

Leo Strauss

Plato's Gorgias (1963)

Plato: Political Philosophy

A course offered in the autumn quarter, 1963

The Department of Political Science, The University of Chicago

Edited by Devin Stauffer

Devin Stauffer is Associate Professor of Government at the University of Texas at Austin. He is the author of *Plato's Introduction to the Question of Justice* (State University of New York Press, 2001), *The Unity of Plato's Gorgias: Rhetoric, Justice, and the Philosophic Life* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), and *Leo Strauss's Defense of the Philosophic Life: Reading "What is Political Philosophy?"* (University of Chicago Press, 2013)

With assistance from Aidan Beatty, Ariel Helfer, Will Selinger, and Mark Verbitsky

©1967 Estate of Leo Strauss

©2014 Estate of Leo Strauss. All Rights Reserved.

Table of Contents

Editor's Introduction	i–iv
Note on The Leo Strauss Transcript Project	v–vii
Editorial Headnote	vii
Session 1: Introduction (447a–447d)	1–20
Session 2: Gorgias section (447c–452e)	21–48
Session 3 (unrecorded)	
Session 4: Gorgias section (457c–464a)	49–72
Session 5: Gorgias, Polus sections (463a–469c)	73–99
Session 6: Polus section (469c–474d)	100–128
Session 7: Polus section (474d–481b)	129–157
Session 8: Callicles section (481b–486d)	158–184
Session 9: Callicles section (486d–491d)	185–215
Session 10: Callicles section (491d–497c)	216–241
Session 11: Callicles section (497b–501e)	242–272
Session 12: Callicles section (502d–507d)	273–298
Session 13: Callicles section (507–513c)	299–327
Session 14: Callicles section (513c–520b)	328–357
Session 15: Callicles section; the myth (520c–end)	358–381

Preface to Plato's *Gorgias*

Devin Stauffer

Leo Strauss taught two seminars at the University of Chicago on Plato's *Gorgias*, the first in the winter quarter of 1957 and the other six years later, in the fall quarter of 1963. He was also teaching a seminar on Plato's *Gorgias* at St. John's College in Annapolis in the fall of 1973 when he died. Only the transcript of the 1957 course remains, whereas there are audiotapes of the 1963 course and of a single session (what appears to be the second meeting) of the 1973 seminar at St. John's. When he died rather suddenly in 1973, Strauss was not only in the midst of teaching the seminar on the *Gorgias* but had also begun work on an essay on the *Gorgias* which he intended to include in *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*. Since we have a tape of only one session of the 1973 seminar, and since both that seminar and his work on an essay on the *Gorgias* were cut short by his death, students and scholars of Strauss must rely for access to his interpretation of the dialogue primarily on the two earlier courses. Both have now been edited.

When Strauss gave his first seminar on the *Gorgias* in 1957, he was finishing one of his greatest works, certainly his deepest and most detailed statement on a modern author: *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, published in 1958. Strauss dated the Preface, which appears to have been written after the completion of the rest of the work, as December of 1957. We can assume then that in the fall of 1957 Strauss was in the final stage of his work on *Thoughts on Machiavelli*ⁱ, and thus that Machiavelli was still very much on his mind as he was teaching the *Gorgias*. A note late in *Thoughts on Machiavelli* can perhaps provide a clue to a connection between Strauss's work on Machiavelli and his interest in the *Gorgias*: Note 219 to chapter 4 comes in an important section near the very end of *Thoughts on Machiavelli* where Strauss compares Machiavelli's thought, especially regarding the status or meaning of philosophy, with the thought of "the classics." This is the section of the work in which Strauss is most explicitly critical of Machiavelli. He argues that the consequence of Machiavelli's analysis of the political "as if it were not ordered toward the supra-political or as if the supra-political did not exist" is "an enormous simplification and, above all, the appearance of the discovery of a hitherto wholly unsuspected whole continent" (295). "A stupendous contraction of the horizon appears to Machiavelli and his successors as a wondrous enlargement of the horizon" (295; see also 173, 296–98). "The classics," by contrast, who "understood the moral-political phenomena in the light of man's highest perfection," insisted on judging the city by "its openness, or deference, to philosophy." Yet, since they also understood why the city is necessarily closed to philosophy, the classical philosophers regarded themselves as separated from the city, that is, from the *demos* in the sense of "the totality of citizens who are incapable or unwilling to defer to philosophy," by "a gulf" (295–96). Strauss then writes: "The gulf can be bridged only by a noble rhetoric which we may call for the time being accusatory or punitive rhetoric. Philosophy is incapable of supplying this kind of rhetoric. It cannot do more than sketch its outlines. The execution must be left to orators or poets." It is at the end of this last statement that Strauss places note 219, which

ⁱ Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995).

reads: “The quest for this kind of noble rhetoric, as distinguished from the other kind discussed in the *Phaedrus*, is characteristic of the *Gorgias*.” (Strauss also asks his readers to consider Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* 1074b1–4, where Aristotle refers to an ancient tradition of myths that describe the heavenly bodies as gods and the whole of nature as pervaded by the divine, and he points back to pages 125–26 of his own text, where he discusses a subdued criticism that Machiavelli makes of Livy for allowing his judgments to be shaped by moral considerations, a criticism which prepares Machiavelli’s “criticism of authority as such.”)

If this note to *Thoughts on Machiavelli* provides us with a lead in trying to grasp the connection between his first course on the *Gorgias* and his main work at the time, the connection between the second course and his writing at the time is more straightforward and direct. In the fall of 1963, Strauss was finishing *The City and Man*, published in 1964, and he had already begun work on *Socrates and Aristophanes*. Although he did not publish *Socrates and Aristophanes* until 1966, he wrote in 1962 in a letter to Alexander Kojève: “I am preparing for publication three lectures on the city and man, dealing with the *Politics*, the *Republic* and Thucydides. Only after these things have been finished will I be able to begin with my real work, an interpretation of Aristophanes” (see *On Tyranny: Revised and Expanded Edition, Including the Strauss–Kojève Correspondence*, 309). Since one of the three main parts of *The City and Man* deals with the *Republic*, a dialogue that Strauss regarded as closely connected to the *Gorgias*—most immediately because the question of justice is central to both dialogues, but also because both treat the relationship between philosophy and politics—the relevance of the *Gorgias* to *The City and Man* is obvious. But the *Gorgias* may also have been of interest to Strauss in connection with his “real work,” his interpretation of Aristophanes, since the theme or question of rhetoric plays an important role in that work. In many passages of *Socrates and Aristophanes*, Strauss examines Aristophanes’ critique of Socrates for his imprudence and his failure adequately to appreciate the need for a rhetoric that would protect both philosophy and the city from the dangers each poses to the other. In fact, a part—not the whole, but an important part—of Aristophanes’ case for the superiority of poetry to philosophy rests on his conviction that poetry supplies the poet, especially the comic poet, with rhetorical resources and defenses that the philosopher, especially the Socratic philosopher, lacks (see, e.g., *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 24–25, 44–49, 63–65, 192–93, 233–35, 311–12). It is possible then to read the *Gorgias* as a kind of Platonic response to Aristophanes’ critique, albeit one that quietly concedes that there was more than a little truth in charge of the “adversary.” A reading of sessions 12 and 13 of the 1963 course confirms that Strauss regarded the *Gorgias* as a reply to Aristophanes. And as far as one can discern from the barely legible notes in which Strauss sketched the beginnings of an outline for his planned essay on the *Gorgias*, the *Clouds* was to play a key role in the introductory section of that essay.

A detailed comparison of the 1957 course and the 1963 course is not possible here. Nevertheless, let me raise a few points that readers may consider further as they turn to the transcripts. The most striking difference is in Strauss’s mode of proceeding: In the 1963 course, Strauss has virtually every passage of the dialogue read aloud (by his reader, Donald Reinken), whereas in the 1957 course he often paraphrases portions of the text

himself before commenting on them. One result of this difference is that Strauss does not make it to the end of the dialogue in the 1963 course and does not discuss, beyond a few general remarks, the myth at the end of the *Gorgias*. Still, the 1963 course sticks somewhat more closely to the text, and as the second of the two courses it should be regarded as the more authoritative source for Strauss's considered view of the dialogue. In this connection it will also be relevant to students and scholars that the tapes of that course survive (and are available on the Leo Strauss Center website) and that Strauss's seminar on Plato's *Protagoras* in the spring of 1965 devoted the first three meetings to a summary of his interpretation of the *Gorgias* from the course given in 1963.

As for differences between the content of the two courses, I will mention only two. First, whereas the 1963 course opens with an extensive discussion of the twin challenges to the possibility of political philosophy posed by positivism and historicism, the 1957 course begins with a broader consideration of Plato's understanding of the meaning of philosophy as such, a consideration that includes a striking comparison between Plato on the one hand, and Descartes and his heirs on the other, over the question of dogmatism and skepticism. If the 1963 course is perhaps superior as a reading of the *Gorgias*, the opening lecture of the 1957 course is of broader interest than its 1963 counterpart, since the earlier lecture takes up more fundamental questions. (A reading of the opening lecture of the 1957 course should be supplemented by a consideration of Strauss's discussion of Plato's doctrine of the ideas in session 12 of the 1957 course.) Second, when it comes to interpreting the dialogue itself, perhaps the most important difference between the two courses concerns Strauss's analysis of the character of Callicles. In both courses, Strauss repeatedly emphasizes that Callicles cannot be persuaded by Socrates; unlike Polus, with whom Socrates has at least some success, Callicles cannot be moved by Socrates' arguments or by his rhetoric. He is the representative in the dialogue of the man whom the philosopher cannot really budge. But why is he immovable? In the 1957 course Strauss initially stresses as the root of Callicles' obstinacy his softness and his desire for self-indulgence. Only subsequently and to a limited extent does he discuss two other features of his character or concerns that are more heavily stressed in the 1963 course: Callicles' enslavement to convention, which manifests itself especially in his attachment to a certain vision of manliness according to which a true man never leaves his post or abandons his position in argument, and his indignation at the suffering of the just and the prosperity of the wicked. These aspects of Callicles' complex make-up are more fully fleshed out in the 1963 course, especially Callicles' indignation, the discussion of which leads to a fascinating account of what Strauss calls "the dialectics of self-defense," whereby a legitimate concern for protection against injustice can lead one ultimately in the direction of tyrannical aggression.

Despite these differences, the two courses interpret the dialogue in fundamentally the same way. Strauss did not drastically change his view of the dialogue between the two courses or in the process of teaching the second of them. I can hardly do justice here to the richness and complexity of Strauss's interpretation of the *Gorgias* as a whole, but I will indicate a few of its leading features. Unlike most scholars who have written on the dialogue, Strauss does not read the dialogue as an unmitigated condemnation of rhetoric. Crucial to his interpretation is the thought that rhetoric remains the central theme of the

dialogue throughout its three main parts: the Gorgias section, the Polus section, and the Callicles section. According to Strauss, the harsh criticism of rhetoric in the first and especially the second section eventually gives way in the third to a more complicated verdict that, in important ways, restores the standing of rhetoric. The examination of rhetoric in the *Gorgias* proves to be in part an examination of its necessity, even or especially for the philosopher. And while Socrates may be genuinely critical of the sophistic rhetoric practiced and taught by Gorgias, he also points towards a new form of rhetoric that could bridge the gulf between philosophy and the city. Strauss's analysis of this new, noble rhetoric has many aspects, but let me highlight three points on which he places particular emphasis. First, the rhetoric that Socrates sketches in the *Gorgias* defends philosophy in an indirect way, by accusing the city or by "calling the *polis* before the bar of philosophy." Second, to be effective, such rhetoric must abstract from or remain silent about the peak of philosophy, as is indicated by the absence of the doctrine of the ideas from the dialogue. "The peak is missing," Strauss says repeatedly in the 1963 course. Third, since the silence about the peak of philosophy is also a silence about its pleasures, the new rhetoric asserts a radical divide between the pleasant and the good. Of course, these are only three points in Strauss's rich account of the kind of rhetoric to which the *Gorgias* points, a rhetoric which, as he also repeatedly stresses, is quite different in its aims and character from the erotic rhetoric of the *Phaedrus*. In stating these three points in list form, I have surely oversimplified Strauss's interpretation, and to correct that oversimplification one would need to elaborate each point, think about the connections between them, and bring in other many considerations that have not even been mentioned. No preface can adequately capture the intricacy of Strauss's reading of the *Gorgias*. Fortunately, readers can now see with their own eyes what Strauss actually said.

I would like to thank Mark Verbitsky and Ariel Helfer for their help in editing the 1957 and the 1963 courses.

Devin Stauffer
The University of Texas at Austin

The Leo Strauss Transcript Project

Leo Strauss is well known as a thinker and writer, but he also had tremendous impact as a teacher. In the transcripts of his courses one can see Strauss commenting on texts, including many he wrote little or nothing about, and responding generously to student questions and objections. The transcripts, amounting to more than twice the volume of Strauss's published work, will add immensely to the material available to scholars and students of Strauss's work.

In the early 1950s mimeographed typescripts of student notes of Strauss's courses were distributed among his students. In winter 1954, the first recording, of his course on Natural Right, was transcribed and distributed to students. Professor Herbert J. Storing obtained a grant from the Relm Foundation to support the taping and transcription, which resumed on a regular basis in the winter of 1956 with Strauss's course "Historicism and Modern Relativism." Of the 39 courses Strauss taught at the University of Chicago from 1958 until his departure in 1968, 34 were recorded and transcribed. After Strauss retired from the University, recording of his courses continued at Claremont Men's College in the spring of 1968 and the fall and spring of 1969 (although the tapes for his last two courses there have not been located), and at St. John's College for the four years until his death in October 1973.

The surviving original audio recordings vary widely in quality and completeness. When Strauss moved away from the microphone the volume of his voice may diminish to the point of inaudibility; the microphone sometimes failed to pick up the voices of students asking questions and often captured doors and windows opening and closing, papers shuffling, and traffic in the street. When the tape was changed, recording stopped, leaving gaps. When Strauss's remarks went, as they often did, beyond the two hours, the tape ran out. After they had been transcribed, the audiotapes were sometimes reused, leaving the audio record very incomplete. And over time the audiotape deteriorated. Beginning in the late 1990s, Stephen Gregory, then the administrator of the University's John M. Olin Center for Inquiry into the Theory and Practice of Democracy funded by the John M. Olin Foundation, initiated the digital remastering of the surviving tapes by Craig Harding of September Media to ensure their preservation, improve their audibility, and make possible their eventual publication. This remastering received financial support from the Olin Center and was undertaken under the supervision of Joseph Cropsey, then Strauss's literary executor. Gregory continued this project as administrator of the University's Center for the Study of the Principles of the American Founding, funded by the Jack Miller Center, and brought it to completion in 2011 as the administrator of the University's Leo Strauss Center with the aid of a grant from the Division of Preservation and Access of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The audiofiles are available at the Strauss Center website: <https://leostrausscenter.uchicago.edu/courses>.

Strauss permitted the taping and transcribing to go forward, but he did not check the transcripts or otherwise participate in the project. Accordingly, Strauss's close associate and colleague Joseph Cropsey originally put the copyright in his own name, though he

assigned copyright to the Estate of Leo Strauss in 2008. Beginning in 1958 a headnote was placed at the beginning of each transcript, which read: “This transcription is a written record of essentially oral material, much of which developed spontaneously in the classroom and none of which was prepared with publication in mind. The transcription is made available to a limited number of interested persons, with the understanding that no use will be made of it that is inconsistent with the private and partly informal origin of the material. Recipients are emphatically requested not to seek to increase the circulation of the transcription. This transcription has not been checked, seen, or passed on by the lecturer.” In 2008, Strauss’s heir, his daughter Jenny Strauss, asked Nathan Tarcov, who had been the director of the University’s Olin Center and later its Center for the Study of the Principles of the American Founding, to succeed Joseph Cropsey, who had faithfully served as Strauss’s literary executor for the 35 years since his death. They agreed that because of the widespread circulation of the old, often inaccurate and incomplete transcripts and the continuing interest in Strauss’s thought and teaching, it would be a service to interested scholars and students to proceed with publication. They were encouraged by the fact that Strauss himself signed a contract with Bantam Books to publish four of the transcripts although in the end none were published.

The University’s Leo Strauss Center, established in 2008, launched a project, presided over by its director Nathan Tarcov and managed by Stephen Gregory, to correct the old transcripts on the basis of the remastered audiofiles as they became available, transcribe those audiofiles not previously transcribed, and annotate and edit for readability all the transcripts including those for which no audiofiles survived. This project was supported by grants from the Winiarski Family Foundation, Mr. Richard S. Shiffrin and Mrs. Barbara Z. Schiffrin, Earhart Foundation, and the Hertog Foundation, and contributions from numerous other donors. The Strauss Center was ably assisted in its fundraising efforts by Nina Botting–Herbst and Patrick McCusker, staff in the Office of the Dean of the Division of the Social Sciences at the University. The transcripts based upon the remastered tapes are considerably more accurate and complete than the original transcripts; the new Hobbes transcript, for example, is twice as long as the old one. Senior scholars familiar with both Strauss’s work and the texts he taught were commissioned as editors, with preliminary work done in most cases by student editorial assistants.

The goal in editing the transcripts has been to preserve Strauss’s original words as much as possible while making the transcripts easier to read. Strauss’s impact (and indeed his charm) as a teacher is revealed in the sometimes informal character of his remarks. Sentence fragments that might not be appropriate in academic prose have been kept; some long and rambling sentences have been divided; some repeated clauses or words have been deleted. A clause that breaks the syntax or train of thought may have been moved elsewhere in the sentence or paragraph. In rare cases sentences within a paragraph may have been reordered. Where no audiofiles survived, attempts have been made to correct likely mistranscriptions. Changes of all these kinds have been indicated. (Changes to the old transcripts based on the remastered audiofiles, however, are not indicated.) Changes and deletions (other than spelling, italicization, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing) are recorded in endnotes attached to the word or punctuation prior to the

change or deletion. Brackets within the text record insertions. Ellipses in transcripts without audiofiles have been preserved. Whether they indicate deletion of something Strauss said or the trailing off of his voice or serve as a dash cannot be determined. Ellipses that have been added to transcripts with audiofiles indicate that the words are inaudible. Administrative details regarding paper or seminar topics or meeting rooms or times have been deleted without being noted, but reading assignments have been retained. Citations are provided to all passages so readers can read the transcripts with the texts in hand, and footnotes have been provided to identify persons, texts, and events to which Strauss refers.

Readers should make allowance for the oral character of the transcripts. There are careless phrases, slips of the tongue, repetitions, and possible mistranscriptions. However enlightening the transcripts are, they cannot be regarded as the equivalent of works that Strauss himself wrote for publication.

Nathan Tarcov
Editor-in-Chief

Gayle McKeen
Managing Editor

August 2014

Editorial Headnote

This transcript is based upon existing audio files of the course and the original transcription (see general headnote). The course had 16 sessions, out of which only one, session 3, was not recorded. The transcript includes some brief passages that were not derived from the remastered audiotapes (because of a break in the tape or because the words were inaudible) but from the original transcription. Such passages are indicated on the relevant pages.

The text was taught in seminar form. Students did not present papers but submitted questions to Strauss in writing, which he addressed at the beginning of many of the sessions.

When the text was read aloud in class, the transcript presents the words as they appear in the edition of the text assigned for the course (unless otherwise noted), and the original spelling has been retained. Citations are included for all passages.

The text assigned for the course was *Gorgias*, trans. W. R. M. Lamb, Loeb Classical Library, no. 166 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925).

This transcript was edited by Devin Stauffer, with assistance from Mark Verbitsky, Ariel Helfer, and Will Selinger.

For general information about the history of the transcription project and the editing guidelines, see the general headnote to the transcripts above.

Session 1: no date

Leo Strauss: It was announced that this is a section in political theory. Now political theory appears from the *Announcements* to be one branch among a number of branches of political science. Political science, in its turn, appears in the *Announcements* as one among a number of the social sciences. On the other hand, however, political theory is the first branch, according to the *Announcements*, of political science. These purely administrative or bureaucratic facts have some deeper interest because there is a certain ambiguity regarding political theory. Let us start from that.

The ambiguity is ordinarily expressed in the following terms. Political theory may be causal theory, or it may be normative theory. Most of you, if not all of you, will have heard of this distinction. While it is very popular, it is not very convincing for the following reason: because the distinction between normative and causal seems to exclude the possibility that norms can be causes. But it is evident that norms can be causes. Someone may make a decision because it is just to do so; then the justness of the thing would be the cause. And at any rate this distinction is questionable, and I propose this distinction: There is a kind of political theory which deals only with political life as it is, and there is another kind which deals *also* with the question of how political life *should* be. Let us call the latter form of political theory “political philosophy,” and then we have explained part of the title of this course.

But I must say one more word about political philosophy in general. The notion of political philosophy is very simple and can be made evident to the meanest capacity in the following way. If we look at political life as it is, we see that it is concerned either with preservation or with change. If it is concerned with change, it is concerned with the change for the better. And if it is concerned with preservation, there is sometimes the presumption that how things are is good, or at least good enough. All political life is guided by notions of better and worse, but one cannot know of better and worse without claiming to know something about good and bad: better simply being the comparative of good, and worse the comparative of bad. Therefore, everyone assumes¹ they have some awareness of good and bad. Now if this is properly elaborated insofar as it applies to political society, that means we always have some opinion—sound or unsound, well-founded or ill-founded—of what the good society is. There are people who say that this is a bad, reactionary concept. And they say everyone should have *his* notion of the good society, and the society where everyone is permitted to have *his* notion of the good society and to act on it is called an open society. But these men are not aware of the fact that² [when they say this], they mean the open society is a good society. So little can one avoid the question of the good society.

This, then, is the theme of political philosophy: *the* good society. Now a view which once was very common but which is still very powerful today of the good society is the following: A good society is a society dedicated to human excellence, to virtuous activity, to the noble, but in such a way that its members find their chief satisfaction in

virtuous activity. Satisfaction, that means they are pleased with it. The good society in which the noble and the pleasant are in harmony—this was developed first by Aristotle, but it has earlier origins and lasts up to the present day. Now Aristotle made it perfectly clear that this good society is not possible if it or its members do not possess the necessary equipment. You cannot have such a good society, say, in Antarctica as Antarctica was prior to modern development. But here is a great and key alternative which confuses the issue. The equipment can be either easily obtained or obtained only with great difficulty. It can be easily obtained if there is an economy of plenty, and it can be obtained [only] with difficulty³ if there is an economy of scarcity. But the general condition of mankind until a short while ago—not to say up to today—was⁴ an economy of scarcity. And here is a key cleavage between modern thinkers and ancient thinkers.⁵ Aristotle, believing that an economy of scarcity can under no conditions be avoided, was in favor of an aristocracy (rule of the few) because he saw that it was impossible, for reasons of lack of equipment, that *all* can engage in this satisfying virtuous activity. Modern democracy takes the opposite point of view. But this great difference between modern democracy and Aristotle doesn't do away with the fact that it is the same notion of the good society still underlying both solutions. Both the moderns and Aristotle and his like say that the good society, in the most desirable sense, is not always possible, either because there is no equipment or for other reasons.

Now this much in the most general way about what is the definition of political philosophy. The point with which I think you all are familiar is this: that, in spite of the fact that the primary notion of political philosophy is of obvious reasonableness, political philosophy is now generally regarded to be *impossible*. And we cannot stress this fact strongly enough. We have to indicate at least generally the reasons why political philosophy is today generally regarded to be impossible.

There are two different grounds,⁶ which I will indicate by giving the names of the two *schools* in question. The one is called positivism, by far the most powerful element in the social science divisions in this country. And the key thesis of positivism can be stated very simply: we can have knowledge only of *facts*, not of *values*. Which means, of course, we can have knowledge of values insofar as they are facts—i.e., I can know the fact that this—and—this group of people cherishes this—and—this set of values. But I can have no knowledge of them *as values*—i.e., I cannot say whether these values are reasonable or unreasonable, sound or unsound. Now, if this is true, if there is no possibility of knowledge of values, it is clearly impossible to have knowledge of the good society. The second ground (which is more sophisticated [and] therefore more rarely visible, but theoretically more interesting) I call historicism. According to this view, the distinction between facts and values is ultimately not tenable. It may be useful within a very limited range, but it is not tenable in itself. So in other words, men cannot help thinking of the good society, and this thought of the good society is absolutely essential for any factual study on society they might make. But historicism, in contradistinction to political philosophy, says that these notions of the good society are *essentially variable* from historical epoch to historical epoch, from culture or civilization to culture or civilization. For some of them, maybe the Greeks, may have had a certain notion of the good society which was the notion of the good *Greek* society; there cannot be *the* notion

of *the* society as a universally valid notion.

