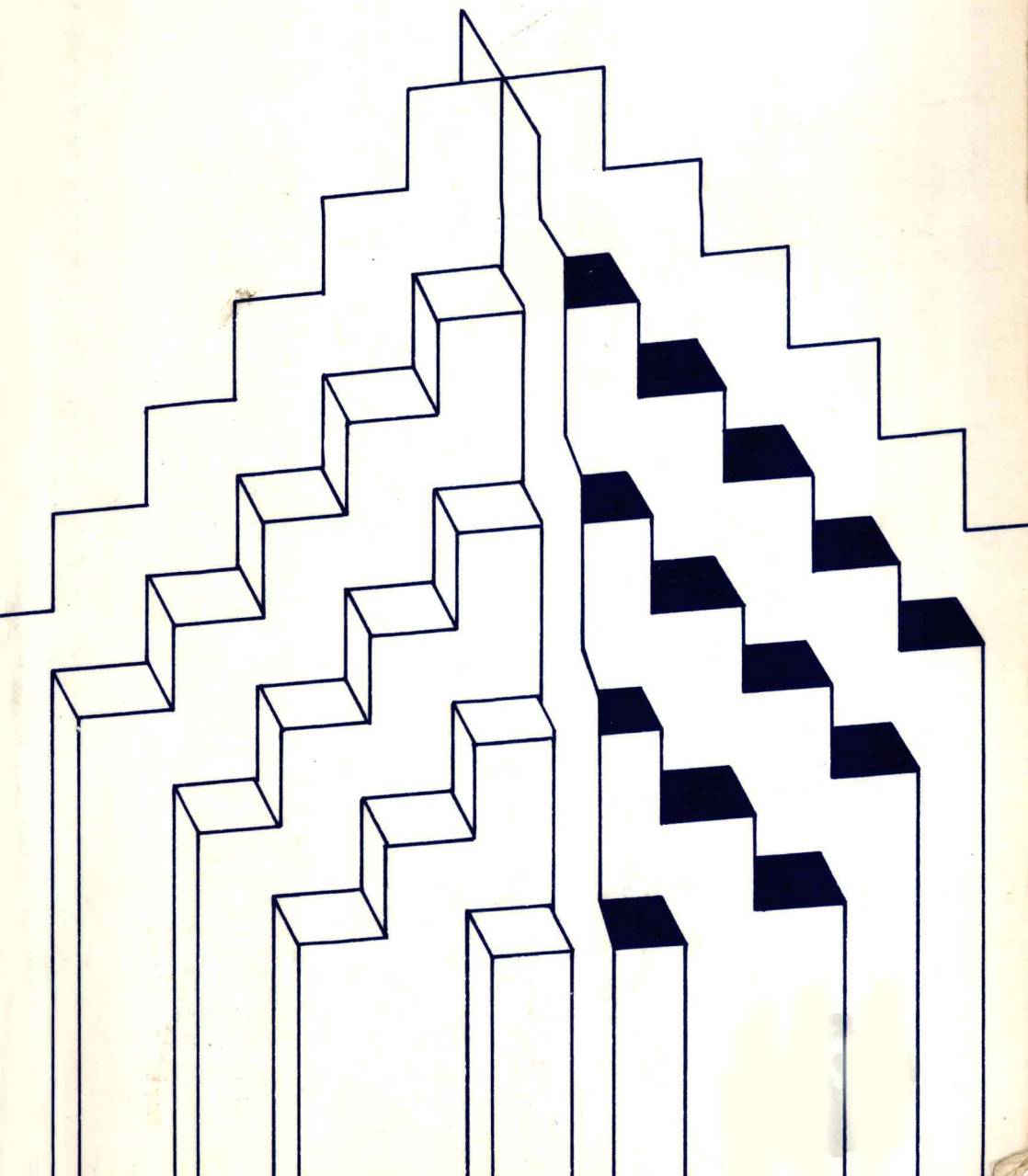


PLATO'S REPUBLIC

TRANSLATED BY G.M.A. GRUBE



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Translated by
G. M. A. Grube

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PREFACE

All translators face certain common problems, of which the most difficult is probably to combine successfully fidelity to their author with natural readability. This is even more difficult with ancient authors because of their different ways of thought and expression. When the translator's main purpose is to help the reading of the original text, literalness is necessary, but if it is excessive the result is strange and artificial. At the other extreme are those who treat the text of their author very freely, often paraphrasing rather than translating and even omitting sentences and whole paragraphs. Plato was not only a great philosopher, he was also a great writer, and to treat his text in this way seems to me like changing and omitting scenes when producing a play of Shakespeare; except in the most skillful hands the result may be disastrous. The only liberty I have allowed myself is where the answers to Socrates' questions are very brief and do not contribute to the argument; there I have replaced the so often repeated "he said" by a dash to indicate the change of speaker, a device not available to Plato. With this exception, everything is translated.

