

PHILOSOPHY-IN-DRAMA SERIES



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Sean O'Connell

VOLUME V

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O'Connell, Sean, 1944-

Plato's retreat : a play in
two acts

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PHILOSOPHY-IN-DRAMA SERIES

VOLUME V

PLATO'S RETREAT

FORTHCOMING IN THIS SERIES:

VOLUME III Neecheemoos and Inuspi

VOLUME IV Winter at Delphi

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED:

VOLUME I Cartesian Dreams

VOLUME II Lives and Evils



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PLATO'S RETREAT

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

by

SEAN O'CONNELL

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PHILOSOPHY-IN-DRAMA LEARNING SERIES

Volume V

PREFACE TO THE SERIES

The first great Western Philosopher and one to whom all others bow—if not in agreement then at least with reverence—wrote nearly all his works in quasi-dramatic form. Plato's dialogues are theatricalized conversations between his teacher Socrates and a host of adversaries, auditors, and associates. Although they were never intended to be pure dramas like those of Euripides or Aeschylus they do manifest a few dramatic elements of setting, plot, and character. While Plato's purpose was never to representatively portray human action or motivation, he certainly believed that dialectical exchange was not only the highest level of philosophical activity and the best philosophical method but quite evidently the best medium of exhibiting and explaining abstract philosophical concepts, theories, and arguments. Other stellar philosophers, most notably David Hume and George Berkeley, seem to have agreed with Plato on this point.

On the other hand great playwrights appear to be exploring perennial philosophical concerns in a purely theatrical medium and in a non-didactic way. Plato, Hume, and Berkeley want to edify and persuade with discursive reasoning while dramatists want to express and explore with theatrical devices. But what the dramatists express and explore, mainly, are traditional problems in philosophy: moral, political, and metaphysical problems experienced in existentially specific plots and characters.

In my brief and undistinguished career as an actor I did roles in Shakespeare, Ibsen, and Miller. I noticed that although these and other authors were not doing philosophy they were undeniably preoccupied with philosophical dilemmas and issues. Questions about personal identity, ethics, rationality, religious faith, political authority, gender politics, and epistemology are raised and dramatically investigated in these three writers and countless others who write in the same genre.

The five plays in this series represent my attempt to synthesize the aspirations of pure philosophy and the aspirations of pure drama at some level that transcends and incorporates each of them. What first moved me to make this attempt was a remark by the German Romantic philosopher Schelling that Art is the organ of Philosophy. Nietzsche augmented Schelling's insight when he said "The more abstract the truth that you would teach the more you have to seduce the senses to it." These remarks gave me two related reasons for combining philosophy and drama.

What did Schelling mean when he said that art is the organ of philosophy? He probably meant that art is the best medium or tool available to philosophy for asking and answering its questions. If this *is* what he meant then most philosophers would find the remark either scandalous or naïve. The instrument or medium is of course reason and conceptual analysis, not imagination and aesthetic expression. That is why Aristotle's magnificent system of logic is titled *The Organon*. *The Organon* describes the methodological *tool* with which philosophers must carry out their operations of constructive and destructive argumentation. The *organon* (instrument) is logic, and logic is a formal system of precisely defined rules for valid and cogent reasoning.

How, then, can art be the organ of philosophy? If Schelling is right then most philosophers must be wrong when they describe what they think they are supposed to be doing when they are doing philosophy.

In one way or another the five plays in this series end up on Schelling's side. Each play somehow agrees that philosophy's traditional canons of logic have been and *ought* to have been displaced by some other canon (probably though not necessarily an aesthetic one). Schelling's view has attracted some impressive company. Logical Positivists and their contemporary descendants, existentialists, and pragmatists agree at least that classical philosophy made promises it did not and *could* not keep. And scores of loosely called post-philosophical, post-modern thinkers believe what poets, playwrights, novelists, painters, composers, and so on, have assumed all along: the deep puzzles and mysteries traditionally confronted by philosophy simply do not yield to deductive reason. Perhaps they do not yield to anything. Perhaps they can only be expressed and explored aesthetically. Their agonies can be transmitted—imaginatively, emotionally—in formalist or representational ways without ever being resolved.

What did Nietzsche mean? He undoubtedly would have agreed with the spirit of Schelling's proposal but his claim goes beyond Schelling's. Nietzsche agrees that philosophy must find a new form of expression and a new medium of investigation but he extends his claim to *teaching*. The more abstract the truth that *you* would *teach*, he says, the more you have to seduce the senses to it. The senses can be seduced in many ways but paramount of all these ways for Nietzsche is *art*. And art, says Picasso, is the lie that helps us recognize the truth. To appease Nietzsche, Picasso should not have said *the* truth but *your* truth.

Still, the main consideration is pedagogical. Art is our most powerful teacher—something Plato recognized long ago.

Prompted by Schelling and Nietzsche, I have tried to simultaneously accomplish two things in these five plays. I have sought to produce dramatic philosophy and philosophical drama. I mean, I hope to have produced in all five plays something which will stand on its own aesthetically, independent of its pedagogical value, *and* on the other hand I hope that each play will reflect Plato's desire to reproduce the dry processes and results of philosophical preoccupations in a lively, entertaining medium. Hence if the plays succeed they will be decent art containing philosophy and they will be decent instruction in philosophy presented artistically.

Cartesian Dreams was my first attempt at playwriting. This was followed by *Lives and Evils*, then by *Neecheemoos and Inuspi* and then by *Winter at Delphi*. *Plato's Retreat* was written last in the series. On completing *Lives and Evils* I detected an increasing didacticism in that play compared to *Cartesian Dreams*. *Neecheemoos and Inuspi* represents a conscious reversal back to the pronounced aestheticism of the first play. This attempt to balance pedagogical and aesthetic interests has brought to light what is now for me the greatest challenge in writing, namely, to heartily endorse Schelling's dictum and Nietzsche's mortifying demand. If it is true that the more abstract the idea the more sensuous must be its representation then the task of representing the most abstract ideas must be an impossible one. Abstraction and aesthetic sensuality seem to be antipodes: like a negative correlation, each factor seems to recede as the other increases. Finding a synthesis of abstraction and sensuality, of didacticism and aestheticism, has been

the source of my greatest despair and my greatest delight. I have published some pure philosophy and some pure poetry. Each of course has its own peculiar demands and difficulties. Neither, however, presents the challenge of poeticized philosophy. I trust I have overcome these challenges to some degree, at least to the extent that the abstract and the didactic do not lose their conceptual sharpness and logical rigor when they are transduced into poetry and that the sensual and poetic do not lose their aesthetic charm and artistic expressiveness when they are laced with logic.

Indeed, I still do not know if *Cartesian Dreams* floated into my awareness as philosophy theatricalized or as theatre with philosophical content. Descartes, struggling with his doubts about whether or not his senses might be deceiving him, suddenly presented himself as a perfect character for drama. I knew that he belonged in theatre (perhaps vaudeville), as did the quirky Queen Christina of Sweden. How could a writer *not* put these two absurd, comedic, and tragic characters on stage together? So I did and most of my students loved it. I was hoping they would read *Cartesian Dreams* in order to better understand Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* but to my surprise many of them read Descartes in order to better understand my play. At that point my project was born.

Truthfully, I thought I was just appropriating two brilliant and fascinating historical characters from the world of letters for the purposes of art. As the play slid off the tip of my pencil, however, I realized that its two lead protagonists were locked as much in philosophical labor as they were in love's toil and turmoil. Art and philosophy were inseparable from the outset.

Lives and Evils is much less theatrical than *Cartesian Dreams*. It was consciously written for teaching purposes, inadvertently sacrificing aesthetic intensity to pedagogical practicality. It was in writing this second play that I became fully conscious of the tension between didacticism and aestheticism: the excluded middle of either/or became a tantalizing temptation (since neither/nor is not in my vocabulary). The project was almost abandoned: either art or philosophy but not both. But Nietzsche, whom I damn and praise in his incendiary brilliance and prodigious febrile talent, kept taunting me. The result was *Neecheemoos and Inuspi*. I set out to write this play with the extreme aestheticism of *Cartesian Dreams* in mind and the reactionary didacticism of *Lives and Evils* in mind. I had hoped to write a play which in being read or viewed would leave pedagogy and art indistinguishable. I thought I had fusion. But readers of *Neecheemoos and Inuspi* (which, I add, is my favorite play of the five) frequently said they did not know what the play was "about". Evidently I did not have the synthesis I thought I had. Consequently, of the two plays before it and the two after it *Neecheemoos and Inuspi* was the only play to have thoroughly rewritten so it would be more "about" something studied in philosophy courses. *Plato's Retreat* was gutted and rewritten so it would be less "about" something. All in all I believe that in each play the no-man's land on the terrain of excluded middle between 'either' and 'or' was stormed and bridged from opposite directions. After *Neecheemoos and Inuspi* came *Winter at Delphi*, a strange mix of classical mythology, grand opera, burlesque, and the foundations of philosophy—not to mention philosophy's justification. Philosophy is actually put on trial in Athens. *Winter at*

Delphi and the re-write of *Plato's Retreat* were both (I trust) written while I was camped on the Lawn of Included Middle—something demanded by Art but prohibited by Logic.

Two features strike me as I review the evolution and content of these plays.

First, I make few philosophical assertions of my own in the first two plays but more through the last three. *Cartesian Dreams* and *Lives and Evils* are philosophically inconclusive. They chart philosophical territory but no claim is staked. By the end of *Winter at Delphi* and even more clearly by the end of *Plato's Retreat* I give the philosophical content of the play an authorial stamp of approval or rejection. I make no apologies for that. It means only that whether or not my conclusions in philosophy are interesting I am increasingly using art as a medium for constructing my own philosophical judgements.

Second, and far more interesting, is the fact that all these plays are at bottom about love. If there were one thread to make a quilt of these plays it would be love. If find it astonishing and you will find it unbelievable that it was never my intention in *any* of these plays to write a love story. They just fell into place that way. Descartes and Christina are mystified by love as they discuss metaphysics; Plato and Erothymia are consumed by love while working out a theory of justice; Neecheemoos sips nightly love potions with the man she loves while raising questions about the epistemological foundations of the European civilization that displaced her own; a fallen gay priest ponders the mysteries of love and lust while teaching theodicies, and so on. This thematic continuity, though, is not as interesting or

significant as the then-unconscious thoughts which caused it. Certainly the plays can be read at one level as love stories and nothing more. I have to ask myself, however, why these different plays on such diverse topics as the mind-body problem and the problem of evil should all have been plotted around love. The answer is found in the leading female character in each play.

Over its two-and-a-half-thousand year history philosophy has been a labor of reason. Systematic logical and conceptual methods have been deployed by philosophy in its assault on mystery. Arbitrarily, the official beginning of philosophy has been set around 585 BCE, when the polymath genius Thales asked questions about the first principle of the universe. He asked a stunningly original question in what we now call metaphysics. Equally stunning, though, was the way he answered it. He asked "What is the *arche*?" What is the basic stuff, or cosmic substance, underlying and supporting the multifarious, changing things we witness with our senses? What is the unchanging *reality* out of which the world was made that supports the *appearances* it generates? Thales is identified as the first philosopher because he tried to answer his question not by going to oracles, not by repeating Greek myths or traditions, not by consulting poets, but by constructing logical arguments based on public evidence. He used *objective* evidence available to everyone to form a conclusion testable by anyone according to rational criteria. Mainstream philosophy since then has furthered Thales' ambitions by using impartial, objective, rational methods to answer the most basic questions about the universe and the place of humans in it. Was the universe created? If so what was the agent of creation? Do humans possess a non-physical

aspect which can survive bodily death in a disembodied state? If so, how is that aspect connected to our bodily aspect and what happens to it after it is disconnected? If not, what is a mind and a person? What are the limits of what we can know? What is the best possible life? What are the best rules to abide by collectively to maximize goodness in our lives? Who should make and enforce these rules?

A most startling fact about the labor of reason is that until very recently it has been carried almost entirely by men. Even skeptical critiques of reason (themselves eminently reasonable) have come almost exclusively from men. Explaining why this is so requires deep and careful thinking that goes far beyond jejune feminist notions of 'oppression' and so on. I shall not pursue any explanation here. I only wish to notice that the history of philosophy has been the history of reason at work on puzzles, questions, and mysteries beyond the scope of natural or social science and the most enduring and important work in this area has until recently been done by men.

The fact is that male philosophers, great and not-so-great, have largely neither understood women nor have they enthusiastically courted their advice in metaphysics and epistemology. Even Plato in his qualified argument for gender equality thought of capable women as diminutive men. Aristotle thought of them as rationally defective. Greek culture, however, wisely made a female Goddess the patron of Wisdom. And philosophy is the love of *that*.

I ended up with love stories in all five plays and I note with surprise that each plot pivots around a strong female character who, while not perfect, has something more to teach the male character than he has to

teach her. Usually she has to teach him that rationality has its limits. Christina, Sophie, Neecheemoos, Erothymia, and Athena all share a deep respect for the potent instrumental efficacy of logic and science. Not one of them is foolish enough to deny objective reason its rightful and demonstrated value as a distinctly human capacity. But each assigns reason to a subordinate or at least cooperative role in relation to the other distinctly human powers that each of us must bring to bear on the issues and questions pressing upon our human subjectivity.

I could speculate on why this insistence on limiting rationality comes consistently from women but I would prefer to let the female characters speak for themselves. I would note only that these anti-Platonic and anti-Cartesian women speak their minds to Plato, Descartes, and others from an eventual position of clarity and strength. Moreover they speak from *love* to men they regard as rare heroic geniuses. Misguided geniuses, perhaps, with their devotion to logic in metaphysics, but rare and heroic nonetheless. There is no doubt that all these women love intensely and that by each play's conclusion they are powerful, centered, competent women. There is equally no doubt that their clear and solid love is what eventually leads their philosophically overweighted men to stances which reason could not provide them. In some cases the female characters must first discover or possibly *recover* their wholeness as *women* before they can guide their intellectual titans. Christina and Erothymia must first demonstrate their intellectual superiority—after all they are squaring off with Plato and Descartes. Having planted their feet solidly on *terra firma feminae* Erothymia and Christina then fertilize but sharply delineate their love's logic, supplementing but not displacing reason

with powers and capacities formerly feared and misunderstood by both Plato and Descartes.

I believe that their fear and misunderstanding of lust, love, and passion led Plato and Descartes to unintentionally write some of the most comical material in the history of western Philosophy on those subjects. Descartes on the passions is hilarious. That is because while he probably loved a few women and respected most others he never understood them and so never learned a thing from them. Why is it that for Descartes the mind-body problem is metaphysical while for Christina it devolves around what to wear: a bikini or a suit of armor? And why is it, in *Lives and Evils* that Sophie is more concerned to hold the philosopher's hand while he dies of AIDS than to solve the theoretical problem of evil and suffering?

Whatever the answer, the central female characters in these plays do not want to become imitative duplicates of the men they love nor *would* they even if they wanted to. They *add* something distinctive to masculine philosophy. They do not usurp or belittle it nor do they capitulate to it. They supplement it and in so doing modify it. With this aspect of my plays I am extremely happy. To ignore women like Christina, Sophie, Neecheemoos, Athena, and Erothymia will leave philosophy arrested and deformed. I love each of these intriguing women—they have in common some superlative qualities for which I have nothing but reverence. I would happily be led and loved by any one of them, although to me the most fascinating of the five is Neecheemoos.

Neecheemoos, which means 'dear one' or 'sweetheart' in Cree, incarnates thousands of years of windswept wisdom in her aboriginal

hair and blood. She is illiterate but glowingly intelligent and intuitively profound. She knows nothing about science, logic, economics, or arts and letters. Moreover she doesn't need or want to. She just loves Inuspi and his strange European ways. She knows that Inuspi (the Cree name for her Irish husband) is ill and that his sickness is nothing less than western civilization itself—the very sickness which eventually killed her. She possessed, in Inuspi's words, "the most beautiful heart that was ever broken". She represents the aboriginal spirit and culture that was violently uprooted and displaced by European colonialism and its attendant evils of greed, cultural imperialism, environmental degradation, technical domination, and spiritual scholasticism. Her remarkable femininity, unadorned by rhetoric and academic pettifoggery, is an unwavering indictment of western epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and politics. Inuspi, as well-intentioned and as far ahead of his time as he was, realizes too late that everything he needs to cure himself of his pathology went with Neecheemoos to her grave. If western philosophy had only one of the five female characters to listen to I think it should be Neecheemoos. She could barely speak English, and Inuspi spoke in halting Cree, so together they invented a new language (and with it a new state of mind), the language of the love-land Keyamawisiwin, in which the western categories of capitalistic acquisition, sin, egotism, institutionalization (of law, medicine, education, and religion), and repression dissolve into the informal tribalistic laws of happiness engendered from the earth, the heart, the genitals, and when it is appropriate the head. Male philosophers and those female philosophers who are trying to become what male

philosophers should no longer be ought to take a deep draught of Neecheemoos's potion Okimawask: that-by-means-of-which-we-love-each-other. The ingredients of Okimawask are a secret known only by women.

PLATO'S RETREAT: INTRODUCTION

Alfred North Whitehead's remark that Western Philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato has been repeatedly quoted to the point of tedium. Nonetheless, it remains true that Plato set the agenda for western philosophical discourse: he defined its goals and ideals, he set its problems, and he imparted to subsequent philosophers the central world-view with which they had to contend. Even the Presocratic period looks like a number of conceptual strands waiting to be woven into a systematic whole by Plato.

Erothymia is Plato's greatest challenge. She is the wild, passionately sensual, hyper-intelligent woman who dethrones the essentials of Platonism and who, if she had loved Plato in history as she did in *Plato's Retreat*, would probably have steered Western Philosophy onto another course.

Plato's Retreat is the name of a defunct New York sex club where swingers gathered for public consensual eroticism in every conceivable mode and combination. Erothymia is Plato's "retreat" in almost that sense. She also provides a "retreat" in the sense that writers have a retreat or religious seekers make a retreat. In the end she provides a sanctuary for Plato's floundering logic, which she herself assaulted and immobilized. Finally, she led Plato's "retreat" from Sicily, a tactical retreat in the military sense, which preserved Plato's resources for other winnable political battles on the field of reason.

Plato's Retreat should be read alongside one of Plato's most important dialogues, *The Republic*. This is the first major treatise on social and political philosophy (and much else besides) in western history. For

some, it is still the last word. One thing is certain though: no student of philosophy can ignore it. It is also the best single introduction written by Plato to his own philosophical system. And somehow, it touches on every major problem in philosophy.

The Republic is an inquiry into the nature and value of communal and individual justice. It asks in Ten Books what principles and structures form the best possible, happiest society and the best possible, happiest person, and tries to prove that just societies and persons are always happier than unjust ones. The treatise opens, significantly, with what seems to be an idle conversation between an old man (Cephalus) and the central character in all Plato's dialogues (Socrates). Socrates questions Cephalus about his views on carnal *pleasure* and its role in an emotionally/cognitively/spiritually prosperous life. Cephalus replies that many of his old-aged friends bemoan the loss of those pleasures—what would have been the ancient equivalent of sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll—but that he himself is relieved to be freed from their tyranny. Cephalus makes an interesting argument: if sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll are the elements of the good life, then as their attraction and pleasure fade it should follow that old people would become unhappy. *He* is old but he is not unhappy, hence the loss of carnal pleasures cannot be the cause of unhappiness in old age. Such loss would cause unhappiness only for those who wrongly believed, in the first place, they were the primary elements of a good life. So it is how well you lived your life—and not the amount of carnal pleasure it contained—that makes old age bearable.

Cephalus also notes that *wealth* does not make him happy. When asked what kind of a life he lived to make his old age bearable,

Cephalus replies that he tried to be a moderate, decent man, honest and fair in his dealings with others. You must mean you were a *just* man, says Socrates, and an inquiry into the essence and value of justice begins. Cephalus departs, leaving the debate open for the more agile and philosophically astute minds of Thrasymachus and Glaucon.

This opening passage is very telling. It informs us that this one life of ours will someday end in death. We must all ask while we live it what will make it good, purposeful, worthwhile. We must all ask whether or not huge amounts of sensual pleasure and money will make it good. Plato later forces us to ask the same question about fame. Cephalus has suggested that while sex, money, and fame are undeniably sources of pleasure there may be other *kinds* of pleasure more lasting and more central to the good life, a theme Plato will make central to the argument of *The Republic*.

Throughout the remainder of Book One, many attempts are made by a number of speakers to define justice. All of them collapse under Socrates' penetrating *elenchus* (examination, inquiry). In Book Two a powerful argument is laid out by Glaucon, so powerful that the remaining eight books of *The Republic* are devoted to refuting it. I will return to this presently. All I want to say at this point is that the entire argument is constructed on Plato's vision of the *kallipolis* (the "finest" or "most beautiful" kind of state). *Plato's Retreat* is written around Plato's actual attempt to actualize the ideas in his *Republic*.

Plato sailed three times to the Sicilian City-state (*polis*) of Syracuse at the invitation of its ruler, where he hoped to organize the state's constitution around his theory of justice. This play is set during his

first trip. Three renowned members of Plato's Academy—his prestigious centre of learning in Athens—are with him. They are Eudoxus (an astronomer/ mathematician), Speusippus (a biologist) and Xenocrates (a legal theorist). Each represents a contending place in *The Republic's* argument: Plato wants to find a functional niche for each of them in his society. It is not until Plato thoroughly encounters the fiery, mesmerizing Erothymia that the conversational play takes a dramatic turn and Plato's argument is undone. In actual fact, Plato's three attempts to found the ideal society ended in failure. And in actual fact, Erothymia never existed. The premise of my play is that the attempts to found the Republic in Sicily were bound to fail *because* Plato underestimated everything Erothymia represents. His reply to Glaucon (represented in the play by Erothymia) is plain wrong. Erothymia proves it in fiction, but Plato's failure proved it in Sicily.

We will have to understand Plato's unified argument before seeing where it goes wrong. It is a brilliant but lengthy argument which I shall try to condense at my own peril. It begins soon after Cephalus exits.

The dominant question is: Do just people have a better life than unjust people, or is it the other way around? This question cannot be answered until we know what justice really is, because our concept of justice will mold and color every estimate of its value. What, then, is the correct account or theory of justice? Plato carefully lays out two popular theories of justice he thinks are disastrously wrong.

Today we would see it as catastrophic if these two theories were indeed wrong, because one or the other of them is identical to pretty well everyone's reflective account of the nature and therefore the value

of justice, whether they are aware of it or not. So if these portrayals of justice are catastrophically wrong then the general view of how to live and what to live for would also be catastrophically wrong, to the point that nearly everyone is wasting his or her life.

The single most essential point common to both these popular theories is this: nothing is just or unjust until it is said to be so *by someone*. There are no rules of just and unjust, of rightness and wrongness, until someone makes them. Rules of right and wrong are not discovered, but constructed. Plato calls this the conventionalist view of justice. Nothing is good or right or just by *physis* (by nature), only by *nomos* (by convention). Like the rules of football, they are strictly arbitrary. Nothing is legal or illegal in football until some rule declares that it is and the same goes for social and legal rules. It therefore makes no sense to ask if the rule is good or bad on other grounds, since the rule itself *defines* what is good or bad.

This conventionalist account horrified Plato. It entails that the rules defining right and wrong, good and bad, just and unjust, legal and illegal, are free to vary according to the whim and will of the rule makers, dictated only by the rule-maker's interest. This is exactly what Thrasymachus thinks with his might-makes-right theory. He argues that the strongest define what is just, enforcing the rules they make to their own advantage. They don't make the rules because the rules are just; the rules are just simply because the mighty say they are. The justness of the rules cannot be established by criteria *independent* of the rules themselves because the rules themselves define justness. This means that standards of justice are completely *relative* to where they are made, and by whom. If one group of rule-makers says polygamy

is right then it is right for everyone within the domain of the rule-maker's influence. If another rule-maker says it is wrong, then it is wrong within *that* rule-maker's domain of influence. The best life, under this view, is that in which one acquires and keeps the power to make self-serving rules.

Glaucon has an even more compelling conventionalist theory of justice. In his account, the rules are not made by a small group of the strongest to its own advantage but by all of us to our *personal* advantage. His social contract theory of justice, now widely adopted by serious philosophers, is what Plato attacks throughout *The Republic*.

Glaucon's fundamental premise is that each one of us wants to maximize our own pleasure and minimize pain. We all seek our own advantage at the expense of others. We are all driven by an innate competitive drive to get more than, or "outdo", others in the pursuit of what we take to be our own pleasurable advantage. The good we seek is the satisfaction of our selfish desires. We are all in the same position, however, so we all know that everyone else is seeking their own advantage at our expense—everyone else is willing to inflict harm on me to get what they want (money, power, fame, sexual compliance, etc.) just as much as I am willing to inflict harm on them, if I can get away with it, to get what I want. The ideal situation would be for each of us to get all we want for ourselves without paying the price of being harmed by others in return, but (most important) all of us would much rather *avoid* being harmed by others in their pursuit of what they want than to *achieve* inflicting harm on others in the pursuit of our personal advantage. The badness of being harmed far outweighs the goodness of inflicting it. Since we are all in the same situation, and

everyone knows it, we are all in a position of mutual constraint. I realize I would be better off if you agree not to hurt me while I pursue my own interests, and you realize you would be better off if I agree not to hurt you while you pursue yours, so we both make a deal, in our mutual interest, not to harm each other. This is a tacit bargain, an intuitive contractual compromise, which puts brakes on each other's self serving desires, allowing each of us to get some of what we want while avoiding what we most don't want. Whatever bargain we strike, whatever contract we make for the joint conduct of our lives will be a set of rules that together define what is just and unjust. We will also agree on what the penalty will be for breaking the rules.

Of course, it would be to my advantage to break the rules whenever I can as long as I don't get caught and pay the penalty. Glaucon thinks each of us would do this if we could, and we would be better off if we could. It would be better to be unjust, but undetected. Glaucon's "proof" of this is drawn from a comparison of two extremes. Compare, he says, two pure cases: the perfectly unjust (lawless) man thought to be just and the perfectly just (law-abiding) man thought to be unjust. He claims the unjust man would be completely happy, the just one completely miserable. This shows that it is the fear of unpleasant consequences *alone* that keeps us more or less just, not any respect for justice. Remove the bad consequences and we would all be unjust.

Plato has the formidable task of proving Glaucon wrong. Glaucon's theory of the *nature* of justice is totally wrong, Plato argues, and his theory of the *value* of justice is consequently spectacularly wrong. If Glaucon only knew what the real essence of justice was—as Plato

believes he does—he would see that a just life, even if it is perceived by others to be unjust, is the happiest, most superior life.

Plato proposes that we examine someone who is “perfectly good” and thereby read off the nature of justice from his goodness. It would be simpler, though, to first scrutinize a perfectly good society to see what justice is and then return to the good individual. (Plato thinks the essence of justice will be the same in societies and individuals, but it would be easier to discern in larger social terms). If the society is perfectly good it would exhibit the four cardinal virtues of Wisdom, Courage, Moderation and Justice. His proposal is to mentally map out the structure of the ideal society, find the virtues of Wisdom, Courage, and Moderation in it, and then analyze whatever excellence remains. That would be Justice.

The best society would be one in which everyone co-operated to help everyone else satisfy simple needs. Human needs are not all simple, however, so many different trades and professions will be necessary to provide for everyone’s luxurious needs. A luxurious city would be at risk of invasion, so a military class would have to be formed to protect it (and to invade other lands when it is necessary for the maintenance of luxury). In addition to that, business and trade would have to be regulated within the city-state—something the military class would also have to do. But who decides when the military class will go to war? Who decides what the business rules and regulations will be? Someone has to govern. Plato therefore creates a third ruling class in addition to the working-producing class and the fighting-enforcing class.

In the best society wisdom will be found in the ruling class, because the natural function of reason is to wisely guide and regulate the lower passions and appetites as well as the fighting spirit. For the appetite or the militant aspect of a society to control the part that naturally deliberates, knows, and makes regulations would be absurd. The ideal society would put the wise and knowing part in charge. Courage, in a well-ordered society, would be manifest in the warrior class—the one whose job it is to protect, to invade, and to enforce the state's internal laws made by the wise and knowledgeable rulers. Moderation (also described as self-control) is a kind of discipline which consists primarily in the willingness of the working and military classes to be ruled by the decisions and regulations of the rulers and, equally, in the willingness of the rulers to wisely exercise their power to govern. So it is a simultaneous submission to authority by the ruled and imposition of legitimate authority by the rulers.