At any rate, political philosophy is today generally, although not universally, regarded as questionable in itself. This is the first thing we must consider. We must immediately add another point: while political philosophy is today generally regarded as impossible, *history* of political philosophy is today generally regarded as possible and necessary. I believe there is not a single political science department in the country, as far as I know, where students are not supposed to take courses in the history of political philosophy. Or am I wrong? I have never heard of it. So history of political philosophy is regarded as legitimate. Now what we are doing in this course can very well be described as part of the theme of “history of political philosophy.” So no one among you should have a bad conscience for taking this course. But let us consider, in the first place, the connection between the denial of the possibility of political philosophy itself and the demand for a history of political philosophy.

First, I state this connection from the point of view of positivism, i.e., of the view now prevailing in social science. Political science as it is⁷ now frequently [understood]—a value-free political science—is related essentially to what we must call “the common sense understanding of political things,” meaning [that], before you go into any inquiry of a scientific nature (say, about presidential elections, or whatever have you) you know already in advance some *facts* about presidential elections. You may regard them as trivial. But without knowing them and taking them for granted, you cannot even begin to study. Or, if I may use my favorite example and make this simple verity stick: When someone is sent out by a super-scientific sociologist to make deep depth interviews or questionnaires or this kind of thing, the sociologist will never tell him, Ask only human beings and not dogs or oaks. Furthermore, he will take it for granted that every one of these boys and girls knows how to tell a human being from a dog or an oak. Where did these students learn that? You must admit that this is an absolutely basic assumption without which you can’t even begin. And yet this basic assumption is never taught in any classroom. And yet it is, to repeat, *the* basic assumption. Now this we call “common sense understanding.” We grow into it, we don’t know how, and we act on it in all our theoretical and practical pursuits. The common sense understanding is *primary*. Therefore, if we want to understand political science—the *scientific* study of political things—we have first to understand the common sense understanding because the scientific understanding is a transformation, a specific transformation, of common sense understanding.

I think every thoughtful and intelligent positivist must admit the stringency of this argument. Now if we then turn to this great question of the common sense understanding of political things as the great and primary task of political theory—that would no longer be admitted by all political scientists, but I think it is nevertheless true—we can be easily brought to see that *the book* conveying this common sense understanding of political things in the most articulate manner is Aristotle’s *Politics*. And therefore we would have to understand this work wholly regardless of any historical interest, only because we want to do a decent job as political scientists. This much about the first case.

Now what is the connection between the denial of political philosophy and the demand for the history of political philosophy from the point of view of political philosophy itself? I have stated briefly the primary evidence in favor of political philosophy: that simple reasoning leading from change or preservation up to the notion of the good society. This, I think, can be made clear to every man even of the meanest capacities. But while this is so evident, we hesitate to act on it because we feel somehow that by the reasonings of both positivism and historicism this evidence is obfuscated. “Yes, that makes sense.” But then we remember our contemporaries and say, Well, why don’t they act on it? There are tremendous powers in our world which contradict it and obstruct this common simple understanding. Therefore, since political philosophy has lost its evidence in spite of this *prima facie* evidence, we must understand the *primary* evidence in favor of political philosophy *fully*. We must go into the question as to what its implications and its presuppositions are. We must go back to the *origins* of political philosophy, i.e., to a time when political philosophy was not yet in existence but had to be established as a possible pursuit and had not become a matter of tradition. Traditions have this dangerous quality that they induce one to take for granted the most important premises. This is the reason why I, for one, am especially interested in the origins of political philosophy.

Now this origin—according to the traditional view, political philosophy was originated by Socrates. And surely the earliest books we have are books by Plato and Aristotle’s *Politics*. We could have given this course, then, on Aristotle’s *Politics* as well. But Plato is more immediately relevant today for us than is Aristotle (and not only because he happens to precede Aristotle in time), the reason being that Aristotle can already build on the Platonic or Socratic basis, whereas Plato or Socrates (the two are indistinguishable for all practical purposes) laid the foundation for political philosophy. Therefore, we shall then study in this course, which I give every second or third year, Plato.

Now after having briefly indicated why we should read Plato, we must now consider the question of *how* to read him. I think we can distinguish three ways of reading which correspond to the distinction between positivism, historicism, and, let us say, the view of political philosophy.

Now the positivistic approach—and this is one with which you are all familiar even if you had never gone to a college—it is simply to look at, say, Plato from this point of view: What is the *contribution* which Plato has made to present-day thought? I think the popular presentations all have this character, and many of the scholarly ones. Now this approach has one great defect. It takes for granted that present-day thought is a standard of judging. It absolutizes, uncritically, present-day thought. Accordingly, what is characteristic of this approach is the thoughtless use of present-day concepts in interpreting Plato or, for that matter, any earlier thinker. Such concepts are “values,” “totalitarianism,” “charismatic,” “reactionary,” “progressive,” and so on—terms which are wholly meaningless in premodern contexts. One can say very briefly—as it has been said more than once—that this positivistic approach to the thought of the past is “unhistorical.” That is a catchword which is frequently used. And this implies [that] the right procedure is “historical.” Now here we come to an interesting question, because “historical” is very ambiguous, and I will explain that briefly.

Now in the ordinary understanding, an historical understanding, say, of Plato, in the first place would mean to understand the phenomena of the past in their *own* light, and not in the light in which they appear when we project them against present-day thought, present-day society—to understand the phenomena of the past as they *really* have been, as a famous historianⁱ calls it, as they were understood by the people of the past themselves. This is what is crudely meant by “historical.” But here ambiguity arises. The first form of understanding corresponds to what I called historicism. And this proceeds as follows: Plato was, of course, a Greek; he was even an Athenian; and perhaps we can add he was an upper-class Athenian; and we can say some more things about him, just as, say, Machiavelli was a man of the Renaissance. Historical understanding of Plato means to understand Plato in the light of Greekness, just as to understand Machiavelli means to understand him as a man of the Renaissance. But how do we know about Greekness and about the Renaissance? Well, through modern historical scholarship, which includes archeology, inscriptions, and what have you. And on the basis of these modern concepts of Greekness and Renaissance or whatever else the epoch may be, we have to understand the thinkers of the past. We can say that this kind of understanding is *genetic* in the following manner. We want to understand the genesis of Plato’s thought out of the matrix of Greek thought—or Machiavelli[’s] out of the Renaissance.⁸ It is genetic also in another way. We wish to understand not only the genesis *en bloc* of Plato’s thought out of Greekness, but we wish to understand each step of that genesis. In other words, we look for signs of a *development* which Plato underwent from his beginnings—if we could, [from] when he was only fifteen; unfortunately, that cannot be done—but from very early times, say, when he was twenty or twenty-five, up to his seventies, when he died. And this would mean, for example, that in reading this work which we would plan to read in this course, the *Gorgias*, we would be particularly interested above all in the question: To which stage in the development of Plato does this particular dialogue belong? The most recent commentary is by an Englishman, Dodds (Oxford University Press).ⁱⁱ And, if you would read his introduction, you would see that he has no overriding interest other than *when* did Plato write that. And you have no idea how much a man can say about this subject.

Now I distinguish from the historicist approach the one which I would call “historical.” Now this is something very modest, but I believe indispensable: to understand Plato’s thought *as Plato meant it*. Now in application of this step, we cannot start from a notion of Greekness. Perhaps this Greekness is a construct of modern historical research based on all these diggings and so on, and it may be historically much truer than what Plato thought. But, if Plato didn’t know it—if Plato didn’t know anything of these developments⁹ [or] thousands which they now thoroughly uncover—then it would have no effect on Plato. To repeat, Greekness—these notions are hypothetical constructs.

ⁱ LS may be referring here to Leopold von Ranke. See Ranke’s preface to “The Ideal of Universal History,” in *The Varieties of History: From Voltair to the Present*, ed. Fritz Stern (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), 57.

ⁱⁱ LS is referring to E. R. Dodds, *Plato: Gorgias: A Revised Text with an Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959).

Maybe [they] have great possibility, but they are hypothetical nevertheless. Plato may have seen the same phenomenon of which the modern historian speaks in an entirely different way; only the way in which Plato saw it is an element of Plato's thought. Say, the Peloponnesian War. Modern historians say some very interesting things about it. But did Plato see the Peloponnesian War as a modern military or economic historian sees it? Therefore, we should first see how Plato saw it, and whether Plato regarded it as in any way important. Perhaps—we cannot exclude, to begin with, the possibility that, although Plato didn't know many things which the modern historians have disinterred,¹⁰ Plato may have had an overall better judgment on phenomena of his time or earlier times than the modern historian has. That possibility we cannot exclude, because there is such a thing as the *wisdom* which does not depend entirely upon the bulk of information. Good.

Another point: the sequence of Plato's writings. The view which is now fairly generally accepted is that we know roughly in which sequence Plato wrote his writings, and so¹¹ we can speak of *early* dialogues (I have to mention this at the beginning to dispose of it), middle dialogues or the dialogues of the middle period, and later dialogues. And the early dialogues are more or less the same as Socratic dialogues, i.e., dialogues when Plato still was much more under the influence of Socrates than later. Now the key difficulty here is this. Let us assume that we would know with absolute certainty the sequence in which Plato had written the various dialogues. This would not prove, in any way, anything about the sequence of Plato's *thoughts*. This simple thing which Paul Shorey stated many years ago at the University of Chicago,ⁱⁱⁱ this simple thing must really be taken seriously. In other words, Plato can have written a dialogue where he abstracted from something which he knew quite well at that time. For one reason or another, not all philosophers make their development *in public*. You know that was said about the famous German philosopher Schelling.^{iv} He began to publish when he was twenty, and all the stages of his development were a matter of public knowledge. There are also people who begin to publish at a much later stage, and have definite notions: In this particular book, I did not go beyond this point. That can in no way be excluded by any evidence we have. We do not have Plato's diaries or notebooks so that we can say, Ah! Today he writes down, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, "for the first time I have considered this." We have no such knowledge. But the most important point is that the concern with the sequence of writings or with the sequence of thoughts deflects attention from the most important thing, namely, that we understand each dialogue by itself and try to see what Plato wants to tell us, which is infinitely more important than *when* Plato wrote it and under what conditions of health and so on. This kind of research, which is very powerful, is fundamentally based on a notion which I regard as fantastic, namely, that people like myself—scholars, fundamentally mediocre men—can survey the possibilities of a genius like Plato, what Plato could or could not have thought at a certain time or out of it. So I think we will wholly disregard this approach, and we will do the very simple thing which people tried to do in former times as the chief and only thing, namely, to understand.¹² If this is worth knowing, worth understanding, then we study it. But in order to have some information about a culture of the past, or [about] Plato as an exponent of that—this is a

ⁱⁱⁱ See Paul Shorey, *The Unity of Plato's Thought* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1902), "Introduction."

^{iv} Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (177—1854).

purely secondary thing, which has no philosophical interest.

Nevertheless, there arises another question of an external or¹³ [methodological] kind. How should we study Plato? To read him, sure. And if you can learn Greek, all the better. If you cannot do that, let us try to get the [best] possible translation. That's clear. The difficulty in the case of Plato arises from the fact that Plato did not write in the way in which, say, Aristotle and almost all other political philosophers wrote. Aristotle's *Politics* is a scientific treatise. Plato did not write any treatise. Plato wrote only dialogues. Hence, the *Republic* and so on, these are all dialogues. This compels us to read him differently from the other great writers. Now what does this mean, that Plato wrote only dialogues? That Plato never speaks to us in his own name; there is always someone else speaking. Now the way in which people dispose of this difficulty frequently is this: But surely Plato doesn't speak, but he has his spokesman, Socrates, and if you listen only to Socrates, that is the same thing. But it is not quite the same thing. One reason being that Socrates is not the *only* spokesman of Plato; in some dialogues, there are other spokesmen. And, secondly, this still doesn't do away with the question: Why not present a teaching in the treatise form? Why in this awkward form of a dialogue? Because if Plato only did it to have some variety, some amusement for people who would get bored by a strictly philosophic or scientific treatment—that is not to be assumed. Why did Plato present his teachings only in dialogues?

Now Plato has discussed¹⁴ this question through the mouth of Socrates in one dialogue called the *Phaedrus*, where he speaks of the defects of writings in general. All writings are, in a way, bad. And one reason given is because they say the same things to everyone, whereas (that's the implication) one should say different things to different people in different circumstances. We can assume that the Platonic dialogues are writings which are meant to be free from the defects of writings; they are writings, but free from the defects of writings. How does he achieve that? The alternatives to writings are, of course, conversations. In a conversation, you speak to this or that individual or a variety of individuals—people whom you know more or less, whereas in a writing you speak to a multitude of people whom you do not know at all. Now when you speak to¹⁵ [a person] whom you know, you can consider his capacity, his possibilities, in speaking to him. In writings, you cannot do that. A dialogue is a kind of compromise. It is a writing, but it is a writing presenting a conversation. Shall I make it clear in the form of a diagram? [LS is now at the blackboard and can be only faintly heard during these intervals.] So if I write or present it in the form of a treatise, I do it in this direction:

A \longrightarrow
(in one direction)

When I converse, what I say depends very much on who the conversant is. There are n such lines, depending on who the conversants are. All Platonic dialogues are dialogues between, *not* Socrates and someone else (Socrates is not the only speaker . . .), but between a clearly superior man¹⁶ [and] men who are clearly inferior to him. That is universally true of all Platonic dialogues. These are all to be seen in this way:



Socrates speaks, say, in the *Gorgias*, say, to Gorgias, a man much lower than Socrates. And Socrates adapts himself in order to be intelligible to the capacities of Gorgias. If we want to know what Socrates' full thought [is] about the subject he discusses with Gorgias, which happens to be rhetoric, we cannot merely listen to these sentences said to Gorgias, but we have to transform them into sentences which are not merely *ad hominem*, *ad Gorgiam*, toward Gorgias and with a view to Gorgias. In other words, the operation which we would here have to perform is to We have to transform this line [the oblique line?] into this line [the horizontal line?]; we have to make this operation:



[into]



Now that is of course terribly vague and abstract. I will make it a bit clearer by reminding you of another statement made by Socrates in the *Phaedrus*. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates says that good writing, or good speech as he calls it, must comply with the demands of the peculiar *necessity* governing writing. This necessity means that,¹⁷ just as in an animal body, every part, however small, however trivial, fulfils the function so that the animal can do its specific work—the work of a horse being different from the work of a cow or of an eagle—in the same way in a good writing every part, however small, apparently negligible, must be necessary to enable the work, the writing, to fulfill its specific function.¹⁸ Specific function of a writing, as Plato means it, of course [is] to make people awake, to make them to be attuned to understand. This, then, is the rule when performing this operation: Don't take anything for granted, consider every detail however trivial and seemingly unimportant as *very* important. Why does he now make this—and—this move in the conversation? Why does Socrates commit this—and—this blunder? Because he makes many blunders, blunders which anyone of you would avoid, but which Socrates nevertheless makes, and sometimes with great success because people are not always very attentive in conversations, as you probably know from your own experience. You can get away with murder, as it were, especially when people are very tired. Good.

This principle, then, I would¹⁹ [state] simply as follows. In every [real—]life conversation, chance plays an enormous role: someone knocks at the door, the telephone is ringing, suddenly hail, and so on—to say nothing of the things which go on within the individuals having the conversation. In a Platonic conversation, there is no chance, everything is meaningful. When he makes a conversation on rhetoric between Socrates and Gorgias, then he has his reasons for picking Gorgias and not other orators, and so on and so on. But this goes into much greater detail. So the time when the dialogue takes place, the

place where it takes place, the number of participants, the character of the various participants—all these things have to be considered.

I will mention only one more point which should be developed at much greater length, but we do not have the time for that. Now, if we are really good children, as I think we all will be, and do not believe [ourselves] to know things which we do not know, then we are confronted by a variety of Platonic dialogues—as a matter of fact, by 35. And, while we hear from very learned men all kinds of theories about the sequence in which they were written and the circumstances in which Plato wrote them, that we don't know. These are at best plausible hypotheses. We are confronted by 35 enigmatic animals. And we must really, first, acquire a sense of the enigmatic character of such works. We must look at them entirely from the outside to begin with. And then we would make observations like the two following ones which I [will] mention. Most Platonic dialogues are *performed* dialogues or, as people also call them, *dramatic* dialogues. But that is very simple, meaning a dialogue where you have at the beginning of each paragraph the name of the speaker, say, Calicles, Gorgias, and so on. These are performed dialogues. The *Gorgias* is a performed dialogue. The others are called *narrative*, i.e., they are narrated by someone else. So Socrates says, “Well, I went yesterday down there in the company of X, and there we met Y, and then Y said this, and then I said that.” And this is, of course, very cumbersome, as is pointed out frequently, because he has to say all the time, “And then I said,” “And then he replied,” and so on. But it has also its advantages, this kind of²⁰ dialogue. There are nine [narrated] dialogues. Another distinction to which I would like to draw your attention right away is that between *voluntary* and *compulsory* dialogues. A voluntary dialogue is a dialogue which Socrates *seeks*; a compulsory one is one which he cannot with decency avoid. Now you all know from your own experience that there are these two kinds of conversation, without any question. Now, the *Gorgias*, as you can see from the first page, was a truly voluntary dialogue, whereas the *Republic*, for example, is not entirely voluntary, as you would see when you read it.

Now this much in the way of a most general introduction, and now we turn to our dialogue, the *Gorgias*. Why did I select the *Gorgias*? The first choice in a course on Plato's political philosophy would be the *Republic*. The *Republic* is devoted to the subject of justice, of *the* just city, which is only a different formulation of what I called earlier in this meeting the good society. But for the purely accidental reason that my last course on Plato's political philosophy dealt with the *Republic*, and some variety is something to which even a professor is entitled, I decided this time to study with you again the *Gorgias*. But the justification is, in the first place, that the *Gorgias* is much shorter than the *Republic*, so we can read it more thoroughly. And secondly, the *Gorgias* and the *Republic* are very closely akin to each other. So by studying the *Gorgias*, we will make some progress toward an understanding of the *Republic*. The subject of the *Gorgias* is rhetoric, not justice. But it so happens that the discussion of rhetoric leads very soon to the subject of justice. So in the *Gorgias*, we have the discussion of rhetoric and justice; in the *Republic*, we have the discussion of justice. But in the *Republic* the most important antagonist of Socrates is an individual called Thrasymachus, who is a teacher of rhetoric. And while rhetoric doesn't become the theme, rhetoric is there in the atmosphere of the *Republic*. So both dialogues deal in a different way, with different emphasis, with this

complex: justice and rhetoric. (Incidentally, justice is of course, I think, still admitted to be a concern of political scientists, but if there is anyone among you who thinks that rhetoric is not,²¹ he would be rather old fashioned, because the study of propaganda, of manipulation by verbal symbols, is of course a legitimate subject of political science even of the most up-to-date times.) Now this kinship between the *Republic* and the *Gorgias* can be indicated very simply by the structure of the two dialogues. The *Gorgias* has a very simple external structure; some people call it unartistic because Socrates first speaks to a man called Gorgias; and then he speaks to a man called Polus (it's always getting longer: the *Gorgias* section is short, Polus longer); and then the bulk with a man called Callicles. Now if you turn to the *Republic* and, in the first place, to the First Book of the *Republic*, you will see also three men as follows. The first called Cephalus [blackboard notation at this point], then we find Polemarchus, and then Thrasymachus.

Gorgias (oldest)	Cephalus (oldest)
Polus	Polemarchus
Callicles	Thrasymachus

Gorgias is the oldest here, and Cephalus is the oldest here [gesturing to the blackboard]. But otherwise there are no visible parallels. However, we must consider not only the first book of the *Republic* but also the *Republic* as a whole. And then we get this picture:

Cephalus and his son Polemarchus
Thrasymachus
Glaucou and Adeimantus

First, there is Cephalus and his son Polemarchus, then we have Thrasymachus, and then we have the bulk of the work, Books²² [2] to 10, in which the interlocutors of Socrates are the brothers Glaucou and Adeimantus. This is more interesting ultimately, the [comparison with] the *Republic* as a whole, because Gorgias is a stranger (he comes from Sicily); Polus is also a stranger. Callicles is a native Athenian Cephalus and Polemarchus were also strangers; [they were] metics. Thrasymachus is obviously a stranger—a teacher of rhetoric, not from out of town, but from out of state. And Glaucou and Adeimantus are also pure-blooded Athenians. And this is of some interest for the works, as you will readily see. The simple consideration of why the difference between strangers and natives is important is indicated in the *Gorgias* more clearly than anywhere else: strangers have to be careful; natives can be frank. So Callicles is much more frank than the others, and he fails to appear [in the *Republic*], as you would see when we could read the *Republic*.

So before we turn now to the text of the *Gorgias*, I would like to state the difficulties which we have to overcome in the following simple manner. The statement is based on observations regarding the literature on Plato. There is a kind of writer whom we may call, without disrespect, thoughtless and tasteless detractors of Plato. Most of them are a kind of vulgar Marxists, you know, who know in advance that this can only be superstructure—you know, this kind of thing. I don't want to mention any names of authors, but I think these people don't have to be taken seriously. The greater danger are

the ones who are *not* detractors of Plato but are great admirers of Plato, but in a wrong way. Let me call them “the clique,” the people who applaud Socrates even before they have heard what he said. This is also a danger. And therefore they do not give any benefit of the doubt to the people who *oppose* Socrates, who might have some point somewhere, and if they miss that point, they might miss what Socrates has to say.

This is my general introduction. The procedure would be now to do what we did before we took this course, to read as much as we can of the *Gorgias*. And I have appointed, if I may say so, Mr. Reinken as lector. He will read the passages which we need (he has very good enunciation, as you will find out soon), and then we will discuss it. I don’t believe we can read the whole *Gorgias* in this manner. I wish we could. May I suggest this procedure: that you read as homework for each meeting about eight or ten pages, say, of the Loeb translation, so that you have some at least very general familiarity with what the subject is. But before I ask Mr. Reinken to begin, I would like to find out whether there is any point I made in my speech which you think should be discussed.

LS: Yes?

Student:^v You mentioned the use of the dialogue. Isn’t dialogue also used to say that each one of these speakers may be possessed of some truth, and therefore the main speaker is not necessarily the one who—

LS: I can’t hear you.

Student: You made the point about the dialogue. Do you say that it is also true of dialogues that it’s sometimes used to show that there might not be any one truth, and that none of the speakers concerned may have [the complete] truth [inaudible words]?

LS: That could be, yes. But, even assuming that this would apply to the Platonic dialogues, it would not contradict what I said: that the chief speaker, the mouthpiece as they call him, is superior in understanding, thoughtfulness, to the people with whom he speaks. That would in no way contradict. Yes, Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: You made a statement regarding the fact that we have to go back to the sources of political philosophy in order to understand the implications of political philosophy, but you made it in the context of a larger argument. I didn’t understand the *why* of that statement.

LS: I mean, say, a hundred years ago the notion of political philosophy was still generally taken for granted. Because such men like, say, John Stuart Mill, however different his doctrine may be from that of Plato or Aristotle, still had no doubt about the necessity and possibility of political philosophy. Whether he would have called it “political philosophy” is another question. Today political philosophy has really become

^v When the students who speak can be identified by name, they will be identified by last name. When the editor is unsure of the identity of the speaker, the speaker will be identified as “student.”

questionable. The simplest proof is this: the work of Sabine, I think it is called *The History of Political Thought*^{vi}, which is the most popular book of this kind. He has a preface to his book in which he says, almost in so many words, [that] political philosophy is impossible: these are all wrong theories—perhaps brilliant errors, surely very effective errors, but that is all there is to it, and we study them only because they have had such a tremendous effect in the past. But none of these doctrines can be said to be true, so it is a history of errors. But, while political philosophy is not possible, history of political philosophy is possible and even necessary. This is, I think one can say, the general view. There are some extremists in the positivist camp who say history of political thought should not be taught in political science departments; it should be taught in a general humanities course. I have heard that. Apparently they want to keep all mischief out of political science departments. But this is not the generally accepted view. So this is the massive fact: that political philosophy is impossible; the history of political philosophy is necessary. But the question is—I think it is undeniable—that we today need the history of political philosophy.