The *Republic* was probably written about twenty years after Socrates' death and purports to report a conversation supposed to have taken place some thirty or thirty-five years before. It is not an esoteric treatise for students of philosophy, it is addressed to the ordinarily educated man and is intended to be understood by him. There are, it is true, some difficult and highly controversial passages, but these are few and far between.

The division into ten books has no significance and is probably due to the length of a papyrus roll. I have, however, kept this traditional division for ease of reference. The argument often proceeds from one book to the next without any break, but when an important break does occur, it is usually at the end of a book, as is the case after books one, four, seven, and nine. The pages and sections in the margin are those of Stephanus' original edition which are universally used to refer to the

PREFACE

Platonic corpus. This translation follows Burnet's Oxford text. The notes have been kept brief and to a minimum to avoid distracting the reader.

There is not one Platonic style but a great many, ranging from the simplest conversational to the most self-consciously elaborate. This presents a challenge which, I imagine, few translators would claim to have met even to their own satisfaction.

The short introductions to each book are not intended as summaries. Plato's theories and conclusions will emerge more clearly and vividly from his own text than from any summaries. These introductions are intended to make it easier to follow the main thread of the discussion through the work as a whole and to enable those who have read it to recall the general context in which a particular subject occurs.

I take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks for the help I have received, first from my wife whose assistance has been so constant that she should really be regarded as co-author. I am also very much indebted to my colleague, Professor George Edison, of the department of philosophy at Toronto, and to Professor Malcolm Brown of Brooklyn College, both of whom read the book in type and made many helpful suggestions. Like all writers on Plato, I owe much to the scholars who have preceded me. I should also like to thank Hackett Publishing and its readers for their co-operative and helpful attitude throughout. Whatever blemishes remain are of course my responsibility.

To translate a masterpiece of one's favourite author is a high literary adventure and a labour of love. If the reader of this translation can derive from it even a small part of the fun and the enjoyment I found in writing it I shall feel well rewarded.

G. M. A. Grube

Trinity College, Toronto
September 1973

Note: In most instances the translation follows Burnet's Oxford text.

INTRODUCTION

Socrates was born in 469 B.C., ten years after the Greek victory at Plataea brought the second Persian war to an end. Twice in a dozen years, to the amazement of the Mediterranean world, the small and scattered states of Greece had defeated the might of the Persian empire. In 490 Darius, the Great King (as the Greeks called the ruler of the Medes and Persians), sent a punitive expedition against Athens which was defeated at Marathon. Ten years later King Xerxes, the son of Darius, tried to conquer Greece, with an armament vastly superior to that of his father. But the Persian forces were again defeated in two crucial battles, the naval battle at Salamis in 480 and the land battle of Plataea in 479. Thus, the Persian threat of invasion that had hung over Greece for a generation was finally dispelled.

Before these Persian wars, Sparta was the recognized leader of Greece. But now Athens had become a rival for that leadership, and deservedly so. For Marathon was distinctly an Athenian victory, with the help requested from Sparta only arriving when the battle was over. While at Salamis, the 200 Athenian ships were at least half the Greek fleet, and the recognized directing genius of that victory was the Athenian general and statesman, Themistocles.

If continental Greece was now safe from invasion, the situation was very different for the islands and coastal cities of the eastern Aegean. Organizing themselves into an alliance, the threatened peoples of those areas looked to Athens, rather than to the land power, Sparta, as their logical leader against a Persian attack from the sea. This was the Confederacy of Delos which gradually became the Athenian empire, although it remained an alliance in name.

The increasing ascendancy of Athens caused the rivalry with Sparta to become ever more obvious and more bitter. By the middle of the fifth century, Greece was divided into two camps.

The division was also ideological, as Athens favoured democratic government while Sparta favoured an oligarchy. So the division penetrated the cities themselves, which all too often were in a state of potential civil war between oligarchs and democrats.

