. The nature of the

oscillation is as follows. One of the earth's chasms is larger than the rest and is [112] bored right through it; this is the one to which Homer refers when he says,

Far off, the lowest abyss beneath the earth,[1]

and which elsewhere he and many other poets call Tartarus. All the rivers flow together into this chasm and out of it again, and each of them has the nature of the earth through which they flow. The reason why all the streams flow in and out of here is that the liquid has no bottom or foundation. So it oscillates, i.e. waves up and down, and the air and wind around it do likewise; for they follow the liquid as it moves first to one and then to the other side of the earth, and the wind there (as in the process of inhalation and exhalation) oscillates with the liquid, causing terrible and irresistible blasts as it rushes in and out. When the water retires to the region known as the lower, it flows into the rivers there and fills them up as if driven by a pump; and when it leaves that region and returns to this side it fills the rivers here. Now when the streams have been filled they flow through the subterranean passages until they reach the various localities to which their several paths lead, where they form seas, marshes, rivers and springs. Thence they redescend below ground, some encircling many extensive regions, others fewer and smaller areas, and eventually come again to Tartarus. Some of them flow into it far below the point where they were sucked out, and others only a little way; but all do so below their exit. Some flow in on the side from which they flowed out, others on the opposite side; and some flow in a complete circle, coiling about the earth once or several times, like serpents, then descend to the

[1] *Iliad* viii. 14.

lowest possible depth and fall again into the chasm. It is possible to go down from each end as far as the centre; but not beyond, for that point marks the beginning of an upward slope in front of the streams from either side of the earth.

'The streams in question are many and large and of all kinds. Among them are four in particular, of which the greatest and outermost is called Oceanus, flowing round the earth in a circle. Opposite this and flowing in the contrary direction is Acheron; after watering desert places and passing underground [113] it empties into the Acherusian lake. To this lake go the souls of most dead men, and after lingering there for whatever length of time is appointed for each, they are sent back again to be reborn as living beings. The third river emerges between these two; a little farther on it plunges into a vast region flaming with an enormous fire and forms a lake larger than the Mediterranean, boiling with water and mud. Thence it flows in a circle, turbid and muddy, and comes in its winding course, among other places, to the Acherusian lake, with whose waters, however, it does not mingle. Then, after a good deal of subterranean meandering, it flows into Tartarus at a lower level. This is the river known as Pyriphlegethon; it gives rise to the streams of lava which erupt at various places on earth. Opposite Pyriphlegethon the fourth river issues, it is said, into a wild and fearsome region, which is all of a dark blue colour like lapis lazuli. It is called the Stygian river, and the lake formed by the influx of its waters is the Styx. Here the stream receives terrible powers, passes underground, and after circling round parallel to but in the direction opposite to that of Pyriphlegethon, it completes its circuit in the Acherusian lake. The water of this river likewise mingles with no other; having flowed in a

circular course it falls into Tartarus opposite Pyriphlegethon. The poets call it Cocytus.

'So much for the natural environment. When the dead reach the spot whither each is led by his guardian spirit, they are first judged and sentenced, according as they have lived good or wicked lives. Those who are found to have spent their lives on earth in a manner midway between good and evil proceed to the Acheron and, embarking upon ships provided for them, they travel to the lake. There they dwell and are purified; if they have sinned they merit absolution by paying the penalty for their misdeeds, while for their good deeds they are rewarded, each according to his deserts. Those, on the other hand, who appear to be incurable because of the heinousness of their sins—repeated and notorious sacrilege, wilful murder or the like—are cast by their appropriate destiny into Tartarus, whence they never emerge. Some, however, are curable but are found guilty of grave offences. Perhaps in a moment of passion they have offered violence to father or mother, [114] but have lived repentant ever after; or perhaps they have slain someone else under similar conditions. Well, these people cannot escape being hurled into Tartarus. But when they have spent a year there the wave throws them out, homicides by way of Cocytus, those who have outraged their parents by way of Pyriphlegethon. When the current has borne them to the Acherusian lake they raise their voices and appeal to those whom they have wronged, begging and beseeching them to be gracious and allow them to come out into the lake. If their prayer is granted they come out and are released from their misery, otherwise they are borne away again to Tartarus and thence back into the rivers. Such is the penalty inflicted upon them by the judges, and it continues until they win the