But again let me state the whole conflict. As long as political philosophy was regarded as necessary, there did not exist a history of political philosophy. The first history, as far as I know, was written about 120 years ago. There was a man who wrote around 1680 in a Latin book called *The History of Natural Law*, but which was a kind of . . .^{vii} The first history was written, I believe, around 1840, [18]50, in German, by Stahl.^{viii} And then of course there came this Frenchman, whose name I don't remember at the moment—Janet^{ix}—and then Gierke,^x and the brothers Carlyle^{xi} and Sabine . . . Now as long as political philosophy was powerful, no one cared for the history of political philosophy *per se*. With the decay of political philosophy proper, there emerged an interest in the history of political philosophy. And we have somehow to face that. We can't disregard the fact that today political philosophy has all prejudices against itself. And therefore we have to reflect about its possibility in a way in which it was not necessary as long as the tradition was firmly established. And therefore we must go back to the origins, because there the foundations were laid and not already taken for granted. Yes?

Student: Would you allow the possibility or concede that history might not help in understanding Plato in the way he understood himself? I would give as an example a historian like Jaeger—

^{vi} George H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory* (New York: H. Holt, 1938).

^{vii} LS may be referring Christian Thomasius, *Historia Juris Naturalis* (Halle: Salfeld, 1719).

^{viii} Friedrich Julius Stahl, *Geschichte der Rechtsphilosophie*, bd. 1, *Philosophie des Rechts* (Heidelberg: J. C. B. Mohr, 1847).

^{ix} Paul Janet, *The Theory of Morals*, trans. Mary Chapman (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1883). With Gabriel Séailles, Janet wrote *History of the Problems of Philosophy*, trans. Ada Monahan (London, New York: Macmillan, 1902).

^x Otto Friedrich von Gierke, *Natural Law and the Theory of Society: 1500 to 1800*, trans. Ernest Barker (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957); *Political Theories of the Middle Age*, trans. Fredrick William Maitland (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958).

^{xi} R. W. Carlyle and A. J. Carlyle, *A History of Medieval Political Theory in the West* [1903] (Edinburgh, London: Blackwood, 1962).

LS: Like?

Same student: As an example, I would give a historian like Werner Jaeger.^{xii} This is someone that might help us understand—

LS: If you don't quote me, I would say no. [Laughter] I mean, I don't believe that this is [the case]. The only contribution or help which I could ever derive from Jaeger was that on some occasion, more than one occasion, he gave parallels in footnotes to a passage in an orator or in a tragic poet which I did not know and which was really helpful for me to consider. Is it possible to write a history of music without being musical? I believe that everyone would admit that it is not possible because we might write something about the weight, the hair—shape, shaved or not shaved, the kind of beard which the famous musicians had, but he couldn't write anything about their music. I believe you would admit this. Can a man write a history of thought—say, of philosophic thought—without philosophizing? In other words, if you do not take the question of justice and the good society, and all the other questions seriously, if they are not questions for yourself, you are almost in the position of an unmusical man who is asked to make comments on a symphony. You know that patently cannot be done.

[The recording is interrupted at this point. Before the recording of the *Gorgias* seminar resumes, the tape includes a portion of another seminar of Strauss, on Aristotle. When the recording of the *Gorgias* seminar resumes, a thought is in progress.]

LS: There is a letter by Plato, the *Seventh Letter*, which is in a way an autobiography. On the basis of this autobiography, if you take it literally and without any sophistication, you can say we know something about the life of Plato. There are some other things known about the life of Plato, and you can use this biography as a kind of framework [into which] to insert²³ the various works of Plato. You might try to do that. But if you have not understood the works by themselves, that is a purely bureaucratic affair—you know, filing away the works. Now I know that sounds very harsh and it would need many qualifications. But you wanted a blunt answer, I take it, a simple answer, and I gave that to you: that is not the way to do it. I think a book like Jaeger's is very good if you—this sounds malicious, but I don't mean it maliciously—if you know a nice boy or girl coming to college and he or she is not seriously interested in these matters, by all means give him or her Jaeger's three volumes of *Paideia*. I'm sorry that I can't go beyond that.

Student: Would you please state the difference between the historicist and the historical approach again?

LS: Ya. Jaeger's point of view is, of course, historicist. I mean, in other words, on the basis of a certain construction of what Greek thought is, coming from Homer on (there also the question arises if they understood Homer; you know there are enormous

^{xii} Werner Jaeger published several works on ancient and early Christian thought, the most well-known of which is *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1944).

questions at every stage), and then you know the background of Plato, i.e., Homer, tragic poetry, lyric poetry, and so on, as now understood generally by classical scholars. You have this as a background canvas, and then you somehow have to understand Plato in the light of that canvas, you know? It's a long time since I have looked at Jaeger, and therefore I cannot give you any examples. But sooner or later these men have to disregard absolutely massive and crucial things in Plato. I can give you from time to time examples from Dodds's commentary, which I will read, which has fundamentally the same approach. One must really read these books as what they were *meant*, not as supplying *information* about Greek culture, but as books meant to *awaken* human beings. Perhaps primarily Greeks—naturally, because they were written in Greek, and very few non-Greeks (if any at that time) were willing or able to read these books. But the main point was to awaken them and not to give information: the information which they convey is purely accidental, not intended. This, I think, is a simple formula. I believe one must be—of course, one should be much more polite than I was now, by all means—but still, one should nevertheless be firm. Or do you believe that firmness and politeness are incompatible?

Mr. Butterworth: But you are not saying, are you, that one can ignore the historical setting?

LS: But you get it when reading it.

Mr. Butterworth: Well, for instance, when one reads Rousseau, unless he knows what Rousseau is referring to very obscurely, because of knowing the history of eighteenth-century France, he cannot understand him.

LS: I know Rousseau a bit better than you say I do, and I don't think there is any important point you have to know in order to understand Rousseau's political philosophy which is not either conveyed by Rousseau himself or else indicated very clearly by giving names of authors or something. And we may be compelled to read these authors too, that is all right. And it is quite true that Plato may quote a number of writers whose writings we do not have—for example, Polus, and so on. I would be very glad if they had a writing of Polus to refer to, which no longer exists. But I prefer not to say anything about this writing than to rely on a modern reconstruction. There is a very great danger, you know. If you had some information—say, about a drama, and we have some information about some lost dramas—no one can be blamed if he tries to figure out how that drama looked when it was complete. But that is of course purely hypothetical; it cannot be taken as having the same cognitive dignity as something which we can have in our hands. Yes, surely, what I tried to state can be reduced to this simple formula: that I'm against sin, but sometimes we can't help sinning. I know that. But rather to sin in this direction than in the other direction, that is the main point. I mean, I would be very grateful to you, Mr. Butterworth, if in a given case you would make clear to me in the class that I sin. Very grateful, because that would give us an occasion to see where what I might call "extraneous information" (extraneous to the book or the author himself) is truly *useful* for understanding. I do not deny this always simply, but I say it must be kept in its place, which cannot be the chief place.

Mr. Butterworth: The reason I questioned it is because I thought that I understood you to say in your lecture . . . that one has to have a knowledge of political events, just for the simple thing of not confusing regimes.

LS: A man acting in a particular situation has, of course, to know this situation, that goes without saying. But Plato is not a political actor in the *Gorgias*. I believe we have all the information we need for understanding this work. And if, incidentally, there is some other point, Plato wrote a kind of Greek history up to 387 B.C. in a dialogue called *Menexenus*, which is a funeral speech allegedly made by Aspasia (you know, the girlfriend of Pericles) but in fact delivered by Socrates to a single man (it's not a public speech) in which he gives a kind of survey of Athenian history up to 387 B.C., twelve years after Socrates' death, and which is probably a parody of patriotic oratory. But still, some facts are there, and you don't have to go to any historian outside of Plato to know these facts. That's of course only²⁴ when Plato was about forty, and he lived for another forty years. Good. Let us take this question up from time to time when we come across it.

Now is there any other question? Otherwise we can perhaps just begin. Or, Mr. Butterworth, do you have a point? No? Good. Now will you read slowly, Mr. Reinken, the first three speeches?^{xiii}

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: "To join in a fight or a fray, as the saying is, Socrates, you have chosen your time well enough."

Soc.: "Do you mean, according to the proverb, we have come too late for a feast?"

Call.: "Yes, a most elegant feast; for Gorgias gave us a fine and varied display but a moment ago." (447a)

LS: Let us stop there. Now I'll try to translate the first thing somewhat more literally: "Of war and battle, they say, one must partake in this manner, Socrates." Well, they come too late, and the indication of course is [that] you can't come too late for war and battle. The premise being that it is very unpleasant to participate in war and battle. It seems to be a redundant expression, "war *and* battle," because the really unpleasant thing is, of course, a battle. But this does not mean that war itself is not unpleasant. Think of a present-day example. If someone is drafted into the Army because of the war, and he comes too late for battle because the war ends before he is sent over, he had still to be drafted and to undergo the hardships of basic training, [which] doesn't become pleasant for this reason. While war may be less unpleasant than battle, it is nevertheless unpleasant. The point I want to make is that it is not redundant. Now thereupon, Socrates answers: "Then, if what you say is true, then we come after the festival, when the ball is over." So they have missed the main point. And Socrates adds here (that doesn't come out in the text): "We come after the festival, *and we are late.*"

^{xiii} *Gorgias*, trans. W. R. M. Lamb, Loeb Classical Library, no. 166 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925). This translation is used throughout the course except in session 2 (see session 2, n. 2).

Socrates also uses a redundant expression: “come after the festival, and we are late.” But Socrates does something different. He uses a metaphorical expression, “coming after the festival,” and then, stated in nonmetaphorical terms, “we are too late,” “we are late,” which is something different. I mention this right away because it shows that this dialogue which *deals with rhetoric makes use of rhetoric, practices rhetoric*, while it goes,²⁵ from the very beginning. Plato uses all his words carefully, but with special care, I believe, at the very beginning of his works. In some cases, I *know* that this is so. For example, the first word of the *Republic* is “Down I went” (in Greek, [it is] one word),^{xiv} and later on he will have to say a lot about going down and going up. Now, here the first words are “war and battle.” This is a *fighting* dialogue, and perhaps the fightingest dialogue written by Plato. The action is roughly this. In the first stage, Socrates fights with Gorgias; he is down. Polus raises his ugly head; fought by Socrates; down he goes. Then Callicles raises his ugly head, a long and protracted fight, and he is also brought down, but not quite: he is silenced, but not convinced. The antagonism, the opposition, remains until the very end. It is a battle or a war not ending in peace or pacification. This is more emphatic than in any other Platonic dialogue.

Now Callicles thereupon says: “Yes, the festival which you missed was indeed”—one can say—“elegant,” “nice.”^{xv} He doesn’t say “beautiful.” “Nice” is a lower term, you know. “For Gorgias has exhibited to us many beautiful things.” “Exhibiting”: the term must be understood very literally because—this I think we must keep in mind all the time—according to the notion then prevailing, there are three kinds of rhetoric: forensic rhetoric (before law courts), political or deliberative rhetoric (in the political assemblies), and show-off rhetoric (meaning rhetoric which has no practical purpose but which has only the purpose of giving enjoyment and of showing off the power of the speaker). This last²⁶ is called, in Greek, *epideiktik*. [LS writes on the board.] So, in other words, Gorgias has given such a show-off speech, perhaps about the beauty of Helen, perhaps about the wonderful character of²⁷ water, which no one questions, or of salt. These were subjects of this kind of speeches. Thereupon, what does Socrates say²⁸?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “But indeed, Callicles, it is Chaerephon here who must take the blame for this; he forced us to spend our time in the market-place.” (447a)

LS: Ya. So in other words, Socrates was eager to come, but this man with him, called Chaerephon, is guilty: “he compelled us” (probably not only Socrates but some other people who were also with Socrates) “to linger on in the market.” Chaerephon likes to spend time in the market. Socrates would much prefer to be away from the market, and to listen to this exciting Gorgias. Chaerephon thereupon says:

Mr. Reinken:

Chaer.: “No matter, Socrates: I will take the curing of it too; for Gorgias is a friend of mine, so that he will give a display now, if you think fit, or if you prefer,

^{xiv} *katebēn*.

^{xv} *asteias*.

on another occasion.” (447b)

LS: Yes. So Chaerephon, in other words, knows that he is guilty and that he must repair the damage. And he says he will *cure* that mishap which he has caused. He’s a friend of Gorgias. Just as he tried to linger on in the market, he is a friend of Gorgias—there is a connection between these two things, as you will gradually see. And since he is a friend of Gorgias, of course he can easily persuade him to make [another] such²⁹ show. Now what does he mean here? “If he seems, now, but if you wish, another time”^{xvi}—what does he mean by that qualification? He suggests to Socrates, it seems, that he should not have the show now, naturally. Gorgias has talked for a long time, he must be exhausted, and therefore let us do it another day. And then Callicles, who is in a way the key figure of the dialogue, says:

Mr. Reinken: *Call.:* “What, Chaerephon? Has Socrates a desire to hear Gorgias?” (447b)

LS: Now wait a moment. You see, Callicles is surprised. This is most unlikely, that Socrates should *wish* to hear Gorgias. He has a certain notion of Socrates. Socrates wouldn’t go in for this kind of show. So here it is amazing. Chaerephon says nevertheless, “but we are here for this very fact.” In other words, “Callicles, you are wrong, Socrates likes to hear this kind of thing.” Now, go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “Then whenever you have a mind to pay me a call—Gorgias is staying with me, and he will give you a display.”

Soc.: “Thank you, Callicles, but—” (447b)

LS: But let us first wait here. So this has something to do³⁰ [with] the situation. Callicles makes, in fact, a decision. He says, “Not now,” in effect. “When you come to my house”—which cannot be now, that will take some time—“then Gorgias may make his speeches.” Where do they meet? That is the question. That is of some importance—minor importance, but we must consider it. Well, they don’t meet in front of Callicles’ house, as will appear from the immediate sequel. There was some building in which Gorgias and his company were when he made his short speech, and Callicles left. Callicles was in front of the house. Why? Well, perhaps he needed some fresh air. Perhaps he wanted to go elsewhere, to the marketplace maybe. And then Socrates suddenly comes and³¹ [Callicles] says, “Well, let’s meet again another time where Gorgias will make his speech.” Now Socrates says then:

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Thank you, Callicles: but would he consent to discuss with us? For I want to—” (447b–c)

LS: “To *converse* with us.” That’s a key word: “*converse* with us,” have a conversation with us. Because that will become the key theme: the relation of *rhetoric* to *conversation*.

^{xvi} LS is translating 447b2–3.

Rhetoric means here, quite superficially, to make a *speech* where you are not interrupted except perhaps by hecklers,³² [as opposed to] a conversation, which means an exchange of speeches. This is a very superficial distinction, but it has very deep possibilities which are fully exploited by Plato in the dialogue in the sequel. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “For I want to find out from the man what is the function of his art, and what it is that he professes and teaches. As for the rest of his performance, he must give it, as you suggestion, on another occasion.” (447c)

LS: So Socrates definitely decides it. Now, no show-off speech now, only a conversation. But the question is: Is good old Gorgias not too exhausted even for a conversation? That’s also possible. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: *Call.:* “The best way is to ask our friend himself, Socrates—” (447c)

LS: Ya, that should not be done: “Nothing like asking [him] himself, Socrates.”^{xvii} For this was part of his show, his show off. He suggested, commanded, that one should ask him—anyone who liked, namely, of the men who were inside—and that he would give answers to everything. So this is the claim of Gorgias which will become crucial for the rest. Here is a man who says: “anybody ask me, and then I will give him an answer.” This is a terrible danger to make such a promise, and he will be severely punished for that. But at any rate since he promised to answer any questions, he cannot with propriety deny Socrates that he will answer the question regarding the power of his art. Now Socrates also makes a strange move.

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “What a good idea! Ask him Chaerephon.” (447c)

LS: Why does he ask Chaerephon to ask him and doesn’t ask him himself? It appears from the sequel that Socrates and Gorgias know one another, so that is not the reason. Why does he make that move? One can answer the question on the basis of the few lines we have read: Chaerephon says that he is a friend of Gorgias. Socrates never says that he is a friend of Gorgias. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Chaer.: “What am I to ask?”

Soc.: “What he is.”

Chaer.: “How do you mean?”

Soc.: “Just as, if he chanced to be in the shoemaking business, his answer would have been, I presume, ‘a shoemaker.’ Now, don’t you see my meaning?” (447c–d)

LS: “Ya, I understand, I will ask him.”^{xviii} Now, there is a very famous place where Chaerephon went to ask someone a question. Does anyone of you remember it? A very

^{xvii} LS retranslates the line just read.

^{xviii} LS is translating Chaerophon’s reply at 447d.

famous story told by Plato elsewhere. Chaerephon is the man who went to Delphi to ask the oracle whether there was anyone wiser than Socrates. And when the Oracle said no, this led to the whole story of Socrates as described in the *Apology of Socrates*. Now here, if we consider this fact: Chaerephon also goes here to ask a question. The first thing we see, of course, is that Gorgias is in a way an oracle, obviously. But if he can't answer any questions, is he an oracle? But it may also have a somewhat deeper meaning, a somewhat laughable meaning. When Chaerephon went to Delphi, *he* went there. But who formulated the question with which he went to Delphi? Perhaps who advised him to go to Delphi? We do not know. There was another case in the neighborhood of Socrates, another friend or companion of Socrates, called Xenophon. When there were political troubles in Athens, he went to the oracle and asked it for its advice—namely, because Xenophon wanted to go to the Persian King, or the brother of the Persian King, because there were political troubles in Athens for him. And Socrates said, “Well, that’s very dangerous because Prince Cyrus is an enemy of Athens. Be careful—you know, security—be careful, and ask the god in Delphi, the only being who could know whether it is wise for you to go to Cyrus or not.” Xenophon went to Delphi, and asked the god: “To which god must I sacrifice so that my trip to Cyrus will be prosperous?” And the god gave him an answer. And then when Xenophon came back to Athens and told Socrates his story, Socrates said, “What did you do? *You* made the decision! You decided to go to Cyrus and then asked the god what could you do in order to have the trip [be] prosperous.”^{xix} The meaning of this story: people did not always ask the god that question which Socrates *suggested* that they should ask. They changed it. We must consider the possibility, not more, that Socrates was responsible for Chaerephon’s going to Delphi, but that the question asked there—“Is anyone wiser than Socrates?”—was formulated in this way by Chaerephon, not by Socrates. That is in itself not more than a minor joke, but it is of some importance for the following reason, which will gradually become . . . as the question of Socrates’ fate, his whole life, including his death, is of course in the background of this whole work because Socrates’ fate shows that men who do the kind of thing which Socrates does, philosophize, may get into grave troubles with the city, with political society. And this is crucial for understanding the background of this dialogue in particular.

I think we should leave it at this particular point. And I hope you understand and you see the necessity that Chaerephon, although he’s [been] a companion of Socrates for such a long time, doesn’t know what Socrates means when he says, “Ask him who he is.” In other words, this question was perfectly clear to . . . that it did not mean “what his name is.” Obviously. It could only refer to Gorgias’ art—[that] was perfectly clear from what we see . . . Chaerephon is not such a companion of Socrates on the highest level. This much we can assume from the early pages. Now the dialogue will then go on roughly as follows. Gorgias will be asked the question what his art is, and the answer is simple. After some . . . it takes quite a time to get to such an answer: rhetoric. And then the question arises, “What is rhetoric?” And it takes a still longer time until we get an answer to the question of what rhetoric is, namely, the art of persuading multitudes regarding just and unjust things—which is the definition not of rhetoric in general but of forensic rhetoric. But you see already here, by this definition, the question of justice comes in.

^{xix} *Anabasis* 3.1.4–7.

This is very roughly what will go on in the first part of the dialogue. So next time we will read the first, say, ten pages of the translation. If there is any point you'd like to raise now

[end of tape]

¹ Deleted "to."

² Deleted "while they say so."

³ Moved "only."

⁴ Deleted "that it was."

⁵ Deleted "that."

⁶ Deleted "and."

⁷ Moved "understood."

⁸ Deleted "It means."

⁹ Deleted "before."

¹⁰ Deleted "that."

¹¹ Deleted "that."

¹² Deleted "Either."

¹³ Deleted "methodical."

¹⁴ Deleted "it."

¹⁵ Deleted "people."

¹⁶ Deleted "to."

¹⁷ Deleted "there is."

¹⁸ Deleted "By."

¹⁹ Deleted "begin."

²⁰ Deleted "over the performing."

²¹ Changed from "If there is any one among you who thinks that (justice is, of course I think, still admitted to be a concern of political scientists) but if he thinks that rhetoric is not . . ."

²² Deleted "I."

²³ Deleted "into it."

²⁴ Deleted "about."

²⁵ Deleted "that's."

²⁶ Changed from "This [the latter]."

²⁷ Deleted "the."

²⁸ Deleted "then."

²⁹ Moved "another."

³⁰ Deleted "for."

³¹ Deleted "he."

³² Deleted "and."

Session 2: no date

[In progress] **Leo Strauss:** And you wanted to ask a question?

Student: If you can't get the Loeb Classical Library edition, which translation would you recommend?

LS: I do not know. Who is the translator of the Penguin Books? Who is the translator? I do not know.

Student: Hamilton.

LS: I do not know. Do you find it reasonably good?

Student: It says, "war and battle."

LS: Ya, that is something. [Laughter] That's good.

Mr. Reinken: If you can't find the Penguin translation, which is probably out of print, the Modern Library is also very good, coming from a less pretentious name.

LS: Good. Now this course, as you know, will be devoted to Plato's *Gorgias*. It will take some time until we come to subject matter which is immediately relevant to political philosophy as we ordinarily understand it. You must therefore be patient for some time. But patience is a virtue and therefore requires an effort. And in order to make the effort a little less, I will make it easier for you to be patient by the following general remarks.

We have seen that this is a fighting dialogue; it is even *the* fighting dialogue, and that fighting dialogue is devoted to the subject of rhetoric. This is strange. After all, there are other subjects which seem to be much more important¹ [that might be made] the subjects of *the* fighting dialogue. Well, we will see soon that there is a way leading from rhetoric to justice. And justice is here not merely one virtue among many, but *the* virtue—at least *the* social virtue, so much so that some translators translate the Greek word *dikaiosyne* by "righteousness," which has this advantage: to remind us of the *breadth* of the notion. The disadvantage is that righteousness is common as the translation of the biblical term for justice and therefore has some biblical connotations. The question of justice in the broad sense of the term is identical with the question of *how men should live*, which will prove to be *the* question of this dialogue. And there two ways of life come to sight represented by Socrates on the one hand, and Callicles on the other. These representatives of the two opposite ways of life oppose each other till the very end. So the fight never ceases.

But this does not explain the link-up of *the* Platonic confrontation of *the* two ways of life with rhetoric. The following provisional answer may be helpful. Each of the two ways of life has its mode of *thought* belonging to it. The mode of thought belonging to the just way of life is called philosophy, and the mode of thought belonging to the unjust way of

life is called rhetoric. So in the different distinction between philosophy and rhetoric the distinction between justice and injustice is reflected. Rhetoric is here presented as *the* alternative to philosophy, and this is possible because within this dialogue philosophy is almost identified with political philosophy or the legislative art. Now in order to understand this distinction between this notion of rhetoric in contradistinction to philosophy, we have, fortunately or unfortunately, a contemporary equivalent, and that is ideology. We can say rhetoric is productive of ideology, and ideology is by definition something which is not true—[something] which may be very helpful, but which isn't true. Another contemporary equivalent, now more fashionable perhaps even than ideology in this country, is image. One can say rhetoric is a kind of image-producing art. Whereas the Declaration of Independence spoke of “a decent respect to the opinions of mankind,” we now speak of “the image.” And this shows, I think—every one of you can see the difference between a decent respect to the opinions of mankind and the image of America. But this only to indicate to you that we are speaking here not only about strange and Greek things, but, in different names, our issues are there. Good.