Justice is also a quality exhibited by the composite state and not by one of its three classes. Justice, in its original Greek sense, is a condition of lawfulness and orderliness in the relation among elements in a whole. In a just, orderly system the whole functions efficiently because each of its elements functions efficiently, doing what it is supposed to do and doing it well. In a justly organized system all the elements are coordinated under some regulating principle, and each element does its own proper task without interfering with or usurping the work of another element. Plato is unwavering in his insistence that everyone should do the work they do best and only that work. In his *kallipolis* the working class limits itself to its own proper work (this includes all exchanges of goods and

services for money, so the working class is not just composed of cobblers, bakers, farmers, etc., but also doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, etc.). The fighting class does nothing but prepare to fight and engage in policing. The rulers only rule and deliberate. This means above all, that the workers and soldiers do not have the right or power to rule. Nor do they have any voice in who will be picked to rule. Plato thinks that for the ruled to select the rulers is absurd, rather like school children deciding who will do the teaching or patients voting for who will do the doctoring. This argument is premised on Plato's anti-democratic assertion that people are naturally *unequal* when it comes to *innate intelligence, talent, and character*. Obviously, no innate qualities will ever come to fruition without careful, knowledgeable guidance—hence Plato's obsessions with education—but no amount of nurture will alter innate nature. Large numbers of people are born with talents and dispositions for working in the trades and professions and consuming the goods produced from their labor. These are the masses. A smaller number have the rarer qualities of extreme courage, endurance, intelligence, and prowess necessary to protect the interests of the masses and to execute the directions of the rulers. The very best of the military class are qualified to become rulers. By “very best” Plato means the most intelligent, the most educated, and the most virtuous: the rulers would have to be moral saints, geniuses, and polymaths all at once.

Justice requires that everyone perform the function they are best suited to perform. Since talent, intelligence, and character are not distributed equally not everyone can rule, not everyone can fight, and not everyone can work. Plato draws two fascinating corollaries to this:

if you are not fit for a job, you *cannot* do it; if you are fit for a job, you *must* do it. This includes women fit for the military and for ruling. It also includes parenting: only those who are fit to raise children will be required to do so.

Suppose you were going to take an airplane trip to Europe. You discover on boarding that the airline has a new policy: the mechanics will be allowed to fly the plane, the pilots and navigators will serve the wine, and the flight attendants will service the engine (which was designed by the baggage handlers). Would you get on this airplane? Of course not. Again, would you get on an airplane whose captain was *elected* by the passengers on the basis of speeches, promises, and advertising? Again, of course not. You would want an experienced captain who has *proven to experts* that he or she is qualified to a very high standard to be captain. The captain would have to prove that he is intelligent, that he knows more about aerodynamics and aeronautical engineering than everyone else on the aircraft, that he is decisive and cool in emergencies, that his judgments are sound, that he can inspire respect and obedience from the crew, that he inspires confidence in the passengers, and that once he has demonstrated all these other things, he is supremely good at taking off, cruising, and landing airplanes. A well ordered, justly regulated aircraft requires that it be run by a captain of superior talent, knowledge, and virtue and that the captain does *nothing but* command. The just state is no different.

Plato argues forcefully that ruling is a *techne*. The English words 'technique' and 'technical' come from this Greek root. These words suggest that good ruling is a craft requiring expertise and technical knowledge, just like airline piloting, doctoring, or carpentry. *Techne*

is sometimes translated as 'art', but to Plato 'art' would have meant 'skill', and skill is technical expertise at something. Hence, if ruling is a *techne*, then no one can rule except those who have proven themselves to possess an unsurpassable amount of aptitude for it. They must somehow demonstrate through a series of progressively more demanding tests over a period of fifty years that they are the finest of the finest. If there were a Nobel Prize for statesmanship, leadership, and legislative wisdom, only the winners would be candidates for ruling.

The rulers in the ideal state would have to demonstrate exceptional intellectual gifts. They would also have to be exceptionally superior in virtue—virtuous in self-control, courage, justice and wisdom to the highest degree. They would have received the most complete and rigorous education possible in the arts and sciences. And they would have demonstrated an unusual talent for leadership and diplomacy after a fifteen-year apprenticeship in managing different civic departments. If, and only if, a man's or woman's talents and gifts are proven by objective tests to be at the highest level of superiority would they be asked to rule. They would agree to rule not for money, power, or fame, but because they know that in a just society they have an obligation to do so. In a just society the best must rule, and this means the wisest, the most knowledgeable, the smartest, and the most skilled at the *techne* of ruling. A society is completely just, says Plato, when the state is governed by a Philosopher King or Queen, when wisdom rules and rulers are wise.

How is wisdom proven? Plato's answer raises the most controversial theory in his corpus of thought (indeed, the most controversial theory

in the history of philosophy). His answer forms the heart of his system, a heart broken by Erothymia. That heart was his Theory of Forms.

The concept of wisdom contains many elements. A wise person has considerable experience in living and learning (even though experienced and learned people are not always wise). They also have unusual practical insight—a hefty dose of common sense about what is strategically sensible, what is appropriate to what, what is fair, and so on. But again, insightfulness is not always a guarantee of wisdom. Wisdom is made complete by *knowledge*. The wise man or woman knows something that most people don't know, and the wisest man or woman has *more* knowledge at the *highest* level than anyone else does. The wisest person knows what is most real.

Three Books of *The Republic* are devoted to a Theory of Reality (metaphysics) and an aligned Theory of Knowledge (epistemology). In these two interdependent theories Plato uses his favorite recurrent metaphor, that of a hierarchical scale or ladder. He locates everything on some scaled progression from least to most, lowest to highest: love, justice, pleasure, goodness and (most importantly) knowledge and reality. His hierarchy of reality is a scale of Being (one could also say Perfection). The ascending scale from least real to most real is divided in half. The lowest half is populated by the familiar world of empirical objects, the world of appearances known through sense experience. It is a constantly changing and impermanent world of separate material things in space and time. It is imperfect because it is material, since material things are subject to alteration and eventual decomposition. Opposed to it on the upper half of the line is the non-material, more real heaven of permanent immutable Forms. The Forms are the

timelessly unchanging realities which provide the ground for all being, value, and knowledge. The most perfect Form of all is the Form of the Good, which, if it had creative power and person-like characteristics, would be something like the God of Christianity: that which is the source of all lesser being(s) and that into which all lesser being is ultimately absorbed.

Plato's division is really a separation of reality into the two categories of the empirically known *natural* world and the rationally known *supernatural* world. The first is populated by mutable material objects that are imperfect manifestations of the perfect immutable, immaterial objects called Forms. Plato gives this example. There are numerous sensed instances of beautiful things, actions, and states-of-affairs in the natural world. We are able to identify these multiple instances as beautiful in some imperfect degree because there is an unchanging universal essence of Beauty, which imparts the quality of Beauty to them. This is the Form of Beauty, from which the many more or less beautiful things in the sensed world derive their nature. There is only one standard of Beauty but many beautiful things.

Every instance of knowledge must have something that is known *about*; all knowledge has a reference—the object of what is known. The more perfect the object of knowledge is, the more the knowledge is perfect, similarly with the less perfect. If what is known is shifting, insubstantial, and imperfect the level of knowledge will be correspondingly shifting, insubstantial, and imperfect. In fact, Plato does not call thinking at the lowest level knowledge at all. He calls it *mere opinion*—thinking that something is real as opposed to knowing that it is not. As his famous parable of the cave shows,

thinking at such a low level is a kind of imprisonment, the senses being the jailer.

The complete wisdom of the ruler, then, includes knowing the transcendental Forms. This gives the ruler the exclusive authority to make laws, rules, and policies for the benefit of the ruled, because in knowing the Form of Justice the ruler knows better than anyone else what best regulates a happy, integrated society.

Plato argues that each individual *psyche* (soul) is made up of parts homologous with the three social classes. The biggest part of the soul is the irrational appetitive part, driven by powerful blind desires for carnal pleasure. This part does not think, it just wants. The finest part of the soul, the part that is divine and immortal, is the rational part. This part calculates, deliberates, and knows, so its role is to govern and direct the appetites. Between the rational part and the appetitive part is the third part called the spirited part. It can variously be described as Will, Temperament, or Passion. Like an obedient, well-trained constabulary in a smoothly functioning society, it executes and enforces the directions of the ruling deliberative part. The complete human psyche is thus a composite of three things, loosely describable as Body, Mind, and Spirit. Wisdom resides in the mind, courage in the spirit, moderation in the submission of body and spirit to the mind, and justice in the non-interference of each part in the proper functioning of the others so that the soul functions as a unified whole rather than a disunited clash of warring parts.

Now Plato is in a position to reply to Glaucon. Having provided an account of the essence of justice radically different than Glaucon's, he

argues that a just life, communally and individually, is qualitatively and intrinsically better than any unjust one. The virtue of justice, he will show, is its own reward. Then he will try to demonstrate in a crowning argument that a just life will ultimately bring infinitely greater rewards as well, even if those rewards do not come to us in our brief mortal residence in this world. Plato develops these arguments with Glaucon's three-fold division of goods in mind.

Glaucon had asserted in Book Two that there are some things we would describe as good, but we would never desire them for their own sake. Painful medical treatments for example, would never be sought out unless they produced some consequential good. Their goodness is merely *instrumental*, for the sake of something else. Some goods are sought, however, not because they bring about some other good but simply for their own *intrinsic* goodness. Art and sex may be thought of as so intrinsically good that they are engaged in for no purpose beyond themselves. Obviously art may also be sold and sex may be engaged in to make babies, in which case they would be *mixed* goods, providing both instrumental and intrinsic goodness. Glaucon places justice in the first class, the *merely* instrumental class, claiming that no one would willingly be just unless it either promoted good consequences or circumvented bad ones. Plato does not agree, saying that justice is in the "finest" mixed class, good both in itself and for the sake of its consequences. He attempts to prove, first, that justice is intrinsically good.

The first argument exploits Plato's ladder metaphor. Imagine a ladder with five rungs. The lowest rung represents the most unjust person, the highest one the most just. In between are three more

gradations. Plato's portrait of the personality type occupying each run of the ladder of justice is stunning in its brilliance. His profile of the most unjust person is a chillingly accurate analysis of the criminally sociopathic personality: completely without reason, lawless, a slave to animal appetites and fantasies, and an abusive tyrant. The just person, at the other extreme, is an enlightened, morally sound lover of truth. Plato asks us to consider, on the basis of appearances alone, who has the better life. The sane verdict, he thinks, would consistently favor the most just person.

The second argument is generated from considerations about the differential quality of pleasures. Each part of the soul has its own unique desires, which in being satisfied yield their own quality of pleasure. The appetitive part desires the carnal pleasures associated with food, sex, drink, material things, and the aesthetic titillation of the senses. Because these pleasures can be easily obtained through the medium of money, Plato names it the money-loving part. The spirited part acquires its satisfaction through competition, free of monetary considerations. It loves the honor and fame that comes from heroic conquest. Courage and victory in war or in the Olympic games would be the pre-eminent circumstances in which the honor-loving part acquires its pleasures. The rational part of the soul desires truth and philosophical enlightenment. It does not love money or fame. This truth-loving part of the soul seeks knowledge and understanding for their own sake, experiencing its own peculiar satisfaction when it acquires them. Plato rightly claims that the money-lover will certify his own pleasure as the best, the honor-lover will say his is the best, while the truth-lover will make the same claim

for his. Who is in the best position to judge? Naturally, the person who has experienced all three kinds of pleasure. If those who have experienced of all three consistently judge the pleasures of science and philosophy to be qualitatively superior to the other two then that judgment must be accepted as authoritative. Plato believes that such judges do in fact render such a judgment about the pleasures of reason, so they must be better or “higher” pleasures. Further, since just people are ruled by their rational part, they must have qualitatively better lives than those ruled by spirit or appetite.

The third argument is based on how *real* pleasures are. The appetitive pleasures, in their endlessly renewable cycle, are unreal and illusory. A reduction in pleasure is painful but a reduction in pain is pleasurable. Hence, on the pleasure-pain continuum there is a midpoint where reduced pain and reduced pleasure intersect, and this point is contradictory mixture of both pleasure and pain, which is impossible. The rational pleasures, however, are stable and enduring, unaffected by chance and circumstance, because the *objects* of rational pleasure are timelessly permanent and unchanging. The pleasures of the mind are more real than those of the flesh or spirit. Again, the just person in whom the rational part is fully developed and in a regnant position is the happier person.

Plato deploys these three arguments to demonstrate the intrinsic goodness of justice. But he has further promised to prove that a just life also procures superior consequences. Here he takes Glaucon's argument head-on. He argues that whatever worldly benefit emerges from the practice of injustice is infinitely outweighed by its bad consequences in the world to come. There, virtue will be rewarded

eternally while vice will be punished a hundred times over. Then, exonerated from vice, the unjust person will have to be reborn until his soul is liberated from appetitive and spirited desires. The whole purpose of human life, it seems, is to reach the final blinding encounter with the Form of the Good and, freed from the bonds of worldly, bodily desire, to spend eternity in its blissful presence.

So goes the last of *The Republic's* arguments. These are the arguments forming Plato's blueprint for a new constitution in Syracuse. His first sailing provides the setting in which proponents of legal theory, metaphysics, mathematics, and biology engage in a dialectical struggle to formulate the principles and structures on which their kallipolis will be founded. *Plato's Retreat* opens on top of the active volcano Plato had put ashore enroute to investigate. "The forces of nature go deep," says Plato as they peer over the lip of the simmering crater. Plato knew they went deep, but he premised his argument on the belief that reason could plumb their depth and subdue their fury. My argument is that reason cannot do this. In historical fact, Plato's actual failure in Syracuse was due, I believe, to this weakness in his argument. Reason lacks the power to organize and govern the passions and appetites. It can't. Nor should it. This play concludes, in agreement with Hume, that "reason is *and ought to be* the slave of the passions." The only thing, I would say, that controls a passion or appetite is a stronger passion or appetite. Logic and abstract thought do not have the energy to force the conformity of passion and appetite to its dictates.

The only way I could see to refute Plato dramatically was to give to the female character Erothymia more rational capacity and more passionate intensity than Plato had. I believe only a woman with

greater intellectual gifts than those possessed by Plato could have caused him to relinquish his "Platonism". She had to prove to him first that he was *wrong*, but she engaged his passions in order to do so. I gave her a more nimble and sharper mind than Plato's but, significantly, I had to give Plato an expansive sensual appetite and boundless passion in order for Erothymia to find him challenging. Curiously, I also had to give Erothymia an initially disordered personality which, in being cured, transforms her chilling Social Darwinism into a more humane contractarianism, thanks to Plato and Alethea.

'Erothymia' is a name of my own fabrication, coming from the two Greek words *eros* and *thymos*. Eros is one of the six continents on love's map. Erotic love is undiluted, shameless desire, the love of the animalistic rut. I'm sure this is the kind of love Plato opposes to *philein* which is the love that drives us to embrace wisdom. As I have described it elsewhere, "Erotic love is frenzied love, drive and sustained by sexual desire; it is passionate, obsessive, irrational, and promiscuous" (O'Connell, *Dilemmas and Decisions*, 1994). Closest to it, and frequently in bed with it, is romantic love (*amor*), in which a specific person is obsessively idealized and sacrificially adored. *Eros* is impartially genital while *amor* is personally "spiritual". Erothymia, in loving Plato, discovers *amor* and learns to incorporate her *eros* into it. *Thymos*, the second component of her name, is the Greek word for the third part of the soul, the spirited part. This is a very interesting and fecund concept, which I have sketched out in the play. We could describe the spirited part as Will, the kind of spirit that is "willing when the flesh is weak", or whatever it is that is low when one's spirits

are low. Erothymia has an over-abundance of high spirit. She is a hyper-intelligent spirited woman, and her spirit is driven by erotic lust, which is ironically unfulfilled until she meets Plato and learns to integrate it with love.

Erothymia incarnates everything Plato fears as a threat to justice, to lawful orderliness in the *polis* and the *psyche*. The passions and appetites are the boiling elements of the psyche Plato thinks should be subdued and directed by cool reason and logic with compliant thymic assistance. Erothymia, however, is a romantic pragmatist. For her, feeling and sensation will always assert their hegemony and ought to, making reason a purely instrumental device that intelligently secures for the appetites and passions what they desire. In this respect, Erothymia is Glauconian in outlook. She also acknowledges the technical power of reason and respects its limited capacity for mastering the world in science and logic. Leaping outside its proper domain of pragmatic application into Plato's bloodless, bodiless heaven of abstract, purely formal transcendental "realities", however, elicits nothing but ridicule from her. Justice is thus not some kind of space-less, time-less "essence" hovering in disembodied perfection outside the natural world. It is entirely *in* this world and *of* this world, created by self-interested reason to advance the irrepressible aims of the appetites and passions. An active *thymos* is nothing more than aggressive ambition to succeed in these aims.

Notice that I have not created a stereotype in Erothymia. Her mature romanticism, if one wants to call it that, is not due to a weak or incompetent mind. She does not overwhelm Plato's "masculine side" with her "feminine side". She challenges his passions, yes, but she

defeats him *philosophically*. Her test of his reason is at two levels. She first wants to make sure that his *mind* and *will* are as strong as she insists they must be in a worthy lover. If he can resist her temptations he will be minimally worthy, given that his temptations are intense. But second, she uses Plato's most beloved instrument to beat him at his own game. With razor-sharp logic she attacks and dissects the heart of his system. Calmly and benevolently she destroys his Theory of Forms (and with it every subsequent theological theory of supernaturalism). Plato wins her game and she wins his. Each comes to respect and love each other's immense strengths of mind and character.

Erothymia, with some help from Alethea, pulls Plato's head out of the clouds and reconnects it to his heart, to his genitals, and to the earth on which he stands. She leaves him bereft of his otherworldly consolations: the transcendental forms and a place for his soul to rest while maggots consume his bodily remains. In purging him of supernatural beliefs, she undermines the foundation of western theology and rationalist otherworldly metaphysics. She did to Platonism what Queen Christina was later to do to Cartesianism.

But we must notice something else. Erothymia comes to revere justice as much as Plato does. She is also in awe of Plato's courageous rejection of conventional marriage and his unpopular promotion of gender equality, such as it was. She has no chip on her shoulder about science or logic, indeed she admires it when it is used pragmatically to solve crimes or to build faster, better boats. She knows that Plato reasons well, as much as Christina later knew that Descartes would reason well, but these two impressive women did not *reject* reason. They merely gave two major western philosophers a different account of it

and of its range of application. I note too, with relief, that while they ruined Platonism and Cartesianism, they loved Plato and Descartes. With love they saved them.

Why did Erothymia love Plato? And why did Plato love her? Because each had in great breadth and depth what was de-centered in the other. Reason and passion achieved a synthetic *balance* in their respective spirited wills. Each blessed with the highest degree of intelligence, each possessed of the greatest extent and magnitude of desire and passion, Plato and Erothymia were fated to clash and bond.

In one of his greatest dialogues, *The Symposium*, Plato gives us an unforgettable metaphor for love. He quotes a Greek Myth, in which it is said that human beings were originally a double-sexed fusion of male and female. In anger, Zeus cut everyone in half, severing the female part from the male part. Each part ran in different directions, and love is the search for our missing, sundered half. Until we find it and cleave to it we will not be happy. Plato was Erothymia's better half, and she was his better half. Each better half joined itself to the other better half, with the result that, in being united, the union of the two better halves was made even better by the goodness of each.

I wish, for the sake of philosophy's two-and-a-half millennia, that a real Erothymia had knocked loudly on the door of Plato's Academy. The story of philosophy might then have looked forward to as happy an ending as *Plato's Retreat* had. But no Erothymia showed up. I don't know if Plato even had a girlfriend. If he had, and if she had been Erothymia, Descartes would not have died in another drama set two thousand years later.

Plato's Retreat

CAST OF CHARACTERS (In order of appearance)

Plato, a Greek Philosopher

Eudoxus, Xenocrates, and Speusippus, Plato's companions

Dion, an army general

Erothymia, niece of Dionysius the Elder

Several crew members

Alethea, an Athenian scholar

Dionysius the Elder, ruler of Syracuse

Dionysius the Younger, the Elder's son

Several assembly members and soldiers

Program Note

Plato's *Republic*, one of the greatest works by one of Western Philosophy's greatest practitioners, is concerned primarily with the nature and role of justice in a good life. Plato examines justice in each individual's *psyche* and in political groupings. The political aspects of his theory intrigued the Ruler of Syracuse, in Sicily, and Plato was invited by the ruler to make an attempt to install the *Republic's* political philosophy in his city-state (*polis*). Plato sailed to Sicily three times in an effort to bring his version of the ideal society into existence. My dramatization records Plato's failure. I have made considerable use of the poet's license to change actual historical events and sequences, while preserving the arguments of the text.

ACT ONE

It is 380 BCE. Plato is enroute from Athens to Sicily, where he will visit Dionysius the Elder, ruler of Syracuse. He is accompanied by Speusippus (a biologist), Xenocrates (a constitutional and legal theorist), and Eudoxus (an astronomer-mathematician). They have stopped at an island, where Plato is furthering his research into volcanoes.

Scene One

House lights to black. Bouzouki music up. There is a red, circular glow centerstage against a background of black, dotted by tiny white shimmering lights. The background slowly changes to indigo, then lavender. As Scene One continues, the background will change to light salmon pink, then pale orange. Enter Plato, Eudoxus, Speusippus, and Xenocrates, silhouetted against the lavender background. The four of them crawl up a ledge and peer upstage into the red glow. Steam rises from behind the ledge. Music down.

Plato: The forces of nature go deep.

Eudoxus: Are you talking about the volcano, Plato, or about everything?

Plato: My good Eudoxus, you know I like metaphors, even though I distrust them. Metaphors are the clamps of language. But I am interested in volcanoes on a factual basis too.

Eudoxus: So is that why they call you a philosopher? Because you want to know everything?

- Plato:** Yes, I want to understand things mathematically in the way you do. And I want to understand biology in the way that Speusippus does. How, for example, do those lilies live in this lava?
- Speusippus:** How does anything live at all? My study of plants and animals keeps bringing me back to that. (They all turn and sit, facing the audience.)
- Plato:** And the questions posed by Xenocrates are some of the most difficult and most pressing of all. What do you say Xenocrates? What do you want to know?
- Xenocrates:** As a constitutional and legal theorist, I want to know which constitutions and which laws will guarantee the finest *polis* for human beings to flourish in. I want to know what the best life is for each of us, and then see the political structures and principles that would nurture such a good life for all of us.
- Plato:** Bravo, Xenocrates. We should apply ourselves to the daunting task of doing just that and make preparations now to begin it. We will be at the court of Dionysius the Elder in Sicily after just two more days of sailing. You all know and share my fondest wish—to establish a supremely good *polis*. I deeply want to found the ideal city-state, and the ruler of Syracuse is giving us that chance. (Hissing and rumbling sounds come from the crater. They all peer over its lip.)

- Xenocrates:** So that will be our goal—to think out what kind of constitution we should install in Syracuse when we get there.
- Eudoxus:** What's that? Is it about to erupt?
- Plato:** I don't think so.
- Eudoxus:** I am phobic about the unpredictable.
- Plato:** Shame on you, Eudoxus. In the material world, unpredictability and randomness are dominant principles. Nothing is stable, everything is capricious.
- Eudoxus:** We should go back to the ship. Speusippus, what do you say?
- Speusippus:** If it blows, it blows. Something equally threatening could just as easily kill us on the ship. Lightning, for example. I say we go on talking. I think Xenocrates agrees.
- Xenocrates:** Absolutely. I say we should make it our goal to think out what kind of constitution we should install when we get to Sicily.
- Eudoxus:** Wait a minute! What's that over there?
- Xenocrates:** Over where?
- Eudoxus:** There. That speck on the horizon.
- Xenocrates:** I don't see it.
- Plato:** There it is. Is it a ship?

- Speusippus:** I think so. It's heading this way.
- Eudoxus:** Pirates?
- Speusippus:** Likely. We should go before they see us.
- Plato:** Where would we go? If we put out of the harbor they will certainly see us. We should stay here. (More hissing and rumbling.)
- Eudoxus:** And do what?
- Xenocrates:** We could talk about what we ultimately want to accomplish in Syracuse. Do we not want to conceive and nurture the best possible society, the *kallipolis*? Do we not want to produce a blueprint for the ideal state, then impliment it with the help of its ruler Dionysius?
- Speusippus:** What does that mean? I think it means that we must reason out the structures and principles that would guarantee a political state we could identify as completely good. A *kallipolis*, as you say.
- Eudoxus:** In other words, a *polis* which is unsurpassably fine or beautiful or excellent. But this is not the time or place to start. We have a rumbling volcano to one side of us and possible pirates to the other. Look, that ship is getting closer. It's coming right for us!
- Plato:** I think they've seen us. We should hide.
- Xenocrates:** Where?

- Plato:** Behind a lava mound. Then we could start talking. No, on second thought we should let them know we are here. Then they will not think we are hiding something valuable or that we are afraid of them.
- Xenocrates:** They've seen our ship in any case. (He takes off his shirt and waves it.) Here! We are up here!
- Plato:** They see us. They are lowering their sail and breaking out the oars.
- Speusippus:** Let's not move. Let them come up here to us. So much for Xenocrates' *kallipolis*.
- Plato:** We can talk while we wait. There is still time. I have an idea. Let's isolate the one quality, the one dominant excellence, that would characterize the finest and most superior kind of *polis*, and then organize the constitution of Syracuse around it. What would that be?
- Xenocrates:** Yes, a society of the highest value, of the greatest worth, something superior, the best of the best. But it must be realistically possible and not merely ideal.
- Speusippus:** It would have to be the quality that provides the greatest amount of goodness and well-being to each of its participants.
- Plato:** We have a name for it already. The right word is *dikaiosune*. If a *polis*, or even an individual, has the quality of *dikaiosune*, it will have the most important

characteristic for a smooth and happy existence. If it has that quality, we could say it is *dike*, and its *dikaiosune* makes it good. (Eudoxus exits quickly.)

Xenocrates: I have been thinking about that for many years. I agree that this is exactly the right question. What is *dikaiosune*? What makes something *dike*? I know several words for describing the usual meaning of *dikaiosune* but I want to know what its essence is. Particularly, I want to know what causes something to be *dike*. (Eudoxus re-enters.)

Eudoxus: They're coming. There are four of them.

Plato: Xenocrates, what words can you use to express the meaning of *dikaiosune*?

Eudoxus: I said they are coming!

Plato: So? We can talk while we wait for them. Xenocrates?

Xenocrates: There are several words, but none of them can individually depict it. Something is *dike* if there is a certain orderliness to it, some organization to it.

Speusippus: Do you mean something like an army?

Xenocrates: Yes, like an army, or a family, or a team, or even a gang of outlaws, and especially a society.

Plato: And certainly a person. A person's *psyche* is *dike* if it is organized and ordered.

- Xenocrates:** Absolutely, Plato. *Dikaiosune* would have the same structure in persons as it does in a *polis* or anything else. But I don't think we are clear yet about it. What does orderliness or organization mean?
- Eudoxus:** As a mathematician, I would identify it as a kind of harmony or proportion in a system of inter-related parts. If a system is *dike*, it is in a state of proportion or balance. As you say, it is ordered or orderly. We can talk of the *dike* of nature, or of a company, or even of a machine, for example.
- Plato:** Well said. It sounds as if something is *dike* if all its various parts function together in an integrated way, or unified way. Perhaps that is just another way of saying that it is balanced and proportionate and harmonious and integrated. Above all, integrated. It has *integrity*. It is a unit, like an *integer*.
- Speusippus:** But what accounts for this orderliness and integration? Things can be disordered and disintegrated. They can be lacking a principle of organization. What, then, brings about unification and *co-ordination* in a person or in a society, or in anything that requires a co-operation of parts to achieve its purpose?
- Plato:** Now we are getting closer. Let us say that equilibrium in a system is brought about when the parts or different functions in the system are

regulated by some governing principle, by some regulation or rule that oversees the system.

Xenocrates: A regulation is like a law or principle.

Plato: Yes. Something is *dike* if it is lawful and orderly. It must be *ruled* and *regulated* by the right laws and principles. (More hissing and rumbling.)

Eudoxus: Could we say that something is *dike* if it is right according to the law and wrong if it isn't? And what about the opposite? Something lacks *dikaiosune* if its balance and orderliness is disrupted by any deviation from the ruling principle. Then the system is out of balance, it's disharmonious.

Plato: Now we have it. *Dikaiosune* is the same thing as lawful orderliness. The exact word for this is justice. Justice is lawfulness, balance, regulation, co-ordination. Look at what is in 'justice'. In a just condition, everything is *adjusted*. Everything is *justified*. Everything is lawfully governed. Of course, the laws or principles may not be good ones, but they are what provide the lawful order. Consequently, we must ask what the best rules are and what the best order is. How are they formulated? Where do they come from?

Speusippus: On our ship, they come from the Captain.

Xenocrates: But how does the Captain make them?

Eudoxus: And how does he know they are good ones? How

does the crew know they are good? And let me ask this: why should the crew obey them?