By the late sixties, Pericles became the dominant political leader in Athens and so remained for thirty years. This is the Periclean Age, when Athenian imperial power was at its height and Athenian democracy reached its fullest development, with all major decisions taken by the assembly of all male citizens. The greatness of Athens, however, was not only imperial and political; it was also cultural. Pericles himself is reported to have said that Athens was "the school of Hellas." During this period (between 447 and 438 B.C.) the Parthenon was built under the direction of the sculptor, Phidias, who executed the famous statue of Zeus at Olympia as well as the gold and ivory statue of Athena on the Acropolis. Drama, both tragedy and comedy, reached an excellence not reached again for many centuries and never surpassed. Athens became a center of philosophic thought, and the school of Hippocrates, on the island of Cos, developed medicine and medical method in a highly scientific manner. Further, as democracy developed, there was a demand for higher education, especially in the art of persuasion, and the best teachers in Greece, the Sophists, were attracted to Athens. They all taught rhetoric, the art of speech, but they were also political and philosophic thinkers. In short, the Periclean Age saw a sudden flowering of human genius rarely paralleled in human history.

When the inevitable war between Athens and Sparta broke out in 431, Socrates was nearing forty. His adolescence and early manhood were therefore spent in an Athens that was at the pinnacle of her power and cultural development. Plato was born in 428-7, and it is perhaps significant that during his adolescence Athens was gradually losing both her empire and the war. He was only in his middle teens at the time of the Sicilian expedition, a war in which Athens hoped to establish her power over the Greeks in the West. But Athens lost two fleets and two armies, a disaster from which she never recovered, even though the war continued for another decade.

It was during this time that Plato became one of the young men who followed Socrates about as he buttonholed stranger and citizen alike and engaged them in provocative dialogue. Insistently, Socrates would urge his audience to define their terms, especially the ethical terms they were accustomed to using so freely. As he encouraged them to ask awkward questions, they became involved with him in exploring Socrates' own paradoxical views. These views included the belief that

"the unexamined life is not worth living for a man;" that goodness is a matter of knowledge; that no man does wrong deliberately, but only because he does not *know* any better, and that the essence of wisdom is to realize one's own ignorance. Socrates also tried to convince his fellowmen that every person is responsible for his own moral attitudes, which he described as the state of a man's soul.

The greatest Socratic paradox, however, is Socrates himself. He never wrote anything. He founded no school. He did not profess to teach. His method, to search for the truth by discussion, by question and answer and step-by-step agreement, was basic but simple. Yet he had an immense influence not only on his contemporaries (after his death a number of Socratic dialogues were written by different authors) but on all later Greek philosophers. Above all, he influenced a man like Plato to spend the rest of his life writing Socratic dialogues, i.e. conversations in which Socrates was a speaker, usually the main speaker. Only in Plato's very last work, the *Laws*, does Socrates not appear.

The Athenians would have expected a young man of Plato's background and connections to go in for a political career, and indeed Plato himself expected it. He cannot have had much sympathy with the rather extreme leaders of the assembly during the closing years of the war, but he got his chance when an oligarchic government was established after the war was lost in 405. This oligarchy was later known as the government of the Thirty Tyrants. Its ruling group, led by Plato's uncle, Critias, invited Plato to join them. But, disgusted by their tyrannical measures and their attempt to implicate Socrates in their guilt, Plato refused the invitation and turned away from politics. The democracy that was restored shortly afterwards showed great toleration, and Plato's hopes of a political career revived. But the subsequent trial and execution of Socrates destroyed again his hopes for a political career. It is interesting to note that on both occasions the treatment of Socrates by those in power was a factor in his decision.

It is obvious, however, that Plato's interest in politics remained keen, if more theoretical. He not only wrote the *Republic*, but also a later dialogue, the *Statesman*, and in his last work, the *Laws* (in twelve books), an Athenian discusses with a Spartan and a Cretan the constitution and laws of a projected colony. Moreover, the Academy was largely a school for statesmen and political consultants, and several of its members acted in the latter capacity in various cities. Plato himself was well over sixty when he went to Syracuse a second time to influence Dionysius II and make him a philosopher. Plato had no great hope of success. He went, he tells us, through a feeling of shame that he should be proved to be a mere *logos*, a mere spinner of theories.¹