This opposition between philosophy and rhetoric comes out most clearly in the second part of the dialogue: the Polus section. The Gorgias section, [which is the first section,] does not bring that out at all.² The discussion with Gorgias is very drawn out and seemingly much too long. And that is what I thought of when I was afraid you might become impatient when we read that. But³ this long, drawn-out discussion with Gorgias becomes immediately interesting when we make this observation: clearly, in the discussion with Gorgias, Socrates *practices rhetoric*. Now if Socrates practices rhetoric, and if Socrates is a just man, rhetoric cannot be simply unjust. And we are then⁴ [compelled] to raise this question: Either there is one art of rhetoric which can be used well or badly (and we could tentatively suggest Socrates uses it well, and Gorgias and his followers use it badly), or else there are two arts of rhetoric, a good one and a bad one. The theme of the Gorgias section is clearly the definition of rhetoric. We can define [rhetoric], on the basis of the Gorgias section,⁵ as follows. Rhetoric is the art of speaking about political things in a politically effective manner. Here we have first of all (a) a subject matter (political things) and (b) a manner of speaking (politically effective). Or to state it more simply, there is a *what* and a *how*. Now the peculiarity of this section is that Gorgias proves to be unable to give this simple definition of rhetoric. He is surely poor at defining. Defining is called by Plato the art of conversation, of conversing, dialectics. Now if Gorgias is *the* exponent of rhetoric, his failure to define rhetoric proves the inferiority of rhetoric to dialectics. The rhetorician is not able to give an account of his own art. His inability shows itself, in particular, in the fact that he cannot distinguish between the question of the *what* and the question of the *how*. And the boring or tedious character of the discussion is largely due to this fact, this movement between the questions of what and how, and Gorgias not being aware of it and becoming aware of it only very slowly at least. This much in order to help you a bit to be patient.

But let me remind you of a few things which were said about the beginning of the dialogue last time. The situation: Socrates is eager to hear Gorgias' show-off speech but is prevented from arriving in time by Chaerephon, who compels Socrates to linger in the marketplace although *he*, and not Socrates, is a friend of Gorgias. In other words,

confronted with the choice of listening to his friend and of staying in the marketplace, he finds the marketplace more attractive. Now this is not without further implications. We learn from Plato's *Apology of Socrates* that Chaerephon was a companion or comrade of the multitude, i.e., of the *demos*, of the democracy in that period of the Thirty Tyrants, where Socrates remained neutral. Chaerephon sided with the democracy, fled with the leaders of the *demos*, and returned with them. This all belongs together: lingering in the marketplace, being a friend of Gorgias, and being a friend, a companion, of the *demos*. Chaerephon is Socrates' link with Gorgias and the Athenian multitude, and he is also the link, as we have seen last time, with the oracle in Delphi. Good.

Now they come in there too late, but there is a possibility that Gorgias might make another show speech. Why does it not come to that show speech? Chaerephon suggests, "not now, unless Socrates insists that a second show speech should be made now." Callicles says, by implication, "not now, and no qualification." Now the reason can be guessed. Chaerephon has certain consideration for Gorgias. After all, if he has talked for one or two hours, the old man needs some rest. Callicles, however, seems to have a different motivation. He is on his way *away from* Gorgias. Perhaps he wants now to go to the marketplace. Now Socrates accepts this decision. We won't hear that show speech, the second show speech, but only a conversation, which is not as strenuous. And as we shall see later, since Gorgias is supposed to give only very brief answers—yes and no—it can't be too hard on him. And the conversation will have as its subject two things: first, what is the power of Gorgias' art, what can it achieve? And second, what claim does Gorgias raise and what does he teach, which I take together. What claim does Gorgias raise regarding his teaching? The two questions are not identical. A man may possess an art, and what he teaches may be different from his art. For example, it may be only a part of his art. To anticipate later developments, Gorgias may have among other things the art of making these big show speeches, but he may teach his pupils only the practical speeches, like political and forensic speeches.

Let us now turn to the text, 447c9, which we read already last time, but I should add a few points. No, you don't have to read it, but only Callicles' remarks. When Callicles says, "He asks any one of the men within, the people within, to ask him any questions they like."ⁱ And Socrates says, "Chaerephon, ask him." And then he asks him immediately. Now, obviously they have arrived in the building at that time. This shows that this is clearly a performed dialogue. In a narrated dialogue, Socrates would have said, "Well, and then we have entered the building, and so on," which clearly cannot be said in a drama. But this is only in passing for those who have some interest in these seeming externals. Then Socrates sends Chaerephon to ask a question, a question which Chaerephon doesn't understand, namely: Who is Gorgias? Who is he? Well, if Chaerephon had been a bit more alert, he⁶ [would have] known it, because Socrates . . . what is his art? Which art does he claim to teach? That would be the question. Socrates explains the question to him by saying, "Well, if he were a maker of shoes, then he would say that he's a shoemaker. Or don't you understand what I mean?" "I understand." That's good. Now this is the first example of an art, and these examples

ⁱ LS translates here, as in all of the passages quoted in this paragraph.

are never chosen without some consideration. Let us reflect for one second about the art of shoemaking. Unfortunately we cannot do that in all cases. What is the peculiarity of the art of shoemaking? Well, a shoemaker makes shoes. Good. And shoes are for the purpose of *protecting* our feet; it is a *protective* art, protective against harshness of roads and so on. Protection will be a great theme of this work. Self-preservation is the formula comprising all these kind of things. Secondly, shoes are of course protecting the lowest part of the body, and there are, in these things, the lowest protective art. In addition—this one cannot immediately know because situations change in this respect—shoemaking was regarded as a particularly unmanly art. In parts of Europe, the art of tailors has this reputation. In Greece, apparently they were the shoemakers, pale-faced fellows, people who don't have ruddier complexions because they are outdoors all the time. Good. So this very lowly art is given as the first example. But it's very, very important because protection is, it seems, of some importance. Let us now read Chaerephon's question:

Mr. Reinken:

Chaer.: "Tell me, Gorgias, does Callicles here say truly that you promised to answer whatever anyone should ask you?" (447d)ⁱⁱ

LS: You see? He is, in his way, quite shrewd. He makes sure of his ground. Maybe Callicles misinterpreted this announcement. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Chaer.: "Tell me, Gorgias, does Callicles here say truly that you promised to answer whatever anyone should ask you?" (447d)

LS: So in other words, Gorgias does not know really the *answers* to all questions; he knows the *questions*. He is much better than an oracle, yeah? Well, we must be fair to him: he doesn't mean, of course, that he knows all questions and all answers. For example, someone would ask him, "Could you tell me what the name of my great-great-aunt was?" He surely wouldn't be able to say. Let us say therefore that he means the questions and answers of a *general* character, which are not connected with some proper names and things denoted by the proper names. Yes, Chaerephon goes on:

Mr. Reinken:

Chaer.: "Without doubt, then, you will answer easily, Gorgias."
Gorg.: "You may make trial of that, Chaerephon." (448a)

LS: Chaerephon is slightly malicious, but Gorgias is in a sovereign manner polite. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Polus.: "By Zeus, Chaerephon, if you please, make trial of me, for Gorgias appears to me to be fatigued, as he has just now been speaking a great deal."

ⁱⁱ During this session Mr. Reinken reads not from Lamb's translation as he normally does, but from a translation by Henry Cary, which can be found in *The Works of Plato, Vol. I* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1881), 136–232.

Chaer.: “What, Polus, do you think you can answer better than Gorgias?”

Polus.: “What matters that if I answer well enough for you?”

Chaer.: “Not at all. Since you wish it then, answer.” (448a–b)

LS: Let us stop here for one moment—this brief intermezzo. You see, Polus makes this very simple point that his old teacher should now be spared because he appears to be tired. Gorgias has a young companion who comes to his assistance. Now let us contrast him with Socrates. Socrates also comes with a companion, doesn’t he: Chaerephon. Is Chaerephon of any great help to Socrates? Well, let us consider that for one moment. None whatsoever. In the first place, he had kept him in the market so that he couldn’t listen to the speech. And then, when they came here, Socrates sends him to ask Gorgias a question and he can’t do this without being guided by Socrates very specifically. And the bigger story:⁷ he went to Delphi and asked the god about Socrates, and this started the whole terrible mess, at the end of which Socrates was executed. That’s not a very helpful young companion. [Laughter] And this leads us to the whole question: How [could] Socrates be⁸ condemned? Did he not have companions, and sufficiently powerful companions, who prevented that? No! The question of Socrates’ defense, or *failure* in his defense, will be a major theme in this book later, so that is by no means accidental. So Polus is much more efficient as a companion of Gorgias than Chaerephon is as a companion of Socrates. Chaerephon tries to prevent Polus’ entry. But Polus is superior to him, as you see. And Chaerephon is immediately defeated. He has to admit that there is no good reason why Polus should not answer the question. Good. And now how does it go on here?

Mr. Reinken:

Chaer.: “I ask, then, if Gorgias happened to be skilled in the same art as his brother Herodicus is skilled, what name should we rightly give him? Would it not be the same as his brother?”

Polus.: “Certainly.”

Chaer.: “In calling him a physician, then, we should speak correctly?”

Polus.: “Yes.”

Chaer.: “But if he were skilled in the same art as Aristophon, son of Aglaophon, or his brother, what should we properly call him?”

Polus.: “Evidently, a painter.” (448b–c)

LS: Let us stop here. So you see he proceeds in the way which Socrates ordinarily proceeds, to make absolutely clear the meaning of the questions by examples. And he goes so far as to give two examples. He starts from Gorgias and Gorgias’ brother, which is a natural association of ideas. And then this art of medicine, and then this art of painting. Does any one of you know who the brother of Aristophon is?

Student:

LS: Yes, sure, I also know it as well.

Student: Polygnotus?

LS: Polygnotus, the famous painter. I believe Chaerephon tries to test a bit how far Polus is informed by not mentioning the famous Polygnotus but his less known brother Aristophon. The interesting point is that the two examples have one thing in common: these are both pairs of brothers. They were brothers. Now we know from Xenophon that Chaerephon also had a brother, and that they are not on good terms at all. And so, I believe, in present day we would say he had a “brother complex.” And this brother complex shows in his examples. Now, going beyond the funny side of the matter, it means, if a man is a difficult brother, he is likely to be still more difficult with other people. The dialogue *Gorgias* is described by modern commentators as a particularly *bitter* dialogue, which is true. But a sign of that is the presence of Chaerephon, who doesn’t say much, but he gives a certain coloring to the dialogue. How is it in the *Republic*? The chief interlocutors of Socrates are two brothers: Glaucon and Adeimantus. But they are on *excellent* terms with each other, at least in the dialogue. The dialogue devoted to fraternity,⁹ the *Republic*, has a clear ending and a satisfactory ending in connection with the fact that it is a dialogue with these two good brothers. Here it is not a satisfactory arrangement, and [that is] connected somehow with this defect of Chaerephon. Yes? So now we come to the question:

Mr. Reinken:

Chaer.: “But now, since he is skilled in a certain art, what can we properly call him?”

Polus: “Chaerephon, there are many arts among men by experience experimentally discovered: for experience causes our life to proceed according to art, but inexperience according to chance. Of each of these different persons partake of different arts, in different manners; but the best of the best; in the number of whom is Gorgias here, who possess the finest of arts.” (448c)

LS: Yes. Now, this is then meant to be the answer to the question, “What is the art of Gorgias?” It is in a way very unrevealing, and it is justly criticized by Socrates on this score. But still, we must be fair, even to Polus. Could Polus have had a reason for giving this rhetorical answer, which would come out more clearly in the original, but which comes out also in the translation? What could it be? Well, here we have the first example of outside information. You remember we discussed it last time—the extraneous information? We have to know something about Gorgias which we are not told here. But fortunately we don’t have to go out of the work of Plato, because the sequel to the dialogue *Gorgias* is the dialogue *Meno*. Meno was a pupil of Gorgias’ too. And there we learn quite a bit about Gorgias, for example, that Gorgias was a pupil of the philosopher Empedocles. So he was not merely an orator or a teacher of rhetoric, not at all. He gave the definition of color, for example, which is not a rhetorical subject. But we know it even from this dialogue if you only read carefully, because if he gives answers to *all* questions of a general nature, he must have information at least in all important spheres of knowledge. So it is perfectly possible that Polus, thinking of the range of Gorgias’ knowledge—or to use¹⁰ a somewhat old-fashioned term which came more easily to the Greeks than it comes to us, thinking of Gorgias’ *wisdom*, he couldn’t find so easily an

answer (*this art*: painting, or physician, or shoemaker) because it is an art, a knowledge, a skill, of an all-comprehensive nature. And this could very well have been his reason. And this is not contradicted by the fact that Gorgias later on will say his art is rhetoric, because Gorgias might very well have had his own reasons, which we will discuss, for saying “my art is rhetoric.”¹¹ But we must see that . . . Good. And then Socrates uses this opportunity for entering the fray again and pushing his comrade Chaerephon aside. Let us read that:

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Polus appears, Gorgias, to be very well prepared for speaking: but he did not do what he promised Chaerephon.”

Gorg.: “How so, Socrates?”

Soc.: “He does not appear to me to answer the question that was asked.”

Gorg.: “Do you then, if you please, ask him.”

Soc.: “No, but if you yourself would be willing to answer me, I would much rather ask you. For it is evident to me that Polus, from what he has said, has studied more what is called rhetoric than conversation.” (448d)

LS: Let us stop here. So you see Gorgias is not eager to return, obviously. He says, “Ask Polus himself.” But then Socrates says, “No, I must talk with you, because Polus is simply not competent enough.” He has studied the so-called rhetoric, which is, of course, not exactly a term of praise and therefore somewhat insulting to Polus—but not to Gorgias, because Gorgias is much more than a rhetorician. And Socrates here calls the alternative¹² conversing—a very humble and simple word. Polus has no training in conversation, only in rhetoric. We must see why Plato uses this word conversing and gives it this terrific meaning. Up to the present day, it has retained it. In Greek, it¹³ [is] *dialegesthai*; the art of conversation is *dialectics*. And in the age of Khrushchev, every schoolboy or schoolgirl has heard of dialectics. So this enormous development of the humble art of conversing into what is claimed to be *the* method of understanding the whole, at least the whole historical process, is a long question. Part of that story is to be found in Plato himself. Now, what then was the mistake which Socrates finds with him?

Mr. Reinken:

Polus: “Why so, Socrates?”

Soc.: “Because, Polus, when Chaerephon asked you in what art Gorgias was skilled, you praised his art, as if someone had blamed it. But you did not say what the art itself is.”

Polus: “Did I not answer, that it was the finest of all arts.”

Soc.: “Certainly. But no one asked you what is the quality of the art of Gorgias, but what it was, and by what name we ought to call Gorgias just as Chaerephon proposed the former questions to you, and you answered him well and in few words. Now, therefore, tell me in the same manner, what art Gorgias professes, and what we ought to call him. Or rather, Gorgias, do you tell us yourself what we ought to call you as skilled in what art.” (448e–449a)

LS: Now, let us stop here for one moment. We get here the first inkling [of] what the difference between rhetoric and dialectic is. Rhetoric deals with *how* a thing is, dialectic with *what* it is. Now, that is of course extremely provisional, but must be understood in terms of the context. *How* it is: Is it wonderful or contemptible or what not, i.e., terms of praise and blame? The sober question of what the thing is independently of praise and blame: that is dialectical. You see here already from this simple example there is a connection between the distinction of dialectics and rhetoric and the distinction of *science* in the modern sense and rhetoric. I mean, one can't help thinking of the distinction between facts and values, which is of course not quite the same thing. But an ingredient of this fact–value distinction is of course here implied. Dialectics has nothing to do with praising and blaming, but with what a thing is. Why this should be *conversing*, have anything to do with conversing, that's a long question which we must gradually try to answer.

So Socrates then turns to Gorgias with the question, “And tell us simply what is your *technē*?” And what does Gorgias say?

Mr. Reinken: *Gorg.*: “In rhetoric, Socrates.” (449a)

LS: You see from here that Gorgias *knows* Socrates: they are not introduced. So Socrates could have raised the question right at the beginning if he wanted. But he didn't want [to]. So “rhetoric.” Now why then does Gorgias give this simple answer and his pupil Polus, who was surely no longer very young and not completely stupid (he had already written a book, if this is a proof of non–stupidity, and I think the practice of many university administrations would seem to show that it is a proof of non–stupidity), why does Gorgias give this simple answer when it is true, what we said before, that Gorgias' art or knowledge was much broader than any single art? Now there is one very important source for our understanding of the early fate of philosophy and political philosophy, and that is a comedy: Aristophanes' comedy the *Clouds*, the deplorable hero of which is Socrates, who has a very bad end in that play. Now in this play, the rumor in Athens is that Socrates has a kind of cosmology, knowledge of the universe, and in addition the art of rhetoric. The same¹⁴ would be true of Gorgias. Now there is this difference: Socrates teaches for pay only the art of rhetoric. I mean, no man in his senses at that time where there was no technological use of these things would pay a penny for hearing something about earthquakes, eclipses of the sun, and so on. But *rhetoric*: that he could very well use. Now from the point of view of self–preservation, or comfortable self–preservation, rhetoric of course was much more important to emphasize for Gorgias than these other arts, to say nothing of other perhaps more subtle reasons. So at least we have now an answer by which Gorgias is now bound for the rest of the dialogue: his art is rhetoric. And now how does Socrates go on?

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.*: “Ought we, then, to call you a rhetorician?” (449a)

LS: “Ought we, then, to call you an *orator*?” This is, I believe, important, and I don't know whether I have the time to correct it in *all* cases. There are two words which occur

every time: one is *rhētor*, which means simply a public speaker, and then this, a somewhat more complicated word, *rhētorikos*, and that means a man who possesses the art of speaking. Now a fellow like Cleon for example, or any of these speakers you read in Thucydides (Pericles, of course, too) is an orator. But that does not necessarily mean that he possesses the art of rhetoric. I mean, there are people of a natural eloquence, who would be wholly unable to give an account of what they did and *how* they do it, and yet they have it. This distinction is of some importance. But Socrates blurs in a way the distinction by saying, “Well, then one must call you a public speaker.” And that is of course very little, because anyone who rises in the assembly and makes a speech is a public speaker, and therefore Gorgias very modestly makes a correction. What is that correction?

Mr. Reinken:

Gorg.: “And a good one, Socrates, if you wish to call me, as Homer says, ‘what I boast myself to be.’” (449a)

LS: Good. You see, he is a model. Gorgias appears as a model of it: “I’m not simply a public speaker, like anyone who speaks about a certain tax or whatever it may be; I’m a good speaker.” And this is done in good taste, as is proven by the quotation from Homer. Homer guarantees that, as it were. But people may boast, may raise claims on behalf of themselves. And Socrates also very politely says:

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “But I do wish.” (449a)

LS: “I *do* wish to call you a good speaker.” Gorgias says, “Call me then.” But¹⁵ [Socrates] doesn’t do it. In other words, there is a *wish* to call him a good speaker, but he cannot do it. And why can he not do it? Because he doesn’t know him, hasn’t heard him. So, in other words, Socrates is as polite as is compatible with honesty, but no more. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Shall we say, too, that you are able to make others orators?”

Gorg.: “I profess this, not only here but elsewhere.” (449b)

LS: That is important: “I am an internationally famous man”—that would be the present-day term—“so, if you judge of me in terms of your Athenian experiences, you would say, ‘Pericles is a good orator’ because you have heard him. Well, but Pericles was a strictly local celebrity.” Good. Why do we consider all these little things? Because they show that Socrates, in particular, *practiced* rhetoric all the time. That is certain. That is not a scientific analysis, obviously. There are all kinds of passions, interests, sentiments involved *all the time*.

Student: Isn’t the “not only here but elsewhere” the claim that he has a science of rhetoric?

LS: You mean because he can teach it?

Student: Because he can teach it *in other cities*.

LS: Yes, that is very true. That is good, that is quite good. In other words,¹⁶ the man who has only the natural eloquence cannot teach it. But to teach it means to be able to teach it everywhere. Universality is essential; yes, that is true. Now let us go on:

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Are you willing then, Gorgias, to continue, as we are now doing, partly to ask questions and partly to answer, and to defer to some other occasion that prolixity of speech, such as Polus just now began with? But do not belie what you promised, but be willing answer each question briefly.” (449b)

LS: Now, let us first consider that for a moment. Socrates says, as it were, “Well, both of us will ask questions and answer them,” ya? But later on he says, “Gorgias *promises* to answer questions.” Where did Gorgias promise that? Not only to answer questions but to answer them *briefly*? Where did he do that? There are two possibilities. The first is that after the question in this paragraph, Gorgias nodded—that’s a promise. Or else, which is more likely, Socrates *imputes* to him a promise, very legitimately, because¹⁷ Gorgias raises the claim that he can do everything, so to speak, in speech. This *suggestiveness* of Socrates—we will find other examples of it. Again, suggestiveness is obviously a rhetorical device. In proving a theorem in Euclid, you don’t make suggestions; it has to be spelled out one hundred percent. Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Gorg.: “There are some answers, Socrates, which must necessarily be made at length. However, I will endeavor to make them as short as possible. For this is one of the things which I profess, that no one can say the same things in fewer words than me.” (449b–c)

LS: So in other words, Socrates has divined that this is what Gorgias would claim. To that extent, he could say, “You have already promised, your whole existence is a promise, of everything¹⁸ [of] this kind.” Gorgias’ general answer is sensible, is it not? There is no particular merit in long answers or in short answers, but in answers which are as long or as short as the subject matter requires—common sense itself. And Gorgias answers, “So, very well, I’m willing to enter on this particular contract, which doesn’t make sense in itself, that I will answer only as briefly as possible.” The kind of contest which now begins, the whole attempt to define rhetoric *as it is*—a scientific or philosophic enterprise—is affected by this promise of Gorgias: brevity. Brevity. And now let us see how these two things will go together and what results they will bring about. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “There is need of this now, Gorgias; give me therefore a specimen of this very thing, conciseness of speech, and—”

LS: No, that is not good. “Short speech.” “Short speech”—in Greek, one word: *brachylogy*.

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “and of prolixity at some other time.” (449c)

LS: “long speech” is the word.ⁱⁱⁱ Now, this is of course a very funny¹⁹ explanation of the difference between rhetoric and dialectic: rhetoric is long speech, dialectic is short speech. The most superficial distinction we can possibly get. But here, for the time being, it is sufficient. Why short speeches should be preferable to long speeches is not explained. Socrates just has this *preference* for short speeches (that’s all we can say hitherto), and he *imposes* this preference on Gorgias—legitimately, because Gorgias says, “I am first-rate in both long speeches and short speeches.” And then he cannot possibly back down and say, “No, I don’t want short speeches,” because that would mean to concede defeat from the very beginning. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Gorg.: “I will do so. And you will admit that you never heard anyone speak more concisely.”

Soc.: “well then, since you say that you are skilled in the art of rhetoric, and that you can teach another this art, tell me about what is rhetoric employed? Just as the art of weaving is employed in the making of garments, is it not so?”

Gorg.: “It is.”

Soc.: “And is not music also employed in the composing of melodies?”

Gorg.: “Yes.” (449c–d)

LS: So Socrates gives again two²⁰ examples, to give Gorgias some elementary training in giving brief answers. Good. And so the answer couldn’t be shorter: one word. The examples he chooses are, however, very different this time. This time he takes the art of weaving and the art of making songs. Socrates, you see, as a sensible teacher, after the boy has learned the lesson, praises him of course. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “By Hera, Gorgias, I admire your answers, for you answer as briefly as possible.” (449d)

LS: Now that is the first oath of Socrates, and it is “By Hera.” Polus, I believe, had the one “By Zeus” before. “Hera” was an oath for women, Hera being a goddess, a god of youth. The art of weaving also is a feminine art. And the art of making poems is, of course, not feminine, but it has something to do with the muses—the muses were also female gods. Socrates presents himself here as belonging to a female, feminine context. That is, he does this not only here, but it is no accident that it is here. In a way, Socrates is not a man. Let us reflect upon that for one moment, because to be a man, an *hombre*,²¹ of course meant to be a true human being. Human being was something rather low: *anthrōpos*. *Anēr*, *hombre*, that was the man. Now this has all kinds of implications; the primary is surely sexual difference. But something which is of key importance is that a *man* is a man who can take care of himself, and especially of course in fighting and in

ⁱⁱⁱ *makrologia*

protecting himself. A woman is not supposed to be able to do that. The men go out to war, and the women stay home. And what do the women do when they are at home? What do they do? It is not altogether flattering, but since we are not rhetoricians we are not supposed to flatter. Well, of course, they do their work—weaving, spinning, and so on—but apart from that they sit at home and *talk*. What do people like Socrates do? They sit in the houses and talk. So there is a certain strange kinship between philosophy and the *female* sex; they are not manly, the philosophers. That will be a great theme later on in this dialogue. Now, go on. Gorgias accepts the praise with conviction.