Plato: We are going too fast. I wanted us only to get clear on the meaning of the word *dikaiosune*. We have decided that it means 'justice', and 'justice' is a word for a condition of lawful regulation, or a state or orderliness imposed by a ruling principle. We need to slowly inquire into the origins of lawful rule, in to the essence of just regulation, and into its goodness if it is indeed good. Who knows? Perhaps disorganization and lawlessness are advantageous. (More steam rises from the volcano.)

Speusippus: I hear something down there.

Eudoxus: Listen. (They listen. Offstage are faint voices.)

Speusippus: It's them. (He crosses and peers offstage.) Who is it?

Dion: (Offstage) Who is there?

Speusippus: Travelers from Greece. We have no weapons.

Erothymia: No weapons? Are you fools?

Plato: What is a fool?

Erothymia: (Enters with Dion and two crew members.) A fool is someone who thinks his assets protect themselves.

Plato: Perhaps a fool is someone with assets he believes *need* protecting. We have no assets, so nothing needs protecting.

- Erothymia:** Let's see about that. (She unsheathes her sword and thrusts it at Plato's groin. Then she places it broadside on his testicles.) You say you have no assets to protect? Nothing I could slice off?
- Plato:** (Calmly, evenly.) You would do me a favor if you did. Just do it quickly, cleanly, and completely.
- Erothymia:** Who in the name of Zeus are you?
- Plato:** We told you. Travelers from Greece.
- Erothymia:** Give me your money. I want your jewels too.
- Plato:** We have neither.
- Erothymia:** You don't know who you are toying with. I wouldn't do that if I were you. Where is your money?
- Plato:** I told you. We don't have any. We don't need it, so we don't use it.
- Erothymia:** I see...you want to play games. Let me simplify things for you. Either hand it over or I will kill you here and now.
- Plato:** You would be better advised to castrate me.
- Erothymia:** What are you talking about?
- Plato:** If you kill me, you will never know if I am telling the truth or not about the money. Suppose I have a fortune. If you do me in, you will never know about it. For all you know, it could be buried on this island.

As well, if I am dead you would never be able to apologize for distrusting my word.

Erothymia: I don't apologize to anyone. And I distrust everyone.

Plato: Fine. Would you please stop fooling around and get this over with? Just kill us and leave. You are wasting our time.

Erothymia: Is he real? (To Speusippus) He must be bluffing. But he hides his fear very well.

Speusippus: He's not afraid. None of us are.

Eudoxus: We probably would be if we had something to hide. But he is right—we have no money or property. It's not even our boat.

Erothymia: Whose boat is it?

Xenocrates: The captain's. He is donating it and his time to us. There is no currency on the ship either.

Erothymia: What are you doing here?

Plato: We are doing research into this volcano and we are discussing the nature of justice.

Erothymia: You are all demented. Nobody does that. Now I know you are playing me for a fool. I'm losing my patience with you. All of you are liars.

Plato: Do you hate liars?

Erothymia: I kill them when I catch them lying to me.

- Plato:** Do you always tell the truth?
- Erothymia:** It depends. But when I tell you I'm giving you my word, my word is good. I tell the truth.
- Plato:** So why don't you kill yourself when you lie?
- Erothymia:** Lying is normal. It's an aspect of life in the jungle. It is necessary for survival. Nature thrives on deceit and treachery.
- Plato:** So why would you *ever* tell the truth?
- Erothymia:** I speak truthfully and keep my word with someone I love.
- Plato:** Love? You probably don't know a thing about it. If that is true then you never tell the truth.
- Erothymia:** Careful, mister. I sliced off heads for less than that.
- Plato:** You're lying.
- Erothymia:** Prove it.
- Plato:** You don't love me.
- Erothymia:** So?
- Plato:** You lie to everyone, unless you love them. That's what you said. You don't love me, therefore you are lying to me.
- Erothymia:** You are very clever.
- Plato:** That's nothing. An eight year-old can figure that

much out. You appear to me to be more than eight years old.

Erothymia: You are not only clever, you are lippy too.

Plato: And you like that.

Erothymia: Sort of. I like smart, confident men.

Plato: I'll tell you what. Put down that ridiculous sword and stop your pathetic disguise. I'll show you intelligence and confidence. I like dialectic, so I would like to see how well you do. I will guarantee that I can defeat you in a debate. You must promise that when I do, you will leave us alone.

Erothymia: And if I don't?

Plato: You can castrate all of us.

Erothymia: (Putting down her sword.) You have a deal. (She speaks more and more seductively. She undoes some upper buttons on her tunic, partially exposing her ample breasts. She faces Plato and massages his testicles.) You don't want to lose these, do you?

Plato: I told you, it doesn't matter.

Erothymia: All right. What do you want to debate? None gets the better of me. I always win. You will cave in before you know it.

Plato: My friends and I were debating the nature of justice.

Erothymia: Go for it. (She licks her lips sensuously, fingers the buttons on her tunic, seductively exposes a thigh, grinds her hips slowly.) I said go for it. What is justice?

Plato: I agreed to a debate, not a burlesque show.

Erothymia: This is how I win arguments.

Plato: I already know that. You will attempt to elevate my lust until I want you more than I want to win the debate. I'm supposed to agree with you in order to have you. It won't work. Besides, I've chosen abstinence. Now give me a theory.

Erothymia: Sir, you are smarter than I thought. Let's get rid of all these people. I know I can get you to capitulate. Dion, hand me the wineskin and take everyone except him back to the boat.

Plato: Impossible. I need witnesses to verify my victory. You are a liar, remember? You will prevaricate on what really happened.

Erothymia: Fair enough. At least get them out of sight, but not so far that they can't hear us.

Plato: Agreed. Now give me a theory.

Erothymia: Dion, take them over there. The wineskin please. (Dion hands her the wineskin and they all exit. Music up.) Sit down. (Plato reclines on a lava mound.) Here, let me make you comfortable for our

debate. (She removes her tunic and places it under Plato, then she straddles him and cups her breasts to his cheeks. She dribbles some wine on her nipples.) Lick it off. You will love it.

Plato: No thank you. I am waiting for a theory. This is already boring.

Erothymia: Boring? Try this. (She puts the wineskin to his lips and he drinks.) Now this. (She takes a long drink and kisses him, forcing wine into his mouth.) Wasn't that nice?

Plato: I'm not impressed. What about a theory? This is supposed to be a debate, if you recall.

Erothymia: Do I feel some excitement here? (She undulates on his lap.)

Plato: I'm a philosopher. Now get off me and try some logic. You are pitiful.

Erothymia: Getting a bit testy, mister? If you want to know what justice is, go and look it up in a dictionary.

Plato: A dictionary would say that something is just if it conforms to the law. That tells me nothing.

Erothymia: I like criminals. I like outlaws.

Plato: You are off the point. Give me a theory of the nature and origin of justice. How does harmony and balance arise in a person or in a society?

Erothymia: From laws. Laws create order and *dikaiosune* is order.

Plato: Where do the laws come from?

Erothymia: In my world, the law is whatever I say it is.

Plato: Really? Is that your theory? Are you saying that might makes right?

Erothymia: Mister, your questions are making me aroused. Why aren't you excited yet? (She gives him more wine and increases her pelvic gyrations.)

Plato: I *am* excited. I'm excited by the thought that you might actually have an idea. Something to discuss. Something to defend.

Erothymia: (Pouting and teasing.) Might makes right.

Plato: There are two ways to interpret that. The masses interpret it one way, usually the wrong way.

Erothymia: (Still seductively.) Oh, you don't say. Why don't you tell this little simpleton all about it? What does it mean, mister philosopher?

Plato: The statement that might makes right can be either a factual claim or it can be a normative claim. The factual claim is true and the normative claim is false.

Erothymia: Oooh...tell me more about it, mister philosopher.

Plato: It so happens that, as a matter of fact, those with the power make the laws. Certain people, or groups of

people, have power or control over many others. Some are able to dominate others and impose their will on them. Their might may sometimes come from brute force and intimidation, but it more often comes from great wealth, or charisma, or superior skill and intelligence, or even from some alleged divine power. In your case it comes from erotic, seductive energy. But no matter how they get it, these people have the power to make laws. In a democracy, they are elected by the many to do so. As a factual claim it is true but uninteresting that the power to make rules and laws is concentrated in the hands of the few.

Erothymia: Oh, you are so right. My theory is correct. Shall I hack them off now?

Plato: But that is not your theory.

Erothymia: Tell me what my theory is, mister.

Plato: Yours is the normative claim.

Erothymia: This is sooo thrilling. Tell me what I *really* think.

Plato: Let me ask you something. Do you think the laws are just only because someone makes them, or is it possible that someone makes them because they are just.

Erothymia: Oh, what an exciting question. The first, of course. (Music down.)

Plato:

This is your normative theory. It says that a few people hold all the power and they make laws to their own advantage. It may be only one person, but usually is more than one. Justice is nothing more than what they say it is. Lawfulness is nothing other than what the powerful decide to impose on the many who follow. Those with the might define the right. Those with the might do not merely identify and define the right through the laws they make, they *create* the right. The regularity and lawfulness in a society is coerced and enforced by fear, seduction, or bribery. You are saying that just as a child must do what it is told to do by its parents only because its parents tell it to, the many must submit to whatever rules the powerful tell them to. Might *defines* right. This is true even of the Gods. According to your normative claim, whatever the Gods command is right only because the Gods command it; they could command whatever they want and it would be right for no reason other than the fact they commanded it. Do you see? They do not command what is right, rather, what they command is right...according to your theory. Justice, or what you call a condition of regulation by rules, is nothing more than what the most powerful say it is. The mighty make the rules, and justice is whatever the rules define it to be, all to the

advantage of the rule makers. (More steam rises. There is a rumbling sound. Plato stands up and looks nervously over the lip of the volcano.)

Erothymia: Should we leave? Is it dangerous?

Plato: Everything is dangerous. But this volcano will not be erupting for quite some time. We are safe. You were saying that justice is a condition created when the strong make rules to their own advantage.

Erothymia: My, my. What an impressive theory. Is that what I really think?

Plato: Yes, I believe so.

Erothymia: And you disagree with it?

Plato: Most emphatically.

Erothymia: So if I can prove it true, you lose your jewels. I mean those jewels.

Plato: Or if I can prove it false, then you must leave.

Erothymia: I'll get you to agree to my theory. More wine? (She circles both nipples with her fingers. If you agree that this whatever-you-call-it-theory is true, you can have me. (She lifts her tunic, exposing herself to Plato.) Oooh, what's this? Something you want?

Plato: (Indifferently) Your theory is false.

Erothymia: Why?

Plato: Because rules can be assessed for their goodness and justness apart from who makes them.

Erothymia: According to whom?

Plato: According to reason.

Erothymia: You are cute when you reason. You seem to have a powerful mind. I like that.

Plato: It's more powerful than your pitiful efforts to distract me.

Erothymia: You want me. Don't you?

Plato: No, I don't. How many times do it have to repeat myself? You are wasting your energy and mine. Your theory is false.

Erothymia: Prove it. (She redoubles her efforts at seduction. She stands and sways her hips closer to Plato's face. She fondles her breasts.) You like this, don't you?

Plato: For the love of Zeus, woman! Put on your clothes and use your mind! You have one, don't you? You are boring!

Erothymia: You are quite a bastard. (With great menace.) Now try to prove the theory wrong so I can lop off your lovelies.

Plato: I just did. I said that rules and laws can be assessed for their goodness and justness independent of who makes them. That entails that there is a standard of

justice over and above the fact that rules are made by the powerful. Look, suppose a ruler makes a law that is not to his own advantage but to the advantage of the weaker. If you define justice as whatever-is-to-the-advantage-of-the-stronger, we have the strange result that whatever-is-to-the-advantage-of-the-stronger is also whatever-is-sometimes-to-the-advantage-of-the-weaker. Now if you will put on your clothes, I will ruin your theory completely. (She puts on her clothes.) Here is an even more serious problem. Would you not agree that an army commander might sometimes issue a bad order?

Erothymia: I suppose.

Plato: So an order is not good just because the commander orders it?

Erothymia: I suppose that must follow.

Plato: Similarly, a ruler may sometimes make an unjust rule or law?

Erothymia: Again, I must reluctantly agree.

Plato: So being ordered by a ruler and being just cannot be the same thing?

Erothymia: I suppose.

Plato: A law can therefore be assessed for its just nature independent of who makes it. We can see that 'might'

does not equal 'right'. We must search elsewhere. And by our agreement you must go. (The volcano rumbles. More steam rises.)

Erothymia: But that was not my theory. *You* said it was. All I said was "go look it up in a dictionary". I never put it forward as my theory...those were words you imputed to me, but I never said they were mine.

Plato: You are devious.

Erothymia: I told you not to trust me. I'll tell you what. I'm starting to find this interesting, and I am starting to find you fascinating. Let's drop this game for an even better one. I'm not as stupid as I pretend to be, but I am still holding the sword. Just to add a little luster to all this I should give it to you, but there is an old saying that one should never give a sword to a man who cannot dance...and I have yet to find out if you can dance. So for now let's do it this way: I want to get serious with you. I find you the most challenging, interesting man to cross my path in quite some time. I'll drop the charade and raise the stakes. I do have a mind, and I want to use it against yours. I'll give you a real theory...one I have actually thought through. Fair enough?

Plato: What are the stakes?

Erothymia: If you win, I put down the sword. If I win, I do whatever I want.

Plato: How about this? If I win, you put down the sword forever. If you win, you become a member of our research group.

Erothymia: And I suppose one of the rules of your group is “no weapons”, right?

Plato: That’s right.

Erothymia: How do we decide who wins?

Plato: One of us says “You win”.

Erothymia: It’s a rotten deal for me.

Plato: You don’t see it yet, but it’s a perfect deal for you. Better yet, why don’t we drop the whole idea of winning and simply have a serious conversation, just for its own sake, just for the purpose of finding truth?

Erothymia: What is the point of that?

Plato: (He puts his hands on her shoulders and looks deeply into her eyes, speaking slowly and firmly.) Just try it. You will discover something new. If you agree, we should call the others back so they can learn and contribute too. Truth is beautiful. The shared search for it is the greatest pleasure available to us. It will gratify you more than anything you have ever experienced. It’s what you really hunger for. Let me satisfy you.

Erothymia: Call them over.

- Plato:** All of you, come back here. This is something you should share. (Enter all.) We are going to listen to her. She has a theory of justice.
- Speusippus:** We heard the previous argument, such as it was, so you don't need to repeat it. It is merely the popular view of justice. But I hope you pursue this line of thought further, because there is a valuable insight in it I could endorse. The popular view contains the idea that whatever justice may be, it is created *arbitrarily*. It presupposes that nothing is just or unjust by nature, but by some kind of conventional decision.
- Erothymia:** Sir, that is exactly where I am going with my argument. Justice is socially created, so social circumstances can change it from time to time and place to place. There is no objective quality that makes something just, no unchanging essence of justice we can discover in things. No, justice is variable and conventional, so what is just to some is not necessarily just to others.
- Plato:** Can you expand that idea into a more thoughtful theory of justice?
- Erothymia:** I will. I will argue that justice is the result of an arbitrary agreement, but instead of coming from the powerful few it comes from all of us.
- Xenocrates:** I want to listen carefully to this. Are you going to

present a version of the social contract theory of justice?

Erothymia: Yes, I want to explain the origins, nature, and value of justice in those terms.

Eudoxus: To simplify, why don't we say that *dikaiosune* is lawfulness? How does lawfulness originate, what is its nature, and what good is it?

Erothymia: Let me begin by asking Dion something. You call many things 'good', do you not?

Dion: Certainly. I can say I had a good lunch, or that this man is good, or that this knife is a good one, or that truth telling is good.

Erothymia: Wouldn't you say that some things are good simply because they are conducive to other goods. I mean, we do not value them in themselves. We value them for the goods they bring about. Bitter medicine, for example, is good because it is for the sake of something else we hold to be good.

Speusippus: There are many examples of goods like that. We call them instrumental goods. Then there are many goods we value in and for themselves. Think of pleasures like drinking wine or listening to music. Think of friendship which serves no purpose except itself.

Xenocrates: We should call those goods intrinsic goods.

Plato: I see a third kind of good too, a mixture of the other two. They are goods which are valued for themselves and for their results. I would imagine that exercise and learning would fall in this third class.

Eudoxus: The question is, which class is justice in? What kind of good is lawfulness and acting rightly?

Erothymia: I assert that justice is like bitter medicine: it is good only because it produces something better, but by itself it is worthless. Most people would agree that justice is an unwelcome burden, something we would never pursue unless we were forced to pursue it for the sake of something else. No-one really respects justice—they merely endure its demands in order to avoid something worse and perhaps get something better. The value of justice is all in its pay-off.

Xenocrates: What is the pay-off?

Erothymia: Peace-of-mind and personal security.

Xenocrates: Now I am lost. You need to explain that thoroughly.

Erothymia: Very well, with everyone's permission I will speak at length about the origins, the nature, and the value of justice. To begin with, I will place justice in the first class of goods by saying that it has no inherent value. It is good only for the results it brings, but by itself it is pursued grudgingly and it is endured more as a burden than as something inherently good. Do you all agree?

Plato: Certainly not. I place justice in the best category. It is good both for the benefits it confers and by itself. However, let me hear out your argument, and then I will respond with mine.

Erothymia: My argument is simple. It begins with the observation that within every human being there is a natural element. It is governed by instinctual fears and desires, seeking only to preserve and reproduce itself. It is pre-civilized and amoral, recognizing no rules except self-protection and aggressive acquisition. Uncontrolled, it serves nothing but itself by whatever means it can: homicide, infanticide, cannibalism, deceit, betrayal, theft, or what have you. That natural element is void of shame and sympathy. It is *pre-moral*, lacking any sense of right or wrong. And I repeat, it is in all of us; it is nature, pure and simple, and we can never divest ourselves of it.

Speusippus: I think of that element in humans as raw and blind ambition to get ahead and stay ahead of others. It goes beyond nature. In other words, humans are innately competitive. Nature is not greedy, but humans are—everyone wants to outdo everyone else and everyone wants to exploit everyone else to get ahead. For some reason, humans are hoarders.

Erothymia: That's another good way to put it, as long as you remember that the drive to compete against and

exploit others is *blind* and *inevitable*. We can't stop it. Our innate, elemental motive is greed. We all want to have more of everything. Until we acquire the purely human qualities of shame and guilt, we will do anything in our power to attain it.

Eudoxus:

And as a mathematician, I can tell you that even a child can calculate that not everyone can have everything. Indeed, if one person had everything, everyone else would have nothing. Everything must be summed and divided.

Speusippus:

Eudoxus, you speak rightly. But let's not put it so formally just yet. She is only making the point that everyone wants to exploit others, by whatever means, in order to get more for themselves. This pre-civilized part of ourselves is bound by no morality. But listen well: I know that you are the same as me, and you know that I am the same as you. We all want to win by exploiting others. So, you and I are in the same boat: you want to exploit and harm me, and I want to exploit and harm you. We both know that about each other.

Erothymia:

There is more than one very smart person in your group. I'm loving this. Let me say that we both know one more thing. We both know that in addition to wanting to exploit and harm each other, we both want to *avoid* being exploited by the other. In fact,

the desire to *avoid* being harmed is stronger than the desire to outdo others, because if you severely harm me I get nothing of what I want.

Xenocrates: Exactly, we both want to impose restraints on the other's natural aggression and greed so each of us can get at least some of what we want.

Dion: She does it with sex.

Erothymia: Shut up, Dion. You can't follow this. So we forge an unwilling bargain not to exploit and harm each other in order to get at least some of what we want. It's a kind of forced co-operation or uneasy truce for our personal advantage.

Xenocrates: And it has to be *enforced*. It's a compromise we would rather not agree to. Nobody gets all of what he wants, and in exchange he avoids what he doesn't want.

Speusippus: Just as there is no sporting event without a set of rules, there is no *dikaiosune* without this forced agreement. This contract basically spells out the rules of competition.

Eudoxus: Yes, they are acceptable rules only if everyone agrees that they serve their own selfish interests. (More steam and rumbling. Plato looks over the ledge.)

Plato: Gentlemen...friends...I may be mistaken. Perhaps—

Eudoxus: —I think I see the logic of this. An example occurs to me. Let me try this out on Plato, since he looks perturbed by your argument. (Plato gestures toward the red glow.) Suppose that you have an olive-grove, and so do I. I want your olives and you want mine. Would you let me steal your olives?

Plato: (He looks over the ledge, then back to Eudoxus. He returns to sit with the others.) Pardon?

Erothymia: Would you let me steal your olives?

Plato: Of course not.

Erothymia: Would I let you steal mine?

Plato: Undoubtedly not.

Erothymia: Isn't it more important to keep the olives you already have than to steal mine?

Plato: Yes, yours may make me richer, but without mine I could starve.

Erothymia: And I am in the same position?

Plato: Yes, your options are the same.

Erothymia: So even though you want my olives, in order to make sure you keep yours wouldn't it be wise for you to promise not to steal mine if I promise not to steal yours?

Plato: I hesitate, but I must agree.

Erothymia: And the same goes for everyone else and for anything they own? Isn't everyone better off if we all agree not to steal, even though we would all prefer to have all the olives? Or, let me put it this way. What would it be like if we *didn't* promise to refrain from stealing?

Xenocrates: I would lose some of my olives to you, and him, and him, and perhaps steal some back. Or maybe lose *all* my olives to the best thief, and not be able to steal them back.

Eudoxus: More than that, Xenocrates. Each of us would live under constant fear of attack. We would constantly risk injury to ourselves and our olive-groves. The money we could have spent on improving our groves will have to be spent on defense. And we would all have many spoiled olives. Besides, nobody has the power to steal and defend *all* the olives; eventually others would band together and kill him.

Erothymia: Your name is Xenocrates?

Xenocrates: Yes.

Erothymia: So, Xenocrates, you see how the social contract arises. I agree this is the right theory, but I want to put it in a slightly different way. I would say that in a state of nature, nearly everyone realizes that he or she is simply too weak to exploit others with

impunity. They would do it if they could, but they can't. What do you think prevents them?

Xenocrates: Oh, I would say a lack of power.

Erothymia: Yes, but why do so many lack power? Are they naturally powerless? Is it like a true state of nature, where there are a few dominant figures within a species and many submissive ones?

Xenocrates: Well, in a state of nature the dominant ones are usually the most aggressive.

Erothymia: And cunning, and so on. In humans there are many factors beyond aggression and shrewdness that contribute to personal power. The strongest are most often full of self-confidence, charm, intelligence, single-mindedness, fearlessness, and so forth. They also have the resources to dispense to others what the others want, so wealth is power. Wealth buys anything and anyone.

Xenocrates: What do you think people most want?

Erothymia: Men want women and women want powerful men.

Speusippus: In any case, you want to add something to the theory. What is it?

Erothymia: I am saying that the social contract arises not so much to curb each other's greed but to curb the power of a few. The weak majority bands together to

restrain the power of the dominant few. The many know that the powerful elite needs them to thrive, so the many makes rules in their own interest.

Eudoxus:

I disagree. I think we are all basically equal in power. Anyone can kill, maim, or rob anyone else. I agree with Speusippus. We all tacitly make a covenant of mutual restraint because everyone else is a competitor, not just a few.

Erothymia:

We could get bogged down in a debate on that finer point. But I think we agree on the larger point: it would be in everyone's self-interest to support the rule that I will not rob you if you do not rob me. Now here is the biggest problem: we all seek our own advantage, so it would be to my advantage to make a promise with everyone else not to steal their olives and then *break* my promise while they keep theirs. The promise is to my advantage as long as you keep it and I don't. So I should appear to be trustworthy while actually being deceitful.

Speusippus:

But you know that your competitor would think exactly the same way. So in order to prevent a relapse back into the situation that made the agreement necessary, you will both have to think of a way to force each other to keep the agreement, because it is to everyone's advantage that everyone else keep the agreement.

- Xenocrates:** I suppose we should just have faith that all human beings are rational enough to see that, and that they will act in accordance with reason.
- Erothymia:** That won't work. The more people who keep the agreement, the more likely it is that someone will break it. To prevent that from happening, there must be some penalty *included* in the agreement for anyone who breaks it.
- Xenocrates:** Who will enforce the penalties?
- Erothymia:** We don't need to worry about that. Each society can, and does, create its own mechanisms. For now, we have what we need—a theory of the origins and nature of *dikaiosune*. (More rumbling and hissing.)
- Eudoxus:** Should we go?
- Erothymia:** Please, don't go. I need this. I have never felt so alive. I have a question.
- Plato:** What is it?
- Erothymia:** Aren't we all criminals at heart? Aren't we all naturally unjust? Isn't that why we need a contract?
- Plato:** How could I prove we are not? What's behind your question?
- Erothymia:** Love. (They all look at each other in puzzlement, except Plato, who stands to address Erothymia.)
- Plato:** Love will unravel your argument. If you know what

love is and how to love you don't need a contract. Love transforms the natural criminal into a supernatural savior.

Erothymia: Nonsense. You are a deluded romantic. Lover's crimes are the most spectacular crimes of all. They break hearts instead of pocketbooks and careers.

Plato: So why your question?

Erothymia: I was...it's just that....

Plato: It's just that you suspend your beliefs about human nature when you love. That's why you said your word is good, but only to those you love. When you love, you have trust and truth. You are wondering if this is a temporary loss of realistic good sense. Or is it the glimpse into a better way?

Erothymia: What is love? (Plato looks at her aloofly.) Answer me! What is love? Speak to me, or I'll get that sword out again.

Plato: The only love with which you are familiar is a form of insanity.

Erothymia: The love with which I am familiar is cruel and painful. Consequently, sir, I do not trust it. I engage in sex instead. It's a straightforward contract. I'll give you something you want in exchange for something I want. Whenever, wherever. If you make it worthwhile for me, I'll be back for more.

- Plato:** What is your point?
- Erothymia:** My point is that we are all criminals, especially in love.
- Plato:** Give me a reason to believe that.
- Erothymia:** What? That we are all naturally unjust?
- Plato:** Yes, and relate it to love.
- Erothymia:** I can. Let's use our imagination. Let's imagine that you could do whatever you want to whomever you want *without paying a penalty*. No penalty whatsoever. Suppose you were so incredibly smart that you could do *anything* without being detected...almost as if you were invisible. And suppose I could give you drugs with the power to extinguish all shame and guilt. In fact, they would make you feel good no matter what you do. You could swindle, lie, rob, pursue perversions, commit adultery—anything you please—and you would have nothing but good feelings. Most important, suppose you would never get caught. There would be no price to pay...none. I assert that anyone in such a position, including you, would be unjust. The natural part of anyone comes out when their fear of detection and reprisal is removed. Remove the fear, and they act naturally. Why do you think so many people commit crimes and engage in perversions when they are drunk? The fear is gone. But even in sober thought, that's when

people cheat on exams, on their taxes, on their customers, and on their spouses. If the probability of detection is low, about the only thing that stops them is their fear of a guilty conscience. But my drugs would take care of that—they would disable any socially programmed sense of guilt or shame.

Plato: If I loved you, I would remain truthful and faithful to you whether you knew it or not. And not out of a sense of guilt either. I would do it because virtue is its own reward.

Erothymia: Phewey! If you had the chance to cheat on your spouse without detection and without remorse you would do what any other man or woman would do. You would do it. You would tell lies and engage in deception.

Plato: Not me.

Erothymia: I don't believe you. Moreover, you *should*. The unjust life, free of all penalties, is the best life of all.

Speusippus: I'll back you on this one too.

Plato: A moment please! Are you recommending the unjust life? Surely not!

Erothymia: Wholeheartedly.

Plato: You are actually advocating criminality and injustice?

Erothymia: Absolutely. I am saying that the outlaw, unjust life is the happiest one. To get whatever you want, by any

conceivable means, is the best way to live. And don't give me the simpleton's answer that crime never pays. It always handsomely pays those who are smart enough to hide their criminality and avoid detection. Everyone, in their heart, would agree. It's the many who know they can't get away with it who extol decency and righteousness. But secretly they wish they could exploit and dominate others.

Plato: Surely you are not trying to tell me that the criminal who escapes retribution is a happy person.

Erothymia: That's exactly what I am saying. The best life is the unjust life that pays no penalty. Look at us! We are pirates. We kill and steal, but never get caught. We have no remorse over the fact that we get what everyone else wants. We have money, good wines, great clothes. We have sex with whomever we want, whenever we want. Best of all, we get others to do whatever we ask them to. We have power, and among us my word is the law.

Plato: What about your victims?

Erothymia: What about them?

Plato: Do you have sympathy for them?

Erothymia: Sympathy is for idiots. To be happy requires ruthlessness. I have no sympathy for anyone who would do exactly the same thing to me if they

could. Do you think animals feel sorry for their victims? Of course not. It's kill or be killed.