There are two questions to which a reader of the *Republic*, or any other Platonic work, would like answers. The first is the date of particular dialogues, and the second is whether the Socrates we meet

in Plato is the historic Socrates and whether the theories he enounces were in fact his. Neither question can be answered categorically, but the second is perhaps the easier one if we take into account the passages in the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle in which he clearly distinguishes between the definitions of Socrates and the Platonic Forms.² He says that Socrates did not mean his universals to have a separate existence, whereas in the dialogues Socrates repeatedly expounds the theory that they have. Aristotle had spent some years in the Academy and, as he cannot himself have had any personal knowledge of Socrates, he is probably expressing views that were current there. The ancients did not expect historical accuracy as we do, and they would find it perfectly natural for a writer of Socratic dialogues to feel free to expand and to follow through the implications he saw in Socrates' opinions. Plato himself almost certainly felt free to do so, in this case by attributing to Socrates the theory of Forms that he developed on the basis of Socrates' definitions. This kind of thing would be expected and acceptable, so long as he did not attribute to Socrates theories that were incompatible with the opinions of the historic Socrates, or actions that were contrary to his moral principles.

As to the dates of the various dialogues, there is no external evidence; and scholars who have tried to decide their relative dates on internal evidence, i.e. on their conceptions of the development of Plato's thought, have come to remarkably different conclusions. A more promising method relies on the study of Plato's style, especially if attention is paid to his use of certain particles and phrases which a writer uses almost unconsciously, and the frequency of their use in different periods. Even so, however, the only solid conclusion arrived at by stylometry, as this method is called, is to assign the dialogues to three periods, early, middle and later,³ but even for the three periods no one ventures to give exact dates. However, it is pretty well agreed that the *Republic* should be placed in the middle period, which I also believe to be that of the greatest literary artistry. It is generally assumed that the *Republic* was written not too long after the founding of the Academy in 385 B.C.—probably around 380—and this seems to fit well enough. Not only is the work central in time and style, but it also gives us the central theories and principles of the Socratic-Platonic philosophy.

1. Seventh letter 328c. This letter is generally considered genuine. In it Plato gives an account of his attitude to practical politics and of the incidents mentioned in the text.

2. A. 987 a 29—b 9 and M. 1078 b 9—32. The significance of these passages is fully discussed by W.D. Ross in the introduction to his edition of the *Metaphysics* (Oxford 1924) xxxiii - xlv, and I follow his conclusions.

3. See my *Plato's Thought* xi-xiv and references there.

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BOOK I

On his way back to Athens from the Piraeus Socrates is stopped by Polemarchus who persuades him to come to his house, where he is received by Polemarchus' old father Cephalus. They have a brief but interesting conversation on the burdens of old age, and Cephalus admits that these are lightened by his wealth, which enables one to speak the truth and to pay one's debts to men and gods. Here we slip almost unawares into an attempt to define justice (i.e. right conduct toward others). Cephalus retires from the argument and Polemarchus takes over. He quotes Simonides that justice consists in giving everyone what is owed them. This definition is queried by Socrates and proved to be unsatisfactory, and this refutation is a good example of the Socratic method. Although Polemarchus shifts his ground more than once, he has to admit that his definition will not do.

At this point the Sophist Thrasymachus intervenes somewhat vehemently. He sneers at the Socratic method and is with apparent reluctance persuaded to give his own definition, that justice is the advantage of the stronger (i.e. that might is right). He is a much more formidable opponent than Polemarchus, though Socrates soon makes him contradict himself, but he gets out of that difficulty rather subtly, and it takes Socrates some time and difficulty to show the Sophist that he is wrong. Thrasymachus fights back by appealing to the facts against Socrates' theoretical view of justice. The interplay of characters has full play here. So has the Socratic irony and in the end Thrasymachus is, if not convinced, at least argued into submissiveness, but Socrates himself points out that this leaves us without a definition of what justice really is.

The first book might well be called the most dramatic and artfully contrived of the Socratic dialogues. It is extremely vivid throughout and forms an excellent introduction to the whole Republic.

327 I went down to the Piraeus yesterday with Glaucon, the son of
 | Ariston. I intended to say a prayer to the goddess,¹ and I also
 wanted to see how they would manage the festival, since this was its first
 celebration. I thought our own procession was a fine one and that which
 b the Thracians had sent was no less outstanding. After we had said our
 prayer and witnessed the procession we started back toward the city.
 Polemarchus saw us from a distance as we were setting off for home and
 he told his slave to run and bid us wait for him. So the slave caught hold
 of my cloak from behind: Polemarchus, he said, bids you wait for him.
 I turned around and asked where Polemarchus was. There he is, coming
 up behind you, he said, please wait for him. And Glaucon said: All
 right, we'll wait.

c Just then Polemarchus caught up with us. Adeimantus, the brother of
 Glaucon,² was with him, and so were Niceratus, the son of Nicias, and
 some others, presumably on their way from the procession.