Mr. Reinken:

Gorg.: “I think, Socrates, that I do this well enough.”

Soc.: “You say well. Come, then, answer me thus respecting rhetoric, of what is it the science?”

Gorg.: “Of words.” (449d)

LS: No, that is impossible! “*Of speeches.*” If it were about words, then it would be perhaps grammar, but not rhetoric. “*About speeches.*” This is the first answer: rhetoric is an art dealing with speeches. Now Gorgias will be severely criticized for that, and he gets into great troubles. But still, before we consider the insufficiency of the definition, is it not a good answer to begin with as a first answer, as indicating the general if not the specific difference? I mean, spinning or weaving, for example, deals with the making of clothes. Does not rhetoric deal with speeches? Isn’t that a reasonable answer? Now, let us see what Socrates does with him, how Socrates points out the insufficiency.

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.*: “What kind of speeches, Gorgias? Are they—” (449e)

LS: You see how interesting: the same word in Greek, *poios*, “what kind,” or rather, “of what quality.” And Polus had been blamed because he had said not what the art is but of *what quality*. So that is a complicated thing; there are apparently two kinds of qualities which have to be considered. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Are they such as inform the sick by what kind of diet they may become well?”

Gorg.: “No.”

Soc.: “Rhetoric, then, is not concerned with all kinds of speeches.”

Gorg.: “Certainly not.”

Soc.: “Yet it makes men able to speak.”

Gorg.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “And does it not enable men to think on the same things on which it enables them to speak?”

Gorg.: “Without doubt.”

Soc.: “Does not, then, the medicinal art, of which we just now spoke, make men able to think and speak about the sick?”

Gorg.: “Necessarily so.”

Soc.: “The medicinal art, then, as it appears, is conversant with speeches.”

(449e–450a)

LS: “Is about speeches.” “Is about speeches.” Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Gorg.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “And those that concern disease?”

Gorg.: “Just so.”

Soc.: “And is not the gymnastic art also about speeches that relate to the good and bad habits of bodies?”

Gorg.: “Certainly.”

Soc.: “And it is the same with other arts, Gorgias: each of them is about those speeches that are employed about that particular thing of which each is the art.” (450a–b)

LS: Ya, we can almost say “about the subject matter.”

Mr. Reinken:

Gorg.: “It appears so.”

Soc.: “Why, then, do you not call other arts rhetorical, as being about speeches, since you call that rhetoric which is employed about speeches?” (450b)

LS: Ya, this is the first refutation. What do you make of it? Does it make sense to say the subject matter of medicine²² [is] speeches? No one, I think, would say that. They would say [it is] about diseased bodies, human bodies. And if you take any other art—for example, arithmetic, which comes up later, deals with numbers. The *only art* the subject matter of which is speeches would seem to be at first glance the art of rhetoric. Socrates *confuses* the issue deliberately in order to test Gorgias, by saying *all* arts, or at least *many* arts, are as much about speeches as rhetoric is. And Gorgias is helpless. Why is he helpless? Surely he is not trained, we know that, in conversing, but there is also some other obstacle which prevents him from reflecting sufficiently to see whether the answer is good or bad. And we have seen what it is. He is an—yes?

Student: It’s his vanity, isn’t it? He’s—

LS: Ya, sure, but how does it work out?

Student: Well, it works out so that rhetoric deals, rhetoric really—rhetoric is another art.

LS: No, I see, that is not merely vanity. That will come out later. But he contradicts it when he says at the beginning, when Socrates asks him, “Does rhetoric²³ deal with the speeches addressed to sick people?” he says no, and he should have said yes, because he himself gives later on an example in which he shows how good he is, how superior he is to physicians, in inducing sick people to undergo treatment. No, I think it is something more simple and obvious. He is committed to give brief answers. Now if he had

answered that way, “a simple answer is not possible,” then he would have lost his bet. And Socrates makes a trap for him, and Gorgias just walks into it very neatly. At any rate, now²⁴ the whole original statement “rhetoric is about speeches” has been refuted, but it seems that *all* or *many* arts are about speeches, and rhetoric is only *one* of them. And now, how does Gorgias try to get out of this situation? Now he is compelled to make a long speech.

Mr. Reinken:

Gorg.: “Because, Socrates, almost the whole science of other arts is about manual operations and such-like actions: in rhetoric, however, there is no such manual operation, but all its activity and efficiency is by means of words. For this reason, I consider that the art of rhetoric is about speechings, herein speaking correctly, as I affirm.” (450b–c)

LS: Now here he makes a slight switch, although it doesn’t come out in his final statement.²⁵ He makes it shortly before. Rhetoric is not so much *about* speeches as *through* speeches. That’s an entirely different proposition. That rhetoric proceeds through speeches is true. But we can see there are other arts which have nothing to do with speeches. Let us take a simple example, the art of milking a cow, which can be practiced without any speech, perhaps from time to time an almost inarticulate exhortation or dehortation addressed to the cow—but practically without speeches—whereas, say, rhetoric surely would be through speeches, and so would be mathematics, of course, too. But now we come to the question and to an entirely different distinction: The distinction of arts which do their work chiefly *through* speeches and arts which do their work chiefly *not* through speeches, let us say, which are almost exclusively manual and can be practiced in entire silence. Of course, that doesn’t help us, because then rhetoric—being an art which proceeds chiefly through speeches or . . . speeches—then rhetoric would surely be one of those arts proceeding through speeches, but it would be only one of them, and you would still not know what the peculiarity, the specific nature, of rhetoric is. Then there is another question: Does rhetoric proceed entirely through speeches? That would be a question. In other words, if we have here, say, some arts [LS writes on the blackboard], let us call them *speaking* arts, and the other *nonspeaking*, and milking cows is a nonspeaking art and arithmetic is a speaking art—but does rhetoric really belong to the speaking arts? That’s a question. In the first place, is there nothing *manual* in rhetoric? Gestures, obviously. So to some extent it’s a manual art or brachial art. And then, in addition, *silence* is terribly important in rhetoric, which is also nonspeaking. Good. So, now, let us see how Gorgias proceeds in the sequel:

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Do I understand what kind of art you wish to call it? But I shall soon comprehend it more clearly. However, answer me. We have arts, have we not?”
Gorg.: “Yes.” (450c)

LS: Why does he have to That is so trivial, that one should not What does he do? He does it from time to time in other dialogues too, but this is a particularly good example. What is the object here? That what was developed by Aristotle, but it is clearly

present in Plato:^{iv} that before you raise the question of *what* a thing is, you must first know *that* it is, because if it doesn't exist, there is no use of wasting one's time in trying to talk about it. This is the basic [point]: the arts *are*, we have arts. Who are the "we"?

Student:

LS: I think so. But it cannot be demonstrated on the basis of this play, but it is important. These human beings So this is Now after we have answered the question *whether* arts are, [we ask] what they are about. Or with a view to finding out what kind of art rhetoric is—and how do we arrive at the what? Later, in the Aristotelean formula, we get first the genus, and then we go down to the species. In Socrates or Plato, that is somewhat different, although the fundamental notion is the same. We start from a position of *all arts*, all arts . . . and then we divide it reasonably—the genus of all arts—and then we go down until we come to this particular species First, halve our substances into other substances, until we arrive at the species rhetoric. Of this procedure, it is called²⁶ [division] by Plato, [indiscernible Greek word],^v we have here a simple example.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.:^{vi} “[Of all the arts, some], I think, consist principally in workmanship and stand in need of but few words, and others of none at all, but their work may be accomplished in silence, as painting, statuary, and many others. With such arts, you appear to me to say that rhetoric has nothing to do? Is it not so?”

Gorg.: “You apprehend my meaning perfectly, Socrates.”

Soc.: “On the other hand, there are other arts that accomplish all by means of words—” (450c–d)

LS: “*through* speech,” not *about* speech, *through* speech—that’s the word.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “through speeches and require no work at all, or very little, such as theoretical and practical arithmetic, geometry, the game of dice, and many other arts; some of which require almost as many words as actions, and most of them more, so that altogether their whole activity and efficiency is through speeches. You appear to me to say that rhetoric is among arts of this kind.” (450c–d)

LS: We must say a word about the examples. In the first case, the examples were painting and sculpture, both *imitative* arts. Rhetoric does not belong to them, whereas the truth would be that rhetoric has very much to do with imitative arts, but it would take some

^{iv} At this point there is a break in the remastered tape. The remastered tape picks back up with the next passage that Mr. Reinken reads from the text. The text here is based on the typewritten transcript alone with emendations by the editor.

^v Probably *diairesis*.

^{vi} At this point the remastered tape become audible again.

time until this could be made clear. Now the four arts which he mentions here—²⁷the translation [is not good]. The art of *numbering*, the art of *reckoning*.^{vii} Numbering, that you know the numbers²⁸; this we do not regard as a separate art. In other words, what we call arithmetic is what the Greeks call [*logistikē*,] the art of reckoning, of *operating* with numbers. But in Greek, arithmetic, [i.e., *arithmētikē*,] means the art of *knowing* the numbers: they have to be *learned*.²⁹ For example, if I give you any number, however large, that everyone of you knows what number *follows* upon it: you know that number. That's arithmetic. *Logistic*, as it is called, from which of course the present military use of logistics is derived; *logistic* is the art of reckoning—adding, subtracting, and so on. Geometry is clear. And now he gives here “dice.” It is not dice. “Draught playing” is the usual translation, isn't it? Why does he give such a strange art, draught playing?³⁰ How does he translate it?

Student: Lamb's is “draughts.”

LS: Ya, well, Plato uses this expression metaphorically for dialectics, and the reason is this. Whenever you have a draught game, you move the pieces. [LS writes on the blackboard.] Well, what do you do? You lift it, and then you want to sit it down, and then you reflect: “No, not here, but here.” And sometimes it is even possible that, after having put it down, you may still reconsider it and put it elsewhere. This is what we do in conversations, in dialectics. We put something down, we make an assumption, we reconsider that assumption and replace it by another assumption. Yes. This only in passing. Now the answer is clear: We have a division of all arts into those which proceed chiefly through speeches and those which proceed chiefly in silence, and rhetoric is supposed to belong to those which proceed chiefly through speeches. Ya, go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Gorg: “You say truly.”

Soc.: “However, I do not think you mean to call anyone of these rhetoric, although in the expression you used you so said, that rhetoric has its efficiency by means of speeches; and any who wished to catch at your words might reply, ‘Do you say then, Gorgias, that arithmetic is rhetoric?’ But I do not think that you call either arithmetic or geometry rhetoric.”

Gorg.: “You think rightly, Socrates, and apprehend my meaning correctly.” (450e–451a)

LS: “You *believe* correctly, Socrates, and you *assume* justly, you make a just assumption”—which is a rhetorically balanced answer. Yes. So that is clear now, the situation. How does he go on?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Come then, complete the answer to my question. Since rhetoric is one of those arts which make great use of speeches, and there are others of the same kind, endeavor to tell me in reference to what rhetoric has its efficiency in

^{vii} The Greek words are *arithmētikē* and *logistikē*, respectively.

speeches. Just as if anyone should ask me respecting any of the arts which I but now mentioned: ‘Socrates, what is the arthmetical art?’ I should say to him, as you did just now, that is one of the arts that have their efficiency in words—” (451a–b)

LS: No, “*through* speech,” through speech. In other words, that is the genus to which it belongs.

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “and if he should further ask me, ‘In reference to what?’—” (451b)

LS: “*About* what,” about what. In other words, it is *through* speech, but *about* what subject matter? Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “I should answer, ‘About the knowledge of even and odd, how many there may be of each’—” (451b)

LS: Ya, in other words, knowledge of numbers, not operations. Knowledge of numbers must then be concerned, since it deals with *all* numbers, with the most comprehensive *division* of the whole field of numbers, and that is a division into odd and even. Any number—in the billions, a number of which you may never have thought—we know in *advance* that it is either odd or even. And it is the knowledge of *how many*, i.e., of the number. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “how many there may be of each. But if again he should ask me, ‘What do you mean by the art of computation?’ I should answer—” (451b)

LS: Now it is suddenly computation, ya? But that has nothing to do with the distinction between theoretical and practical. [It] has nothing to do with that. The primary distinction is simply, as you will see, that it is not practical as such. Yes? “Then I would say—?”

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “that this also is one of those arts whose whole efficiency is through speeches. And if he should further ask me, ‘About what?’ I should answer, as they do who draw up motions in the assemblies of the people, that in other respects computation is the same as arithmetic, for it is about the same object, that is to say, the even and the odd; but it differs in this respect, that computation considers what relation even and odd have to themselves and to each other in regard to quantity. And if anyone should ask me about astronomy and, after I had said that its whole efficiency consists in words, should say, ‘But, Socrates, to what do words that are employed about astronomy refer?’ I should answer that they are employed about the course of the stars, and of the sun and the moon, how they are related to each other with respect to velocity.” (451b–c)

LS: Does it say “to philosophy”? . . . To philosophy?

Student: “Velocity.”

Student: Should we write “philosophy”?

LS: No, “velocity” is correct. I heard “philosophy,” and I was puzzled. Yes? Now Gorgias will reply?

Mr. Reinken: *Gorg.*: “And you would answer rightly, Socrates.” (451c)

LS: Ya, “You *speak* correctly.” That’s the first time that Gorgias, *the* teacher of rhetoric, says to Socrates, “You *speak* correctly.” Now, here Socrates takes some of the [same] arts as before, as you have seen, arithmetic and logistic, but he replaces geometry and draught playing by astronomy. Now, in the list of the sciences in Plato’s *Republic*, Books 6 and 7, you will find this order: arithmetic, logistic, geometry, astronomy, and then dialectics. I omit something. Astronomy is in the middle between geometry and the draught playing in the metaphoric sense of the term. We have here the first clear example of a dialogue *within* a dialogue, you see? Socrates says, “If someone were to ask *me*, I would reply *to him*.” In the Greek, it’s very clear: it begins with Socrates and it ends with Socrates. A non-existing man whom Socrates conjures for the situation out of nothing addresses to Socrates a question. Socrates answers. What is this? What does he do by making such a dialogue within the dialogue? Yes?

Student: This conversation continues in a way—

LS: Ya, sure, he gives here a model of a conversation because Gorgias is not yet good enough for that. That is clear. But what does Socrates do in order to give him that model? He introduces a *fictitious* man. He does what poets do, on a very humble scale, but still. A nonexistent man. You know, just [as] when you read a novel where something is said about Mr. Mueller, or any other man, and this Mr. Mueller of course exists nowhere, and yet we are told all kinds of stories about him. Socrates, again—a use of a rhetorical device. Yes. And so there is a model, and Gorgias has now no longer any excuse for not answering properly. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.*: “Now then do you answer, Gorgias—” (451d)

LS: “Do you speak correctly on your part, too?”—because Gorgias had praised Socrates for speaking correctly. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Do you speak rightly, Gorgias? For rhetoric is one of those arts which accomplish and effect everything through speeches: is it not so?”

Gorg.: “It is so.”

Soc.: “Tell me then in reference to what? What is the particular thing about which these speeches are, which rhetoric uses?”

Gorg.: “The greatest of all human concerns, Socrates, and the best.”
(451d)

LS: Yes. Now, that’s clear. Clearly not money, clearly not movements of stars, and so on. Now what about this answer? “Rhetoric is the art which deals with the greatest and best of the human concerns.” Does this indicate the subject matter of rhetoric? At least to begin with—clearly distinguishing it from almost all other arts. Surely the shoemakers cannot deal with the greatest and best of human matters. Now in a speech in Thucydides (in a way the most important speech in Thucydides), by a man called Diodotus, Diodotus speaks of “the greatest things,” and he calls them “freedom and empire,” freedom and rule. And that is of course, as we shall see, what Gorgias means. He doesn’t make it clear, but it points somehow in the right direction—at least according to the then very common view. Socrates, however, is not satisfied with that, because it is too general. Now, how does Socrates proceed from this point?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “But, Gorgias, what you say is questionable, and by no means clear. For I think you must have heard at banquets men singing that song in which the singers enumerate that the best thing is health, the second beauty, and the third, as the author of the song says, riches gained without fraud.” (451d–e)

LS: Ya. “As the *poet* of that song says.” Yes. So it is emphasized that it is *sung*. Gorgias replies what?

Mr. Reinken: *Gorg.*: “I have heard it; but with what object do you mention this?” (451e)

LS: Ya, in other words, Gorgias denies the relevance of that. Does he not have a reason for denying the relevance? That this is what people sing when they are drinking. What authority does that have? And it is emphasized: they say it “*singingly*.” Twice he speaks of singing, and once he speaks of the poet. Now, the singers of course merely follow the poet,³¹ and the poet would be much less competent here than the people of whom Gorgias thinks. Now what does Socrates mean, however, by his quotation? He means [this]: Could one not say that health, beauty, and wealth are the greatest human goods? I believe the ordinary reaction would be “no,” because they are great goods, but if someone is healthy and wealthy, what is that compared with having political power? I mean, they may be great goods, or may be goods, but not so—obviously, for the politically interested man, the greatest good is political power, [or] would seem to be. Now, how does Socrates go on?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Because the artificers of those things which the author of the song has commended, namely, the physician, the master of gymnastics, and the money-getter, will forthwith present themselves, and the physician will say: ‘Socrates, Gorgias deceives you, for his art is not employed about the greatest good to men, but mine is.’ If, then, I should ask him, ‘Who are you that say this?’ he would probably answer, ‘I am a physician.’” (452a)

LS: Ya, “probably.” That’s very funny this qualification, because he doesn’t know what this product of his imagination, this *x*, is going to say. Now, you see another dialogue within the dialogue, but a different one. This time he doesn’t give a *model* to Gorgias, but this time he brings in attackers of Gorgias. Socrates doesn’t say, “You deceive me.” This anonymous man whom Socrates has created for the occasion says, “Socrates, Gorgias deceives you.” Yes. Now, how does he go on?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: ““What, then, do you say? That the object of your art is the greatest good? ‘How could it be otherwise, Socrates?’ he would probably say, ‘since its object is health? and what greater good can men have than health?’” (452a–b)

LS: Let us stop here for one moment. Gorgias raises a claim: that his art is productive of the greatest good. And then the physician comes and says, “*my* art is productive of the greatest good.” What, then, is the relation of these two men? Surely they are opponents in this connection. But we can state it more specifically: he is a *competitor* of Gorgias. What Socrates does is that he enlarges the audience, as it were, breaking through the walls so that other people can come in. And what he brings in is a whole cavalcade of *competitors* with Gorgias. This aggravates the situation. Gorgias is now not only under compulsion to give *brief* answers, he also has to think of his *livelihood*, of his competitors. Yes. Now the next man:

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “And if after him again the master of gymnastics should say, ‘I too should wonder, Socrates, if Gorgias could show you any greater good from his art than I can from mine,’ I should again say to him, ‘And who are you, sir?’” (452b)

LS: *Oh “Sir”!* No. I don’t know how to translate it in English, but what it says in Greek is “human being.”^{viii} And this has a very low meaning, “human being,” here. As you say to slaves or otherwise contemptible—

Mr. Reinken: Well, “Sir” has an ambiguity—what . . . as in “sirrah.”

LS: I see, I see. Good. At any rate, that is very important, that Socrates says this is a *mere* human being. Good, and—“And what is your work?”

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: ““and what is your employment?’ ‘A master of gymanastics,’ he would say, ‘and my employment is to make men beautiful and strong in their bodies.’ After the master of gymnastics, the money–getter would say, as I imagine, despising all others—” (452b)

LS: You see, he is a special competitor. Because not only does he raise the claim that he gives the highest good, but he has a *contempt* for all competitors, which the physician and

^{viii} *anthrōpos*.

gymnastic teacher do not have.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: ““Consider, I beg, Socrates, whether there is any greater good than riches, either with Gorgias, or anyone else.”” (452c)

LS: You know, that is a barbed question. Gorgias is very much concerned with earning money. Yes. So in other words, is not perhaps wealth *in fact* the highest good for Gorgias? Yes. And then “*we* would say to him”—you see, in this case, the threat to Gorgias is so great that Socrates must become the ally of Gorgias: “We together talk to him.” Yes, aggravation, sure. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “I should thereupon say to him, ‘What, then, are you the artificer of this good?’ He would say, ‘I am.’ ‘Who are you then?’ ‘A money-getter.’ ‘What then? Do you consider riches to be the greatest good to men,’ I shall say.” (452c)

LS: “*We* would say.” You see, the allies—Socrates and Gorgias. Now it’s the real enemy, as it appears. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: ““Assuredly,’ he will answer. ‘However, Gogias here contends that his art is the cause of greater good than yours.’” (452c)

Student: Socrates is pulling out of it.

LS: No, “*we* would say.” Ya, ya.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “It is clear, then, that after this he would ask, ‘And what is this good? Let Gorgias answer.’ Come then, Gorgias, suppose that you are asked by them and by me, and answer: ‘What is this, which you say is the greatest good to men, of which you are the artificer?’” (452c–d)

LS: You see, after they had given such clear answers—what the greatest good precisely is—Gorgias must of course reply. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Gorg.: “That which is in reality, Socrates, the greatest good, and is at the same time the cause of liberty to men of their being able to rule over others in their several cities.” (452d)

LS: Ya, “each in his city.” Now we have an answer. The highest good, the greatest good, is not health, wealth, or money. Incidentally, [note] the slight change which the moneymaker makes. The poet had said: “to be rich without fraud.” “Without fraud” has been dropped by the moneymaker, because as moneymaker, he is of course indifferent to

this qualification. That is We have now, then, the answer, yes—but what is the answer, precisely? Does he say that freedom and empire are the highest good? He says that [the] highest good is the *cause* of freedom and rule. It is the cause.³² [It] is in truth the greatest good and, in addition, as the translator wisely interpreted,³³ the cause of both freedom for human beings and at the same time³⁴ [of rule over] others in one’s own city. Why does he add this qualification, “in one’s own city?” Well, the greatest good will be rhetoric itself; that will become clear from the sequel. Rhetoric enables men to preserve freedom—well, in assemblies, by speaking in favor of freedom—but it is also enables a man to become the *ruler*, but only in his own city. This is of some importance. The power of rhetoric is not infinite. No one can become the ruler of a foreign city *merely by speaking*—by conquest perhaps, but surely not by speaking. That is an important question, because what Gorgias will bring up, and means already all the time, is something like [this]: *rhetoric is omnipotent*. And therefore this qualification is very important: rhetoric is not quite omnipotent. And it has of course also the additional meaning: If rhetoric is omnipotent and *the orator par excellence* is Gorgias, Gorgias could possibly be a menace to the freedom of Athens. And he says, as it were, “Well, I couldn’t become the tyrant of Athens by any speaking because one can become a ruler of a city only if the city is one’s *own*, if one is already a citizen in advance.”³⁵ And so the answer is by no means clear because, to repeat, Gorgias does not say freedom and empire, freedom and rule, are the greatest good, but *x* is the greatest good, which *in addition* is the cause of such great goods as freedom and empire. Yes. And Socrates therefore asks him: “What do you mean? What is *that x* which you still . . . ?”

Mr. Reinken: *Gorg.*: “I say it is the power of persuading by words—” (452e)

LS: “By speeches.” Always “speeches.”