favour of those against whom they have sinned. Finally, those who are found to have lived lives of outstanding holiness are liberated from those regions within the earth and set free as from prison; they mount upward to their pure abode and dwell upon the earth.[1] Of these, all who have duly purified themselves by philosophy live hence-forward entirely disembodied, and pass to yet more beautiful abodes which it is hard to describe, even if we had the time.

'Yes, indeed, Simmias, in the light of all that I have said, we must strive to acquire virtue and wisdom in this present life. For the prize is splendid, and the hope is great.

'It would ill become a man of intelligence to insist that all is exactly as I have described it. But since the soul has been proved immortal, I think he may properly and worthily venture to believe that at any rate some-thing of the kind is true of our souls and their abodes. The venture is well worth while; he ought to repeat such things to himself as if they were magic incantations, and that is why I have prolonged the story to such a length. To feel confident about the fate of his soul is the right of any man who during life has turned his back upon the pleasures and adornment of the body, looking upon them as alien to him and more likely to do him harm than good; who has been anxious to enjoy the delights of learning; and who, after adorning his soul with no alien trinkets but with the true ornaments of self-restraint, justice, [115] courage, freedom and truth, awaits his departure to the other world, ready to march whenever fate may call. You, Simmias and Cebes and the rest, will set out hereafter, each at his appointed time.

[1] The upper or ideal earth which Socrates has just described.

I am already, as a tragedian would say, summoned by fate, and it is about time for me to go and take a bath. I think it's better to bathe before drinking the poison; one spares the women the trouble of washing a corpse.'

When he had finished speaking Crito said: 'Well now, Socrates, are you leaving any instructions with us regarding your children or anything else; is there anything we can do to serve you?'

'What I always say, Crito,' he answered, 'nothing new. If you take care of yourselves you will serve me and mine and yourselves whatever you do—even if you make no promises now. But if you neglect yourselves and refuse to walk step by step, as it were, in the path mapped out by our present discussions and those we have had in days gone by, you will achieve nothing, no matter how much or how eagerly you promise here and now.'

'We will certainly try hard to do as you say,' he replied. 'But how shall we bury you?'

'Any way you please, if you can catch me before I give you the slip.' Laughing gently, and gazing upon us, he continued: 'I cannot persuade Crito, my friends, that the Socrates who is conversing here and marshalling the details of his argument is really *I*; he thinks *I*'m the one whom he will before long see as a corpse, and he asks how to bury *me*? Although I have spent a great deal of time explaining that after I drink the poison I shall no longer be with you but shall go to enjoy the blessings I have described, he seems to think all that was mere idle chatter intended to encourage you and myself. So offer security for me to Crito, but not as he did at my trial, when he offered himself as guarantor that I would remain. Do you then offer him security that when I die I shall *not* remain, so that he may endure these events with a lighter heart. I don't want him to be troubled when he sees my body

buried or cremated, as if *I* were being ill-treated; nor would I have him say at the funeral that he is laying out *Socrates*, following *Socrates* to the grave or burying *Socrates*. I assure you, Crito, that inaccurate phraseology is not only undesirable in itself, but also does a certain amount of harm to the soul. No, dear friend, set your mind at rest and say that you are burying my *body*. And bury it [116] in any way you please, just as you think most fitting.'