Plato: And yet you over-ride these sentiments when you love. You appear to have a conflict. Part of you is drawn to love and justice, but another part is drawn to exploitation and injustice. Which part do you trust more? Which part do you admire more?

Erothymia: I can't answer that right now.

Plato: Mmmm, that's interesting. You must have quite an internal struggle going on.

Erothymia: More than one.

Plato: What do you mean?

Erothymia: Never mind. I don't want to talk about it.

Plato: About what?

Erothymia: Don't push me, mister.

Plato: Fine, I won't. We have an argument to attend to.

Erothymia: I've pretty well stated my theory. Now, how about your response? I want to keep on thinking. I want to hear you reason this out.

Plato: Do you really believe in reasoning things out?

Erothymia: I don't know if I *believe* in reasoning things out, but I do know that I enjoy it. It does something to me. It is...I mean...when you....I get...you make me...

Plato: Say it.

Erothymia: I don't want to. I can't.

Plato: You get aroused. You get sexually excited.

Erothymia: You! Don't you *ever*...(She stops herself. Paces slowly. Goes to the lip of the volcano. Turns and looks at Plato, then turns back to the volcano.) How did you know that?

Plato: I know you very well.

Erothymia: Dion, take everyone back to the ship. Treat them as guests. (All exit.) Tell me, mister philosopher, why am I like that? Is it a problem?

Plato: Not really. It's a symptom of another problem.

Erothymia: What other problem? Tell me, can you fix my problem mister philosopher?

Plato: Yes, I can. But not now.

Erothymia: Ooooh, mister philosopher, please tell me what's wrong with me and fix me. Tell me why this gets so inflamed by intelligence. (She lifts her tunic and faces him.) Look, there is nothing underneath. Do you want it? (Plato turns his back to her.)

Plato: I told you, I'm celibate.

Erothymia: You're a pervert. Either that, or you are afraid of me. Or is it that you are not a man?

- Plato:** You are starting to bore me again. I practice celibacy so I am not distracted from thinking. Romantic love and sex are seething swamps of irrationality and emotional disarray. They should be cured more than condoned. Now please, get away from me and go back to your ship. I have work to do.
- Erothymia:** You have not proven my theory wrong yet. And I still have my sword.
- Plato:** It can be done, but it will take some time. I would have to delay my trip by at least one full day and you would have to sacrifice a day of piracy. We would both have to stay until tomorrow. Imagine how unhappy you would be without someone to rob.
- Erothymia:** Watch your words, buster. Would you like me to sleep on your ship?
- Plato:** Sleep wherever you want. Just don't bother me.
- Erothymia:** What, no sex?
- Plato:** Sometimes you don't listen.
- Erothymia:** Don't you realize that every man in the Mediterranean wants me? Don't you realize what you are turning down?
- Plato:** My dear woman, I realize *exactly* what I am turning down. That is why I am turning it down.
- Erothymia:** Idiot! Are you playing games with me? You had better

think twice before you do!

Plato: We will resume the argument tomorrow. Good night. I will put off my voyage by a day.

Erothymia: You think you can dispense with me in a day? Ha! Where in Hades are you going, if I may ask?

Plato: To the court of Dionysius the Elder in the *polis* of Syracuse in Sicily. (Erothymia looks astounded.)

Erothymia: You are lying. That's impossible.

Plato: Why are you so surprised? What is so strange about going to Sicily?

Erothymia: What are you going to do there?

Plato: Consult with the ruler about a new political constitution based on my theory of justice.

Erothymia: Oh really? What is your name?

Plato: Plato of Athens. And yours?

Erothymia: Xanthippe.

Plato: I know another Xanthippe. You are quite unlike her.

Erothymia: You don't say. (Music up.)

Plato: I do say. Now would you please go back to your ship?

Erothymia: Where are you going to sleep?

Plato: I may not sleep. I will stay right here until tomorrow.

- Erothymia:** So will I then.
- Plato:** You know the rules. Stay here if you wish, but don't bother me. I have some hard thinking to do.
- Erothymia:** As you wish. You do not know what you are passing up.
- Plato:** Goodnight.
- Erothymia:** Goodnight. (She removes her tunic and rolls it into a pillow. Music up as the lights fade. Plato goes to the lip of the crater and looks in, lost in thought. Slow fade of all lights except a red glow from the crater. Erothymia lies down. Plato mumbles to himself. Fade music.)

Scene Two

The next morning, on the volcano. Music. Plato is still looking down into the crater. Erothymia stirs and puts on her tunic. Lights up. Fade music.

Erothymia: Did you sleep at all last night? It's a hard theory to refute, isn't it?

Plato: In many ways it is. But it is still false. It takes into account an undeniable and powerful element in human nature, but it doesn't go far enough. There is more to the human *psyche* than you allow, so your theory of justice is not only incomplete, but wrong. Justice is much more than a self-interested pact between outlaws. I agree we all bear the state of nature within us, but we all have the potential to develop another part which is divine.

Erothymia: Do you ever stop thinking?

Plato: Not if I can help it. Well, sometimes I do. I have to get away from it all on occasion.

Erothymia: Why? How?

Plato: I have a hunch your name is not Xanthippe.

Erothymia: Don't change the subject. Why do you need to find a refuge from thinking?

Plato: Many reasons.

Erothymia: Name some.

- Plato:** It's tiring. It's frustrating. It's isolating. Sometimes I dream of just raising olives and dancing in the tavernas. Loving wisdom can sometimes break my heart.
- Erothymia:** Do you drink to stop from thinking, or do you think to stop from drinking?
- Plato:** I think when I drink. It's a different kind of thinking. Shouldn't we get on with our conversation?
- Erothymia:** I have an idea. You asked me yesterday to relate my theory to love. Why don't we talk about love, and why don't you refute my theory by showing me that my views on love are wrong. They are deeply interconnected...justice and love.
- Plato:** I wrote a book on love. I'm still not sure what it is. There are so many kinds of love, but I am still not sure what they all have in common. I'm looking for the *form* of love.
- Erothymia:** Why don't we limit it to erotic love then? I am extremely interested in that.
- Plato:** No kidding. What is it?
- Erothymia:** It's not love at all. It's no more than sexual commerce. Love has nothing to do with it. I don't even like it.
- Plato:** Are you saying that it is impossible for sex to coexist with love, or just that they often don't as a matter of fact?

- Erothymia:** Sex is use. It's mutual exploitation. It's bait. It's something you trade for something else. It's a weapon. By definition, it's loveless. That's probably why I can never...never...
- Plato:** Never what?
- Erothymia:** Never mind. Leave it alone.
- Plato:** Sex is your bargaining chip?
- Erothymia:** Of course. It's something I have and something you want. I'd be stupid to give it away without getting something in return for it.
- Plato:** You get pleasure in return.
- Erothymia:** I get—forget it! Maybe this way of approaching your subject was a bad idea. Let's take another tack.
- Plato:** No, I insist. It's a good one. In a way, it encapsulates and focuses the issues we are discussing. A true theory of sex would entail a larger theory of justice. We should call Speusippus up here. He can explain something. (Plato crosses offstage.) Speusippus, come here! We need you! (To Erothymia.) He is a biologist and he sees sex in purely biological terms. I agree we must understand it at that level, but not *only* at that level. There is another level which refutes your theory. Here he comes.
- Erothymia:** How does this relate to a theory of justice?

Plato: It will explain why we do, in fact, treat each other the way we usually do, but it will also illuminate how we *ought* to treat each other, even though we usually don't. (Enter Speusippus.) Speusippus, what are the biological dynamics of sex?

Speusippus: For us, sex is the need to impregnate as many females as possible—to populate the world with as many of our offspring as we can. For her, it is the need to be impregnated by the highest quality males. Males make advances to all women in the hope they can mate with all of them and women solicit advances from all males in the hope they can mate with the fittest few. Men compete with each other for the greatest number of young fertile women, and women compete with each other for the smallest number of select, superior men. Males want reproductive fitness in females; females want power and prestige in men. Each sex seeks its own advantage through the other. It's constant competition, constant negotiation. It's a tradeoff.

Erothymia: And what does love have to do with that?

Speusippus: Nothing. It's a transaction. If you want to know about love, ask Plato. I'm just explaining biology. In those terms, sex is something you ladle out to us as long as we are willing to pay the highest price for it. The more reproductively fit you are, the more we pay. Pleasure is just a byproduct, just an incentive.

Erothymia: I know. All the rules, all the etiquette, are nothing more than mutual constraints, imposed by each sex on the other to its own advantage. Sex is warfare, but even war has its rules for the protection of both sides. And everyone tries to break them, especially in the treacherous trenches of sexuality.

Speusippus: Men, for example, do not want to squander energy and resources on another man's offspring, so they demand fidelity and virginity from women with whom they mate. Women demand it from men so resources are available exclusively to their own children. And yet both sexes commit adultery when they can do so without consequence. Men do it to spread their seed around and women do it when they find a more dominant man. It's all for the seeds. For our *own* seeds.

Erothymia: So justice in the sexual sphere, this condition of opposed desires balanced by implicit rules, is really a set of compromises in the battle of the sexes. Each side is working for its own advantage, and therefore anyone on each side would break the rules if he or she could do so without being caught and without paying a price. But look how many try. Lies, deceptions, broken promises—everyone engages in them to their own advantage. They just aren't smart enough to consistently pull it off. However, I applaud them when they do. It is better to be unjust and

undetected than to be just. I say break all the rules and be smart about it. You'll be much happier.

Plato: And you want to extend that to all areas of life? Not just sex?

Erothymia: You bet I do. Power and wealth are everything. Those who are feared the most are most happy. Those who by stealth and cunning have the most are the most happy. Those who have fame, money, and power say they are much better off than those who don't. And those without a public name or wealth of any kind seem to agree that they are worse off. They are envious.

Plato: Your point is clear, and it forces me to be clear. I know most people agree with you. But they are wrong. (Enter Xenocrates.)

Xenocrates: Keep going. I will pick it up and follow you.

Plato: Look at it this way. I say that virtue is its own reward, but most people think that virtue for its own sake is for simpletons, for naive dreamers and fools. They say that virtue is romanticized because so many are cowardly or otherwise incapable of injustice. They say that *diakaiaosune* should be pursued only to one's own advantage. Honesty, for example, is only a good policy for the wily businessman.

Speusippus: They say that being lawful and doing the right thing

should be no more than deceptive *appearance* because it will help get you what you really want. If I pretend to care about you, or if I can deceive you into thinking I am honest with you, or loyal to you, or that I will honor my word with you, it will be to my advantage for you to believe it so I can exploit you later. Then I will be better off, as long as I can keep the exploitation hidden. There is no intrinsic value to these virtues. Their value lies in entirely in the good consequences they bring about when they are deftly used. That's what most people believe. They believe that nice people finish last, at the bottom of the heap. Now what do you say Plato? Isn't the man or woman who admires honesty, charity, justice, self-control, and so forth, merely some kind of innocent idiot, sitting there like ripe fruit waiting to be plucked by the first predator to see it? Maybe the many are right. These believers in virtue are nothing more than food and fodder for the powerful, ambitious few who, without shame or guilt, use them to satisfy greed and lust, our only true motivators.

Erothymia:

That's how sex works. I will not love you. I will *pretend* to, however, because I want something from you. It's just business. I will get you to desire me through all kinds of artifice and deception, then deliver what you want only after I extract something from you. And I *should*.

- Xenocrates:** You are giving away your trade secrets.
- Plato:** Again, you put the case clearly, but I know it is wrong. The just person is happier, regardless of the consequences of his justice. To challenge myself, I will take the most pure and complete cases of people who are just and unjust, then ask you to compare them in happiness. Let us compare a person who is completely *dikaiosune* with one who is not.
- Erothymia:** To make the comparison pure, why not compare a thoroughly just person with a thoroughly unjust one, but grant that the just person is believed to be unjust by everyone?
- Xenocrates:** And further that the unjust person is believed to be just by everyone.
- Plato:** That's what I was going to suggest. In that way, we can more easily decide that virtue is its own reward, independent of the social rewards that follow from merely being *perceived* as just. And we can more easily see whether vice is its own punishment, independent of the social sanctions that follow from being perceived as unjust. I will show that the good person who seems unjust to others is immeasurably more happy than the unjust person who seems just to others. If I can show this in such a way, I believe I shall have removed all doubt.

- Speusippus:** Better yet, you could compare two hermits who get *no* social consequences whatsoever. Why not compare a solitary saint with an isolated criminal and ask who is happier? We should compare unknown saints with solitary sinners.
- Plato:** No, my case is stronger in the first way. The saint must suffer in some way while the sinner must gain in some way. Then virtue would definitely win out—the virtuous person would be truly happy in spite of bad consequences, while the person of vice would be truly unhappy in spite of good consequences.
- Erothymia:** I already know who is happier.
- Plato:** No, you only think you do because your concept of happiness is deficient.
- Erothymia:** You can't admit it, but yours is the same as mine.
- Plato:** It's radically different, just as my concept of love is radically different.
- Erothymia:** Prove me wrong then.
- Plato:** What I observe is that both your arguments have something in common. In your first argument you said that *dikaiosune* is imposed by the most powerful on the many. The rules are made and enforced by the mighty. Your second argument says that the rules are made by *everyone* in each person's own interest. But the two arguments are the same. They both assert

that *dikaiosune* is a conventional *creation* of human will. As to which wills construct the rules, I am indifferent. I intensely disagree with both arguments, and I want to prove both of them false. You also argue that being *dikaiosune* for its own sake is naive and simple-minded. But I want to prove that due to your gross misunderstanding of the nature of justice you must necessarily fail to see that it is inherently good, and that people who have it are thoroughly happy even if the rest of the world is not aware of the just person's condition. Let me give you a preliminary insight that may help you understand my argument when I state it. Please remind yourselves that we have so far been discoursing only on social *dikaiosune*, without mentioning the nature and value of *dikaiosune* in the individual *psyche*. When we shift our attention to the *dikaios* soul we get a very different picture, and we would see that a rational person would choose *dikaiosune* as an inner condition for its own sake.

Speusippus:

But why? Surely this kind of self-regulation, or this state of inner lawfulness, is nothing more than society's impression on the individual *psyche*. Surely people keep themselves restrained by laws and rules only out of fear of punishment. It's **nothing** more than a socially programmed conscience.

Plato: Precisely not. I will show you that a wise, healthy person would *want* this inner lawfulness and orderliness because that person *knows* that it is the way to the most fulfilled and happy life. With your permission I will refute her argument by demonstrating two truths and by drawing out all their implications. The first truth is: There is a universal, unchanging essence of *dikaiosune* discoverable by reason after long, hard intellectual effort. The second is that after reason discovers this essence and when a *polis* or a *psyche* conforms to it, the result is genuine, lasting well-being and happiness. I will show that justice is real by nature, not by conventional contracts, that reason can discover it, and that its embodiment in cities and souls makes for the best possible life.

Erothymia: Is this going to be boring?

Plato: Has it been boring so far? You said something about titillation.

Erothymia: So titillate me.

Plato: I will, if you will be quiet and listen.

Erothymia: Ooooh, such a nasty little man. Will we ever get to love?

Plato: Indirectly. You will be able to make some obvious inferences and analogies. (There is a barely audible rumble from the volcano. Eudoxus is heard offstage.)

Eudoxus: Plato! There is another one coming! (Enter Eudoxus.) Look! Another ship is coming! It's headed this way.

Erothymia: It's at least an hour away. Plato, send this man down to my ship and fetch my crew. Tell him to bring them all back here.

Plato: Why? We don't know who they are.

Erothymia: We don't need to know. Please, do it quickly. No questions.

Plato: Eudoxus, please fetch all the others and bring them here. (Exit Eudoxus.) Then what?

Erothymia: I'm going to show you how I operate. When they get here we will all be hiding, except for you. You tell them we have all gone exploring. Just delay them. No more questions.

Plato: What are you up to?

Erothymia: I said, don't ask. Now, what is the nature of our disagreement about justice? What are these two arguments that are going to save your testicles?

Plato: Briefly?

Erothymia: Please.

Plato: You are surely wrong when you say that self-interested agreements define justice. Justice is not a human creation. It is an objective essence or nature

inherent in all just actions and laws and persons and societies. I call it the *Form* of justice. When you intellect apprehends the real, universal nature of justice you will immediately see that to conform to the Form of justice in your actions and in your personality will result in stable and authentic happiness. Those are my two arguments.

Erothymia: They sound far-fetched to me. They hardly make sense. There is a *reality* called justice? This Form is a real thing?

Plato: You can't see it, can't touch it, just like all the other Forms. You can know it only through reason. Forms are not grasped or discovered through sense experience.

Erothymia: I really don't understand. Really, I'm not pretending to be dense. Wake up my mind here, or anything else you please, and explain this to me. What do you mean by 'Form'? What is the Form of justice?

Plato: Forms are indestructible, unchanging, timeless objects of the highest level of knowledge. I could also say they are perfectly stable, meaning they never change and they exist eternally. They are perfect paradigms, represented in the world by the many instances which imperfectly embody them.

Erothymia: And they are *real*?

Plato: More real than you and me. More real than anything you can see or touch or hear.

Erothymia: How can they be real if you can't see them?

Plato: They are objects of pure thought. You can't see or touch or hear your *psyche*, can you? But you know it is real, maybe more real than your body, because your *psyche* cannot be destroyed and it exists externally. At least you can intelligibly consider that possibility, which means that it is at least possible for something unobservable to be real. I want to prove that possibility true.

Erothymia: I don't think you can do it.

Plato: It will be difficult. But you will be forced by my argument to concur, will you not, that if there are timeless, eternal objects, and that if those most advanced in mental discipline can perceive them with the eye of their soul, then they would have knowledge of the true nature of justice, for example? Moreover, they would have timeless, universal knowledge, wouldn't they?

Erothymia: I can see no other conclusion.

Plato: So I must prove there are timeless objects of knowledge, objectively independent of the knower. I'll start simply. Think of the plan, or design, for this ship. The design for this ship is a blueprint, existing

somewhere in a naval architect's cabinet. Many ships can be made from this one design, can they not?

Erothymia: In fact, many have been.

Plato: Are all these ships exactly the same?

Erothymia: Not exactly. Some are slightly different weights or colors, some have different smells, and so on.

Plato: Are there some ships which imitated the blueprint at one time, but which no longer exist, and others which have not yet appeared that will imitate it?

Erothymia: Absolutely.

Plato: So the many tangible ships we call real can change and disappear while the blueprint stays the same. What would you say is more perfect, the ships we see on the ocean, or the blueprint from which they came?

Erothymia: I don't know. You did not sail from Greece on a blueprint.

Plato: But the blueprint must be more perfect. Without the *concept* or the *idea* for the ship there would be no ship at all. The ships are *contingent* on the concept they instantiate. Also, the ships we see do not embody the concept perfectly—they only approximate it, some closely, some remotely. That is why they sink and need replacing. But most of all, the blueprint is nothing but the mathematical form of each ship. It is

a collection of formal equations, measurements, and geometric shapes. These shapes are not made of wood or canvas. The formulas give shape to the materials. Now listen: the formulas endure, but the material ships don't. The blueprint, or *form* of the ship is not subject to change and decay in the way the ships are. So the Form is immutable while the ships come and go. What then is more perfect and more real, the ships or the Form of the ships?

Erothymia: By your reasoning, the Form. It outlives the ships, it cannot be altered, and without it the ships would not exist. But what if I rip up the blueprint! Haven't I destroyed the form of the ships?

Plato: Where was the concept or *idea* for these ships before it was drawn on the architect's desk?

Erothymia: In his mind.

Plato: If you ripped up the blueprint, the form would remain as an idea in the architect's mind wouldn't it? Then surely the blueprint is more perfect than the many perishable things that imitate it, and the idea or concept of the blueprint in the architect's mind is more perfect than the blueprint on his desk. Can anything be more perfect than that?

Erothymia: No, except when the architect dies, the formal idea dies with him.

- Plato:** Suppose the Form is objectively real, independent of the architect's mind who thinks it.
- Erothymia:** I don't understand that.
- Plato:** Look at it this way. If I organize some grapes or these three pebbles into groups of three, you can see triads with your eyes, can't you? Now I am breaking up the groups of three, but I will write a symbol of any group of three in this sand. But watch, I am erasing the symbol. Does three-ness still exist?
- Erothymia:** Yes, it still exists as a thought in your mind.
- Plato:** Does it still exist when I don't think of it?
- Erothymia:** It must.
- Plato:** Would it still exist if *no-one* were to think it?
- Erothymia:** No-one? I'm not sure.
- Plato:** Look, the Form of three-ness does not perish. It must be universal and everlasting. What about other things? You surely agree there are many beautiful things. None of them is perfectly beautiful, and none of them lasts forever. But what is the *essence* of beauty itself? Does it cease to exist when the many tangible beautiful things cease to exist? I would say no. Beauty itself is non-perishable and non-tangible, meaning it is timeless and immaterial. The form of the beautiful itself is the *cause* of beauty in the many changing appearances of

beauty, all of which come and go, in the same way that the idea of a ship is the cause of *that* ship.

Erothymia: But ideas exist only in minds. How can they be independent of our minds?

Plato: Eternal forms *are* in our minds, because our minds are eternal.

Erothymia: You haven't proven that. I'm not satisfied.

Plato: If I can prove that there is at least one eternal mind, would you then agree that it would not be difficult to at least conceive of that mind creating other eternal minds containing eternal ideas?

Erothymia: I would. Try to prove it.

Plato: Would you please lift your finger? (She lifts her finger). What made your finger move?

Erothymia: I did. My muscles did.

Plato: What made your muscles move?

Erothymia: Oh my, a lot of muscles are moving. My thoughts are making them move. My thoughts are being propelled by your thoughts.

Plato: So a non-physical thing was the first cause of the visible, physical movement in your finger?

Erothymia: It seems so.

- Plato:** Now look around you. Isn't everything moving, either rapidly or slowly, but still moving? No-one can deny that. And I ask you, if there were no original source for motion itself, would anything be moving at all?
- Erothymia:** I don't agree. Everything gets its motion from something else in motion, and the sequence just goes on without end.
- Plato:** Yes, it may be without end in the sense that there was no first initiator of motion *in time*, but surely there must be a first *principle* of motion, something which sustains the endless succession of movements and imparts the property of movement to everything in the endless succession.
- Erothymia:** I will reluctantly agree to that.
- Plato:** Could this principle itself be moving?
- Erothymia:** No, or it would just be another part of the succession.
- Plato:** So we can say that the first principle of motion is some kind of *psyche*. It is not moving, so it does not change. Since it is a *psyche*, it would also have to be non-material. Finally, since motion is eternal, it would also have to be eternal. Let us conclude that the first cause of motion is immutable, immaterial, and indestructible. Tell me, do you see order in the world?
- Erothymia:** Certainly. There is numerical ratio, regularity, repetition, natural laws, and so on.

- Plato:** Do you see order and regularity in motion?
- Erothymia:** No doubt.
- Plato:** And do you not see degrees of order in nature, and degrees of order in human society?
- Erothymia:** Sometimes more, sometimes less, but yes.
- Plato:** Do you think the world could be self-ordering?
- Erothymia:** How could it be? One and the same thing cannot be both the ordered thing and the ordering thing. Something distinct from the world must give order to it.
- Plato:** If we call the world the totality of changing or moving things, the principle of order could be nothing other than its first cause—the origin of motion. And that, we agreed, was eternal, changeless, and indestructible. Here then is my argument: there is an eternal, unchanging *psyche* that imparts motion and order to the changing world. The ideas or patterns by which the cosmic *psyche* imparts this order are themselves changeless, eternal, and indestructible. I call them timeless Forms. They are the immaterial, eternal patterns or paradigms that give everything a shape or structure or, let us say, an essence. There is a Form for everything with an identifiable nature: a Form of beauty, mathematical Forms like three-ness and equality, a Form of ship-

hood, of humanity, of justice, and so on. After great intellectual labor, these Forms can be known by us. The timeless, unchanging Forms are the objects of rare philosophical knowledge. We can even define a philosopher as a knower and lover of Forms.

Erothymia: By all that moves, Plato, you have a wonderful mind. It moves me immensely. Why does that happen? Your words and arguments are aphrodisiacs to me. You could take me now if you want to, and you haven't even won the argument. Come and show me your other powers.

Plato: How repulsive! I think carefully for you all night and you respond like a rutting goat!

Erothymia: There is something erotic in strong minds and powerful ideas.

Plato: Well get your excitement somewhere else. Leave me alone.

Erothymia: You bastard! You are ignoring me! (She picks up the sword.) I could do you in right now.

Plato: Go ahead. Don't you trust your ideas? (Enter all.)

Erothymia: We'll talk later. All of you, hide behind the mounds with me. I want to show this man something.

Eudoxus: The strangers are not far behind us. They are following us up here.

Erothymia: Plato, you greet them. We are going to hide. Just talk to them and find out where they are from. We will do the rest.

Dion: Here they are.

Erothymia: Quick, let's go. (They all disperse and hide. Plato paces in front of the volcano. Enter four crew from the third ship.)

Plato: Hello. Where do you hail from?

1st Crew: The island of Naxos. And you?

Plato: I am making passage from Athens to Sicily.

1st Crew: We are returning to Naxos. Are you on your way to Sicily, or returning?

Plato: We have not been there yet. (Erothymia leaps from behind the mound. Dion and his two crew members surround the newcomers.)

Erothymia: Nobody move. We want all your money. Quickly. Who is carrying the money? You, tell us where it is. (She slashes the shoulder of the first crewman.) We are not fooling. Hand it over, or your whole arm comes off.

1st Crew: It's not here.

Erothymia: I know you have some. If you are on a return trip to Naxos you must have something.

- Plato:** Wait. (He grabs the blade of Erothymia's sword.) You are not going to do that.
- Erothymia:** Let go of the sword.
- Plato:** You can slash my hand if you want to, but I'm not letting go. Not until you let *them* go.
- Erothymia:** I am taking their money.
- 2nd Crew:** It's aboard the ship.
- Erothymia:** Let's get it then.
- 3rd Crew:** Only our commander can give you access.
- Erothymia:** Fine, which one of you is the commander?
- 3rd Crew:** We left her on the ship. She's still there.
- Erothymia:** She?
- 3rd Crew:** Yes, she.
- Erothymia:** Your commander is a woman?
- Plato:** That's what he said. Now sheath your weapon and attend to this man's wound.
- Erothymia:** I am the only woman who can command a crew. Who does she think she is?
- Xenocrates:** You are quite evidently mistaken. Plato, what should we do? If we leave this crew in the hands of Xanthippe she will kill all of them. Then she will kill their captain.

- Plato:** What is your commander's name?
- 1st Crew:** Alethea.
- Plato:** Which of you does she trust?
- 1st Crew:** All of us.
- Plato:** Send him to get her. (The fourth crew makes a move to exit.)
- Erothymia:** Wait a minute! I'm in charge here! Nobody does anything until I say so.
- Plato:** Do as I said. Bring your captain here. This woman will not hurt her, not in any way. Now put this thing away. (Erothymia looks furiously at Plato and sheathes the sword. Exit fourth crew.)
- Erothymia:** What in Hades do you think you are doing?
- Plato:** You know something about me, but you don't know that I know you know it. My knowledge of what you think I don't know will keep us all safe.
- Erothymia:** You are playing with me, mister. Don't do it.
- Plato:** Then stop your nonsense and play by different rules.
- Erothymia:** Whose rules?
- Plato:** The rules of reason.
- Erothymia:** You are an idiot.
- Plato:** Everyone come here and sit down. (All three groups

sit around the base of the crater, on which Plato is standing.) Dion, why do you obey this woman?

Erothymia: Don't answer!

Plato: He is a man. He can speak for himself.

Erothymia: Not around me, he can't.

Plato: Madame, you have a problem.

Erothymia: Oooh, Mister know-it-all thinks I have a problem. So what's my problem?

Plato: It will become clearer and clearer.

Erothymia: Maybe you have a problem.

Plato: I have many. Which one did you have in mind?

Erothymia: Me.

Plato: Maybe so. Let me ask all of you. What kind of problem does this woman present to me?

Speusippus: She quite clearly represents a problem for your theory of justice.

Plato: She hasn't heard it yet. You have, but she hasn't. Do you think she has any premonitions about what kind of problem she is?

Xenocrates: I suspect she does.

Edoxus: She's a victim of something. Someone has hurt her badly. She has wounds and bruises on her *psyche*.

Plato: Heavy scarring is more like it. She mistakes the scars for healthy tissue. She's a victim, but she won't admit to it. She thinks she's special.

Xenocrates: All victims think they are special.

Speusippus: It's their protection against forgotten pain. Pains like shame and guilt. The original wound is shame.

Erothymia: Stop it! All of you! One more word and I will kill you. This time I mean it.

Plato: You can't kill us. You need us. You need us at many levels.

Erothymia: I'm one iota away from killing you.