Mr. Reinken:

Gorg.: “persuading by speeches judges in a court of justice, senators in the senate—house, and the hearers in the public assembly, and in every other convention of a political nature. Moreover, by this power, you will make the physician your slave, and the master of gymnastics your slave, and the money-getter will be found to have gained money, not for himself, but for another, for you who are able to speak, and persuade the multitude.” (452e)

LS: “The *multitudes*,” plural. Good. Now we have been given an answer: *The* greatest good is ability to *persuade*, and to persuade *political* assemblies. Now juries are of course political assemblies, and this is not merely due to the fact that in ancient times there were very large juries compared with the twelve men now. But even a twelve—man jury is, of course, a *public* assembly established by law with the function to decide such grave issues as life and death. And now to show that this is truly an art superior to *all other arts*, Gorgias takes the three arts mentioned here: the physician, the gymnastic trainer, and the moneymaker. They all are his subjects. And this is particularly clear in the case of the most arrogant of the three, the moneymaker, because what can he do if he is confronted with a magnificent orator who brings in a bill, a confiscatory bill, and succeeds, of course, being an excellent speaker,³⁶ [in getting] it passed—and where is the

money? It's the wealth of that orator. So this is the Yes. Socrates is now satisfied, after this long and roundabout way.

Let us reconsider this way. First, rhetoric was to be the art dealing with speeches. Then Socrates said somewhat misleadingly, somewhat incorrectly, that *many* arts deal with speeches—which is not quite correct, because arithmetic cannot be said to deal with speeches, but it deals with numbers. Gorgias, wishing to give brief replies and being very tired also (we must not forget that), simply accepts Socrates' suggestion that medicine also deals with speeches. And therefore the question arises (we come to this in a roundabout way) when Gorgias recovers his senses and says, as it were, "I didn't mean *about* speeches, but *through* speeches," which makes it of course worse because there are many arts, apart from rhetoric, which proceed through speeches. And then eventually he arrives at this definition: rhetoric is the art which deals with the greatest human things, i.e., with freedom and empire. And we know that he didn't say to *improve* on³⁷ [them], when we say that. He did not really indicate the subject matter at all. Some *x* which *causes* freedom and empire.

The answer which he seems to give now, Socrates modifies this: rhetoric is simply the art of persuasion. And that's a good answer, according to Socrates. It is, of course, again a very bad answer. Let me briefly indicate how the conversation develops from this point. Rhetoric is the art of persuading, of creating persuasion or conviction. But then we see immediately that there are *many arts* which create persuasion. More specifically, we see a fundamental distinction of all arts into those which create *mere* persuasion and those which *truly* convince, or, as Socrates says, which *teach*. And rhetoric proves then to be an art which does not teach but *merely persuades*. We have then a distinction between persuasion and teaching, between persuasion and *science* or *knowledge*. In other words, we have been given an answer now to the question of the *how* of rhetoric, and the *what* is still not clear.³⁸ The whole dialogue, in this first part, moves between these two questions. As I said, we understand this whole argument if we start from, or if we keep in mind, this simple answer which Socrates of course could have given and which even Gorgias might have been able to give in a somewhat different situation: that rhetoric is the art dealing with the *political* matters in a *politically effective manner*. The two things would have to be defined. First, the political things: What are they? And this becomes clear from the sequel: they are the just things, the noble things, and the good things. This is sufficiently clear for the present purpose, because no other art or science deals with—of course, things could foment; it's obviously . . . the human things—the just, the noble, and the good things.

And then the question arises: The manner? Answer: *politically effective*, i.e., *not scientific*. Because it is clear that, if someone gives a *lecture* on these things in a popular assembly, he will not cut any ice, at least in almost all ordinary circumstances. And this raises of course the question: Is there not a possibility of speaking about the good, just, and noble things *not* rhetorically but *knowingly*, scientifically? In the *Republic*, in a passage in the Sixth Book somewhere, Plato speaks of an art which deals [with] or is about these speeches, about speeches—and that is there dialectics, not rhetoric.^{ix} So³⁹

^{ix} LS is likely thinking of the discussion in Book 7 (531d—534e).

from the very beginning, when Gorgias says rhetoric is about speeches, the simplest argument would have been, “but dialectics also is about speeches.” And then we would have arrived at this point which we have now here. But, instead, this roundabout way is chosen via not the *how*, but the *what*—in other words, the difference, not between rhetoric and dialectics, but the difference between rhetoric and medicine and arithmetic and so on.

Now what is the situation in which Gorgias finds himself? He’s tired. He is committed to give brief answers by hook and by crook. And of course this in itself can ruin a man, such a commitment itself can ruin a man. And now the third point—which comes out very clearly in this speech already when the competitors appear, and [which] Socrates will mention explicitly very shortly—is Gorgias’ concern with his potential pupils. In other words, what he says here in this conversation is bound to affect his finances and his renown. And this is of course something which detracts attention from the subject matter. So the consequence is that Gorgias does not succeed in making clear what he understands by rhetoric, because there are deflecting influences, drug-in influences, we can almost say, effective on him. This will be very important for the rest of the dialogue. And the true discussion of rhetoric is, then, only that with *Polus*, not that with Gorgias. Gorgias, who was the most renowned rhetorician and a greater man than Polus, is not able here to present his view of rhetoric. Well, since Socrates was a fair man, I would say⁴⁰ [that this is] his explanation: Socrates knew quite well what Gorgias understood by rhetoric. But rhetoric as Gorgias [would have understood it even] when he was in the peak of his condition⁴¹ would be as unacceptable to Socrates as this so poorly defined rhetoric which he presents. Now let us have then some exchange. Someone else? All right, Mr. . . .

Student: I was wondering if Gorgias’ inability to define the *what* might suggest that the first question, which was overlooked, we might have to go back to [the question]: Does it exist? Is rhetoric an art? [That] depends upon the *what*. Maybe it is not an art—it has been defined with a certain subject matter—but merely a *knack*, as Socrates will later say, the ability to convince. Maybe it isn’t an art.

LS: Ya, Gorgias surely maintains—Polus, too—that it is an art. I alluded to this question at the beginning of today’s meeting, that there could be something else. If we start from this premise which will become the theme in the next meeting, that there are two ways of handling any subject, rhetorically or scientifically, [and] dialectically, [then] the question arises: Is this true? Are all subjects susceptible of being treated scientifically and dialectically? I think we can assume that Gorgias did not believe that the just things can be treated scientifically. They are merely by convention, merely by opinion. That is his premise. And therefore this must also have played some role [in] why the dialogue developed as it developed. Did I answer your question?

Student: No, but it’s a help.

LS: I see. Yes?

Student: Why does Plato choose to present the discussion at a time when Gorgias is tired

and not so efficient? Why wouldn't it make a better dialogue if he presented Gorgias in a better state?

LS: That is an absolutely necessary question. And the only answer can be he didn't *wish* to present it.

Student: That's not a very good answer, is it?

LS: No, but it's an opinion of mine. You know, because if you would say, "he did this thoughtlessly that way," then we would have no way to go on with our questioning. But if he *deliberately* presented a tired Gorgias in order not to present Gorgias' rhetoric, then we have to go on to find the reason why he did that.

Student: It would seem to me that—

LS: Perhaps he regarded it as not first class. Let me make this He speaks here, in this definition which we have just read at 452e, only of deliberative and forensic rhetoric.⁴² You know what that means, political rhetoric and forensic rhetoric. There was a *third*, because what Gorgias did before they arrived was of course neither deliberative nor forensic—that was a show speech. And this was something higher, the highest achievement. This, for Plato . . . is not the sensible object, and therefore why should he make the effort of elaborating a Gorgian epideictic speech? Plato could have done that; there's no doubt about that. But this has a cost: epideictic [rhetoric] is mere show, and from this Plato didn't take it seriously. And . . . entirely here with political and with forensic [rhetoric]. Strictly speaking, only . . . because political rhetoric is And on the basis of . . . because political rhetoric is an art by virtue of which people without true competence have sway . . . without competence. That is Now if you say that is a democracy—well, Plato was no democrat: philosophers should rule. So the only thing which remains, which seems to all these things: forensic rhetoric. Because in every regime people are accused of crimes—and perhaps innocent people, for example, Socrates—and one must be able to defend oneself. And since it is not sufficient to be honest, one must also be able to impress an audience. You need some trained speaker.

Now this will be then the meaning of the dialogue: forensic rhetoric. And the answer given is, of course, [that] even forensic rhetoric, which makes some sense, is very dubious. And Socrates makes a very paradoxical and fantastic suggestion (I mean, according to common sense) as to what forensic rhetoric should be: namely, in the first place, it should be the art of accusing oneself before a judge, so that one will be punished But then there then arises another question, and that is: Do we not need another rhetoric *higher, grander* than forensic rhetoric, which we truly need? Now for example, in Plato's *Laws*, Plato makes this solution: that the mere bald formulation of the law—that he who does this and this will be punished . . . is not good enough. A good law would have a prelude, a proemium, which would *exhort* to do or to forebear what the law demands. Now this clearly, in order to do such a . . . must be a rhetorical So we would need rhetoric even in the well-ordered society . . . and if you think of the *Republic*, there is the story of the beautiful falsehood, the noble lie This of course is, as a

falsehood, beautifully stated: a use of rhetoric. So Plato had no doubt that there is a rhetoric, but now a higher rhetoric, higher than forensic. But this is not Gorgias' rhetoric. And the dialogue is in a way an attempt to sketch (but this will appear only much later) the *outlines* of the non-Gorgian rhetoric which Gorgias, if he really wanted, could have achieved, whereas now he wastes his time indulging in foolishness

Student: But it seems to me that, assuming that Plato writes to persuade his audience of the shortcomings of Gorgias' rhetoric, it would seem that he would start from a better point of view of convincing the reader if he didn't stack the cards against his opponents to begin with.

LS: Ya, but you see that is the trouble: stacking the cards, as you call it. Did you call it, stacking the cards? You must beware of that. But the simple treatment, the unsophisticated treatment, to say nothing of the simply careless treatment, does not concern us. And if you think these careless treatments are [made by] some hillbillies, you are mistaken. I haven't seen a single commentator who reflected on the simple point that Gorgias is tired. Surely, there are quite a few people who are aware of it, but even the professionals are not To be aware of that fact that Socrates stacks the cards, as you put it, presupposes already some greater reflection, some greater patience, than most people think. For the *simple* reader who reads it, the dialogue as a whole will be a very impressive statement of a very *severe* notion of justice. The only thing which counts, so to speak, is not doing injustice: suffering injustice is a minor consideration, and all the consequences from that—which is surely a good teaching, and everyone can learn from it. But it is of course not sufficient because, as Socrates admits, suffering injustice is also something which one should try to avoid. And then forensic rhetoric would of course come in under this heading. The whole question of Socrates' fate comes, of course. When we study forensic rhetoric later on, we will discover ⁴³the background of his *own* forensic speech, you know, the *Apology*. [You] see, Socrates never made⁴⁴ a political, a deliberative speech—the Platonic Socrates. He made, however, a forensic speech. This he was obliged to do when he was accused. He also wrote an epideictic speech, a show speech, but this is so manifestly ironical that we may So when Socrates speaks to the city of Athens in his forensic speech, he does not give of course the deliberations and the anticipations about the success or failure of this speech which he had. In the *Gorgias*, this background of his sole forensic speech is fully developed, especially the political. I mention only one thing, and that is this: His situation, when he is accused by the city of Athens, is like that of a physician who is accused by a cook that he is the one who gives the children the bitter medicine, and the cook gives them the candies and other sweet things, and how can he possibly make these children understand what the situation is? This you would not find out directly from the *Apology of Socrates*. Obviously, he cannot speak to the children; he has to speak to the men of Athens, and So this shows you, by the way, why the general subject: forensic rhetoric. And Socrates' own case is only a single case, a particular case. But the particular case, Socrates, throws light on the *universal* problem and vice versa. And if you do not consider *both* things at the same time, the question of defense before a law court and Socrates' own special case, one does not understand. Socrates' case was indeed not just the case of one individual, because what was at stake was the *fate of philosophy*. Behind this whole thing is the great

question, the relation of philosophy and the multitude or the city. But this will only take some time, and this will become clear. Good.

Well, I'm willing to stay a few more minutes if there is anything else you would like to bring up. Yes?

Student: If the central subject of the *Gorgias* is rhetoric, what is the central subject of the *Phaedrus*? It seems to be rhetoric also.

LS: Of which dialogue?

Student: The *Phaedrus*.

LS: Oh yes, sure. These are *the* two dialogues on rhetoric. But that can be simply stated. The *Gorgias* is above all about forensic rhetoric, i.e., the rhetoric concerned with justice and injustice, accusation and defense. The *Phaedrus*⁴⁵ is about erotic speeches. Erotic speeches would have a use entirely different. And more specifically, the *Phaedrus* is about *written* speeches, written . . . therefore, writing is a big theme. So one can say there are from Plato's point of view two kinds of rhetoric: rhetoric devoted to justice in the simple sense of the term, and love rhetoric. The love rhetoric, however, is that rhetoric which goes with *teaching*, because it is concerned with the well-being of *souls*,⁴⁶ if I can use an expression (in English it sounds rather funny), of *beautiful* souls—love has to do with beauty—of *attractive* souls of the young. And that is not the subject of judicial, forensic rhetoric. So one can say the *Phaedrus* deals with that rhetoric without which teaching—an important matter—is not possible. So therefore in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates talks to a single young man, Phaedrus, outside of Athens—the only dialogue of Plato's outside of the city, apart from the *Laws*. In the *Gorgias*, he talks with at least three men in the presence of an unnumbered multitude (we don't know how many were there) *in* Athens. Is this of some help? And of course the rhetoric which Plato himself uses in writing these speeches (after all, these were not speeches which Socrates actually made), that's also rhetoric. And the question arises then, by the way, rhetoric and poetry are not so radically different from Plato's point of view as they would be from the present-day point of view, as we shall see later.

[end of session]

¹ Deleted "to make them."

² Moved "which is the first section."

³ Deleted "you see immediately that this is very relevant if."

⁴ Deleted "confronted."

⁵ Moved "rhetoric."

⁶ Deleted "had."

⁷ Deleted "when."

⁸ Changed from "How come that Socrates could be."

⁹ Deleted "and."

¹⁰ Deleted "a term."

¹¹ Changed from "Gorgias might very well have said, for reasons of his own which we will discuss, 'my art is rhetoric.'"

¹² Changed from "And he says, 'The alternative is here called.'"

- 13 Deleted “means.”
- 14 Deleted “of what.”
- 15 Deleted “he.”
- 16 Deleted “if.”
- 17 Deleted “since.”
- 18 Deleted “in.”
- 19 Deleted “previous.”
- 20 Deleted “previous.”
- 21 Deleted “was.”
- 22 Deleted “are.”
- 23 Deleted “doesn’t.”
- 24 Deleted “we forget suddenly that.” One can tell from the tape that LS began one formulation and then switched to another.
- 25 Deleted “when.”
- 26 Deleted “position.”
- 27 Deleted “that is not good.”
- 28 Deleted “primary, you know the numbers.”
- 29 Deleted “the numbers.”
- 30 Deleted “a kind of”
- 31 Changed from “the singers, of course, they follow merely the poet.”
- 32 Deleted “what.”
- 33 Deleted “in addition.”
- 34 Deleted “for ruling.”
- 35 Deleted “you wanted to say something? No?”
- 36 Deleted “gets.”
- 37 Deleted “it.”
- 38 Deleted “the how.”
- 39 Deleted “We have.”
- 40 Deleted “that’s.”
- 41 Moved “would have understood it.”
- 42 Sentence changed from “He speaks here in this definition which we have just read, he speaks only of deliberative (in 452e)—he speaks only of deliberative and forensic rhetoric.”
- 43 Deleted “of course.”
- 44 Changed from “made never.”
- 45 Changed from “*Rhetoric*.”
- 46 Deleted “who.”

Session 4: no date

[Note: Session 3 is unavailable.]

Leo Strauss: Rhetoric is the art of persuasion, of mere persuasion, in contradistinction to teaching, instruction, expertise. The art of persuasion is inferior to teaching or instruction. But our own experience and reflection shows us that rhetoric is evidently necessary or useful. To give a further proof, I just saw a note in the *New York Times* of July 25th: a new project to translate jargon, i.e., social science jargon, into plain talk. Now this is obviously a rhetorical function because by being translated into plain talk it ceases to be scientific talk, and is therefore purely rhetorical. If you want, I can circulate that for anyone who is interested in that particular thing. So rhetoric is then evidently useful. But Socrates raises a more specific question. He asks: What is the usefulness of rhetoric to the orator? Gorgias' answer is very simple: Rhetoric gives the orator an immense power; but, he adds, rhetoric, this immense power, is accompanied by great dangers, especially to the teachers of rhetoric who are held responsible for the mischief done by their pupils. So: power and danger. Gorgias says that this danger is unfair because the rhetoricians are not responsible for the misuse, and he uses the parallel of boxing. The boxing teacher cannot be held responsible if the young boxer boxes his own father. So rhetoric is only a kind of verbal boxing, which should not be used badly but unfortunately may be used badly. Now, before we see what all this means, let us consider the rest of the Gorgias section. We begin where we left off at 457c4, where Socrates makes another fairly long speech. Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "I expect, Gorgias, that you as well as I have had no small practice in arguments, and have observed the following fact about them, that it is not easy for people to define to each other the matters which they take in hand to discuss, and to make such exchange of instruction as will fairly bring their debate to an end: no, if they find that some point is in dispute between them, and one of them says that the other is speaking incorrectly or obscurely, they are annoyed and think the remark comes from jealousy of themselves, and in a spirit of contention rather than of inquiry into the matter proposed for discussion. In some cases, indeed, they end by making a most disgraceful scene, with such abusive expression on each side that the rest of the company are vexed on their own account that they allowed themselves to listen to such fellows. Well, what is my reason for saying this? It is because your present remarks do not seem to me quite in keeping or accord with what you said at first about rhetoric. Now I am afraid to refute you, lest you imagine I am contentiously neglecting the point and its elucidation, and merely attacking you. I therefore, if you are a person of the same sort as myself, should be glad to continue questioning you: if not, I can let it drop. Of what sort am I? One of those who would be glad to be refuted if I say anything untrue, and glad to refute anyone else who might speak untruly; but just as glad, mind you, to be refuted as to refute, since I regard the former as the greater benefit, in proportion as it is a greater benefit for oneself to be delivered from the greatest

evil than to deliver someone else. For I consider that a man cannot suffer any evil so great as a false opinion on the subjects of our actual argument. Now if you say that you too are of their sort, let us go on with the conversation; but if you think we had better drop it, let us have done with it at once and make an end of the discussion.”(457c–458b)

LS: Yes. Now you see, we have here another Socratic remark on the manner of procedure. Before Socrates begins to refute¹ [Gorgias], which he hasn’t even tried to do now, he fetters him. He binds him hand and foot, so that he cannot possibly run away. He hints at the possibility of a dissolution of the being together: “So you might choose that, Gorgias, but I make it for you morally impossible by this speech.” Gorgias cannot in decency stop now, after this remark of Socrates’. And Socrates tells him in advance that he is going to make great trouble for him. He doesn’t say what these troubles are; he expresses himself very politely: “some slight inconsistencies.” We have to figure out what they were. I believe it is not difficult to see. What Gorgias wants to say is: rhetoric is omnipotent. And when he speaks, however, of the fact that the rhetoricians are endangered, he admits that rhetoric is not omnipotent. That is the obvious contradiction here in this whole posture which he takes. This statement which Socrates makes here in this connection, that “I belong to those who are as gladly refuted as they refute”—well, very few people really can say that. Most of us don’t like it particularly if we are refuted, and² [we] may not necessarily enjoy refuting others. But surely to be refuted oneself, perhaps especially in public, is regarded by most people as an unpleasant thing. Now, Socrates has a right to say that. But we must also not forget the other side. The other side is, of course, that he says [that] to be refuted means to be freed from the greatest evil, ignorance, and to be oneself liberated is much more estimable than to liberate someone else. Charity begins at home. And so this quote “selfishness” of Socrates must of course never be disregarded. The greatest evil is ignorance in important matters, i.e., false opinion, of course. Right opinion, which is not knowledge, is not an evil. It is also not a very great good compared with knowledge. But we must keep this in mind: most of the time most men must leave it at right opinion. So this, then, is the situation. Now, Socrates has, as it were, given Gorgias an opportunity to state: “Do you want to be refuted or not?” And what does Gorgias say? Let us see.

Mr. Reinken:

Gorg.: “Nay, I too, Socrates, claim to be of the sort you indicate; though perhaps we should have taken thought also for the wishes of your company. For, let me tell you, some time before you and your friend arrived, I gave the company a performance of some length; and if we now have this conversation I expect we shall seriously protract our sitting. We ought, therefore, to consider their wishes as well, in case we are detaining any of them who may want to do something else.” (458b–c)

LS: That is a beautiful example of quite good rhetoric. Of course, Gorgias could not possibly say, “I am not gladly refuted,” after what Socrates said. “But, Socrates, we have to think of the others.” And the others? “That’s too much now, you know, it has taken now hours and hours.” That’s simple. Now what happens then? Chaerephon:

Mr. Reinken:

Chaer.: “You hear for yourselves, Gorgias and Socrates, the applause by which these gentlemen show their desire to hear anything you may say; for my own part, however, Heaven forbid that I should ever be so busy as to give up a discussion so interesting and so conducted, because I found it more important to attend to something else.” (458c)

LS: You see, Chaerephon, after all, is a friend of Socrates. Therefore it is not surprising. But Callicles:

Mr. Reinken: *Call.:* “Yes, by all that’s holy, Chaerephon—”

LS: “by the gods.”

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “by the gods, Chaerephon; and let me say, moreover, for myself that among the many discussions which I have attended in my time I doubt if there was one that gave me such delight as this present one. So, for my part, I shall count it a favour even if you choose to continue it all day long.” (458d)

Soc.: “Why, Callicles, I assure there is no hindrance on my side, if Gorgias is willing.” (458d)

LS: You see, that’s beautiful, isn’t it? Now Chaerephon and Callicles, speaking on behalf of the others, prevent Gorgias from escaping. You see that Callicles is even more enthusiastic in favor of continuing than Chaerephon. On the other hand, Chaerephon speaks of all—they all want to see these fireworks go on for hours. Callicles speaks only of himself—you know, he cannot go on living without seeing the end of that. It is a decision by popular vote. It has been unanimously decided to continue the whole thing *by election*. Now, we have heard something about the competence or incompetence of election before. But the application here: the vote is in no way binding on Socrates or Gorgias. Socrates graciously says, “I am willing to abide, but it depends absolutely on Gorgias”: Gorgias may reject it. Socrates has surely won a great rhetorical victory, regardless of what the merits are—we cannot possibly The situation now is, however, perfectly clear. Gorgias *must* stay for sheer shame, if for no other reason. Let us see what he says:

Mr. Reinken:

Gorg.: “After that, Socrates, it would be shameful indeed if I were unwilling, when it was I who challenged everybody to ask what questions they pleased. But if our friends here are so minded, go on with the conversation and ask me anything you like.” (458d–e)

LS: You see, Gorgias is truly a gentleman. I mean, he tries to be just. He had promised to answer every question, and he will try to keep his promise. Perfectly clear. And so he is now bound hand and foot and must bite, if I may change the metaphor, must bite into the

sour apple which Socrates hands to him in secret. There is, by the way, a similar situation in the *Protagoras*, where Protagoras also is in a fix and would like to get out of it, and then he is also forced by a vote of the whole assembly to go on. But in the *Protagoras* that is infinitely more elaborated; there is truly a meeting of an assembly with speakers on both sides, the attempt to set up an arbiter, and so on. You might read that. It is *Protagoras* 334c to 338e. Now, how does he go on?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Hark you then, Gorgias, to what surprises me in your statements: to be sure, you may possibly be right, and I may take your meaning wrongly. You say—” (458e)

LS: In other words, Socrates still allows for the possibility that Gorgias did not contradict himself. Yes. Good.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “You say you are able to make a rhetorician of any man who chooses to learn from you?”

Gorg.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “Now, do you mean, to make him carry conviction to the crowd on all subjects, not by teaching them, but by persuading?”

Gorg.: “Certainly I do.”

Soc.: “You were saying just now, you know, that even in the matter of health the orator will be more convincing than the doctor.”

Gorg.: “Yes, indeed, I was—meaning, to the crowd.”