With these words he rose from the couch and went into another room to bathe. Crito followed him, telling us to wait. So we waited, talking among ourselves about various points in the discourse to which we had been listening. Then we spoke of the disaster that had overtaken us; for we looked upon Socrates almost as a father, deprived of whom we should spend the remainder of our lives as orphans. After he had bathed, his three sons were brought to him—two little boys and a tall young man. His women folk also arrived, and he talked with them in Crito's presence, giving them such directions as he wished. Then he dismissed them along with the children and returned to us. Some time had passed since he had left the room, and it was now nearly sunset. He came and sat down, fresh from the bath. After that few words were spoken until the agent of the Eleven entered, stood at his side and addressed him thus:

'Socrates, I shall have no need to complain about you, as I have about others, for cursing and swearing at me when I do my duty and order them to drink the poison. No, during all this time I've found you in every way the noblest and gentlest and best man who ever came here. I'm sure that even now you bear no ill will towards me, knowing that others are to blame. Well, you know the message I have come to bring you. Goodbye, and try to

bear what you must as easily as you can.' Bursting into tears, he turned away.

Socrates looked up at him and said: 'Goodbye. I shall do as you ask.' Then he said to us: 'What a charming man! All the time I've been here he has visited me regularly for a chat; he's been kindness itself, and now see how generously he weeps for me. But come, Crito, let us do his bidding, let someone bring the poison if it is ready; if not, get the man to prepare it.'

Crito answered: 'But Socrates, I don't think the sun has set; it still lingers on the mountains. I know for a fact that others have drunk the poison very late, long after being told to do so. Meanwhile they have taken food and wine, and some have even enjoyed the company of their friends. Don't hurry; there's still time.'

To which Socrates replied: 'Crito, the sort of people you mention are right in doing as they do, for they think to gain by it. But I shall not follow their example, [117] for I don't think I shall gain anything at all by drinking the poison a little later. I should only make myself ridiculous in my own eyes if I clung to life, prolonging the hours when there is no more profit in them. Come, do as I ask and don't refuse.'

Thereupon Crito nodded to the slave-boy who was standing by. The lad went out and came back after some considerable time with the man who was to administer the poison, which he brought ready mixed in a cup. When Socrates saw him he said: 'Well, my good man, you know all about this business; what must I do?'

'Nothing,' he replied, 'except drink the poison and keep walking about until your legs feel heavy; then lie down, and the poison will do its own work.'

So saying he held out the cup to Socrates. He took it, and very gently, Echecrates, without a tremor or a change

of colour or expression, but looking up at the man with open eyes as was his wont, said: 'What do you say about pouring a libation to some deity from this cup? May I, or not?'

'Socrates, we prepare only what we think is a sufficient dose.'

'I understand,' said he; 'but I may and must pray to the gods that my departure hence be fortunate. So I offer that prayer and hope it may be granted.'

With these words he raised the cup to his lips and calmly drained it, without a murmur. Until then most of us had just managed to restrain our tears; but as we watched him drink the poison we could do so no longer. I could not repress a flood of tears, so I hid my face in my cloak and wept for myself. No, it was not for him that I wept, but for my own misfortune in being deprived of such a friend. Crito had risen and turned away even before I did, because he could not hold back his tears. But Apollodorus, who had been weeping the whole time, gave way to cries of grief, so that we all broke down—all of us except Socrates himself. 'What strange behaviour, my friends,' he said. 'My chief reason for sending away the women was to prevent them from behaving in this absurd fashion, for I have heard that it is best to die in silence. Keep quiet now and be brave.' His words put us to shame, and we controlled our tears. Socrates continued walking up and down. At length he said his legs were feeling heavy, and lay down on his back as he had been advised. The attendant laid his hands on him and after a while examined his feet and legs, then pinched his foot hard and asked if he felt it. 'No,' said Socrates. Next he applied the test to his thighs, and so on upwards, always with the same result, which showed that he was growing cold and rigid. Then the man felt him again, and said that when the lack

of sensation reached his heart he would be gone. The chill had now reached the neighbourhood of the groin, and Socrates, uncovering his face, which had been veiled, uttered his last words: 'Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius. Be sure to pay the debt.'

'That', said Crito, 'shall be done. Have you anything else to say?'

There was no reply, but after a little while the attendant uncovered him; he wore a fixed stare. Crito, seeing this, closed his mouth and eyes.

Such was the end, Echecrates, of our friend, who was surely the best and most upright man of any we have ever known.

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