Then Polemarchus said: Socrates, it looks to me as if you had started
 on your way back to the city.

Quite right, said I.

Do you see how many we are? he said.

Of course I do.

Well, he said, you must either be stronger than we are, or you must
 stay here.

Is there not another alternative, said I, namely that we may persuade
 you to let us go?

Could you, said he, persuade men who do not listen?

Not possibly, said Glaucon.

Well, you can take it that we are certainly not going to listen.

328 Adeimantus intervened: Do you really not know that there is to be a
 torch race on horseback this evening in honour of the goddess?

1. "The goddess" in an Athenian writer, especially when the scene is laid in Athens, usually means Athena, and it may do so here. However, we know from 354a, and the mention of the Thracians here, that the festival was that of Bendis, a Thracian goddess whose worship had recently been introduced in the Piraeus, and the reference may be to her.

2. Glaucon and Adeimantus are the brothers of Plato, who is not present. They carry the main burden of the conversation with Socrates from the beginning of the second book to the end of the work. The scene is the house of old Cephalus, father of Polemarchus, Lysias, and Euthydemus. Lysias is a well-known writer of speeches of the late fifth century, and a number of them are extant. He later became the model of the simple style. He takes no part. We have a dialogue named after Euthydemus. Thrasymachus was a Sophist of the younger generation, known for his powerful emotional appeals. He is the main objector in the first book, but after that says very little. We have a short dialogue, the *Cleitophon* which criticizes Socrates for his lack of positive teaching. The first book, like many early or "Socratic" dialogues, discusses several definitions of "justice" but comes to no conclusion. The whole discussion is probably supposed to have taken place about 411 B.C.

On horseback? said I, that is a novelty. Are they going to race on horseback and hand the torches on in relays, or how do you mean?

That's it, said Polemarchus, and there will be an all night festival besides, which will be worth seeing, and which we intend to watch after dinner. We shall be joined by many of our young men here and talk with them. So please do stay. b

And Glaucon said: It seems that we'll have to stay.

If you think so, said I, then we must.

So we went to the home of Polemarchus, and there we found Lysias and Euthydemus, the brothers of Polemarchus, also Thrasymachus of Chalcedon, Charmantides of Paiania, and Cleitophon the son of Aristonymus. Polemarchus' father Cephalus was also in the house. I thought he looked quite old, as I had not seen him for some time. He was sitting on a seat with a cushion, a wreath on his head, for he had been offering a sacrifice in the courtyard. There was a circle of seats there, and we sat down by him. c

As soon as he saw me Cephalus welcomed me and said: Socrates, you don't often come down to the Piraeus to see us. You should. If it were still easy for me to walk to the city you would not need to come here, we would come to you, but now you should come more often. You should realize that, to the extent that my physical pleasures get feebler, my desire for conversation, and the pleasure I take in it, increase. So be sure to come more often and talk to these youngsters, as you would to good friends and relations. d

I replied: Indeed, Cephalus, I do enjoy conversing with men of advanced years. As from those who have travelled along a road which we too will probably have to follow, we should enquire from them what kind of a road it is, whether rough and difficult or smooth and easy, and I should gladly learn from you what you think about this, as you have reached the point in life which the poets call "the threshold of old age,"³ whether it is a difficult part of life, or how your experience would describe it to us. e

Yes by Zeus, Socrates, he said, I will tell you what I think of old age. A number of us who are more or less the same age often get together in accordance with the old adage.⁴ When we meet, the majority of us bemoan their age: they miss the pleasures which were theirs in youth; they recall the pleasures of sex, drink, and feasts, and some other things that go with them, and they are angry as if they were deprived of important things, as if they then lived the good life and now were not living at all. Some others deplore the humiliations which old age suffers 329
b

3. The phrase occurs several times in Homer (e.g. *Iliad* 22, 60). It refers to old age as the threshold on leaving life.