Soc.: “And ‘to the crowd’ means ‘to the ignorant’? For surely, to those who know, he will not be more convincing than the doctor.”

Gorg.: “You are right.”

Soc.: “And if he is to be more convincing than the doctor, he thus becomes more convincing than he who knows?”

Gorg.: “Certainly.”

Soc.: “Though not himself a doctor, you agree?”

Gorg.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “But he who is not a doctor is surely without knowledge of that whereof the doctor has knowledge.”

Gorg.: “Clearly.”

Soc.: “So he who does not know will be more convincing to those who do not know than he who knows, supposing the orator to be more convincing than the doctor. Is that, or something else, the consequence?”

Gorg.: “In this case it does follow.”

Soc.: “Then the case is the same in all the other arts for the orator and his rhetoric: there is no need to know the truth of the actual matters, but one merely needs to have discovered some device of persuasion which will make one appear to those who do not know to know better than those who know.” (458e–459c)

LS: Ya, this seems to be a very long, redundant argument. But this is part of the rhetoric, because, by proceeding by small pieces, you are not only more scientific, you also make it impossible, in a way, for the other man to know where you lead up to. Socrates proceeds step by step. The first step is: the orator is superior to the knower among the nonknowers. The second step: this means that the nonknower, the orator, is superior to the knowers among the nonknowers. The orator himself is in ignorance, not only his audience. And then the implicit conclusion: he is a fake, he is a swindler. Which is, of course, not said, but clearly implied, because he knows absolutely nothing of medicine and yet he is regarded as a greater authority in medicine than the physician. Good. This is a very grave accusation against rhetoric. How does Gorgias react?

Mr. Reinken:

Gorg.: “Well, and is it not a great convenience, Socrates, to make oneself a match for the professionals by learning just this single art and omitting all the others?” (459c)

LS: Is this not amazing? I mean, that he doesn’t sense the insult which Socrates hurled at him, and simply says, “Is it not a great convenience to be a top swindler?” How is this intelligible? That he must have a high degree of levity—obviously, a high degree of levity—and, more particularly, he must have forgotten completely about the danger, of which he had spoken, which he incurs by virtue of this magic which he has and which is distrusted by the citizens. I think that this levity is due to the fact that he is now completely oblivious of the danger. And what is in the foreground is this *utter contempt* for these experts—physicians, builders, shoemakers, or whatever they may be—because his *technē*, his art, is such a much more impressive and brilliant art than these more or less humble arts. The belief in the absolute superiority, the omnipotence, of rhetoric is at the bottom of this levity. Good.

Now this, however, is only preparatory to Socrates’ exquisite argument. This comes now in the sequel, because there is one special subject regarding which it is impossible to have levity. That is the subject of justice. I mean, a man may not pay any attention to justice, but he surely cannot afford to say: “I have no knowledge of justice whatever, and yet I speak about justice.” This would produce and increase the danger. Now, let us see how this comes out.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Whether the orator is or is not a match for the rest of them by reason of that skill, is a question we shall look into presently, if our argument so requires: for the moment let us consider first whether the rhetorician is in the same relation to what is just and unjust, base and noble, good and bad, as to what is healthful, and to the various objects of all the other arts; he does not know what is really good or bad, noble or base, just or unjust, but he has devised a persuasion to deal with these matters so as to appear to those who, like himself, do not know to know better than he who knows. Or is it necessary to know, and must anyone who intends to learn rhetoric have a previous knowledge of these things when he

comes to you? Or if not, are you, as the teacher of rhetoric, to teach the person who comes to you nothing about them—for it is not your business—but only to make him appear in the eyes of the multitude to know things of this sort when he does not know, and to appear to be good when he is not? Or will you be utterly unable to teach him rhetoric unless he previously knows the truth about these matters? Or what is the real state of the case, Gorgias? For Heaven’s sake, as you proposed just now, draw aside the veil and tell us what really is the function of rhetoric.” (459c–460a)

LS: “The *power* of rhetoric”; “function” is a very weak translation. The *power* of rhetoric is the question. So, is the rhetorician also an ignoramus regarding the good, noble, and just things and the opposite, while he succeeds in *appearing* to be a knower of these things to the other nonknowers? Now we must apply this less to Gorgias himself than to Gorgias’ pupils, who will confront their respective citizens all the time. Must these pupils possess knowledge of the just things in advance, before they become Gorgias’ pupils, or will Gorgias make them *appear* to possess that knowledge? That is to say, will he make them *appear* to be good? This will be explained later. The reason is simple: a man who does not know right from wrong cannot possibly be good. To that extent, surely knowledge of the just things is at least a prerequisite of doing the just things. If Gorgias teaches people of this description, namely, people who have no notion of the difference between right and wrong, he is of course responsible, fully, for the mischief they do, for the mischief they do with the power which Gorgias gives them. Or, again, must they possess in advance knowledge of the just things? This is now the key question, and Gorgias is in a spot. But Gorgias still is not aware of the danger, as you see from his answer:

Mr. Reinken:

Gorg.: “Why, I suppose, Socrates if he happens not to know these things he will learn them too from me.” (460a)

LS: [In other words], “I don’t have to give him some private lessons from time to time when I explain a certain legal trick. I tell him, ‘you know stealing is forbidden and you have to watch yourself—or perjury, or whatever it may be.’ That’s so easy. This is elementary, and there are people who don’t even know of these elementary things, but they are easily conveyed.” Again, an underestimation of the gravity of the danger, to say the least. Now what does Socrates reply?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Stop there: I am glad of that statement. If you make a man a rhetorician he must needs know what is just and unjust either previously or by learning afterwards from you.”

Gorg.: “Quite so.” (460a)

LS: This is crucial. This he admits. He cannot permit one of his pupils to go to the marketplace without having made sure that he knows the traps He may have learned them from Gorgias, he may have learned them from his father—that doesn’t make any

difference. This is admitted: he must know them. Now, how does the argument go on from here?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Well now, a man who has learnt building is a builder, is he not?”

Gorg.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “And he who has learnt music, a musician?”

Gorg.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “Then he who has learnt medicine is a medical man, and so on with the rest on the same principle; anyone who has learnt a certain art has the qualification acquired by his particular knowledge?” (460b)

LS: Yes, that’s perfectly clear, isn’t it? A man who has learned shoemaking can make shoes, and the same applies to all others. You see in the middle—we have three examples: building, music, and medicine; music in the middle, rightly, because it is a borderline case. Do you become a poet by going to a school of poetry? That is by no means self-evident, what the answer to that is, but it is true in the two other cases. And now we come to the key proposition:

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “And the just man, I suppose, does what is just?”

Gorg.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “Now the just man must *wish* to do what is just?”

Gorg.: “Apparently.” (460b–c)

LS: Now what does he do here? According to the same proportion or relation: he who has learned the just things is just. Gorgias: “Absolutely.” Now this is a great step, isn’t it? This brief sentence is decisive for the whole refutation. Now let us understand it. That Socrates should say that is intelligible, because Socrates is known to have asserted that virtue, including justice, is knowledge. But how can Gorgias assert it? He is tired, but he can’t be so tired to accept such an extreme assertion. We cannot even leave it at saying that Socrates said virtue is knowledge, because that is a very paradoxical assertion, an enigmatic assertion, and we cannot simply refer to that as a sufficient explanation. What does this sentence mean to anyone who hears it first? A meaning which Socrates has, of course, always in mind. What are the just things? The *legal* things, the things commanded or forbidden by law. And of course you learn them if you come from a decent family in a decent society; you learn them while you grow up. And to that extent everyone knows the just things, i.e., the legal things. This is the meaning. And if you don’t believe me, read the chapter in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*, Book IV, chapter 6, where the thesis that to be just is identical with knowing the just things is proven on the basis of the identification of the just with the legal.

Now it is obvious that you do not make a man just by teaching him what the just things are. Mr. Giancana,ⁱ I am sure, knows the most important just things—I mean, he may not know all the specialties, but the rough things he knows. Nevertheless,³ from all I hear, he⁴

ⁱ Sam Giancana (1908–1975) was a Chicago Mafia boss from 1955–66.

[transgresses] them. So I think most criminals know the just things and transgress them. That is a very obvious difficulty. Now, it is indeed true that there is one simple meaning of the Socratic assertion that virtue is knowledge which is intelligible to everyone of us. We say, for example, of a man, “he has come to his senses.” And by this we do not merely mean that he sees now the situation . . . are trees and not elephants, but that he has come to his senses by acting *wisely*, or by remembering what we now call the “moral consequences.” So that there is an element of intelligence involved in morality: this was known at earlier times and is immediately intelligible to us today. But there is, of course, a long way from this to the understanding of virtue according to the analogy of the arts—shoemaking, medicine, and so on—which is done here. In other words, what is implied in the analogy is that virtue can be taught in classrooms or in shops, in the way in which shoemaking and medicine can be taught. The most recent commentator, in order to explain this passage, refers to *Protagoras* 352c, where Protagoras admits without qualms that when a man knows something to be good he will *do* it.ⁱⁱ And Dodds tries to prove [by] this that the Greeks generally were inclined to believe in “virtue is knowledge.” But Dodds forgets to say that Protagoras admits this after a very long preparation *by Socrates*. To begin with, he states, as every ordinary man would say at that time and today, that a man may be just without being wise, and that a man may be wise without being just—which is a crude popular view at all times. And . . . adds that this is the common view, to say justice is something radically different from wisdom and wisdom is something radically different from justice. Why, then, does Gorgias admit this without qualms? I believe there is something behind it which we must keep in mind throughout. When Socrates says virtue is knowledge—and without even trying to understand what he means by that, but only assuming that this could be so—what will it imply? In one word: the omnipotence of knowledge, of . . . knowledge. [Merely] by⁵ knowing truly, we are sure of acting well. The omnipotence of knowledge, of science, of learning—this is the Socratic assertion, especially in this dialogue. And this assertion is an *experiment*; it is not final. It is contrasted here with the opposite assertion of Gorgias: not learning, or science, is omnipotent, but *rhetoric* is omnipotent. Now if you take these two propositions together, the Socratic and the Gorgian, they have one thing in common: the omnipotence of *logos*, be it the scientific, dialectical *logos*, which Socrates means, or the rhetorical *logos*, which Gorgias means. On this basis, there is a possibility, not clearly seen here by Gorgias, that he might accept such an assertion which in a general way seems to assert the omnipotence of *logos*. “Virtue is *logos*”—that can be said by Socrates as well as by Gorgias, and they mean something very different by that. Only on this ground, not on the ground of general Greek morality, can this be understood.

Now there comes a very complicated passage where people have doctored the text in various ways. I think the simplest thing is that I read to you my summary of this passage. That’ll probably be better. [LS reads:]

The rhetorician is a man who has learned the just things. But he who has learned the just things is just. The just man does the just things, i.e., not the unjust things. Hence rhetoric is necessarily just, because, as we have seen, the pupil of Gorgias has learned, either from his father or from Gorgias, the just things. The just man

ⁱⁱ See Dodds, 218.

wishes to do the just things. [LS: This is suddenly introduced.] The just man never will *wish* to act unjustly.

You see here this new consideration: the just man will never *wish* to act unjustly, and the just man never *acts* unjustly. This is a new consideration, wholly unprepared by what went before. The rhetorician is necessarily just. Again, he will never *wish* to act unjustly. The difference between “the rhetorician does not *act* unjustly” and “the rhetorician never *wishes* to act unjustly”: the latter assertion implies [that] he sometimes will *in fact* act unjustly, but he will never *wish* to do it. This is here mentioned, as it were, in passing, and we must see whether there are any further consequences. Some of you will remember from Aristotle’s *Ethics* (1134a17–18) that Aristotle says this explicitly: the just man may commit unjust acts without ceasing to be just, [to] have the character of the just man. I mean, an occasional deviation does not destroy his fundamental justice. Also, in the *Protagoras*, in the interpretation of a poem by Simonides (345b–c), you find the same admission: that occasional lapses from justice do not destroy the justice of anyone. Whether this is of any relevance for the rhetorician, we cannot for the time being see. We must go deeper into the subject. Let us continue at the next paragraph: Socrates, 460c6. Because we must now first finish the Gorgias section; otherwise, we cannot see how everything hangs together. “Do you remember”—

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then do you remember saying a little while ago that we ought not to complain against the trainers or expel them from our cities, if a boxer makes not merely use, but an unfair use, of his boxing? So in just the same way, if an orator uses his rhetoric unfairly, we should not complain against his teacher or banish him from our city, but the man who does the wrong and misuses his rhetoric. Was that said or not?”

Gorg.: “It was.”

Soc.: “But now we find that this very person, the rhetorician, could never be guilty of wrongdoing, do we not?”

Gorg.: “We do.”

Soc.: “And in our first statements, Gorgias, we said that rhetoric dealt with speech, not on even and odd, but on the just and unjust, did we not?”

Gorg.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “Well then, I supposed at the time when you were saying that this rhetoric could never be an unjust thing, since the speeches it made were always about justice; but when a little later you told us that the orator might make even an unjust use of his rhetoric, that indeed surprised me, and thinking that the two statements were not in accord I made those proposals—that if, like myself, you counted it a gain to be refuted, it was worth while to have the discussion, but if not, we had better have done with it. And now that we have come to examine the matter, you see for yourself that we agree once more that it is impossible for the rhetorician to use his rhetoric unjustly or consent to do wrong.—” (460c–461a)

LS: Ya, “be resolved to act unjustly.” Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc. : “Now, to distinguish properly which way the truth of the matter lies will require, by the Dog, Gorgias, no short sitting.” (461a–b)

LS: So this is the end of the Gorgias part. The main point is simple: Gorgias said on the one hand, rhetoric may be misused as medicine may be misused. Rhetoric may be used justly and unjustly; it is neutral to the difference between just and unjust. And on the other hand, he says rhetoric *cannot* be misused, on the basis of this argument: Because he who knows the just things does them necessarily, or at least most of the time. It’s a clear contradiction. And here, that’s the end. Gorgias is left in a state of speechlessness. You have observed the oath “by the Dog.” We cannot yet explain that because there will be a later statement where there is some bit of explanation. We will come to that.

Now let us first make a provisional summary of the dialogue as we have understood it hitherto. We have started from the fact that the *Gorgias* is *the* fighting dialogue of Plato. The very words with which it begins indicate that. And also it is a dialogue about rhetoric. The question which we have to solve in the course of this course, if we can, is: Why is *the* fighting dialogue of Plato devoted to the subject of rhetoric? There would seem to be much more important subjects, but here we are. Now, we can give here only a provisional answer: rhetoric is *the* alternative to dialectics—which is the same for Plato as science—to science, to *teaching* about the just and unjust things. And this teaching, we have seen, is identical with *making* men just. Teaching justice is making men just. And justice is *the* virtue, the all-comprehensive virtue. So rhetoric is *the* alternative to dialectic, because it is the alternative regarding the good life. And no subject can be said to be broader and more important than the question of how to live. This is, of course, not immediately intelligible because we don’t know yet quite what rhetoric is; we know still less what dialectics is. But if you replace dialectics by science—which is perfectly legitimate—and think of a science, human knowledge at its best and highest, one gets a glimpse of the possibility that this might really be the issue.

Now Gorgias commits a tacit self-contradiction: rhetoric is omnipotent and rhetoric is endangered, i.e., not omnipotent. And his political rhetoric proper would be of no help. But his success before law courts is assured *if* rhetoric is truly omnipotent. Why could he not then defeat, easily, any accuser? Gorgias, confronted with this situation, says in effect, “No, it is not assured; rhetoric is *not* omnipotent.” This is the tacit contradiction. There is a comic representation of this subject, by the way, in Aristophanes’ *Clouds*. There Socrates is presented as the teacher of rhetoric. And he of course claims omnipotence—or the *Clouds* claim it for him—and the consequence is that Socrates has no fear whatever of being hauled before any law court because he could defeat any accuser. Yes, but this is unfortunately not quite sufficient because people can proceed against him *via facti*, by fact, as Strepsiades does there, who burns down the school, the think-tank, of Socrates. But the problem is the same. Here in the *Gorgias* it is not treated from this somewhat comical point of view. But there is also an explicit self-

contradiction, if an explicit self-contradiction brought about by Socrates: Rhetoric *cannot* be misused, because it is radically just, and therefore it is not endangered, and rhetoric *can* be misused, which is a more popular view which Gorgias had stated on his own initiative. And if rhetoric can be misused, it is endangered. In other words, the explicit contradiction is: rhetoric *cannot* be unjust and rhetoric *may* be unjust. But the two contradictions, the explicit and the tacit one, are in fact identical, because the tacit self-contradiction—rhetoric is omnipotent and rhetoric is not omnipotent—can also be stated as follows: Rhetoric can safely be unjust if rhetoric is omnipotent; and the alternative, rhetoric cannot safely be unjust, rhetoric is not omnipotent. Is this point clear that the explicit and the implicit contradictions of Gorgias ultimately amount to the same thing? Yes, Mr. Dry?

Mr. Dry: At the time that Socrates said, “You can go on; I see some difficulty here,” the explicit contradiction wasn’t at all evident, although the implicit one was—Socrates himself . . . Now, to some extent . . . but, if we bring the rhetoric down, and we say that it is not omnipotent, it has certain limits, in order to . . . then Gorgias says, like the judo master, “there is some difficulty here,” then I think he gets out of the contradiction. He doesn’t have to say that . . . about knowledge.

LS: Yes, what you say is this: the whole argument is based on a certain disregard of common sense. Ya? I mean, no man in his senses would say rhetoric is omnipotent, surely. And therefore there are all kinds of so to speak and perhaps—you know, all⁶ [those] qualifier[s]. Aristophanes of course, as a comic poet, is obliged to disregard common sense, and therefore he can state the questions in utmost clarity and extremism. But must not Plato or Socrates also necessarily transcend common sense in order to make clear the problem? Is it not necessary for him? You see, if we say “rhetoric is not omnipotent,” as we all would admit, and taking even a broader view, thinking not only of rhetoric but also of teaching proper, to use the broader term, “*logos* is not omnipotent”—that is commonsensically plausible. But is this sufficient? Must we not know or find out the precise reason why *logos* is not omnipotent? I mean, they are not merely references to experiences⁷ here and there, but to understand, then, by turning to the principle. Strictly speaking, the problem can be stated as follows: How could Socrates have been condemned? It’s the same question. Assuming that he was the greatest and most superior Athenian, how was it possible that his superiority was not seen? Well, we all have commonsensical reasons. We have so many other examples of the same that we say, “Well, that was more or less bound to happen.” But *why* was it bound to happen? What is the relation of this kind of superiority to political power? What does political power precisely mean? This kind of question we cannot properly elaborate if we have not understood first the immense superiority and hence *power* of wisdom. How come that this immense power of wisdom has this severe limitation, so that, from one point of view, wisdom is almost *powerless*? This we must understand. And therefore it is necessary to state the case in this extreme form.

You are quite right that what I call the implicit self-contradiction is never stated. It remains implicit. What becomes explicit is only the contradiction: rhetoric *must* be just and rhetoric *may* be unjust. That becomes explicit and that is the content of the explicit

refutation. But the other problem is there. You see, let us assume that Gorgias is what they now call a cynic, i.e., he is absolutely unconcerned with the question of justice and injustice and is only concerned with success, power. Then the explicit contradiction would not seriously affect him, but the other would. The question of the limits of his power necessarily affects him. We will see the continuation of this discussion in the Polus section. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: When you made a summary of . . . I didn't understand the statement that the just man does what is just by means of . . . the rhetorician is therefore just.

LS: Because he knows the just things. And to know the just things means to do them.

Mr. Butterworth: But then Gorgias admits that he knows the just things.

LS: Ya, sure. How could he avoid that? He must even admit that his student, his pupil, before he is let loose on the market, must know the just things. Then all the more must *he* know the just things, [he] who is infinitely more endangered because he is a stranger, whereas the pupil will naturally be a citizen of the city where he is a political speaker. He must say that. Good. Mr. Glenn?

Mr. Glenn: I don't quite understand your remarks about the immense power of wisdom. From what point of view do you mean wisdom has an immense power? Certainly not from the point of view of persuasion.

LS: Mr. Glenn! [Laughter] We are reading the *Gorgias*, where, as I have said more than once, rhetoric is not only discussed but also *practiced*, and practiced above all by Socrates. Now Gorgias was an immense celebrity. It would be hard to find a contemporary parallel—I mean, you know, given the different sizes. [Gorgias was] a very great celebrity, a man who is in a way *the* founder of rhetoric as an art and at the same time sent as an ambassador by his home town to Athens. In France, you find sometimes literary men who are sent as ambassadors, but probably no one who founded a new art which has such a terrific fate later on. So we must admit Gorgias is a *very* big man, much more famous than Socrates at the time. And Gorgias says, "I have a terrific power," [and] gives you proofs—when he goes with his brother to speak to the man. Do you remember that? And Gorgias has very great power, and Socrates has much greater power than Gorgias. Gorgias has to dance to Socrates' tune all the time, and therefore the immense power of wisdom is demonstrated⁸ [before] our eyes here.

Mr. Glenn: I see. But I thought, when you were talking about the immense power of wisdom, you were talking about the context of political power.

LS: Ya, but does it not follow? If the pupils of Gorgias rule the cities and they owe their rule to Gorgias, then indirectly they rule through Gorgias. And Socrates rules Gorgias. So, that is not mere syllogism: that is of course very grave because the truth, as we also can say, does have an immense power. It is not omnipotent, that's the trouble. But it has an immense power because—well, if I may again use contemporary jargon—truth has to

do with reality, and reality has an immense power. [It is] confused, weakened by speech, by bad speech, by rhetorical speech, surely, but still, in spite of that, it has immense power, and therefore wisdom, the human awareness of reality as it is, has this power.

So now we are through with the Gorgias section and we come to the Polus section. Yes? Mr. Lyons?

Mr. Lyons: Is Socrates, then, entirely fair to Gorgias? He embarrasses Gorgias with this distinction between belief . . . and knowledge. And then he, in turn, would himself, with a combination of silence and rhetoric Is he not being entirely persuasive?

LS: Yes, you see, if Socrates' last words were "rhetoric is wicked," he would contradict himself. But as we know from the *Phaedrus*, and as we could know even from the *Gorgias*, Socrates of course admits that there can be a just or noble rhetoric. Rhetoric is absolutely necessary. How can you teach children in the first place? Surely not dialectically, but only rhetorically, ya? And many grown-ups are not more than children, regardless of whether they are dropouts or not—it has nothing to do with that. Rhetoric is of course necessary. But it is not Socrates' fault if Gorgias is wholly unable to defend himself because he has never *thought properly* about rhetoric. And the reason why he has never thought properly about rhetoric is because he has never thought properly about the alternative to rhetoric—call it science or call it dialectics; therefore the defeat is deserved. And there would be no way for Socrates to silence Gorgias, to bring him to his senses, to make him listen, except by arguing [in] the way which has an effect on Gorgias. And he uses rhetorical means, as we have seen all the time, you know, by appealing to "these are all potential customers, and be careful." And then of course Gorgias can no longer be quite objective because his competitiveness becomes engaged at this time.

Student: I wasn't quite satisfied with your explanation of why Gorgias accepted the argument that he who knows what is just will act justly. Apparently, according to your explanation, he was not convinced by the analogy that the arts

LS: No, you see, we must always use our imagination a bit. We read that, and we can read and reread *n* times, if we do not understand that passage. But Gorgias, in the conversation with Socrates, cannot all the time say, as I knew a student once who did,⁹ "say it again, and break it up in short parts, so that I can follow every part of the sentence." He can't do that. So he's confronted with a statement of Socrates, and he must say "yes" or "no" to it. That is a very nasty situation. In addition, if you have an audience around you, and if a man is accustomed to having only *applauding* audiences (which is very bad), then of course he will not admit his difficulties in this simple way. Therefore a discussion between Socrates and Gorgias, with both men alone, might have been more profitable for Gorgias. But probably Gorgias would not have admitted that.

Student: Why do you think he accepted that argument?