Plato: You need us at a level you have not yet discovered. (Enter fourth crew with Alethea. Alethea is wearing a blue robe, delicately trimmed in gold fur and feathers, and an elaborate gold bonnet. Her pure blonde hair cascades down to her waist when she removes the bonnet. Plato bows deeply, then kisses both her hands. Erothymia tries to push Plato aside and brandishes her sword at Alethea.)

Erothymia: Give us your money and leave. Leave and never come back.

Alethea: And go where? In an infinite universe all points are at the center. I am always at home.

Erothymia: (Puzzled.) There is something strange about you.

- Alethea:** I am sure he does not think so (touching Plato). I am familiar to him. And he is familiar to me.
- Plato:** I worship you. You are Alethea. You are living truth.
- Erothymia:** She's an outlandish bimbo. (Plato decisively grabs Erothymia's wrist and locks her elbow with his other hand.)
- Plato:** Drop the weapon.
- Erothymia:** If I drop it now I will be back later with another one. Plato, you'll regret this.
- Plato:** Drop it. Drop it to the ground and leave.
- Alethea:** I would like to try something. Please release your grip. (To Erothymia.) You can use your weapon on me if you wish. But if you do, you will destroy something you need. Have you read his book on love?
- Erothymia:** Who needs books?
- Alethea:** You do. Let me tell you something.
- Erothymia:** Go right ahead.
- Alethea:** First, everyone but him and you should leave. I am dismissing my crew. Now you do the same, if you would, please.
- Plato:** I agree. Friends, I will meet you back at the ship. (Exit Xenocrates, Eudoxus, and Speusippus.)
- Alethea:** Now them, if you would be so kind.
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- Erothymia:** But I keep the sword.
- Alethea:** Those without love need reason. Those without reason need justice. Those without justice need force. I believe she is asking you to leave. (Exit Dion and his crew.) Thank you. The rest of you know what to do. Go, my friends and make peace with the others. (Alethea's crew exits.) We have much to say to each other, much to learn from each other.
- Erothymia:** We have an argument to finish.
- Alethea:** About what?
- Erothymia:** About justice. I say that justice is a forced condition we would all rather do without. We conform only because it serves our interest. He says that justice is an objective, universal quality...some kind of real property.
- Alethea:** Do you both agree on the meaning of the word? Do you agree that justice is order and regulation?
- Both:** Yes, we do.
- Alethea:** So you must disagree about the nature and source of justice.
- Both:** Yes, we do.
- Plato:** Hence we disagree profoundly about its value.
- Alethea:** But surely you agree that justice is a virtue.

- Plato:** We have not got that far yet.
- Alethea:** But it must be. A virtue is nothing more than a quality or excellence that makes something work well. It is what makes the parts of a system work together for a purpose. I mean, our crews must work in unison to sail our ships well.
- Erothymia:** True.
- Alethea:** So why, then, don't we analyze something that is working optimally and find the virtue of justice in it? Then we can talk about its value. What are the four cardinal virtues?
- Erothymia:** Wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice.
- Alethea:** Let me ask you, Plato, if we were to analyze a completely fine and beautiful society, or better yet, a completely fine and beautiful soul, wouldn't we find the virtues in either one? Then couldn't we decide if these virtues make for happier societies and happier persons?
- Erothymia:** If I may, let me point out that we may soon grow weary—especially him.
- Plato:** By the dog, you are right. Perhaps we should draw this portion of our discussion to a close simply by naming the cardinal virtues, then pick up the thread of the argument tomorrow. I suggest we go back to our respective ships for the rest of the day and make

passage to Syracuse tomorrow. I am inviting both of you to sail with me. After we have made way I will explain what I mean by *dikaiosune*.

Alethea: I agree.

Erothymia: I can't leave my crew in another's hands.

Plato: We can sail with you, in that case. I trust my crew.

Alethea: I am of the same mind. We will sail on your ship. Now what are the names of the virtues?

Erothymia: Their names are easy: we all know them. They are *Sophia*, *Andrea*, *Sophrosune*, and *Dikaiosune*. Some other words for *Sophia* are wisdom, knowledge, insight, and understanding.

Alethea: Some other words for *Andrea* are courage, endurance, steadfastness, and strength-of-spirit.

Plato: Some other words for *Sophrosune* are self-control, temperance, discipline, and restraint.

Erothymia: And as I recently discovered, some other words for *Dikaiosune* are rightness, orderliness, proportion, and lawfulness. Most people would prefer to use the word justice.

Alethea: Let's leave it at that for now. Tomorrow I will hear more about virtue. Then we can recognize why *dikaiosune* is a virtue, and if its possession makes the good *polis* happy.

Plato: And if its presence in each *psyche* makes its owner happy. Do not forget, it is the just individual which is uppermost in my mind. The individual ranks first in our concern. The health and goodness of the state is important, but philosophy is pointless if it fails to point the way to the good life for all members of the state. I would even say that the *purpose* of the state is to provide the best conditions for each of us to achieve happiness. I think about justice, however, because I need to care for my own soul above all else.

Alethea: That said, let us go back to our respective ships. A new day is coming, and we must greet it with fresh minds.

Both: Agreed. Right. No disagreement here. (They all move off. Music up. Lights slowly to black. The volcano glows red. There is a barely audible rumble. Music down.)

Scene Three

Sounds of waves. Lights slowly up. On the deck of a sailing ship.

Alethea: Her crew has the sails well trimmed for the course.

Xenocrates: Indeed, the bearing seems right and the sails are flying firm.

Alethea: Where is Plato?

Xenocrates: He has been in a contemplative trance. He will be here soon. You know, I've been wondering whether or not we will complete our blueprint for the ideal state before we put in at Syracuse.

Alethea: You must be especially keen to see it finished, being a constitutional and legal theorist.

Xenocrates: You are right. I need a constitutional model and some general laws, but they always arise from concepts and principles which only philosophy can provide. All practice is merely applied theory. All we make and all we do is nothing more than the implementation of ideas, so we must labor with courage, honesty, and great skill to ensure that we have the true theory. (Enter Plato.) There is only one way to be good and many ways to be bad.

Plato: And, I would add, only one way to be right and many ways to be wrong. Good morning to both of you.

- Both:** Good morning.
- Plato:** Where are the others?
- Xenocrates:** I'll fetch them. (Exits)
- Plato:** Shall we finish last night's discussion? I've had more thoughts than there are waves off this bow. By your leave, I will summarize them in the hope we can move from *dikaiousune* in the state to its presence in the soul.
- Alethea:** By all means, continue. (Fade wave sounds.)
- Plato:** Let me search for justice in society first. On the larger scale it will be easier to see. In fact let us construct the finest possible society, one that is smoothly functioning and flourishing, then ask how it achieved its order. Tell me how you think it arises in a society. How do cities arise in the first place?
- Alethea:** I think because we need each other. There are many things we want that we cannot provide for ourselves.
- Plato:** Why not?
- Alethea:** Because none of us has the time to do everything. And none of us is talented at everything. Some have talent for healing, some for carpentry, some for fishing, and so on. So we band together and cooperate in helping each other.
- Plato:** Good. The smooth operation of the *polis* will come

from two things—people will specialize at some particular work, and their specialty should be what they are best at.

Alethea: That is not hard to agree to. But who will oversee the entire *polis*? Who will fight for it and maintain its internal functioning?

Plato: Obviously, there will be a separate military class to guard the society against intruders and to maintain civic order. Those in the military will be true warriors, distinguished for their gallant service to public harmony and security. On our two principles, they must specialize in the military arts and nothing else, and they must be of the highest courage and character. In fact, their work is so important, requiring such extreme dedication, self-sacrifice, and self-discipline, that they should live together on a military base with its own special way-of-life.

Alethea: Now we have two separate classes, the producing-consuming class and the warrior class. But who will decide which people go into which class? And who will decide the particular rights and obligations of each class, or their lifestyle? Who will decide which policies—foreign or internal—the warrior-class should enforce?

Plato: It would have to be a third class. One class would be the providers of goods and services, a second would

execute orders to fight and enforce the regulations of civic order, and a third would make the regulations and decisions.

Alethea: That makes good sense. Someone has to frame the constitution and laws and guide the whole society. Keeping to our two principles, they should be those who are naturally best at leading and governing, and they should do nothing other than lead and govern. (Enter Erothymia.)

Plato: Good morning.

Alethea: Good morning to you. Are you rested? (Erothymia does not respond.)

Plato: What's wrong? (She still does not respond.)

Alethea: You may speak if you wish. We were talking about the ideal society.

Erothymia: Why didn't you wait for me?

Plato: Why weren't you here when we started?

Erothymia: I don't want you talking to him alone. He is still my prisoner, you know.

Alethea: It's your ship. We will respect your wish.

Erothymia: It's not a wish, it's an order.

Plato: Can we say "Hello" in passing?

Erothymia: Don't be ridiculous.

- Plato:** How about the weather? Can we talk about the weather when we are alone?
- Erothymia:** Watch out, mister.
- Plato:** Of course, we could always go to your ship to talk and leave her here.
- Erothymia:** You are not going anywhere until we get to Syracuse.
- Alethea:** Women do not usually talk to a man like that until after they are married to him.
- Erothymia:** Really. You don't say.
- Alethea:** Would you like to contribute to the dialogue?
- Erothymia:** Well, I hate to interrupt your private little chat here.
- Alethea:** It's not private. We were not talking about you in any case.
- Plato:** Even if we were, you wouldn't need to worry, especially if I were talking to Alethea about you.
- Erothymia:** You should never talk behind my back. I don't like it.
- Plato:** If you were talking to Alethea, I would *want* you to talk about me.
- Erothymia:** What is so special about her?
- Alethea:** This is infantile. We have important work to do. He was telling me that in the noblest, finest society the four virtues would be manifestly present. So we began the mental construction of the *kallipolis*, the

ideal state. Our first conclusion was that the state has three distinct classes: the working class, the military class, and the ruling class.

Plato:

Since we were speaking earlier of a military class, let's think of the state in terms of a fighting ship. There would have to be one group to provide the food, make the uniforms and weapons, construct the ship, repair the sails, provide and administer medicines for the wounded, and so on. None of them would be aboard the ship. Once the ship's needs are met, it would go forth and do battle. The crew on it would do nothing but sail the ship well and fight defensively or offensively. All those aboard the ship would be courageous, highly disciplined, physically fit, aggressive and decisive in their craft. They must also be able to restrain their aggression at will, capable of diplomacy and tactfulness when necessary. The analogy here is complete when we remember that the ship needs one captain, and only one. The captain is ultimately responsible for everything, including when to fight and why; tactics and strategy in battle; helmsmanship and navigation; the co-ordination of the crew; maintenance of discipline, safety, procedure, and the ship's fighting trim. (Enter Speusippus, Xenocrates, and Eudoxus.)

Speusippus:

Keep talking. We can pick it up.

- Alethea:** Why would the crew willingly submit to the Captain's commands and orders?
- Plato:** Alethea, you touch here on the central claim in my argument. I will have to expound it at length. For now, I will say only that the Captain maintains authority because of *proven* superiority. The Captain is obeyed out of reverence. The Captain is simply the best: the finest in character, in intelligence, in military wisdom and tactical judgment, in courage, in nautical skills of all kinds, and in knowledge. Like a wise and benevolent God, the good Captain is worshipped and obeyed by the whole crew and all its providers. I will say more on this later, but for now that is my answer.
- Erothymia:** I cannot let this go. Who picks the Captain? How does the Captain make the rules and commands? How does the crew know that the Captain is the wisest and best of people?
- Plato:** I promise, I will get to all that.
- Erothymia:** (Almost angry) No, I want to be told now! This is important!
- Plato:** Curb your spirit and be gentle. I need to make a further point. Please be satisfied for now with a question, and I will soon address your concerns. Tell me, Xenocrates, do you think the crew should tell the Captain which policies to institute?
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- Xenocrates:** That would be foolish.
- Plato:** Or how to navigate?
- Xenocrates:** That would be outlandish.
- Plato:** Or when to return to port?
- Xenocrates:** I see your point.
- Plato:** Do you think the crew should pick the Captain? Or its own jobs on the ship?
- Xenocrates:** Of course not. The Captain picks the crew, and assigns each a task.
- Plato:** And do you think the workers who provide and service the ship should pick *either* the crew *or* the Captain?
- Xenocrates:** Of course not. What does a beautician know about warfare or about commanding warriors?
- Plato:** So warriors and commanders, at the very least, should be selected on some basis *other* than popular vote.
- Xenocrates:** Yes, I see. If the working class or the warrior class selected the commanding class, the commanders would not be selected for their character or knowledge, but for their ability to satisfy the wants of the voters. We don't elect the Gods, so why should we elect the Admirals?

- Erothymia:** I was not elected.
- Alethea:** You got there your own way.
- Plato:** There is a difference between the ways things are and the way they ought to be. I am not talking about how rulers and commanders in fact come to power. I am thinking of the perfect society, and hence I must think exclusively about how rulers and commanders *should* be selected.
- Erothymia:** Well, at least we agree it should not be by popular vote.
- Plato:** We agree on how it should not be, but we will no doubt disagree on how it ought to be. Now, if I promise to say much more later on that point, will you let me proceed on another?
- Eudoxus:** We can all grant that.
- Plato:** Good. Let us return from the metaphor of the ship to the *polis* itself. I ask you, Eudoxus, if a *polis* were completely fine and beautiful and good—like a person—what basic qualities would it exhibit?
- Eudoxus:** The four cardinal virtues, of course.
- Plato:** All our friends in other schools, and thoughtful people generally, agree that there are four qualities that mark any beautiful or noble human entity. Anything humanly good possesses these four

characteristics or features. Consequently, if our city is good in all its details, all of which I have written down for future discussion, it will exhibit them. Let us call each of these qualities or features an *arete*.

Speusippus: People would call them virtues.

Plato: Yes, but that is a weak word. I prefer the word excellence. Other people may prefer words like 'strength' or 'capacity' or 'power'. Whatever word we use, an *arete* is any excellence or power which causes someone or something to fulfill its purpose, that is, to realize its nature or to flourish in its proper function or work. For example, the proper function or work of the mind is to think and discover truth. So high intelligence would be a primary *arete* of the mind. The work or purpose of a soldier is to fight and guard, so courage would be a primary *arete* of the soldier. If anything has its proper *arete* it will function smoothly, efficiently, effectively. In the finest *polis* we say we should find each *arete* which, by the tests of experience and the contemplation of wise thinkers, would be an excellence in a thriving, flourishing social organism. Which would you like to discuss first?

Alethea: Let us begin with the oldest one, *Andrea*.

Xenocrates: I can speak on that. Homer mentions the *arete* of the hero, of someone who overcomes immense obstacles

in quest of a worthy goal. The hero is worshipped for his *Andrea*, for his singular excellence we call courage or fortitude. He overcomes everything, including temptations to flee from pain or give in to pleasure, in order to achieve victory. Courage is the *arete* that causes anything to discharge its fighting function well and emerge victorious.

Plato: Where is it in the finest city?

Xenocrates: In the army, naturally, since the warrior class has the work of warfare. Not in the rulers? Not in the producers? No, that *arete* is specific to the warriors. Speaking only of the state, each class has its own work, therefore its unique *arete*.

Plato: What about *Sophia*?

Alethea: I can speak on that. Can we agree to call it wisdom?

All: Yes. Agreed.

Alethea: Understanding, insight, knowledge, or whatever others call it, *Sophia* has at least three components. I believe they are, first, the possession of proven facts and truths, second, sound practical judgment or good insight, some would say solid common sense, and, third, the ability to grasp the primary, undemonstrable truths without which we could not think or act. I believe it is the second of these we are most concerned with. That kind of sound judgment

or practical insight is the *arete* which causes us to thrive and do well in running our household, in doing business, in the tactical and strategic aspects of warfare, in punishing wrongdoing, in deciding what is enough in anger or pleasure or exercise, but most of all in the art of governing.

Plato: So if the state is as perfect as possible, where is its wisdom?

Alethea: It could be nowhere else but in its leadership. If the state is governed well, which it would have to be if it is completely good, it would be governed by wise, intelligent, knowledgeable, and insightful rulers. We can remember our ship analogy here.

Plato: So wisdom is the *arete* of the rulers, or at least the primary one. And *sophrosune*?

Eudoxus: We all admire men and women who are *sophrosune*, but what do we mean by it? I think we mean that *sophrosune* is the excellence by which we maintain mastery over our animal nature—its instincts, irrational desires, primal appetites, and natural passions. When someone is “out of his mind” or “out of control” they have no *sophrosune*, but when they “keep their head” they have it. If someone is “in control” they have mastery over themselves. With *sophrosune*, the best part is regulating an inferior part, and regulating means it is giving regulations or *rules*

for the inferior part to follow. So *sophrosune* chooses one part to submit to the rightful authority of another part which is naturally fit to govern. It is something like good discipline.

Plato: Where is it in the state?

Xenocrates: Well, it is a willingness by the many to be ruled by the wise, so it is in the relations between the classes rather than one particular class. It is something like the relations between the gods and their followers. Religious people honor and worship their gods and carry out their wishes, in humility and respect.

Plato: I agree, that is a hard word to define. But *sophrosune*, or self-control, is clearly an *arete*. Now, may I speak on *dikaiosune*? We have found three of the four virtues in the *polis*, so whatever remaining feature is most excellent must be the last virtue. Clearly, the *polis* is good because it also exhibits order, harmony, and lawful regularity. This is precisely *dikaiosune*. But where does this orderliness and lawfulness come from? From nothing other than reason and wisdom, from the part that is naturally fitted to guide and rule. Just as the Captain imparts order to the ship by making rules and issuing commands, the rulers use their knowledge, skill and moral superiority to guide and govern the warriors and producers. Eudoxus, let me ask you something. What would you think if the

eye were to try to hear, if the nose were to try to see, or if the ears were to try to taste?

Eudoxus: The result would be chaos and disunity.

Plato: What if soldiers were to try commanding the generals, or students were to administer schools, and administrators were to do the teaching?

Eudoxus: Again, dysfunction and disorganization.

Plato: Now what if the wise were to bake the city's bread, the cobblers were to rule, the lyre players were to fight, and the fighters were to try to heal the sick, or govern the city. Wouldn't that be like the soldiers running the army, or the mentally ill running the healing temples? Wouldn't the result be the same?

Eudoxus: Exactly the same. It is the opposite of *dikaiosune*.

Plato: It follows, doesn't it, that *dikaiosune* is the virtue that permits the best at ruling to rule, fighting to fight, and the best at providing goods and services to provide them. This is similar to *sophrosune*, except that once everyone knows and accepts their place in the *polis*, no-one upsets the natural order by trying to do the work of another. The work of the ruler is to rule, the warrior to fight, the producer to produce. This is more important than it sounds. It has the grave consequence that neither the warriors nor the workers can tell the rulers what to do; nor

can they decide who the rulers will be or what rules the rulers can make. The workers and warriors are simply *not free* to rule.

Xenocrates: So when we get to Syracuse we must tell Dionysius the Elder that if he wants the most just society he must not let the people rule, nor the generals. He must give all the power of ruling to the wisest and best.

Plato: Yes, the ruler must have God-like powers to govern, but only those who are God-like in nature would be given that power. The ruler would have to be *aristos*, or superhumanly good and vastly superior. Political power must be concentrated in the very finest men or women, and the very finest men or women must be required to have political power. Only then will the *polis* be *dikaiosune*. Then it will be balanced, proportionately and unified.

Erothymia: Can you describe the *aristos* man or women in greater detail? What makes them *aristos*?

Eudoxus: Before he answers that, I want to ask Plato what he meant when he said that he wanted to get to the individual *psyche*, and what *dikaiosune* is in the soul. I bet that if we had a portrait of the just person we would be closer to understanding who should rule, because the *aristos* character would be the best, therefore the most just.

- Plato:** Yes, in the finest *polis* power must be given to someone who is *at least* the most just. Remember, 'just' now means 'controlled by reason and wisdom'. Eudoxus, you may wish to discourse on this subject.
- Eudoxus:** I defer to Xenocrates, whose views are more polished. Then I can fill in the rest.
- Xenocrates:** This will indeed be difficult. I shall start by repeating that the finest *polis* has three classes: the large class of workers, the smaller military class, and the very small ruling class. We found wisdom in the ruling class, courage in the warrior class, discipline or self-control in levels of authority, and justice in the apportionment of functions to each appropriate class, such that each class does its own task excellently and *only* its own task. Now these three classes of society must be the larger expressions of different aspects of human nature. What else could they be? If we investigate, we should find aspects or parts of the *psyche* which the three classes express. Assuredly we do. We find parts roughly corresponding to the terms Body, Mind and Spirit. Let's start with Mind, and call it the Reasoning part. This is the part which uses logic and objective thinking processes to reach true beliefs. For example, I can use controlled observations and do repeatable experiments to prove that we should not drink the sea water outside our vessel just as convincingly as Eudoxus can use logic to prove

theorems in geometry. But reasoning alone cannot stop me from drinking it. Suppose I was dehydrated and fiercely thirsty. I would want to drink the water, as people sometimes do. Now I have a conflict between what I want and what I know. What is it in me that “gives in” to the desire, or else “stays loyal” to reason? Is it not some third part of me, distinct from both reason and desire? What is it in me that resists all kinds of temptations arising from things like lust, fear, or anger, so that I can feel proud of myself for resisting them? What is it in me that weakens and gives in to those same temptations, causing me to feel shame or guilt for doing so? Isn't it a third thing, a kind of mediator between desires in the body and thoughts in the dispassionate mind?

Eudoxus:

If this helps, we can imagine an entity which only thinks and calculates with no desire, and we can imagine an entity which only desires but has no reason. If we were to put them together, how would they interact? I don't think they could, because pure thought would be unaffected by desire, and desire would be deaf to reason. So there would have to be a broker between them which has a share in each and which consistently guides desire according to wisdom and logic.

Xenocrates:

What would you call it?

Erothymia: It must be the will. We say that strong-willed people resist temptation and weak-willed people don't.

Speusippus: But what makes the will strong or weak? From where does it get its energy to overcome immense desires and side with dispassionate reason? Or to repeatedly cave in to feeble appetites and desires in the face of overwhelming proof that they would cause harm? Look, the strongest and biggest part of us is the desire for pleasure. As drunkards and reckless lovers know, the desire for pleasure is greater than the fear of pain. So what has the strength to restrain desire, or to give it free reign when appropriate, when desire is unmoved by reason? What gives energy or power to the will? It cannot be reason, because reason by itself issues in conclusions, not actions. Try this example. Let's put Xanthippe right here and put Andrea right here. (He brings Erothymia and Alethea downstage and positions Plato between them. All lights down except a spotlight on Plato.) Suppose Plato were to meet a fiery, wild, hyper-erotic temptress. She is pure appetite and desire. (Spotlight up on Erothymia.) Suppose that Plato's appetitive part desires her more than he has desired any women he has ever met, or could meet. She uses all her charm and seductive sexual power on him. (Erothymia begins her burlesque movements and unbuttons her

tunic, looking alluringly at Plato.) In the absence of reason, he would simply attempt to gratify his lust as any natural animal would. He would not even “give in”. He would be determined by raw, blind desire. But Plato also has reason. (Spotlight on Alethea.) Through the use of his rational part, he can think and calculate logically. The rational part can inform him of objective facts.

Alethea: The woman you desire is someone else’s mistress. If you so much as wink at her you will end up dead. Hence, you must not yield to your desire.

Erothymia: But you want me. I will give you more and rarer pleasures than you ever experienced before. They will be stronger than the sword of Damocles. Oh, Mister Philosopher, come and enjoy me. I will be yours, all yours.

Alethea: It is not in your best interest to succumb to her erotic entreaties. An afternoon of pleasure will actually bring you to ruin. Listen to me, rather than her.

Speusippus: Will Plato wink at Xanthippe? Not if his will is firmer than his phallus, and not if it can put his desire under the dominion of his knowledge. But what makes his will firm? Indeed, does he have some mechanism of willing at all, or does he have some sort of vital energetic kind of power which listens to both reason and desire? (Lights up.)

Eudoxus: I see what you mean. It is more like a power he can summon when necessary and relax when necessary, something similar to the aggression a warrior can activate when reason decides it is right to do so, or which he can *restrain* when reason dictates it. Why don't we call it spirit, rather than will? After all, we talk more of the competitive spirit at the Olympian games, than the competitive will.

Plato: And we describe people as lacking in spirit, or high-spirited, or mean-spirited, or as kindred or beautiful spirits, rather than beautiful wills, and so on. We do not say the Will is willing but the flesh is weak, we say the spirit is willing. We tell people to curb their spirits, not their wills.

Xenocrates: And what do we call this spirited part of ourselves. Is it our temper?

Plato: Not quite. The name for it is *thymos*. One aspect of *thymos* is temper, yes, such that we can *lose* our temper when *thymos* is out of control and anger is rampant, but being angry is only one expression for it. It is certainly the aggressive part, and it is certainly the willing part, and it moves out to act or not, but it is more mutli-faceted than that. Why don't we agree to call it 'spirit' and refer to it as *thymos*?

Alethea: Well done. Now we see there are three divisions in the *psyche*: Reason, Desire, and Spirit or Will.

Clearly, wisdom is found in the rational part, courage is found in the *thymos* part, discipline or self-mastery is found in the right alignment of the parts so that Desire and Spirit automatically obey the dictates of Reason, and justice is found in the contribution of each part to the whole without being interfered with by the other two. In other words the *psyche* will be orderly and unified, integrated and harmonious, a functional whole, with its three divisions cooperating as allies rather than competing as enemies.

Eudoxus:

Now I can see the shape or form of *dikaiosune* more clearly, without even knowing which particular actions or rules or people exhibit it. Now that I see its formal nature I can decide which ones fit it and which don't. I can think of the nature of *dikaiosune* in terms of a mathematical formula, knowing which numbers fit it and which don't. And I can see it even more clearly when I consider someone who lacks it. He or she would be dysfunctional, neurotic, disorganized, disunified, and most of all unhappy. Go back to Xenocrates' example. If *dikaiosune* is lawful orderliness and balance imparted by reason, what would happen when we lose it? Suppose Plato were to make himself grossly drunk with wine, which would be the suicide of reason. We would see *thymos* take over first, aggressively pursuing the object of his desire. The more he drinks, the more he dissolves

thymos until finally there is nothing left but a lusty animal with neither reason nor will. Propelled by instinct and appetite, he would end up physically sick, punished by the mistress's lover, cut off from affection, and banished from a just society.

Erothymia: Not so fast. We cannot reach the end of Plato's argument yet. Before we can prove that the just person is happier—whether he is known to be just or not—there are three points I find troublesome. Without further proof and evidence I cannot accept them. (Xenocrates, Eudoxus, Speusippus, and Alethea huddle in a group, conversing in whispers.)

Plato: Yes, there is much more to be said. But we can address your concerns. I can probably guess what they are. After all, your theory of justice begins and ends with biology. It is perfectly true of a troop of monkeys.

Erothymia: Yes, I see that. But I believe that we are indeed sophisticated monkeys, endowed with the extra ability to calculate our own best advantage.

Plato: What are your concerns?

Erothymia: The first is that I am not convinced of the reality of *thymos*. The second greater problem is that even if *thymos* is real, and not only a verbal fabrication, I don't know if reason is able to rule both it *and* our purely animal nature or that it should. But the

biggest problem is this. Suppose that *thymos* is real, and so is blind desire. What guarantees that the rational part possesses genuine knowledge and wisdom? How would the other parts be shown that reason's claims to knowledge are incontrovertibly *true*? And by what test would we determine who really has this knowledge and who merely *thinks* they do?

Plato: Formidable challenges indeed. If I cannot convince you on these points I will gladly concede the argument to you and I will adopt your theory of the nature and value of justice.

Erothymia: That would be reasonable and honorable.

Plato: With which point would you like to begin?

Erothymia: They are interconnected. I say that reason does and should operate in the service of animal desire. It is just another tool for getting what we want with as little effort or discomfort as possible. It merely thinks out the means to the predetermined, irrational ends posited by desire and instinct. There is nothing else for it to know. When there are conflicts between the social rules constructed by agreement and facts derived from experience, desire will always win out if it is strong enough to make reason forgetful. Either that, or reason decides that defecting from agreements and defying experience

will be to our advantage. And desires usually yield only to stronger desires: the desire to seduce a maiden is over-ruled by the desire to avoid painful retribution after reason has calculated the probability of such unpleasant consequences. There is nothing in between. Either, as most often happens, desire floods and erodes reason, or reason subdues desire with predictions of painful consequences. And then the desire to avoid pain becomes stronger than the desire for pleasure. I suppose we should start on that point, since without it you would not have a theory of justice.

Plato: I agree. I would have to revert to your model if *thymos* is not a real part of the *psyche*, and I would then be forced to revise my view of reason. I would then have to view it as a practical instrument of the appetites, as a mechanism for getting more of what you crave at the expense of others. But what would convince you, if not my former argument?