4. The old saying that like consorts with like.

in the household, and because of this they repeat again and again that old age is the cause of many evils. However, Socrates, I do not think that they blame the real cause. For if old age were the cause, then I should have suffered in the same way, and so would all others who have reached my age. As it is, I have met other old men who do not feel like that, and indeed I was present at one time when someone asked the poet Sophocles: "How are you in regard to sex, Sophocles? Can you still make love to a woman?" "Hush man, the poet replied, I am very glad to have escaped from this, like a slave who has escaped from a mad and cruel master." I thought then that he was right, and I still think so, for a great peace and freedom from these things come with old age: after the tension of one's desires relaxes and ceases, then Sophocles' words certainly apply, it is an escape from many mad masters. As regards both sex and relations in the household there is one cause, Socrates, not old age but the manner of one's life: if it is moderate and contented, then old age too is but moderately burdensome; if it is not, then both old age and youth are hard to bear.

I wondered at his saying this and I wanted him to say more, so I urged him on by saying: Cephalus, when you say this, I don't think most people would agree with you; they think you endure old age easily not because of your manner of life but because you are wealthy, for the wealthy, they say, have many things to encourage them.

What you say is true, he said. They would not agree. And there is something in what they say, but not as much as they think. What Themistocles said is quite right: when a man from Seriphus⁵ was insulting him by saying that his high reputation was due to his city and not to himself, he replied that, had he been a Seriphian, he would not be famous, but neither would the other had he been an Athenian. The same can be applied to those who are not rich and find old age hard to bear—namely that a good man would not very easily bear old age in poverty, nor would a bad man, even if wealthy, be at peace with himself.

Did you inherit most of your wealth, Cephalus, I asked, or did you acquire it?

How much did I acquire, Socrates? As a moneymaker I stand between my grandfather and my father. My grandfather and namesake inherited about the same amount of wealth which I possess but multiplied it many times. My father, Lysanias, however, diminished that amount to even less than I have now. As for me, I am satisfied to leave to my sons here no less but a little more than I inherited.

The reason I asked, said I, is that you did not seem to me to be overfond of money, and this is generally the case with those who have not made it themselves. Those who have acquired it by their own efforts

5. Seriphus was a small island of little importance.

are twice as fond of it as other men. Just as poets love their own poems and fathers love their children, so those who have made their money are attached to it as something they have made themselves, besides using it as other men do. This makes them poor company, for they are unwilling to give their approval to anything but money.

What you say is true, he said.

It surely is, said I. Now tell me this much more: What is the greatest benefit you have received from the enjoyment of wealth? d

I would probably not convince many people in saying this, Socrates, he said, but you must realize that when a man approaches the time when he thinks he will die, he becomes fearful and concerned about things which he did not fear before. It is then that the stories we are told about the underworld, which he ridiculed before — that the man who has sinned here will pay the penalty there — torture his mind lest they be true. e Whether because of the weakness of old age, or because he is now closer to what happens there and has a clearer view, the man himself is filled with suspicion and fear, and he now takes account and examines whether he has wronged anyone. If he finds many sins in his own life, he awakes from sleep in terror, as children do, and he lives with the expectation of 331 evil. However, the man who knows he has not sinned has a sweet and good hope as his constant companion, a nurse to his old age, as Pindar too puts it. The poet has expressed this charmingly, Socrates, that whoever lives a just and pious life

Sweet is the hope that nurtures his heart,
companion and nurse to his old age,
a hope which governs the rapidly changing thoughts of mortals.

This is wonderfully well said. It is in this connection that I would say that wealth has its greatest value, not for everyone but for a good and well-balanced man. Not to have lied to or deceived anyone even unwillingly, not to depart yonder in fear, owing either sacrifices to a god or money to a man: to this wealth makes a great contribution. It has many other uses, but benefit for benefit I would say that its greatest usefulness lies in this for an intelligent man, Socrates. b

Beautifully spoken, Cephalus, said I, but are we to say that justice or right⁶ is simply to speak the truth and to pay back any debt one may have contracted? Or are these same actions sometimes right and sometimes wrong? I mean this sort of thing, for example: everyone would surely agree that if a friend has deposited weapons with you when c

6. It should be kept in mind throughout the *Republic* that the Greek word *dikaio*s and the noun *dikaio*syne are often used, as here, in a much wider sense than our word “just” and “justice” by which we must usually translate them. They then mean “right” or “righteous,” i.e. good conduct in relation to others, and the opposite *adikia* then has the general sense of wrongdoing.