Erothymia: Try to give me an example of pure *thymos* independent of reason and desire.

Plato: Would you say that children and animals are without reason?

Erothymia: Well, they are without logic and *objective* reason.

Plato: Good. Would you say that animals have the same desires as other animals, and likewise children?

- Erothymia:** If you mean desires to eat, stay warm, eventually reproduce, accumulate goods, and destroy aggressors, yes.
- Plato:** So if they are both without reason and equal in desires, and if I can point to distinctive differences among animals and among children, would you agree that this is some third aspect in their nature?
- Erothymia:** Do you mean differences in strength, or in body shape, or in diet?
- Plato:** No, differences in their *psyche*.
- Erothymia:** I would agree, in that case.
- Plato:** Have you ever observed that some dogs are very lethargic and placid, while others are savage and fearless?
- Erothymia:** No doubt.
- Plato:** Would you call one kind low-spirited, the other high-spirited?
- Erothymia:** Yes, we usually talk that way.
- Plato:** And do you observe the same in children? Some are frisky or cranky or over-active, while others are subdued or withdrawn or quiet? Don't you refer to the former as having lots of spirit and the latter as being spiritless?
- Erothymia:** I accept your point. This drive or motivation, this
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variation in temper, must be something other than desire or reason.

Plato: And think of soldiers in combat or boxers at the Olympic games. Apart from knowledge and skill, coupled with a desire to win, what do they need to overcome their opponents?

Erothymia: You want me to say *thymos*.

Plato: Can someone know the principles of combat, but lack the aggression to fight?

Erothymia: Yes, certainly.

Plato: Can they also have a deep wish for the laurels, but lack the fighting spirit?

Erothymia: Again, yes.

Plato: And what do they have to restrain when the competition is halted?

Erothymia: Their aggression. Granted, it is a third thing. I see it in lovers too. They may have intense desire and keen intelligence, but without a strong will they do not win the mate. It is a third thing.

Plato: Now to the harder question. Is reason capable of subduing and guiding both *thymos* and raw appetite? And should it do so? In answering this, I am really defending my theory of *dikaiosune* and attacking yours. Oddly, I will be appealing to the very thing I

am attempting to defend, namely reason itself. You will be reasoning with me. Then I shall prove that what you have used is the natural ruler of your soul and the only source of order within it. If you please, I will approach this in a roundabout way. I will answer your third question next. Can you repeat your third question?

Erothymia: What is the guarantee that reason has genuine knowledge or wisdom, and what tests would show it?

Plato: If I can successfully answer that question, I am sure I would have thereby answered your second one. Like a worthy king or army general, or like the respected captain of a team, reason would have the authority to rule if it proves itself not only superior to *thymos* and desire, but also that it has the knowledge and skill to make its followers happier than anything else can, that it actually *knows* how to have a prosperous life. If I can prove that, I am sure the workers and soldiers in the *polis*, as well as the Appetites and Spirit in the *psyche*, would beg the finest and best to lead them.

Erothymia: If you can prove that, you have made your case. (The others turn their attention back to Plato.)

Plato: Reason must become the ruler, or rulers must become complete in reason. Power and rationality must coincide. At the very least, knowledge and

wisdom must be in the same hands as political or personal power.

Xenocrates: Absolute power? Doesn't absolute power corrupt?

Plato: Only if the soul of the leader is corruptible. In the morally best it would not be, therefore power would not corrupt it. That comment forces me to focus my discourse. I grant you that a leader must be the finest of human beings in many ways, but for now we will confine our attention to the highest, the best kind of knowledge. Let me repeat that the most superior man or woman is *aristos*. This *aristos* person would have superhuman intelligence, skill, wisdom, courage, self-control, justice, charm, and so on. I will speak of this later. But without demonstrable knowledge this person would not be suitable to rule, so we must concentrate first on that. I must show what knowledge is, that some people possess it, that some possess the kind of knowledge required to rule, and that we can know who they are. Speusippus, you are a biologist, so let me ask you this: If you had a strange pain in your stomach would you go to a street juggler to find out what is wrong?

Speusippus: Not likely.

Plato: Or to have it cured?

Speusippus: Certainly not.

- Plato:** Why not?
- Speusippus:** Because I would have no way of telling whether or not the juggler knew anything about medicine.
- Plato:** And you, Eudoxus, if you had a problem in geometry you could not solve, would you take it to an Olympic wrestler?
- Eudoxus:** No, for the same reason.
- Plato:** So if your thoughts were confused or inconsistent you would go to a logician—in this case an expert in mathematics—to have them corrected?
- Eudoxus:** Yes, I would.
- Plato:** And the same for you, Xenocrates, if you had a legal problem? Would you go to a lawyer?
- Xenocrates:** Certainly.
- Plato:** In these cases of medicine, science, and law, what separates the experts from the opinionated?
- Speusippus:** The fact that they are more likely to be right in what they say.
- Plato:** Couldn't the juggler be right in a diagnosis? Or would his being right be due to lucky guessing, perhaps, or due to the fact that he was told something by someone more expert than himself?
- Speusippus:** What is wrong with being right by accident?

Eudoxus: Nothing, but the chance of being consistently right is extremely low.

Plato: More important, we cannot say that the juggler really *knows* what is wrong with you. He just happens to say something true. His opinion accidentally matches the truth. We would have to go to someone else who is truly knowledgeable to get a demonstration of why he is right. In addition to being right he must have some reasoned account which proves or explains why he is right. So, Xenocrates, if someone said to you that wearing a purple toga is illegal in Sparta, what would you ask him first?

Xenocrates: I would say "Are you sure"?

Plato: Imagine now that I am that man, and I say "Yes, I know it".

Xenocrates: How do you know it?

Plato: An oracle told me.

Xenocrates: How does the oracle know?

Plato: Since the oracle is not here, I will say that I have a strong feeling.

Xenocrates: Feelings may cause beliefs, but they don't prove them true. I have had many strong feelings, but the belief was false nonetheless.

- Plato:** All right then, I am sure because most people believe it.
- Xenocrates:** Most people believe that Dionysius was born from the thigh of Zeus. Does that make it true? Most people believe the river Meander flows simultaneously in opposite directions. Does that make it true?
- Plato:** I just gave you a set of reasons. Why won't you accept them?
- Xenocrates:** Because they are not justifying reasons. The belief is not *made right* by them.
- Plato:** Who would know which reasons make a belief right?
- Xenocrates:** Someone who has thought carefully about the rules of evidence, I suppose. Someone who has studied the nature of knowledge and the criteria for it. Philosophers. Lovers of wisdom.
- Plato:** You are a philosopher. What would you accept as a good reason?
- Xenocrates:** I would consult the legal code of Sparta and look for the law that makes purple togas illegal. Or, I would ask a Spartan lawyer whom I trusted to know the code.
- Plato:** Are you saying that there must be something *real* against which you measure your belief to see if it is true or not?
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- Xenocrates:** Yes.
- Plato:** In this case the objective reality is the Spartan legal code?
- Xenocrates:** Yes. Either the law is there, or it isn't. If it is there, my belief is true and justified; if it isn't my belief is simply false. Either it is there, or not there, and not both. I may *think* it is there when it is in fact not, in which case I merely have an opinion on something, not knowledge.
- Plato:** So knowledge is a belief about anything whatsoever which is both true and shown to be true by objective evidence.
- Xenocrates:** I can easily agree to that. (Erothymia sits beside Alethea.)
- Plato:** Would you say that any belief whatsoever can be called an instance of knowledge if, and only if, the claim it proposes conforms to reality, to the way things actually are, *and* if the evidence establishes this conformity to an acceptable degree?
- Xenocrates:** Yes, but I would say that the evidence may not establish it to a perfect degree in all cases, but only to a degree which is higher than that for alternative beliefs.
- Eudoxus:** Mathematical proofs establish it to a perfect degree.

Plato: Still, you would agree that it is reality itself that *causes* a belief to be true or false. If all proof was like that of mathematics, we would have perfect knowledge.

Eudoxus: Yes. So knowledge is the conformity of reasoned belief to the way things really are, independent of the belief. Doesn't this mean that if there is no reality to which a belief can conform, then that belief cannot be an instance of knowledge? Wouldn't it be a mere belief, or merely an opinion? If I said that Minotaurs have a hundred teeth, and if Minotaurs do not exist, then my belief about Minotaurs could never be knowledge, because there is nothing in objective reality to make the belief true.

Plato: Fine. I could then say that Minotaurs *in mythology* have a hundred teeth, and I would be right or wrong, depending on what a check into Mythology reveals. Nonetheless, it is something distinct from my belief that makes it true and something distinct from my belief that shows it to be so. Are we all agreed on that?

All: I see no problem. Agreed. I concur.

Plato: Now you must listen carefully. This is all-important. We said that *dikaiosune* is a kind of regularity or order imposed on a city or a soul by reason. We said that it is the rule of wisdom, and that wisdom at least includes knowledge. Speusippus, would you say you know Eudoxus?

- Speusippus:** Yes, I know Eudoxus like I know Athens.
- Plato:** Is that knowledge in the strict sense?
- Speusippus:** I would say it is more like familiarity or acquaintance than strict knowledge. (Erothymia and Alethea start to eye each other. They exchange intense glances. Erothymia eventually rests her hand on Alethea's forearm.)
- Plato:** So let us eliminate that. Eudoxus, do you know how to swim? How to make wine? How to pilot a ship?
- Eudoxus:** I know how to do all those things.
- Plato:** Even though they are all extremely important, don't all these examples of knowing how to do something presuppose a knowledge of certain facts and truths?
- Eudoxus:** They do. Like knowing how to rule presupposes knowledge of certain facts and truths.
- Plato:** Then let us set aside for the moment acquaintance-knowledge, and how-to knowledge, concentrating on knowing that certain things are true, and others not. We will have to be careful with this. Speusippus, do you think that if something is known to be true, it would be universally true?
- Speusippus:** What do you mean?
- Plato:** I mean that a true belief is always true and everywhere true, that is, it is true regardless of who

utters it, or who believes it, as long as it correctly portrays reality. The belief 'Speusippus is breathing' is true if, and only if, you are breathing, and if you are indeed breathing it would be true for everyone, everywhere. Whoever *knows* that 'Speusippus is breathing' is true would say *exactly* the same thing as everyone else who knows it, no matter who they are or where they are or when they say it, because the *reality* is that you are actually breathing. Of course, if you stopped breathing, by the same token, everyone who knew that would also know that the statement 'Speusippus is breathing' is false.

Speusippus: I believe I follow that.

Plato: Hence, if our rulers are to have knowledge they must possess true beliefs recognizable by anyone else who takes the trouble to investigate them.

Speusippus: Indeed, otherwise they would have only opinions.

Plato: Because reality is the same for everyone.

Speusippus: Yes.

Plato: If knowledge is possible, then there must be an objective reality to be known. We agreed on that. It follows, then, that if there is no objective reality, then knowledge is not possible. Yet we require knowledge in our rulers. So it is necessary to prove that there is something knowable by them.

Speusippus: What do they have to know? (Erothymia and Alethea are now holding hands.)

Plato: They have to know what justice is, and they have to know what makes justice good, or what makes *anything* good, including people, laws, constitutions, works of art, educational policies, and of course all the virtues.

Speusippus: Plato, that is an impossibly tall order.

Plato: But suppose I could prove that there are *realities* that make beliefs about goodness, justice, and so on, *true*. Then wouldn't knowledge of them be possible?

Speusippus: It would be, by all we have agreed to so far.

Plato: Suppose I could prove something even more daring, namely that these realities are indestructible and timeless. I could also say that they are perfectly stable, meaning that they never change and they exist eternally.

Erothymia: He's going to talk about his theory of Forms. I have already heard it. I would like to excuse myself. I need to talk to this woman.

Alethea: My name is Alethea, and I gladly accept your invitation to converse. But let me say that we have all heard Plato's theory of Forms. I have studied the theory in his books and his companions have no doubt discussed the theory extensively at his

Academy. The entire point of his proof of their existence is to show that there is a universal, unchanging form of *dikaiosune*. I agree that only those who possess knowledge of the Forms, above all the Form of the Good, are qualified to rule, and only those who regulate life by it will be happy. In a lengthy, demanding argument he has tried to prove there is a universal essence of *dikaiosune* by nature, not by convention. I admire all of you for having the mental stamina required to follow his argument. It is indeed difficult, and it takes as much character as it does intelligence to grasp it from start to finish.

Speusippus: Now that you have accomplished that, it is not difficult for me to see that Xanthippe's second question is answered. If it is demonstrated that there are knowable objects at the most real or perfect level, and a few gifted minds can grasp them, it would be natural for the workers and warriors to ask these most knowledgeable to rule, just as we want the most knowledgeable to command a ship.

Plato: Let me re-emphasize that it is just as important for the rulers to be as superior in virtue and intelligence as they are in knowledge. Knowledge alone is not enough, even though it is absolutely necessary.

Xenocrates: And necessarily absolute.

Plato: That remark shows that you understand what I have said. Once more, we have labored diligently and we have made good progress. Soon we will make landfall, so I suggest we relax for the remainder of the journey and quietly review all we have discussed. Our first task on going ashore will be to convince Dionysius to relinquish all control to a philosopher King or Queen, and that will be hard.

Xenocrates: But what specific constitution and laws shall we instill in the Sicilian society?

Plato: In the rightly ordered *polis*, as in the rightly ordered *psyche*, we formulate whatever laws are dictated by the form of *dikaiosune*. Those will be the laws which inculcate and preserve the order and harmony dictated by wisdom. Now rest. The more difficult part of our task is yet to begin. (Xenocrates, Eudoxus, and Speusippus exit. Sound of waves and music up. Slow fade of lights as Plato looks over the bow of the ship. One spotlight on Plato. Lights down.)

ACT TWO

Scene One

Morning. At the bow of Erothymia's ship. Music up. Enter Erothymia. She is wearing a white robe. She paces, then stares out over the water. She hums to the music. Paces again, then goes back to her vantage point. Enter Alethea.

Alethea: Do not be startled. It is only me.

Erothymia: Good morning. No, you do not frighten me. I feel no need to raise my defenses against you. I feel safe around you. How do you do that?

Alethea: You wanted to speak with me again.

Erothymia: My name is not Xanthippe. (Music down.)

Alethea: We all know that. Plato knew it first.

Erothymia: What? How did he know that?

Alethea: The lips can chatter lies, but truth oozes from every pore.

Erothymia: Why didn't he tell me?

Alethea: He didn't need to. He has no need to embarrass anyone. He knows you will correct yourself when you are ready to. Even little lies serve a purpose. The lie is over when its purpose expires.

Erothymia: We need to talk.

- Alethea:** I know we do.
- Erothymia:** My name is Erothymia. I am Dionysius the Elder's niece.
- Alethea:** Plato suspected as much. So did I. That's why he knew you would not hurt him. He knew you would have to answer to your uncle. That's not all he knows. He knows you are deeply troubled about love. He has figured out that you can separate love and sex, but you cannot put them together. I believe you want to, but you don't know how.
- Erothymia:** I can't. I never believed they could coexist. It was always one or the other.
- Alethea:** But you want to join them. And you have premonitions that Plato is the one you can do it with. If that's the case, you need to learn to love the same things he does.
- Erothymia:** What's that?
- Alethea:** Me.
- Erothymia:** You? He loves you?
- Alethea:** He loves what I represent. Tell me, when did love and sex veer apart for you?
- Erothymia:** I don't want to talk about it.
- Alethea:** Does that mean you *can't* talk about it?

- Erothymia:** Maybe so...maybe so.
- Alethea:** You said it was always one or the other—love or sex—and never both at the same time.
- Erothymia:** That's what I said.
- Alethea:** Have you ever loved anyone?
- Erothymia:** I...I don't know. I have tried.
- Alethea:** Has a man ever loved you?
- Erothymia:** I...maybe...I...I'm not sure.
- Alethea:** How could you not know?
- Erothymia:** I knew what they wanted.
- Alethea:** You knew they wanted sex. But you thought it was the *only* thing they wanted.
- Erothymia:** Please, this is difficult. Maybe I should not have asked to talk to you.
- Alethea:** Fate decided you had to. If you follow fate, it will guide you. If you don't, it will drag you.
- Erothymia:** Please don't tell Plato that I spoke with you.
- Alethea:** I can't promise that. You are asking me to promise to tell a lie.
- Erothymia:** For me? Would you do it for me?
- Alethea:** Friends are dear, but truth is dearer.

- Erothymia:** But you would be helping me.
- Alethea:** No, I wouldn't. A conspiracy of lies will make both of us unjust. That doesn't help you, it hurts you. Being unjust is the same thing as being neurotic.
- Erothymia:** But I want him to think that I don't know what he knows about me.
- Alethea:** I see your strategy, but I won't agree. The most I can promise is that I will keep this conversation to myself unless he asks me directly. Hence, you do not need to worry. He will never ask.
- Erothymia:** How do you know that?
- Alethea:** Because Plato is extremely smart. He will let you play your game until you defeat yourself.
- Erothymia:** I am going to love him, you know. And I will get him to love me.
- Alethea:** But you don't know what love is. How can you give it or receive it if you don't know what it is?
- Erothymia:** I will. This will be different.
- Alethea:** You can't make a man love you. And you can't make yourself love him. You can only let yourself follow when love calls.
- Erothymia:** I can get a man to do whatever I want him to.
- Alethea:** Men will do ridiculous things for sex, but you can't

make them love you. Want you, perhaps, but not love you. This is where your confusion lies.

Erothymia: I know I can combine love and sex. I've done it before. (Erothymia moves to embrace Alethea. Alethea gently removes Erothymia's hands from her waist and holds them.)

Alethea: Yes, with women. But Plato is a man. Your biggest problem with him is that he is celibate.

Erothymia: Celibate? He mentioned that. But why?

Alethea: Because his love of sexual pleasure is boundless, just like mine. He and I have both chosen celibacy because we do not want our desire for pleasure to displace our desire for truth and spiritual purity. You might say we don't want sex to interfere with love. There is no greater temporal pleasure than sexual pleasure, but we cannot be blinded by it. Our pleasures are eternal, or we want them to be, so we renounce temporal pleasures. We have to, because they are addictively powerful.

Erothymia: You can't be serious. Sex is repulsive. Sex is just something men take from us. We give it to them only to get what we want. Then we hold out until we get more of what we want. I would never let them have it unless there was something in it for me.

Alethea: Really? What's usually in it for you?

- Erothymia:** Money, a nicer boat, jewelry...
- Alethea:** What else? Surely you have obtained things other than money.
- Erothymia:** Such as?
- Alethea:** Such as revenge. Such as power over them. Especially if they are powerful themselves.
- Erothymia:** I don't know what you are talking about.
- Alethea:** I know you don't. That's why you continue to do it. That's why you are not happy.
- Erothymia:** All I know is that I give them whatever they want and put up with the sex, as long as I get what I want.
- Alethea:** And it never feels good?
- Erothymia:** Never. I have never even...not once...I...
- Alethea:** I know. It's alright. Come here. (Alethea sits on a bench and puts Erothymia's head on her lap. She repeatedly rubs Erothymia's temples and strokes her hair.) Who hurt you?
- Erothymia:** I have never told anyone. I can't talk about it. It's...I...my head starts to ache.
- Alethea:** There is a war going on in there. We can stop it if you wish. Or maybe it is better that you never bring this up again. Just go on as you have been. It's easier that way. Change is frightening and difficult, full of

perils—unlike the familiar. Perhaps you should not change and just persist with whatever has allowed you to survive so far and leave your ghosts in the closet. Naturally, it will cost you something.

Erothymia: Cost me what?

Alethea: Plato. Plato cannot love a victim. He has compassion for them, but he could not love one.

Erothymia: I could play on his compassion.

Alethea: You are confusing compassion with pity. You can't play on true compassion. True compassion is very demanding. Pity is arrogance and weakness. In fact, pity is demeaning to both the pitied and the one who pities. If Plato were to love you, his compassion would demand that you give up being a victim.

Erothymia: I don't know how to do that. It's all I know.

Alethea: If you don't, you will be trapped in cycles of manipulation, distrust, and cynicism. You will never be happy. You will go on using men for any number of things until you lose your charm and power, but you will never be happy.

Erothymia: What do I do? I want him.

Alethea: We will be in Syracuse in one more day, maybe two. When you get there, go to the healing temple and

stay as long as it takes. I will visit you regularly. Plato is in no rush. He will still be here when you come out whole and clean.

Erothymia: There is an easier way. You can help me.

Alethea: There is no easy way to health.

Erothymia: This will work.

Alethea: I know what you are thinking. It won't work. You still have the mind of a victim.

Erothymia: What was I thinking?

Alethea: You were about to set up a game. You tell me.

Erothymia: I was going to say we could both seduce Plato. We could get him to love both of us, then force him to choose between us. Right before we force his choice, you could tell him you found someone else and leave him to me.

Alethea: I can't believe how such a brilliant woman could be so shallow. Besides, he already loves me. What we both want is for him to love you. (Erothymia gets up and starts pacing.)

Erothymia: I did not understand that. *Both* of us want him to love me? What do you mean?

Alethea: You have more to give him than I do. You can give him your mind, body, and spirit, all of which you possess in greater abundance than I do. I can give

him only my mind and spirit, and to a lesser degree than you can at that.

Erothymia: Do you love him?

Alethea: I admire him. I respect him more than any man I have ever met. I would rather have his company more than anyone else's. I would do anything he asks of me. If you want to call that love, then I love him. And you? What do you love most about him?

Erothymia: His intelligence. His mind arouses me in every way. I love competent minds.

Alethea: There are brilliant criminals too. Do they also arouse you?

Erothymia: Oh, yes. The way some of them think...the way some of them plan their crimes...

Alethea: Well, then, if you want Plato's attention you had better engage his mind.

Erothymia: I think I may already have done that. I need to go further, in my own way. I'm sorry, but I must by-pass the healing temples and do what I do best. I will surely elevate an intense intellectual encounter into a full joust. I can do that with competence and confidence. But just as surely I will burrow into his passions. I know they are there. I have to. That's what I am very good at. Moreover, I believe his

theory is wrong and mine is right. The only way to prove it to him is in actions, not words.

Alethea: You are a strong-willed woman and your name suits you. I reluctantly agree that you will have to try and win Plato with the talents and tactics you have perfected. But I have some good advice for you. I would think about it if I were you.

Erothymia: For the first time I will actually listen to someone else. I have confidence in you.

Alethea: You know as well as I do what is wrong with you. You know that your feelings about sex are distorted and chaotic. However, you also know that imagining an idyllic union of sexual health and love is not enough to make it happen. Wishing does not change anything. Perhaps you are right—perhaps you can find what you want with Plato without going through the temple rituals, which you can probably see through anyway. Use your familiar methods with this man, if you wish, but I warn you that if they work you had better be prepared for love. Your preparation should consist of one thing. Before you do anything in Syracuse, you should avoid all contact with Plato, or with anyone, and think hard about this. You are not responsible for what happened to you in the past. However, you *are* responsible for your reaction to it from this day forth. The coping mechanisms that

worked for you in the past will not work for you with Plato. What *will* work is for you to fall in love with truth. You must become a philosopher like him. Your love of money, power, fame, and attention is a sickness. It's really compensation for your pain, for your secret shame and sense of worthlessness. Your only cure is truth. It is the one medicine that can cure you. Open yourself to it and learn to love it. Then your love for Plato will be *dikaiosune*. Sex may or may not be an element of it, but it will be different than what it is now. It will satisfy your spirit.

Erothymia: I have had intimations of that. I have had glimpses into the fact that I need to change my thinking about sex and men. My beliefs are false.

Alethea: Yes, but that will be part of a bigger change. That aspect of your thinking will automatically change when you change your whole worldview, especially your beliefs about human nature. You can do that only through philosophy. Your thinking to this point, if you can call it that, has been defensive and reactionary. Situations produced responses. I call this episodic belief. Philosophy cleanses you of them. And there are many you need to purge. They are outdated and useless. If you need to kill, kill them.

Erothymia: I need to kill the part of me that thinks like a whore, that treats men like a whore does.

Alethea: Not quite. That part of you has tremendous talent and power. You wouldn't want to lose it. It is a very valuable resource. You need to *elevate* it and *integrate* it with justice. You won't lose it, you will transform it. It will happen on its own if you love truth and wisdom. Now I must go.

Erothymia: Where are you going?

Alethea: Back to my ship. They need me there.

Erothymia: You won't come to Syracuse?

Alethea: No, I am bound for other places. I see my ship is off your starboard quarter. The sea is flat, so a transfer should not be difficult. Can you arrange that?

Erothymia: Do you really want to go?

Alethea: It's not what I want. It's what I am obliged to do.

Erothymia: I want to thank you. I have never thanked anyone before.

Alethea: Forget the vanity. If you want to thank me, follow my advice. And love him well.

Erothymia: I will.

Alethea: I'm sure you will. (Alethea exits. Music up. Erothymia stares thoughtfully over the bow. Light: down, except a muted spotlight on Erothymia. Plato enters in the darkness and positions himself on a ladder. A very dull, yellowish spotlight come:

up on his head. He fixes his gaze on Erothymia as she looks wistfully out to sea. Hold lights and music for thirty seconds. Very slow fade of both to black and silence.)

Scene Two

The court of Dionysius the Elder in Syracuse. Dionysius the Elder and his son, Dionysius the Younger, are presiding over a drinking party. Among those present is Erothymia. The crowd is boisterous and rowdy.

Elder Dionysius: A word, a word please, to my guests!

Younger Dionysius: My father Dionysius, Ruler of Syracuse, wishes to speak! Quiet in the court please!

Elder Dionysius: And my son, Dionysius the younger, wishes to address you too, after my speech.

Younger Dionysius: Please drain the wine from your goblets and put them down so my father can be heard! Guards, please see to it that some order and calm prevail! (Some guards help the guests finish their wine and remove their goblets. One of the guests resists and is beaten).

Elder Dionysius: I must now declare that the Festival of the Goddess Aphrodite be concluded. We have honored and felt her creativity and power, we have felt the curse of her attention, and we have appeased her frightful ability to deprive men of their reason. Now we must reorganize and await the entry of our distinguished guest from Greece. The philosopher Plato and his three friends have landed. They are here now, so I would ask you to clear the court and restore your daily order. (The guards start leaving)

Younger Dionysius: Only those of the Inner Council shall remain to hear the philosopher out, and you, Erothymia, may remain also. There shall be six guards at each entry and a squadron posted at the city gates.

Elder Dionysius: Our guest shall speak at my invitation. He will try to convince us to replace our constitution with one he says will make the city beautiful and fine.

Erothymia: Will we question him?

Elder Dionysius: Yes, there will be questions. He is a philosopher, and he is used to hard questions.

Erothymia: I shall put the first questions.

Elder Dionysius: We all agree, I'm sure, that Erothymia will put the first questions.

Guard: Make way, make way! Plato has entered. (Enter Plato, Xenocrates, Eudoxus, and Speusippus.)

Younger Dionysius: Plato and friends, welcome to the court of Syracuse.

Plato: Greetings from the *polis* of Athens to the citizens and court of Syracuse.

Younger Dionysius: What would you have us hear from you? We have heard of your greatness, and we wish to prosper from it. As you know, our *polis* is rife with enmity and discord and is threatened with revolution. The generals, too, are conspiring and so the constitution cannot be upheld. We have said that we must start

afresh and rethink the principles by which our *polis* is structured, then implement them if they are wisely reasoned. We shall listen earnestly and question honestly. What will be our starting point?

Plato: You have already suggested it. We must begin with speech and argument. There is no other way. We must reach a consensus of reason, for that is the only thing in which we all have an equal share, and the only thing which issues in unanimity when it is used lovingly and correctly.

Erothymia: Reason bends and capitulates to the impulses of passion and appetite! Even if you could secure unanimity for your conclusions, those conclusions of cool reason are too weak to regulate and subdue the storms of desire, greed, fear, and jealousy!

Younger Dionysius: We must hear the argument first, then we may question it!

Erothymia: No, arguments are useless to begin with. They are merely polite violence, instruments of disguised passion. I can undo an argument in a wink. One flash of my breast has made perfect arguments crumble.

Plato: Does the argument nonetheless remain sound?

Erothymia: Of course it does, but it is not important.

Speusippus: This is the difficulty we encountered on the volcano.

Younger Dionysius: Please, let us hear the argument!

Erothymia: Why should we agree to listen to arguments? Let nature take her course!

Plato: If I believe in reason, then naturally I must use it to convince you to engage in rational argument. My colleagues and I have already worked out this aspect. May I then simply ask you to *assume* that reason must prevail, and engage you in a rational discussion about how to put it to the best use? Would you grant me that assumption?

Erothymia: Why? Can you charm me into it?

Plato: No, I am asking you to assume something for the sake of a discussion. Just agree to speak within the bounds of logic.

Erothymia: What, no force? No bribery? I have no incentive, nothing to gain.

Speusippus: You must appeal to the passions after all before you can motivate us to think logically.

Erothymia: I for one am suspicious. If I agree to play by the rules of logical argument, you will end up humiliating me by defeating everything I say. And since I agreed to the rules of reason, I will have to abide the defeat—something I will not do.

- Elder Dionysius:** If you do not wish to deliberate with us, you may leave. But only if you wish.
- Erothymia:** Make me!
- Plato:** Suppose I could prove to you that you and everyone else would be better off if you let reason guide you now.
- Erothymia:** I told you, “proof” is a procedure I have not yet agreed to.
- Plato:** In that case, I’ll offer you an incentive. I will guarantee you more happiness than you now have, if you just listen to my arguments.
- Erothymia:** Let everyone take note that Plato is using bribery to lure us into logic! What if your arguments fail?
- Plato:** I’ll give you everything I own. If I lose, you get my estate. If I win, you get happiness.
- Erothymia:** Happiness? What is that?
- Plato:** If you don’t know you should listen to me. My arguments form a long definition of happiness. I will convince you that *dikaiosune* is the highest state of happiness, and the best element in social living. If you don’t know what happiness is, we need to start with some definitions.
- Xenocrates:** For the sake of our distinguished listeners, we should start with our basic axiom.

Plato: Yes, let me begin by saying that the only cure for the ills and uncertainties of your *polis* is this: you must put all the power of ruling in the hands of the wisest and best. Your monarch must become a philosopher, or your best philosopher must become an absolute monarch, King or Queen, it doesn't matter. All that matters is that the finest philosopher must rule. The head must literally rule, and the Head of State must be the wisest and best. Wisdom and virtue must be given absolute power. Philosophy must guide the *polis* in the same way that it must guide your own *psyche*.

Elder Dionysius: Who are these philosophers? What do they know? How do we tell who the real ones are and who is fake?

Younger Dionysius: Everyone is a philosopher, everyone is a critic. No one is better than anyone else. Everyone's opinion counts. Perhaps the people should rule—the governor simply carries out their demands.

Plato: Now the challenge is clear. I must define the true philosopher and I must give you a method for determining who they are.

Eudoxus: And you must prove that only they should rule.

Plato: Yes. We can start by asking my friend Speusippus to outline for us the popular, uninformed view of philosophy and her practitioners. Then the truth can

be more easily seen. Can you tell us how the mob views philosophy?

Speusippus:

Most people think of philosophers as useless crackpots who live some kind of fairy-tale life with no appreciation of the real world and with no practical ability to function within it. In effect, they are thought of as failures who escape from real work and real problems into a fantasyland. A few others actually respect philosophers and regard themselves as being in love with wisdom too, but lacking training and formal study in it they mistake its fraudulent representatives for genuine philosophers.

Eudoxus:

Who are the impostors?

Speusippus:

They come in many forms. A few appear as prophets with magical powers and obscure teachings. A few others appear as advice-givers and soul-healers with esoteric rituals and unexplained ideas. Still others say they are messengers for the Gods, and they ask for blind faith. But the most common form by far comes in the guise of a so-called educator who, for a fee, will teach you the art of persuasion. These sophists are those most often confused with philosophers.

Erothymia:

There is no distinction! All philosophy is sophistry! Nothing more than word-play! It is nothing more than gaining the advantage in an argument and

winning it by whatever means your opponent is foolish enough to give you!

Plato: We can prove you wrong. That is the central point in my argument—there is a crucial difference between loving wisdom and loving victory in arguments. Sophists have no regard for objective truth, since they don't believe it exists. Philosophers do.

Speusippus: The point remains that only those who have studied philosophy extensively know what it is. And of those who have, many are corrupt. We have already decided that these who are to be called philosophers in the complete sense are those who are not only superhuman in knowledge but those who are superhuman in character, skill, and intelligence as well. (Several guests now appear drowsy).

Plato: We say those are the few who should rule. High intelligence and formal training without an alliance with love, courage, self-mastery, wisdom, and particularly a just character is dangerous. There are clever but heartless tyrants, the opposite of the *aristos* man or women we say should rule. The ruthless ruler who exercises power through treacherous force and deceit produces disease in both himself and in the *polis*. The person who bullies or seduces others is as unhappy and sick as those he dominates. Without honor, without

justice, without conscience, the tyrant uses fear and bribery, as well as the illusion of paternalistic care, to use and control the people for personal greedy ends. I can show all of you that the *polis* which is ruled by a King or Queen of immense skill, of monumental wisdom and intelligence, of selfless dedication to the welfare of the people, of saintly character, is a *polis* more wholesome and healthy than any other kind of *polis*. And I can show you that the person with a just *psyche*, a person of loyalty and fairness, of trustworthiness and reliability, of courage and temperance, is a person more wholesome and healthy than any other kind of person. Any one of you in such a wholesome condition, in a condition naturally disposed to act in fair and just ways, would flourish and prosper in complete happiness and well-being. Yes, you would, all because your head, your logical mind, is given all the power to benevolently govern your fighting spirit and your bodily cravings. My colleagues and I have identified the form of *dikaiosune*. We define it as an orderly regulation of different aspects or functions. The regulation is imposed by wisdom and knowledge. Lawfulness arises from the law-making function we call reason or rationality, whose proper office it is to impose true and wise judgements on our lawless nature. Justice is the

order imposed on chaos by the government of reason. Our argument will be complete when we isolate a social or individual nature totally unregulated by knowledge and wisdom, then compare it to one which is willingly obedient to the dictates of reason, when reason is reasoning *perfectly*. I will show that the just person or just society is six hundred and twenty nine times happier than the unjust one.

Elder Dionysius: Audience and distinguished guests, an interruption if I may. This seems to be a fitting place to suspend the argument. We have feasted for three days and listened well into this evening. Plato and his cohorts may also need time to rest and reflect on what has been said so far. I propose that the thread of the argument be picked up tomorrow after a refreshing sleep.

Younger Dionysius: I concur with my father. We shall reopen the argument tomorrow at lunch. I declare this session closed. (Everyone slowly disperses. Erothymia approaches Plato as he scribbles some notes in a large book. Eventually, everyone has left except the two of them. No stage lighting or set, other than a spotlight on each of them).

Erothymia: So, we meet again. Are you surprised?

Plato: No, not at all.

- Erothymia:** I knew who you were a long time ago.
- Plato:** I realized the same thing. That's how I knew who you were. You are Erothymia.
- Erothymia:** And you are who you said you were. I want to talk to you.
- Plato:** Straight talk? Without the stage show?
- Erothymia:** Straight. Without the show.
- Plato:** I'm here.
- Erothymia:** I love criminals. They are the most natural beings of all. Do you have an outlaw heart? (Plato looks at her, but does not answer). What about a wife? Do you have a mistress? (Silence). Have you ever had sex? (Silence). Would you like to have sex?
- Plato:** I said without the show.
- Erothymia:** This is all words, no show.
- Plato:** Can't you see I'm busy?
- Erothymia:** You don't know what to do with me.
- Plato:** I don't want to do anything with you. I have my work to complete.
- Erothymia:** Your work has to include me.
- Plato:** What do you mean by that?
- Erothymia:** Your philosophy must have a place for me.

- Plato:** You said you were irrational. The only place for the irrational, in philosophy, is submission.
- Erothymia:** To you?
- Plato:** No, to rationality.
- Erothymia:** Dion loves me. But I find him boring. He can never win an argument.
- Plato:** What does that have to do with rationality?
- Erothymia:** He said he would kill for me. For that I find him useful.
- Plato:** Can't you kill for yourself?
- Erothymia:** I already have.
- Plato:** Who?
- Erothymia:** I could kill you right now if I wanted to, but I don't want to.
- Plato:** Who?
- Erothymia:** It makes no difference. I just have. You are being nosey, like a child.
- Plato:** One of the wonders of childhood is curiosity. You were just curious yourself.
- Erothymia:** What kind of woman do you like?
- Plato:** A just one. A wise one. One who keeps her cool.
- Erothymia:** What kind of woman are you afraid of?

- Plato:** None.
- Erothymia:** Please don't toy with me.
- Plato:** I'm not toying with you. I don't fear any woman. Please, let me think alone.
- Erothymia:** Do you know what kind of man I cannot resist? A brilliant man who lusts without limit.
- Plato:** I lust for truth and clarity.
- Erothymia:** A man whose lust is so great it cannot be measured but who can simultaneously contain it. Such men are intense. I want to find the most intense man ever. I want to push his lust to the breaking point and have him to myself. The greater his passion and the higher his breaking point the more I love him. Every man I've known either had too little lust or they broke too easily. I have broken many intense men.
- Plato:** You can't break me.
- Erothymia:** Why would I want to? You have no lust.
- Plato:** I have more than you could ever imagine.
- Erothymia:** In fact, I heard that. Then show it to me. Give me a challenge I can't refuse.
- Plato:** Why? So you can find my breaking point? That would be entertaining for you, but stupid and disastrous for me.

Erothymia: If you can do it, there is something in it for you. You guaranteed something for me if I became convinced that *dikaiosune* would make me happy. You deserve a reward too if you can desire me without relief and without collapsing.

Plato: What is it?

Erothymia: Me.

Plato: Why would I want you?

Erothymia: Because all men desire me, but none has ever ruled me. I would let a man rule me if he had an insane desire for me and the power to control it. If he showed me *all* his strengths, I would give in. When I spot weakness, I give up. I get bored.

Plato: Why should I trust you?

Erothymia: You can't. That makes me interesting.

Plato: You are dangerous.

Erothymia: Yes, I am. Don't you like that? I do. I like treachery, danger, illicit passion, jealousy.

Plato: What else?

Erothymia: Ambiguity, chaos, heat.

Plato: What else?

Erothymia: Strife, drama, secrecy.

Plato: Keep going.

- Erothymia:** Aggression, ambition, arousal.
- Plato:** All, I suppose, beneath a mantle of social respectability and prudence.
- Erothymia:** Only when I think it necessary. There are no rigid rules, except one.
- Plato:** What is it?
- Erothymia:** That you never give up. I'll push you farther than anyone—man or woman—has ever pushed you, and I will test your theory beyond anything you have ever imagined. Prove to me that your mind can rule your appetites. If you succeed, I will submit to you. If you fail, I will kill you.
- Plato:** I'm not your man.
- Erothymia:** Not yet.
- Plato:** Not ever.
- Erothymia:** It's too late. It's already started, and there is nothing you can do about it.
- Plato:** Let me think about it.
- Erothymia:** Thinking won't help. Your desire is already swollen. I see it in your eyes and I can see it here, between your legs. All I ask is that you never let it waiver or sag. I'll test it relentlessly.
- Plato:** No rules? You drive a hard bargain.

- Erothymia:** It's not a bargain, it's a necessity.
- Plato:** But there have to be *some* rules. We have to be just, we have to be fair.
- Erothymia:** This is a battle of passionate wills, a contest of intense desires. There are no initial rules for war. None. There aren't any until they are made by the competitors in some enforceable way, and their only value is in keeping the war going. The starting point is nothing more than desire and the will to compete in the medium of love. All rules adapt to that. We negotiate everything as we go, on the playing fields of lust. It will be a beautiful war, an intensely poetic war, a war of words, wills, and our worlds of whirling passions. You will love it. Plato, the Olympians have nothing on us. I can tell you one thing: either both of us win or both of us lose. There will be no single winner.
- Plato:** I've never met a woman like you.
- Erothymia:** I hope I've never met a man like you. Strong willed, a strong and agile mind, strong loins.
- Plato:** You are right. I've already taken up your challenge in spite of myself. That's how confident I am about virtue and about the rightful authority and ability of the intellect to govern. Now there is no backing out. But how can I be sure you won't back out? That you won't break the agreement to keep on going?

Erothymia: You don't need to be sure. Your drive and your desire are sufficient in themselves to keep you going. Being sure is irrelevant. In fact, being unsure is part of the charm. Doubt and danger drive the hero, not certainty and safety.

Plato: So we are agreed? The games have begun?

Erothymia: It's an emotional covenant, not a legal agreement. All we can do is admit that the feelings are fired and we will fuel them. We can no longer control them.

Plato: The first thing you must do is listen to my best argument.

Erothymia: Your best argument is useless against the logic of the loins. The first thing I am going to do is have volcanic sex with Dion. When the molten rush has stopped, I will think calmly about what I want to say in the assembly. Your dull and plodding arguments may have some effect on your dull and plodding audience, but an argument is actually intoxicating when it is fermented in the juices of carnal knowledge.

Plato: No, I must speak on my own behalf! It is my argument, my theory. I must explain and defend it!

Erothymia: And so you will. But this is now *our* argument. I can inspire both of us by making your part of it even better. Do you think you will sleep?

- Plato:** No, I will probably just think.
- Erothymia:** You haven't mentioned how you feel about Dion, and I don't want to know. I would rather guess.
- Plato:** If you think having sex with Dion will make you—
- Erothymia:** —Quiet! I said I don't want to know.
- Plato:** How do *you* feel about having sex with Dion?
- Erothymia:** Do you really want to know? I don't think so. You don't just want to know in the way you want to know why the moon glows. You want to imagine it.
- Plato:** Never mind. Do as you please.
- Erothymia:** I'll tell you how I feel about it. I just want round after round of sexual pleasure from a man whose only talent is his ability to work like a horse. He can't even play checkers. If he could at least beat me at checkers after a night of love-making he might stand a chance of being in your shoes.
- Plato:** So I will spend the night worshipping Sophia and you will spend it worshipping Eros. Whom do you think will be most rewarded at dawn?
- Erothymia:** Neither, if we both get what we want.
- Plato:** I want a decisive argument.
- Erothymia:** You want a decisive argument for what?
- Plato:** To prove that the love and acquisition of truth is the

highest pleasure life affords us, and that the knowledge gained from such a pursuit must reign supreme and absolute over the passions and appetites. Reason must be the arbiter and advisor for all opinions, and the Emperor of all feeling and desire. That is the essence of *dikaiosune*.

Erothymia: I have an argument for you.

Plato: If your argument is sound, I will think of it myself. Sound arguments, irrefutable arguments, are sound everywhere and for everyone. Anyone who thinks objectively can recognize them independently.

Erothymia: You might think so. But every argument terminates in a presupposition, some ultimate mystery.

Plato: Philosophy's job is to make the presupposition coherent and intelligible, to decide whether or not it is true or false. Philosophy reasons about first and ultimate principles.

Erothymia: Every first principle is a wish, a postulate of passion. I know what your master passions are. That is why I can build some flimsy edifice of rationality around them and get you to believe that the arguments are sound, or even that you believe the arguments are what brought you to your belief. But I will then destroy the arguments you formerly thought were objectively valid.

- Plato:** How?
- Erothymia:** By transforming your passions.
- Plato:** You are brazen. You announce your strategy before you deploy it. But even if you didn't it would not work.
- Erothymia:** I'll do it tomorrow.
- Plato:** I dare you to try it now.
- Erothymia:** Quickly?
- Plato:** Carefully, but quickly if you wish.
- Erothymia:** Would you fondle my breast as I speak?
- Plato:** Of course not.
- Erothymia:** That is the central thrust of my argument. Now I want a few thrusts from Dion.
- Plato:** Wait. Let's hear a real argument.
- Erothymia:** All right. Here's one for *dikaiosune*. Give me a verbal portrait of the perfectly just person.
- Plato:** A well-ordered *psyche*, harmonious and unified, always directed by a fully competent intellect. I always say that if the intellect is to rule, it must be fully competent, that is, it must reason clearly and correctly, unerring in its discovery of facts and truths, and able to grasp the highest objects of knowledge.
- Erothymia:** What are they?

- Plato:** The perfect Forms. Above all, the Form of the Good. I've explained all that to you.
- Erothymia:** And this knowledge regulates the just soul?
- Plato:** Exactly. The just *psyche* is balanced and harmonious. The passions and appetites are benevolently guided by wisdom and the knowledge of what is good. *Dikaiosune* is an inward condition of the spiritually prosperous and healthy *psyche*. This beautiful inward balance automatically manifests itself outwardly in just actions, in just and balanced dealings and exchanges with others, in fairness, and in the prudential organization of one's overall life. The *psyche* which has justice has the whole of virtue. This is the *psyche* we call *aristos*, the one praised and admired by everyone. In it there is no anxiety or agitation by desires and passions.
- Erothymia:** If *dikaiosune* is a virtue, or something excellent, or you might say a strength of character, then its opposite must be a vice—a kind of flaw or weakness or defect. Isn't that true?
- Plato:** Yes, complete injustice would be the whole of vice.
- Erothymia:** Describe for me, if you will, a completely unjust *psyche*.
- Plato:** Completely lawless and unregulated. Governed by twisting, turning cravings and brute appetites. A

psyche without rules, without wisdom, without organization. A *psyche* full of natural chaos and strife, driven by the irrational, relentless, addictive desires for sex, money, and domination. It is the tumultuous, insatiable *psyche*, the rebellious, irrational, narcissistic, criminal soul—unwise and intemperate in the extreme. It is the uncivilized outlaw in every one of us, unrestrained by civility, manners or laws.

Erothymia: In all of us?

Plato: Undoubtedly. It roams when we dream, or when reason is disordered by drunkenness or madness. Uncontrolled by will or reason, the unjust *psyche* is pure bestial desire.

Erothymia: I see. So this is your first argument? The one we began on the island? You are comparing the most just and the most unjust *psyche's*, and making that the basis for your first argument? I mean, put these two souls side by side and ask which is happier?

Plato: Yes, that was the first argument. There is no doubt who is happier. The unjust *psyche* has no purpose or direction. It is friendless and anxious, living in fear and uncertainty, driven to neuroticism by its insatiable cravings, never satisfied, never at peace, never knowing the stable pleasures of reason. The completely unjust *psyche* lives a perpetual nightmare from which it cannot awaken.

- Erothymia:** That may be your judgment, but I know you are wrong. You have no proof. You merely assert it. I assert the opposite. How do we decide who is right?
- Plato:** I'll think about it.
- Erothymia:** Think, think, think. How boring. While you think, life in all its dramatic splendor slips by you.
- Plato:** Thought is the only way.
- Erothymia:** Look, I am going to undermine this argument I gave you with another argument, probably tomorrow. But I am going to thoroughly demolish your rationality itself in the contest you agreed to. If you love me, you will lose your mind and you will submit to the grip of my passion and mystery. I have to leave soon, but before I go I want to tell you something about your precious attachment to philosophy. When are you going to realize that there are no Forms?
- Plato:** Without Forms, my thesis would admittedly be destroyed. There would be nothing for the purified intellect to know.
- Erothymia:** Without Forms, your *life* would be destroyed. It would be pathetic, comical.
- Plato:** I suppose that without Forms philosophy would be futile.

Erothymia: Your theory of Forms is ultimately incoherent. But even if Forms were intelligible entities, or better yet, supposing them to be both conceivable and *real*, how on earth could your intellect ever perceive them? No, this search of yours ends up in some black hole in the mind. When you realize that, you will wave goodbye to philosophy forever and join me in the blistering drama of imagination, change, appearance, and passion.

Plato: I know the alternatives. I almost created them myself.

Erothymia: You philosophers seem to think that there is *one* complete and final version of objective reality. One and only one catalogue of ultimate truths. You seem to think that if you persist long enough in your logical methods you will get closer and closer to the final articulation of all there is to know. You think: someday all philosophers will embrace the same set of true, proven beliefs. If only you can all find the perfect arguments, purged of all personal interests, cold-bloodedly dispassionate and impersonal, you will have an omniscient, God's-eye comprehension of everything. Then you will be sovereigns of the intellect and guardians of truth. You will be the custodians of metaphysical and moral knowledge, telling all us ignorant people to come to you with our beliefs so you can certify them as true. We will bring our beliefs to your tribunal, beliefs about what

is real, what is beautiful, what is good, and you will coolly tell us which ones to retain, which to relinquish. The trouble is, you know nothing, and never will, never can. Your philosophy is a pretentious charade. It just goes on and on in the same spot. The problem is, you presuppose that there is some eternal, immutable, and universal foundation to your reasoning. Don't you?

Plato: All knowledge must rest on something.

Erothymia: So, try to prove to me what that foundation is. If it is truly foundational, on what *other* foundation would your attempt to prove it rest on? By definition, there could not be one. Plato, say farewell to reason and admit that philosophy is merely a quirky mental game, created by men like you. It's absurd! You have manufactured a mental obstacle course. The craziest thing about it is that you have built two things into it: the obstacle course, by its very nature, cannot be navigated and, by definition, cannot be completed. Philosophy is the paradoxical art of generating questions whose only answer is the generation of another question. You are permanently corralled and disabled by your own creation. And you can't dismantle the creation or fix it from within. All you can do is forsake it and divorce it. That's what I meant when I said you must bid it good riddance. Philosophy and its insane methods must die.

- Plato:** My dear Erothymia, we will see.
- Erothymia:** Maybe we will, maybe we won't. I'll leave you now to think about thinking. What do you think about that?
- Plato:** I think I'm finished thinking for now.
- Erothymia:** You *think* you are finished thinking. If you are finished thinking, how can you *think* you are finished?
- Plato:** All right. I *feel* I have finished.
- Erothymia:** You haven't even started to feel. (Music up.)
- Plato:** Or so you think.
- Erothymia:** Plato, you are demented. You seem to enjoy driving yourself crazy. Who drives and who is driven are one and the same.
- Plato:** An odd thought, isn't it?
- Erothymia:** All your thoughts are odd. Even your even thoughts are odd. With that, I say goodnight.
- Plato:** Say it.
- Erothymia:** I just did.
- Plato:** Goodnight.
- Erothymia:** To you too. Goodnight. (Exits. Spotlight on Plato. Slow fade of music and spotlight as he scratches his head).

Scene Three

The court of Dionysius. A large assembly of guards and auditors, including Speusippus, Eudoxus, and Xenocrates.

Elder Dionysius: Call the assembly to order!

Guard: Order! Order in the assembly! Quiet please!

Elder Dionysius: We are gathered once again to hear the rest of Plato's arguments. If he persuades us, we will turn my title over to the ablest and most virtuous of philosophers, and that will be decided by Plato and his three colleagues.

1st Member: What if we are not persuaded? Or what if a few of our best thinkers are not persuaded?

Elder Dionysius: We could put it to a vote.

2nd Member: How can we agree to let rationality rule by such irrational means? Voting means that numbers rule instead of wisdom. Who decides that voting will decide? We would first have to agree on the principle of voting. Since we can't vote on the principle of voting, someone will have to force it on us, and we are right back to where we started.

3rd Member: The agreement to let philosophers rule would have to be unanimous. If Plato's arguments are valid and sound we would all be persuaded anyway, by Plato's own insistence.

- 1st Member:** Only if we agree in advance to let reason rule us and our city. Unfortunately, that is exactly the point at issue.
- Elder Dionysius:** Let us at least hear the arguments. (Enter Erothymia). Then we will have to find a way of deciding whether numbers or arguments, or something else, will determine who should rule. Where is Plato? Why isn't he here?
- Younger Dionysius:** (To Xenocrates). I thought he was coming in with the three of you.
- Xenocrates:** I haven't seen him since yesterday.
- Eudoxus:** He had two arguments left. We can present them in his absence.
- Erothymia:** He had three. I have heard the first one, and I can repeat with certainty that it is not sound. Let Xenocrates expound the remaining two.
- Younger Dionysius:** We should hear them from Plato.
- Erothymia:** Plato is in a trance. He can't think or speak. I suspect he has lost his mind. (The assembly erupts in commotion).
- Elder Dionysius:** Quiet! Order! What do you mean, Plato is in a trance!
- Erothymia:** It's a fever of some kind.
- Eudoxus:** Where is he?

- Erothymia:** I left him in my quarters. I thought he was coming here.
- Eudoxus:** Where were you last night?
- Erothymia:** I was thinking. Now let us hear from Xenocrates.
- Elder Dionysius:** Yes, I decree that Xenocrates shall expound the two remaining arguments.
- Xenocrates:** As you wish. The first argument is simple. It is based on Plato's view of human nature. He has shown that all humans have three dimensions or parts in their soul. They can be thought of as separate parts insofar as they have distinct objects of love and insofar as they have distinct kinds of pleasure when those loves are gratified. Of course they all operate within one *psyche* and consequently they cannot literally be separated, but we know they are different functions whenever we experience each operating in isolation from the other two. The most powerful and primary part of the *psyche* is the purely biological one, the one we share with all other animals. It has no reason. It is driven by blind instinct and appetite. Sexual desire and competitive aggression are its purest expressions. The second part is reason itself, the part that thinks and ponders. Used correctly, it generates knowledge by using logical, disciplined methods. This part computes and calculates, separating true assertions from false ones. Alone, it does not dispose us to act

or react; it merely reasons things out well or badly. The philosopher, the scientist, the mathematician, and the lawyer usually have the learning and training to use this part skillfully. We can see clearly that we now have two different functions or dimensions in the *psyche*, since we have all experiences of pure animal desire without reasoning and pure reasoning without desire. Between these two parts is what we call *thymos*, will, or spirit, or the passionate part some refer to as temper. When I ask about someone's disposition—"Is it sweet?", "Is it nasty?", "Is it strong?"—I am asking about the nature and amount of their *thymos*. The simplest way to explain it is this. Our appetitive function is driven by the need to have animal pleasure and to avoid animal pain. Our reasoning function can accurately decide what will give us pleasure and what will give us pain. But sometimes we act against our knowledge, by doing things that give us pain or by not doing things that give us pleasure. Similarly, we sometimes fail to resist either pain or pleasure for a greater good. Our resolve or determination weakens. Why is that? It must be because some third part disposes us to act from desire instead of reason. The main point Plato wants to make, however, is that the *psyche* has three divisions. Each division loves different things, and each division has different kinds of gratification.

The lowest, most primitive part loves the pleasures of sex and all forms of sensual intoxication. For convenience, we can call it the money-loving part, because money is the easiest way to acquire all those pleasures. The middle part loves public acclaim and reputation for its courage and heroism. It loves honor and glory. I call it the fame-loving part. *Thymos* would rather be famous and popular than rich. The highest part, though, sacrifices both fame and fortune for truth. It is gratified only by knowledge, wisdom, and expertise. Now if I asked a money-lover, a fame-lover, and a wisdom-lover to tell me who had the best kind of gratification, undoubtedly each would argue for what each knows best and each would defend his own way of life. But who is qualified to judge correctly? Surely the one who has experienced all three forms of gratification. Plato's argument is that since the philosopher has experienced the pleasures afforded by all three parts of the *psyche*, and since philosophers consistently agree that the gratifications of the intellect are far better than those of either *thymos* or the desiring part, it follows that the life of thought and reason is superior to the other two. It follows further that, because a person who is *dikaiosune* is ruled by reason, the just person is happier and superior to the less or more unjust one.

Members: Excellent argument! Most convincing! I am persuaded.

Xenocrates: I now defer the remaining argument to Eudoxus.

Eudoxus: This argument seems difficult to understand at first, but it is actually not. It is based on one basic metaphor whose simplicity and elegance is surpassed only by its profundity. Plato's most valuable insight is that Being is like a ladder. *Everything* is located on some rung on the great ladder of Being. The ladder is a series of steps and degrees from bottom to top, from lowest to highest, from least to most. For example, there is a scale of knowledge from absolute ignorance at the bottom to absolute knowledge and illumination at the top. This is because there is a scale of Being from absolute unreality and non-being at the bottom to absolute reality and complete being at the top. There are degrees of perfection...the most real being the most perfect, the least real being the least perfect. On this hierarchy of Being, there are degrees of beauty, degrees of justice, degrees of knowledge and degrees of *pleasure*. All this because there are degrees of Being or Perfection. Plato's argument is that the lower the objects of your attention are on the scale of Being, the less real your pleasure is in being attached to those objects. If you live in a world of illusion, your corresponding

pleasures are illusory too. The just person knows the highest realities of all—the stable, eternal Forms—and accordingly has the most real pleasures of all. That's it.

Younger Dionysius: That's it?

Eudoxus: Well, I can fill it in if you wish, but that is essentially it.

1st Member: How can one pleasure be more real than another? Pleasure is pleasure. They are all equal.

Eudoxus: What would you rather do? Dream about Erothymia's beauty or physically embrace it?

1st Member: I would say embrace it.

Eudoxus: Similarly you would rather encounter the perfect universal Form of Beauty than perceive an imperfect instance of it. The eternal Form is more real than the temporary instance, and the temporary instance is more real than this fleeting dream. The Beautiful will not change and it lasts forever. Erothymia someday will not be beautiful and she will die, while Beauty itself endures.

Erothymia: Of course I must perish! Everything is perishable! Nothing is permanent, nothing is stable! Heraclitus was right! All things are in constant flux and alteration. You, me, this chair, everything is dynamic and changing, appearing for an absurd moment or

two then disappearing. These arguments are preposterous! Go back to your revelry. (Enter Dion). Get back to the enchanting theatre of sensation, swim again in the waters of change.

- Dion:** Where is that man! Where is that treacherous Plato?
- Erothymia:** Dion, you are interrupting.
- Dion:** I don't care. Tell me where he is. I'll kill him.
- Speusippus:** What's going on here?
- Elder Dionysius:** Someone warn Plato. (A guard exits).
- Erothymia:** You had it coming.
- Dion:** He can't do this to me! You are my woman. Where is he?
- Erothymia:** Never mind. Now be quiet and let us talk.
- Dion:** I'm not moving until you tell me where he is. I'm going to strangle the life out of him.
- Eudoxus:** Would someone please tell us what's happening? Who is this man?
- Dion:** You shut up, or I'll damage you too. Erothymia, come with me immediately, or I'll deal with you here and now. I'm not fooling. Plato is a dead man. (The assembly gets restless).
- Erothymia:** Either you leave, or I'll tell them everything. Then you will be a dead man. Look at who is here, and

think of what I can get them to do. I'm giving you a chance to be quiet, and if you have any brains at all you will take it. (More commotion in the assembly).

Dion: Just tell me where I can find him. Nobody tries to steal my woman!

Erothymia: You idiot, I was never your woman!

Younger Dionysius: Guards, shackle this man. We all know how dangerous he is. Whatever he has to do with Plato, I don't know. But we have suspected he has been plotting for months to overthrow my father. This public disturbance is enough to have him arrested. Shackle him! (Dion is overpowered by four guards and taken away).

Elder Dionysius: This is disgraceful. Come now, let us return to reason. Everyone calm down please. (The tumult dies down). I apologize for the disturbance. My son and I will meet with Erothymia later to sort out whatever it is that has to be sorted out. Meanwhile, let's get back to our debate. Where were we?

3rd Member: Eudoxus was saying that the rewards of being rational and just are at a higher level of reality than the rewards of desire.

Erothymia: Gentlemen, there is no point in going any further with this. Plato cannot concentrate any longer. His reason has been dismembered, for better or for worse.

His intellect hanging on a crucifix of passion, by his own choice. He can't help you.

Younger Dionysius: Send another guard after the first one. We must bring Plato here. (A guard exits).

Elder Dionysius: Without Plato's final summation we can't possibly decide whether or not to install a new ruler and constitution.

Erothymia: Either way, it won't work. You and your ministers will never relinquish power to philosophy, and, assuming you would be willing to, the philosophers would have no interest in it.

Xenocrates: What if his arguments prevail?

Eudoxus: We still have the problem of deciding how to get the public, and the government, and most of all the military to *let* them prevail.

Speusippus: It's the same problem you and I have in getting our desires and our fighting spirit to let rationality prevail. Reason seems to go out the window whenever the desires or passions are ignited. Reason lasts only as long as the appetites and temper are calm.

Xenocrates: And that is precisely Plato's point. *Dikaiosune* requires that one's desire and temper be moderated and subdued by reason.

- Eudoxus:** More than that. Plato is saying that *dikaiosune* requires that each division of the *psyche* performs only its own function as well as possible. The primitive appetites must pursue the basic necessities for survival, not the least of which is the acquisition of bodily pleasures. *Thymos* must protect and defend with its courage. Reason must rule and guide with its knowledge. If desire or spirit were to rule reason, the result would be injustice.
- Xenocrates:** That is correct. But what we must now emphasize is *dikaiosune* in the state. It requires that the wisest and best rule, that the most courageous and self-disciplined rule, and that the best artisans and craftsmen do the work of the state. The hardest thing for the working and warrior classes to accept is the fact that they will not and should not rule.
- Erothymia:** Wait a minute. Does this mean that Plato would allow me to be a doctor or a teacher?
- Xenocrates:** He would *expect* it. He would expect you to do whatever you are best at. If you had natural abilities and talents for something, that is what you will do. But the rulers will decide that, not you.
- Erothymia:** Does it also mean I could be a warrior?
- Xenocrates:** Of course, as long as you had courage, fighting prowess, self-discipline, superior intelligence, and all the other virtues of a warrior.

- Erothymia:** And Plato would let women rule the state if they were the wisest and noblest of persons?
- Xenocrates:** Exactly.
- Erothymia:** He says this in his writings and discourses?
- Xenocrates:** Repeatedly.
- Erothymia:** Has any man ever had the courage to propose such a thing before? It's almost scandalous.
- Xenocrates:** Plato was the first. He is ridiculed for it, but his theory of *dikaiosune* makes it necessary. It is simply reasonable. The logic of his argument demands that men and women be treated equally, in equal proportion to their talents and intelligence. It's not the only thing he is ridiculed for.
- Erothymia:** What else?
- Eudoxus:** Sexual abstinence in the military, except for rationally controlled reproduction. And the warriors will have no private property. The females will also be free to fight or rule because the state will have those who are best at parenting raise the young.
- Erothymia:** Do you mean state-run, universal day-care? Something like that?
- Eudoxus:** Something like that.
- Erothymia:** This is very interesting. Anything else?

- Eudoxus:** No marriage in the fighting and ruling classes. Only in the working class. Marriage and private property would be the rewards for appetitive natures. Since they are motivated by appetite, they cannot see the rational basis for a renunciation of sexual and material pleasures.
- Erothymia:** Are you sure Plato says all these things?
- Xenocrates:** Absolutely sure. We have heard them several times over a long period.
- Erothymia:** And he is sincere? He really believes them? Seriously?
- Xenocrates:** No man on the planet is more sincere than Plato. No one is more serious.
- Erothymia:** So he really does allow reason to make the policies.
- Xenocrates:** Right. Reason does its work in governing wisely, skillfully, and virtuously. Spirit and appetite execute the orders of reason. That is why Plato insists that reason can govern only when it works perfectly and possesses true knowledge.
- Erothymia:** And you are sure that women can rule, if they are able?
- Eudoxus:** If they are able. If they can think clearly and reason correctly.
- Erothymia:** Has anyone heard of Plato's whereabouts?
- Elder Dionysius:** Guard! Is there any news?

- Guard:** There is a rumor down the street that Plato is in a taverna. Someone says he was seen drinking wine and talking of escape.
- Erothymia:** Send another guard to get him! Bring him here!
- 2nd Guard:** He's on his way. He's nearly here.
- Elder Dionysius:** He can make his final summation. Then we will disband for a few days to weigh all the arguments.
- Younger Dionysius:** We may not have to. The conspiracy is gaining control. There may be no government left in a few days.
- Elder Dionysius:** We can't worry about that now.
- 2nd Guard:** He's here!
- Erothymia:** Bring him to the front of the assembly. (Enter Plato and a Guard. Plato is in disarray, and appears drunk). Give him some tea. (She rips off part of her tunic, exposing one breast). Here, make this moist. (A guard dips the cloth in a bowl and wrings it out. Erothymia bathes Plato's face and smooths his hair).
- Plato:** Are you keeping our agreement?
- Erothymia:** More than ever.
- Plato:** So am I. I'm insane with desire.
- Erothymia:** I know.
- Plato:** Who is winning?

- Erothymia:** Both of us.
- Plato:** I'm beginning to have doubts.
- Erothymia:** About me?
- Plato:** No, about my arguments.
- Erothymia:** Don't worry now about the arguments. As long as your love and desire for me keep growing stronger, we'll find a way with the arguments.
- Plato:** You said you would kill me if I couldn't convince you with arguments. I'm going to commit suicide.
- Erothymia:** I never once said that. I said I would test your *theory* to the limit. I said I would pit passion and appetite against reason. If *my* reason defeats your reason, it doesn't mean you have to give up reason, only that you need to revise your theory using *more* reason. I said I would kill you only if my passion could dissolve your reason and make it surrender to passion. And has it surrendered yet? No. Will I make the struggle worse? Yes. Will you win? Yes. Then I will surrender to you, and to your strong mind.
- Plato:** I need some rest. I feel weak.
- Erothymia:** We'll find out how weak you are. (Speaking to Elder Dionysius). I request that you and your son dissolve the assembly. Plato cannot speak with feeling or clarity to those he does not know or trust well. He

needs to speak with me alone. We will work it out together, and whatever fruit our struggle bears we will pass on to you. You can make use of it as you see fit. Plato must learn that it is not his job to think out the ideal society then install it. His job is to love me and let me love him. So I would ask you kindly to please leave us now to get on with our real task.

Elder Dionysius: Very well. The session is over. We'll reconvene when necessary. (Those assembled exit, conversing).

Erothymia: Plato's three friends can stay or leave, as they wish.

Xenocrates: I think we will leave. (They exit. All lights to black, except for spotlights on Plato and Erothymia.)

Erothymia: Are you drunk?

Plato: Yes. I've been up all night.

Erothymia: Doing what?

Plato: Thinking of you. Wanting you. Deciding to leave.

Erothymia: Why?

Plato: Because two people want to kill me.

Erothymia: Is that the real reason?

Plato: That and the fact that passion might be more powerful than intellect. The fact that philosophy may be a hoax. All I've lived for might be an illusion.

Erothymia: Where does the problem lie?

- Plato:** With the Forms. I don't know how to prove they exist.
- Erothymia:** Would it change anything if they don't? Would your life be any different? Would the world be any different?
- Plato:** I don't know.
- Erothymia:** Without the Forms, wouldn't we still have wisdom, courage, self-control and justice? Wouldn't there still be *aristos* men and women to rule? Your theory of justice in the state and in the soul would still hold, but the foundations of it would need reworking. I know it can be done.
- Plato:** Justice requires knowledge, and knowledge requires a real object.
- Erothymia:** I didn't sleep with Dion, you know.
- Plato:** It doesn't matter if you did. No rules, remember? What matters to me is to rescue reason so philosophy can keep its rightful place.
- Erothymia:** Suppose you couldn't. What then? Suppose no-one could.
- Plato:** I'd go to a volcano and jump in.
- Erothymia:** That would be cowardly. Plato, you are so extreme. Look, we can come to a good compromise if you are willing to. You can keep your reason, I can keep my passion, and we can both give much of what we have to the other.

- Plato:** I see nothing wrong with that. But how can I keep my reason without Forms?
- Erothymia:** Tell me, did reason guide you to the conclusion that if a woman is as capable as a man at doing something, she should be asked to do it?
- Plato:** Of course.
- Erothymia:** And that strong, intelligent men and women can be lovers without being married?
- Plato:** That too.
- Erothymia:** Don't you see that logic can guide both of us to such sound conclusions without resorting to some mysterious, other-worldly Form?
- Plato:** It's not that simple.
- Erothymia:** I'm willing to listen.
- Plato:** Besides, there is a more important problem.
- Erothymia:** I know.
- Plato:** What do you think it is?
- Erothymia:** Not whether or not reason *can* rule, but whether or not it *should*.
- Plato:** That's about it.
- Erothymia:** Assume for the moment that the Forms exist, and further that you can know them, and further that you can prove to everyone else you know them.

I wouldn't grant those assumptions, but I'll assume they are true. Then we could agree that reason is capable of ruling. But the question of whether or not it *should* is left untouched. Now assume those three assumptions are false. I would still say reason is *capable* of ruling in some way, but how do we determine whether or not it *should*? Maybe it should, in some way and to some extent, but how do we decide that? That's our problem—yours and mine.

Plato: Let's work it out.

Erothymia: How? With reason? With passion?

Plato: With both.

Erothymia: With both, you say. I want you to do something. I want you to go to where they are holding Dion and confront him. I want you to convince him, by whatever means, not to overthrow my uncle. Would you do that?

Plato: How would I do that?

Erothymia: You figure it out. You might have to kill him. Whatever you have to do, just do it using all your wits.

Plato: For you, I'll do it. It's a just cause.

Erothymia: There is something else, even harder. When were you planning to return to Greece?

- Plato:** When the work here is done. We thought it would take three to four weeks.
- Erothymia:** Fine. Stay here for one month. I want you to sleep beside me every night of that month. We must sleep naked. No matter what I do, no matter how much I plead, no matter how much you beg, we must not have sex. Will you do that? (Music up.)
- Plato:** I can try.
- Erothymia:** I didn't ask if you can try. I didn't even ask if you can. I asked if you will.
- Plato:** (Pacing). I see what you are doing. Will you give me one day to think about it?
- Erothymia:** No. You must answer now. No thinking. Be decisive.
- Plato:** My answer is yes.
- Erothymia:** You will have me for as long as you want me. I am sure of that. Just do those two things. (Music full.)
- Plato:** Will you come with me to Greece?
- Erothymia:** Yes. When we are together for good, we have to find and keep our compromise. See this? (She cups her breast).
- Plato:** I can see nothing but that.
- Erothymia:** Think about it for a month.
- Plato:** I'm sure I will. (Lights to black. Fade music.)

Scene Four

On the volcano, at dawn.

Erothymia: (Crawls to the lip of the volcano, peers in, crawls back). Did you really give serious consideration to jumping in?

Plato: Briefly, yes.

Erothymia: Do you realize now that if you ever jumped in I would have to jump also?

Plato: I would have to do the same thing too, if you jumped. We can't live apart or alone now.

Erothymia: How did you get Dion not to depose Dionysius?

Plato: I sweet-talked my way past all the guards. I told them I had to have a confidential meeting with him. I had to use a little bit of force on him, and when I had him pinned I put a small slit on his throat—just enough to scare him. I said I would cut off his whole head if he ever took another step toward Dionysius. Then I left him with an open offer to get psychological counsel from me whenever he asked for it. He accepted the offer. He needs help.

Erothymia: And me? How did you resist my temptations? It must have been awful.

Plato: I let my mind rule, and my will obeyed.

- Erothymia:** You must have struggled like a Titan. Your appetite is huge, your desire is immense.
- Plato:** It wasn't easy.
- Erothymia:** We still have a lot to work out, you know.
- Plato:** Do you mean on the reason-passion question? I will never give up reason, or my faith in it.
- Erothymia:** Neither will I. I would like to convince you to modify your concept of it, but it doesn't have to abdicate. That would be insanity in the most literal sense. You must realize that I like reason too. I admire it when it is beautifully used. After all, it works. But it doesn't work the way you think it does.
- Plato:** Can you explain that?
- Erothymia:** Why did your attempts fail in Sicily? Why couldn't you install reason as the ruler of Syracuse? Why was everyone skeptical about letting philosophy rule?
- Plato:** Probably because they weren't sufficiently trained in logic to see the soundness of my arguments.
- Erothymia:** Plato, I love you. So I'm saying this without malice. It was not due to the inadequacy of your arguments, even though they *are* inadequate.
- Plato:** Where is the inadequacy?
- Erothymia:** There are two. The first is that there is no Form of Justice. The second is that your account of social and

personal ethics is wrong simply *because* there is no Form of Justice.

Plato: First things first. Can you prove to me that the Forms don't exist?

Erothymia: I don't have to. Maybe I could, but I'm not obliged to because you are the one asking me to believe something extraordinary and mysterious. It's only fair that I listen to your reasons and dispose of them. I don't have to provide reasons for believing in the non-existence of something. If you believe that the Form of Justice exists, give me your reasons. If your reasons aren't good enough, I will not be moved to adopt your belief. So far, I have undermined each reason you gave me—to your satisfaction I might add.

Plato: But could you, if I asked you, give me some arguments which show that the Forms do not exist? Or more strongly, that their existence is impossible?

Erothymia: Yes, I could do two things. I could show that if you believe they exist, then certain paradoxes and incoherencies follow. To get rid of the paradoxes you would have to get rid of the belief which entails them. After that, I could show you that there is something inherently unintelligible in the belief itself.

Plato: Let me tell you something about philosophers. What they long for is one elegant, decisive argument which

conclusively settles an issue. They don't want a gaggle of suggestive arguments. They want one overwhelming argument. So do me a favor. Instead of undermining my reasons for believing in Forms, why don't you take the further step and give me your reasons for not believing in them? If you can do that, I'll never believe in them again.

Erothymia: And will you give up your theory of justice?

Plato: Yes.

Erothymia: Will you then agree with me? And with Speusippus?

Plato: Yes, or with something very similar.

Erothymia: Then I'll try my two approaches. The first one says that if Forms exist, then we have an unacceptable consequence. If we cannot live with the unacceptable consequence, we must eliminate our belief in Forms.

Plato: What is the unacceptable consequence?

Erothymia: Your Forms were introduced to solve a problem. However, they introduce another problem much greater than the one they were to solve.

Plato: What is it?

Erothymia: The Forms are meant to explain appearances. They are the supernatural Realities behind the natural Appearances. This means they cannot have any of

the properties of Appearances, otherwise they would just be a part of what they are supposed to explain. In fact, supernatural Reality must be so different from natural Appearances that the properties of each realm must be *contradictory*. You now have two realms with opposite characteristics: changing/unchanging; visible/invisible; material/not material; in time/timeless; spatial/nonspatial; immanent/transcendent; perfect/imperfect. You have made the separation so complete that there is no possible bridge between them. The natural and the supernatural cannot connect. Why? Because whatever connects them would have to be either natural or supernatural, and these are precisely what cannot be connected to each other. Or it would have to be some third kind of Being. But by your exhaustive division of everything into Reality and Appearance, there cannot be some third kind of Being. Either there is or there isn't. If there is, your theory is false. If there isn't, your theory is unintelligible.

Plato: That seems decisive. How do we explain Appearances?

Erothymia: By other Appearances. There is nothing else except other natural Appearances.

Plato: What else?

Erothymia: This one is short. Tell me, are your Forms perfect or imperfect?

- Plato:** Perfect. That's why they can't change.
- Erothymia:** Absolutely, perfectly Perfect?
- Plato:** Absolutely perfect.
- Erothymia:** And the Form of the Good is the source of all their perfection?
- Plato:** The Form of the Good is infinitely perfect.
- Erothymia:** Can the imperfect be the cause of the perfect?
- Plato:** No. The imperfect would have to contain perfection if perfection were to issue from it. To say that imperfection contains perfection is nonsense.
- Erothymia:** So imperfection must come from perfection.
- Plato:** It's beginning to look that way. It would seem that imperfection is a kind of degeneration or decline of perfection.
- Erothymia:** And Appearances are unreal and imperfect? (Plato nods in agreement). And Appearances are caused by Forms? (He nods again). Then tell me this. Why would perfection become imperfect? Why would supernatural Reality cause natural Appearances to exist? Why doesn't the perfect simply remain perfect in itself and cause no imperfection?
- Plato:** I don't know.
- Erothymia:** You can't know! Whatever the aspect of perfection is

which causes imperfection would have to be an imperfection. The perfect is imperfect. Now your belief is incoherent.

Plato: Reason is in ruins.

Erothymia: No it isn't! It works beautifully in the realm of Appearances. Notice I said it *works*. Use your reason naturalistically and you can cure diseases, tell time by the stars, make ships sail into the wind, ferment wine, grow better olives—all manner of things! But when you displace reason from its natural home in the realm of Appearances, it becomes a sleepwalker. Don't give up on reason. Just give up its pretensions.

Plato: After all the mind-boggling events of the last few days, I feel ready to agree to that. I will compromise with you, as long as you are willing to reserve a place for reason. I'll be reasonable. Will you be reasonable too?

Erothymia: Plato, your passions and appetites are more than enough for me. And I can see now they are perfectly compatible with reason. I always thought that of reason or passion, one would have to be forsaken for the other, but now I see that isn't true. All we have to do is revise your idea of reason and my idea of desire. With the help of *thymos*, your intellect can walk arm-in-arm with my desire, and both will benefit. Neither has to rule continuously, and neither has to submit constantly.

- Plato:** But would you agree that neither should do the work of the other?
- Erothymia:** Up to a point, I would. I can see that desire and passion can never discern truth. But I can see also that only in men like you can truth resist and override desire. In the majority, it is simply too weak. The same goes for *thymos*. And even in your case, there is always the possibility your reason may crumble.
- Plato:** This is the most difficult thing I have ever had to admit, but here it is. Without Forms, and with the dominance of appetite and desire in the majority of people—
- Erothymia:** —Interruption! And with the *possibility* of the temporary dominance of irrational desires and passions in the most reasonable of people—
- Plato:** Yes, without Forms, with the rule of blind appetite in most people, and with the *possibility* of reason being temporarily dislodged in the most rational of people, I have no choice other than agreement with your social contract theory. *Dikaiosune* will have to be a social contract with a Platonic-Erothymian twist.
- Erothymia:** Ethical values exist by *nomos* rather than by *physis*.
- Plato:** That's right. There are no moral values or rules until they are created by us and agreed on.
- Erothymia:** You could think of moral principles as a form of

etiquette, or as the rules that regulate a sport. Their validity derives entirely from a shared willingness to abide by them.

Plato: Remembering though that some rules make sense and some don't. They exist for a reason. They must serve our basic interests and needs.

Erothymia: And our most basic interest and need is to be happy. It would follow that we could all agree to those rules which are most likely to advance our happiness.

Plato: This is where we part company with Speusippus. Being a biologist, he seems to think of humans as a tribe of marauding apes. Social contracts are motivated, for him, by fear. But apes have no sense of happiness.

Erothymia: Therefore no sense of ethical rules which sustain it. Rules for the jungle do not make complete sense for the *polis*, although a few do.

Plato: Let's spend our time making a list of all these rules and present it to the court at Syracuse.

Erothymia: I don't think so. Everyone can do this on his own, and I believe everyone would end up in agreement on what the best rules are for promoting happiness. We need only ask ourselves individually what rules we would want to be respected so our personal happiness remains secure. Each of us should reach

the same conclusions. Fundamentally, there would then be only one, essential, unrevisable principle of ethics. It would be that once the revisable rules are made and the agreement struck, the agreement must be kept. Morality is only as good as a person's word.

Plato: That's a problem, since it would undoubtedly be to someone's advantage if he or she could defect from the agreement without detection.

Erothymia: Let's solve that problem this way. Let's create a contract between you and me *alone*, leaving everyone else out of it for now. A kind of marriage covenant, if you will. Then we will figure out how to ensure compliance with the covenant. Whatever we figure out for ourselves would be valid for everyone else, since they have the same basic interests and needs. They would reason just like us.

Plato: All right then, a contract for two. Let's decide how to co-operate in the pursuit of our happiness. Whatever undermines your pursuit or mine we shall define as wrong and unjust, whatever promotes it we shall define as right and just.

Erothymia: This is actually quite simple and straightforward.

Plato: It is. For example, you like to act on your desires and passions. If you believe that is where your happiness lies, you would not agree to any rules which would prevent you from doing that. Correct?

- Erothymia:** Correct.
- Plato:** In fact, you would want rules which would assist you in doing that.
- Erothymia:** Correct.
- Plato:** And you know that I want to act on my desire too?
- Erothymia:** Of course.
- Plato:** Suppose my desire were to humiliate and abuse you?
- Erothymia:** If you acted on it, my happiness would be jeopardized. That desire would interfere with the fulfillment of my desire. So I would ask you to agree to a rule, namely, do not humiliate and abuse me.
- Plato:** Suppose your desire were to humiliate and abuse *me*?
- Erothymia:** I would have to promise not to, in exchange for your same promise to me.
- Plato:** So there is our first rule. Don't you see how easy that is? It all comes down to which promises we make to our mutual advantage. The promises would actually be unbelievably simple and few. We can both say what they would be without thinking much about it.
- Erothymia:** There you are. You believe your happiness lies in the pursuit of truth. So you would naturally want a promise from me to let you think privately, without coercion or stress. Since you see that as essential to your happiness, you would ask me to promise it. In

return you would have to promise it to me. Now we are willing to make two promises, to the benefit of both of us. In each case, each of us would have to yield on something, give up on something, for a greater benefit. Each of us will exercise *constraints*, and both of us will get what we want.

Plato: To simplify, we could say that we will promise each other to allow each to get what he or she wants but only to the degree that it doesn't stop the other from getting what they want. That is the point at which constraint and self-control would have to begin. We each promise to give up something for something better. Do you like to tell lies?

Erothymia: Sometimes.

Plato: Does it make you upset when someone lies to you?

Erothymia: Very.

Plato: So you would be happier being told the truth?

Erothymia: Yes, even if it hurts a bit initially. When someone lies to me I feel murdered.

Plato: Would you like me to promise not to lie?

Erothymia: Of course.

Plato: I am made unhappy by lies too. Would you make the same promise to me?

Erothymia: I will.

- Plato:** There, we have a contract.
- Erothymia:** You were right about something. We pretty well know already what promises to make to each other. We would probably make them automatically, without thinking. They are so obvious. Why don't we fill them in later and present them to Syracuse as a model for ethics? Right now, we have the problem you raised.
- Plato:** I said the essence of morality is keeping your promise and sticking to the agreement. How can I trust you to stick to the contract? How do I know you won't make a promise and voluntarily break it later?
- Erothymia:** Because you love me. You don't want to wrong or harm me. And I love you. It's not a problem.
- Plato:** But everyone doesn't love everyone else. People *want* to break their promises. Let's make a distinction here. There is the problem of what to do with people who *want* to keep promises, but *can't*, and what to do about people who make promises with no intention of keeping them. It's the latter I'm worried about. How do we convince everyone, first, that everyone is better off if each keeps promises?
- Erothymia:** You simply have to prove to them that they would be happier if everyone stuck to the agreement.
- Plato:** Some would reason like this though: It would be to

my advantage for everyone *else* to stick to their agreements, but not for me to stick to them. Come back to our contract. Suppose we agree we would both be better off if we each set aside some money in a personal estate, so the other would be taken care of after the first one dies. We both see the benefit of that to ourselves, so we promise to do it. But I think: if she keeps her promise, but I don't, I will end up better off. I can have more of my own money while I live, and even more money if I live longer than her. How would you convince me to keep my promise?

Erothymia:

Hmm. I see what you mean. On a social scale it's the same problem. We could prove to all the squid fishermen that if they all over-fish there would eventually be no more squid, hence no more fishing. Reason would show them that their living would be guaranteed if every squid fisherman promised to limit his catch. But reason would also show the outlaw fisherman that such a promise would be to *his* advantage as long as everyone else kept it *except* him.

Plato:

What do you do about these two examples?

Erothymia:

In our case, show you that if I were to reason the same way there would be no estate. Similarly, I would show the fishermen that if everyone reasoned like the outlaw, there would be no fish. Right back where we started. Rationality would have to prevail.

- Plato:** But on your view, desire will usually undermine reason. Remember, it only needs to happen once for the contract to be broken. How do we ensure unanimous consent to the dictates of reason, and unanimous conformity to the agreements it makes?
- Erothymia:** When reason is undermined, we must address the irrational instincts.
- Plato:** Do you mean enforcement by fear and threat?
- Erothymia:** Precisely.
- Plato:** But then people will be forced to live up to agreements they don't agree to. Isn't that the end of the social contract theory?
- Erothymia:** Not exactly. I am going to make one major concession to your original theory of justice. *Someone* will have to reason out a contract which any rational person would agree to. To that extent, reason and political power must coincide. The basis for reason would be, however, everyone's self-interest and happiness—not the Form of Justice. Then, for those who cannot be reasonable and rational, laws which embody rational promises will be made and enforced. This will work because most people are rational, and most of them will accept the dictates of reason. They will see to it that those who are irrational, or those who voluntarily defy reason, will pay a penalty for breaking the promises and

agreements demanded by every reasonable man and woman. Those who are unwise, unjust, cowardly, and lacking self-control will be punished, or reformed, the moment they damage the happiness of others.

Plato: For a person of desire and passion, you certainly think very clearly. (Music up.)

Erothymia: And for a person of intellect, you can certainly love and lust very intensely. Come here. (She takes his hand, and they stroll to the edge of the volcano. They kiss passionately, then hold each other). That was our contract.

Plato: I made it when I met you. I had no choice.

Erothymia: (Looking into the volcano). Plato, would you make me another promise? Would you promise never to jump in?

Plato: No, I would never promise that. I would promise not to jump in only as long as you were with me to hear the promise. If you were gone, I promise I *will* jump in.

Erothymia: (Chuckling). That seems reasonable. I'll promise the same. (They embrace. Lights to black. Hold and fade music)

Dr. Sean O'Connell has advanced degrees from the University of Alberta and the University of California (Berkeley). He teaches Philosophy at Grant MacEwan College in Edmonton, Canada. He is also a Chartered Psychologist and an APPA-Certified Philosophical Practitioner with numerous acting credits in film and theatre. Among his many publications is *Dilemmas and Decisions* (Harcourt Brace), *Self-conflict and Self Healing* (University Press of America, with John King-Farlow), and Volumes One and Two of this series, *Cartesian Dreams* and *Lives and Evils*.

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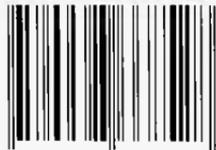
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