LS: I tried to explain it. I don't believe he understood it, but he has a predisposition to look with sympathy at it because of his belief in the omnipotence of *logos*. Now the *logos*

which he has in mind is of course a rhetorical *logos*, not the true *logos*. But this belief in *logos* is an important ingredient of Gorgias. By the way, we will see later on in Polus, whatever the faults Polus may have, [that] Polus has a genuine respect for *wisdom*. And, in a way that is his ruin, you know? Well, a contemporary comparison would be the intellectual who may be as cynical as he wants, but he cannot, with propriety or without self-contradiction, deny that to be an intellectual is something estimable. Therefore he can never say, for example: “It is as good to be nothing but a bum¹⁰ as [it is] to be an intellectual.” He would get into difficulties. We have seen that discussion among our social scientists, who are not intellectuals strictly speaking, in my opinion, because they are scientists, and yet who come, because of their commitment to social science, into certain troubles. In other words, that Gorgias believes in *logos* is part of his own self-confidence. If *logos* is not something *much more* than deeds—especially military deeds, deeds *par excellence*—then who is he?

Student: A possible reinforcement of the lower matter of just not admitting that his students could use rhetoric

LS: Ya, that’s another point. You see, this creates a difficulty for him. The analogy with the boxing teacher is all right as far as it goes. It makes sense. And yet, because the art of rhetoric is so much more *resplendent* an art than the art of boxing or even the art of medicine,¹¹ the analogy from these lower arts is not sufficiently good. And therefore he must claim something like [this]: Rhetoric is not in need of a higher knowledge which guides rhetoric—let us say, moral knowledge. You see, then, rhetoric would be subject to that higher thing, and this is not compatible with the claim which he raises—which *Polus* raised on Gorgias’ behalf—that it is the most noble and best art. So he cannot admit, really, a magisterial art higher than rhetoric. It’s only another way of putting it. Yes?

Student: In order for wisdom to have power, Socrates would have to convince Gorgias. Because of his respect for *logos*, Gorgias may refrain from going into rhetoric. He may be silenced by Socrates. Is he actually convinced?

LS: I’m sorry, I didn’t get what you—

Same student: In order to say that Socrates has power, wisdom has power, greater than that of rhetoric, it seems to me that Socrates would have to actually convince someone. He can make them keep quiet. Does he convince them?

LS: Yes. I have not yet reached that point. I believe that what happens in the immediate future here is a proof that Gorgias *knows* that he has been defeated, and has been defeated, not by a scientific refutation, but by superior cleverness of Socrates. In other words, Gorgias is not convinced that Socrates’ view of rhetoric is a true one, but he excels in his own . . . if I may say so, that Socrates is a much better arguer than Gorgias is. And that is very bad for Gorgias, because Gorgias claimed to be tops not only in long speeches, as he put it, but also in brief speeches, i.e., in these conversational exchanges. Yes?

Student: But it's not wisdom that has the power. It's not wisdom—

LS: Yes. But what is wisdom? Wisdom is a word of many meanings. And the crude popular meaning—

[change of tape]

—the capacity of a man to acquire the most valuable thing or things. That's the crude meaning, the popular meaning,¹² from which the higher meanings branch out. But what is the means for getting the most valuable things according to Gorgias? We know already: rhetoric. Because even the moneymakers, who are so good at getting the most valuable things, are the mere slaves of the orators, as he said. You know? So Gorgias is superior to all moneymakers. The mechanics are very simple: Confiscatory laws, for example, would be a simple thing—how he can take away the wealth from the rich people. So *the* instrument for getting the most valuable things is speech. Speech. This speech is wisdom. But who is better at speech, I ask again? Gorgias or Socrates? From the empirical evidence at our disposal here, we must say Socrates. Gorgias probably never had such an experience in his life, that he encountered a man who could really defeat him. How long can this have taken? Less than an hour, probably only half an hour. That's quite an experience for such a man. And these things happen at all times and in all places, but we have only this most elaborate presentation of that occurrence in the Platonic dialogue.

Now let us turn to the Polus section. Gorgias does not reply; Polus replies. Gorgias does not reply because he has been rendered *speechless*. Polus, his younger comrade, replies. However, it is the same.

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: “How is this, Socrates? Is that really your opinion of rhetoric, as you now express it? Or, think you, because Gorgias was ashamed not to admit your point that the rhetorician knows what is just and noble and good, and will himself teach these to anyone who comes to him without knowing them; and then from this admission I daresay there followed some inconsistency in the statements made—the result that you are so fond of—when it was yourself who led him into that set of questions! For who do you think will deny that he has a knowledge of what is just and can also teach it to others?—” (461b–c)

LS: Sure, because that means, “I do not know the difference between right and wrong.” Who would say that? You would be investigated immediately. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: *Pol.:* “I call it very bad taste to lead the discussion in such a direction.” (461)

LS: Ya, you see, obviously Polus is completely perplexed. He believes that Socrates has stated his view about rhetoric, which Socrates clearly did not. Or he does not know the precise ground on which Gorgias was refuted. He says there was some inconsistency, some disharmony. He doesn't know exactly what it was. Some magic happened. On the

one hand, he finds it *wrong* of Gorgias to grant that the rhetorician must know the just things. On the other hand, he finds it *necessary* for Gorgias to admit it. That is to say, he would have made exactly the same mistake which Gorgias had made and for the same reason. But he must *say* something; he must *act* against Socrates. And what does he do? He says, “Socrates has misbehaved—his question regarding the just and unjust things is *improper*.” Gorgias was too decent to say that, that the question was improper. This is all Polus can do. It is of course very little. You know that happens even in present-day discussion. I had an experience of that in the *APSR* not so long ago, that certain questions are improper to raise in positive political science for example.ⁱⁱⁱ This is not limited to the fourth century. Now let us see how Socrates replies:

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “Ah, sweet Polus, of course it is—” (461c)

LS: Literally, “most beautiful” or “most noble Polus.” Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “of course it is for this very purpose we possess ourselves of companions and sons, that when the advance of years begins to make us stumble, you younger ones may be at hand to set our lives upright again in words as well as deeds. So now if Gorgias and I are stumbling in our words, you are to stand by and set us up again—it is only your duty; and for my part I am willing to revoke at your pleasure anything that you think has been wrongly admitted, if you will kindly observe one condition.” (461c–d)

LS: Ya, let us stop here for one moment. Socrates’ irony is obvious: the “most beautiful Polus,” and so on. Nothing of this kind in the Gorgias section; Socrates never ironized Gorgias. Gorgias is a man of a different caliber. In other words, Socrates has a certain respect for Gorgias. Now, the companions are helpers. That’s the reason why we have companions or friends. Gorgias does have a helper, but not Socrates. Chaerephon? Well, he is not needed. But he would also not be of any help, and the last weeks of Socrates are perhaps true proof that Socrates doesn’t have a proper helper. Whether this was a fault of his young friends, like Plato and Xenophon, is another matter. Socrates is very generous. He adopts now Polus as his helper: “we old men need you young people.” Polus is one of them. Good. Also *sons* we need, and this would of course lead us to raise the melancholy question of Socrates’ sons. (But perhaps we [can] find a better occasion. They were surely no helpers to Socrates.) Now how do we go on? Socrates makes one condition: “You can raise any question you want; I’m willing to reconsider the whole thing; but one condition.” Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: “What do you mean by that?”

ⁱⁱⁱ See Leo Strauss, “An Epilogue” in *Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics*, ed. Herbert J. Storing (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1962); John H. Schaar and Sheldon S. Wolin, “Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics: A Critique,” *American Political Science Review* 57 (1963): 125–50; and Leo Strauss, “Replies to Schaar and Wolin: II” *American Political Science Review* 57 (1963): 152–55.

Soc.: “That you keep a check on that lengthy way of speaking, Polus, which you tried to employ at first.”

Pol.: “Why, shall I not be at liberty to say as much as I like?”

Soc.: “It would indeed be a hard fate for you, my excellent friend, if having come to Athens, where there is more freedom of speech than anywhere in Greece, you should be the one person there who could not enjoy it. But as a set-off to that, I ask you if it would not be just as hard on me, while you spoke at length and refused to answer my questions, not to be free to go away and avoid listening to you. No, if you have any concern for the argument that we have carried on, and care to set it on its feet again, revoke whatever you please, as I suggested just now; take your turn in questioning and being questioned, like me and Gorgias; and thus either refute or be refuted. For you claim, I understand, that you yourself know all that Gorgias knows, do you not?” (461d–462a)

LS: You have here a simple example of Socrates’ justice. After all, Polus may make any speeches of any length he likes, but Socrates has also the right to go away. Equality. That’s perfectly clear. And the situation: one concession is made to Polus. Polus has seen that Gorgias got into trouble because he answered to Socrates. Now Polus will prevent that; *he* will raise the questions. And he has already the simple notion that if one is the questioner instead of the answerer, one has a terrific advantage, which Socrates unfairly assumed. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “For you claim, I understand, that you yourself know all that Gorgias knows, do you not?”

Pol.: “I do.”

Soc.: “Then are you with him also in bidding us ask at each point any questions we like of you, as one who knows how to answer?”

Pol.: “Certainly I am.”

Soc.: “So now, take whichever course you like: either put questions, or answer them.” (462a–b)

LS: Of course, Socrates also partly suggested it to him, you know? The idea might not have come to Polus if Socrates had not said, “you may also ask the questions.”

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: “Well, I will do as you say. So answer me this, Socrates: since you think that Gorgias is at a loss about rhetoric, what is your own account of it?”

Soc.: “Are you asking what art I call it?”

Pol.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “None at all, I consider, Polus, if you would have the honest truth.”

Pol.: “But what do you consider rhetoric to be?”

Soc.: “A thing which you say—in the treatise which I read of late—‘made

art.”

Pol.: “What thing do you mean?”

Soc.: “I mean a certain habitude.”

Pol.: “Then do you take rhetoric to be a habitude?”

Soc.: “I do, if you have no other suggestion.”

Pol.: “Habitude of what?”

Soc.: “Of producing a kind of gratification and pleasure.” (462b–c)

LS: Ya, “gratification” is too little. “Grace”: “productive of some grace and pleasure.” And surely rhetoric is that. And one can rightly raise the question: What should be wrong with that? There is so much gracelessness in the world, that it is quite good to have some people around who can produce grace. But:

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: “Then you take rhetoric to be something fine—an ability to gratify people?”

Soc.: “How now, Polus? Have you as yet heard me tell what I say it is, that you ask what should follow that—whether I do not take it to be fine?”

Pol.: “Why, did I not hear you call it a certain habitude?”

Soc.: “Then please—since you value ‘gratification’—be so good as gratify me in a small matter.”

Pol.: “I will.” (462c–d)

LS: Ya. Well, we cannot read the whole thing. But very briefly, Polus proves an amazing lack of training in these kinds of things, and there is a certain point reached where—let us turn to 463d, where Socrates says, “rhetoric is, according to my assertion, an image of politics.”

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Now, will you understand when I answer? Rhetoric, by my account, is a semblance of a branch of politics.”

Pol.: “Well then, do you call it a fine or a base thing?”

Soc.: “A base one, I call it—for all that is bad I call base—since I am to answer you as one who already understands my meaning.” (463c–d)

LS: You remember what that means. Originally, Socrates refused to answer the question whether rhetoric is base or noble before he knows what rhetoric is. But he is now making this concession. And now something grave happens:

Mr. Reinken:

Gorg.: “But I myself, upon my word, Socrates, do not grasp your meaning either.” (463d–e)

LS: Who said that? *Gorgias* comes in, and that is of very great importance, as you will

see. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “And no wonder, Gorgias, for as yet my statement is not at all clear; but Polus here is so young and fresh.” (463e)

LS: “Polus” means, literally translated, a “colt”—you know, a very fiery young animal, and not in the best position to think straight. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Gorg.: “Ah, do not mind him; but tell me what you mean by rhetoric being a semblance of a branch of politics.” (463e)

LS: Ya. You see, Polus is a very little boy compared with Gorgias. You see, almost with contempt does he brush him aside. That’s important. Gorgias is a great, respected man. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Well, I will try to express what rhetoric appears to me to be: if it is not in fact what I say, Polus here will refute me. There are things, I suppose, that you call body and soul?”

Gorg.: “Of course.”

Soc.: “And each of these again you believe to have a good condition?”

Gorg.: “I do.”

Soc.: “And again, a good condition that may seem so, but is not? As an example, let me give the following: many people seem to be in good bodily condition when it would not be easy for anyone but a doctor, or one of the athletic trainers, to perceive that they are not so.”

Gorg.: “You are right.” (463e–464a)

LS: So now let us first stop here before we go on, and let us consider what this intermezzo means. There is a brief discussion here. We have read already the Gorgias–Socrates exchange. And then afterwards you see Polus, and Gorgias¹³ [no longer comes] in for a very long time. What happens here? In 462e, which we have not read, it appears that Socrates is ashamed to reveal his view of rhetoric to Gorgias—which is the opposite of flattery. But he says, “I do not know whether my view of rhetoric applies to Gorgias’ kind of rhetoric. Maybe Gorgias’ is a kind which I do not know, so that my view would not apply to it.” And there is also a blame of Gorgias implied in that. After all, what Gorgias understands by rhetoric has not become clear at all, although they spoke about it for such a long time. The reason being because Gorgias was ashamed, as Polus put it, and, in another way, Socrates was ashamed. Socrates is trying to *please* Gorgias, at least in the sense that he is trying *not to offend* Gorgias. The consequence of that is that Gorgias’ view of rhetoric and Gorgias’ rhetoric itself are *not* revealed in this dialogue. This negative point is crucial. Now in 463a–c, this is decided. Socrates makes clear the following point. He states his view of rhetoric to *Gorgias*, but with the understanding that

he will discuss it *not* with Gorgias but with *Polus*. Polus will be used as an instrument, as a guinea pig, you could almost say, to bring to light Socrates' view of rhetoric. Gorgias' reaction or response to Socrates' view of rhetoric will not come out at all. To summarize: there will be a *silent exchange* between Socrates and Gorgias. This is part of my answer to—I believe it was Mr. Dry's question, or some one of you. What happens in this dialogue, and that is crucial: there is first a relatively short discussion between Socrates and Gorgias—that we call the Gorgias section. No, first the general scheme: Gorgias section, Polus section, Callicles section. This is by far the longest and by far the most famous and picturesque part of the whole work, the Callicles section.

Now it is a general rule in Platonic dialogues that what is in the center is most important—not necessarily absolutely, but for the context. Why that is so is a long question. The fact that it is, we can observe all the time. But we must know where is the center. I believe that in this particular case we cannot infer that the Polus section is the most important part of the *Gorgias*, and for the reason which I have already indicated, because the structure of the dialogue is this, rather: Direct exchange between Socrates and Gorgias; Gorgias reduced to speechlessness; and then Socrates is absolutely in control and exhibits his view of rhetoric *to Gorgias*, who remains, in the main, silent. [LS writes on the blackboard] And this consists of two parts: the Polus part and the Callicles part. In the Polus part, Socrates is *simply* successful. Polus is not only reduced to silence, he is even convinced. And this has to do with the fact that he believes in his art, that he believes, in a way, in *logos*, in knowledge. And then we have the Callicles section, where Callicles, too, is reduced to silence. But Callicles has never been convinced. So what happens in the dialogue truly—the so-called dramatic idea of the dialogue—is that Socrates exhibits to Gorgias his own, Socrates', rhetoric in its greatness and in its misery. Its greatness: the Polus section; its misery: the Callicles section. Therefore this passage is so crucial where Socrates emphasizes, “I will tell *you*, Gorgias, my view of rhetoric, but I will discuss it with Polus.” You will see later on, such references that are meant for Gorgias will come up in the Callicles section too. This, I believe, we should consider in advance for understanding what is now coming.

Now what Socrates does now in the sequel is his famous long speech, the longest speech he has made hitherto, about rhetoric and its place in a whole which he calls “flattery.” First of all, is there any point you would bring up at this point? Then I would use the rest of the meeting for giving that schema regarding rhetoric, Socratic rhetoric.

Roughly the schema is this. (You should write it down for yourself on a piece of paper and think about the difficulties.) There is first the division into body and soul, which we have already seen—[LS writes on the blackboard]—

[interruption in the tape]

—punitive justice. But Socrates calls it “simply justice.” “Simply justice”—so we have to accept “justice.” [LS writes on the blackboard] And now we have—these are *genuine* arts; I'll write it with a capital G. And then we come to the sham, which he calls “flattery,” where each art is imitated by a sham. Now how do you get the sham, the

appearance, of health of the body? Answer: cosmetics. Good. How do you get the sham of *restoring* health? Cooking. You see that? This is already a difficulty, isn't it? And here [LS indicates the blackboard] of the legislative, he calls "sophistry," and of justice, he calls "rhetoric." So rhetoric is the art of *apparently* restoring health of the soul, but only restoring the *appearance* of a good soul. What can this mean? This is extremely difficult. I believe all the difficulties can be resolved, but it is a very enigmatic statement. Does it make sense at first hearing that rhetoric is the art of restoring the appearance of a healthy soul? He thinks, of course, only of forensic rhetoric here. Well, if someone is quite a criminal but possesses what he would call a very smart mouthpiece, then this mouthpiece can without any question not only keep him out of jail but perhaps convince the public that this is a man who is not an ordinary criminal. In other words, the *appearance* of justice can be created by rhetoric. In other words, the true art of justice, which would here mean undergoing punishment and becom[ing] truly rehabilitated, as it is now called, that would be justice. But the apparent rehabilitation, by denial of the guilt, this is forensic rhetoric, and this is a sham art. The whole discussion, of course, is made for the sake of understanding rhetoric in the framework of the whole order of the arts. But, needless to say, what is said here about rhetoric depends very much on the sufficiency and validity of the overall scheme. I mean, if any of these items becomes questionable, the whole proportion breaks down, and we would have to reconsider the whole thing. Now I saw that Mr. Kendrick was quite surprised that cooking should be an art of sham—restoring of lost bodily health. Well, he doesn't mean, of course, by cooking that¹⁴ [which] a decent housewife does, but he means a kind of fancy cooking. You know, merely pleasing the palate without any understanding of the true nutritious qualities of food. But still it is nevertheless a difficulty.

Let us first, then, enumerate the difficulties, and take these questions home as a kind of exercise for the next meeting. Is there anything which is simple and clear in this schema? The distinction between body and soul is sufficiently clear, I believe. There is nothing wrong with that. Gymnastic and medicine, we understand that, although probably today gymnastics would belong more to medicine, but for Plato gymnastics was something different from medicine: [gymnastics were] only [for] building up a healthy body, and medicine for diseases. Why this is called legislative, is, of course, one dark question. That punishment should restore health of the soul is not a self-evident proposition but still intelligible today. It is still somehow assumed that people are sent to jail in order to become better citizens.¹⁵ Why should the imitation of the legislative art be sophistry? [That] is very hard to understand at first glance. The relation of gymnastics and cosmetics is obvious: you can get a healthy, ruddy complexion by engaging in sports, and you can get it by going to a beauty shop of sorts. And obviously the beauty shop is not as good for that purpose as gymnastics. But medicine and cooking, how does this come about? Mr. Wegner?

Mr. Wegner:

LS: Ya. What do you mean by that question?

Mr. Wegner: Well, very simply, that, in the *Republic*, very strong doubts are thrown

upon the validity of what is normally referred to as “the legislative art”

LS: You mean the difficulty that laws are themselves not necessarily good, or what? Ya, but, very well, this can easily be disposed of because the legislative art is, of course, the art which produces only good laws. Otherwise, they are laws made by bunglers, not by men possessing the legislative art. So legislative art means an art productive only of good. That’s clear. Yes?

Student: How can punishment restore the health of the soul when they have the death penalty?

LS: The death penalty is a special case. [Laughter] That is in the case of people who are incurable, according to Plato. *Incurable*. And therefore only the effect on others can be considered. But there are great difficulties which Plato does not minimize. For example, for Plato the key consideration is curability. If a man committed a murder¹⁶ under circumstances which will never occur again in all probability, and after he has killed the man he knows immediately that he will never do that again, he is curable. There may be a petty thief who cannot be cured from his petty thievery, whatever you might do. So from the principle of incurability, the petty thief should be executed and the murderer should not even be jailed, because he has already learned his lesson. Well, Plato has thought these things through. But what is the difficulty with this argument? Why does Plato not leave it at that?

Student: It would have to depend on the judge, who would have to have special wisdom—

LS. Mm hmm.

Same student:

LS: That is not quite the way, I believe, in which Plato would see it, but it has indeed to do with the question of wisdom. If the citizen body consisted only of wise people, that would be exactly the right thing to do. But since they are not wise, you have to apply also a cruder standard. And that is not guilt or innocence—degree of guilt, degree of innocence—but degree of *damage* done. Now the damage done by murder is generally speaking much greater than the damage done by petty theft, and therefore there is a much higher punishment on murder than on petty theft. But, if you look only at the heart, as it were—as wise people would, if all men were wise—then the usual penal practices would be very questionable. Yes?

Student: Have you ever looked at the distinction between gymnastic and medicine? Don’t they both have to have the idea of what the perfect body is like? Aren’t they really altogether one and the other—

LS: Which one? Gymnastic and medicine?

Student: Aren't they really the same?

LS: Yes. Sure there is a difficulty, and it is a difficulty which is most important regarding the analogy of [the] legislative art and justice. Which of the two arts, gymnastics and medicine, is the higher art? Surely, in Plato's time, but I think we can still understand it—the higher art, I mean, the more intellectual art?

Student: Medicine.

LS: Medicine, sure. We have seen the example: the fellow who is in charge of gymnastics can be a slave. And medicine is something much more respectable; and this is so because you have to have only a rather crude knowledge of the human body in order to know what is good for gymnastic training. But for treating complicated internal diseases, you have to have a very profound knowledge of the human body. That is very strange. Gymnastics is not based on a kind of science of the human body but on a kind of an ordinary awareness. Medicine, however, presupposes anatomy and this kind of thing. And if we would apply it to this [LS points to the schema on the blackboard], the analogy would be really difficult, because justice would then be intellectually higher than the legislative art—which, in one way, we can understand. I mean, from a commonsensical, sub-Platonic point of view, the judicial art is the art of applying the law to particular cases and interpretation of the law. That is a kind of science. But simply to put down the laws, make the laws, that can be done in principle by a very inexpert popular assembly. Of course, they would not have the legislative art. That is true. But the analogy—I think, if you think it through, you will see that it abounds with difficulties, not the least of which is, of course, that justice is here understood, not only in the narrow sense of punitive justice, but as an art. And while this is intelligible on a Socratic basis, this is a very paradoxical assertion. Yes, Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken: To explore the analogy as it now stands on the bodily side, gymnastics is replaced by preventive medicine, the medicine of healthy bodies. Geriatrics, which is a highly respectable and difficult branch of medicine—

LS: You mean today?

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

LS: Ya, but still—

Mr. Reinken: —and this is merely asserted . . . of the analogy. But if the true legislative art is of profound merit, so, on the . . .

LS: I see. In other words, we would have, so to speak, a scientific gymnastics. Yeah. You know, there is another difficulty. The legislative art, which enables a man to give good laws—but, of course, the question arises: What are good laws? With a view to *what* are good laws given? The good quality of the soul. And therefore *psychology* in Plato's sense, *psychēlogia*, would then be a science *higher* in rank than the legislative art. And

this explains why the perversion of the legislative art is sophistry. I mention this only in passing. This will be the last question for the day.

Student: . . . the difference important, that the difference is rhetoric?

LS: No. According to this schema, he is not a rhetorician at all. The sophist is related to the rhetorician as the legislator—the possessor of the legislative art—is related to the man possessing the art of judging.

I am sorry I have to break it off a bit earlier than usual today, but we meet then next Thursday.

[end of session]

¹ Deleted “him.”

² Deleted “they.”

³ Deleted “he.”

⁴ Deleted “does.”

⁵ Deleted “mere.”

⁶ Deleted “that.”

⁷ Deleted “which have made.”

⁸ Deleted “to.”

⁹ Deleted “that.”

¹⁰ Deleted “it’s as good.”

¹¹ Deleted “therefore.”

¹² Deleted “and.”

¹³ Deleted “does no longer come.”

¹⁴ Deleted “what.”

¹⁵ Deleted “and so put away.”

¹⁶ Deleted “and.”

Session 5: no date

Leo Strauss: I have to tell you that the microphone is missing today. Mr. . . . was unable to save us, because there is a competitor for that microphone. So if you don't hear me, come closer, because also

[There is a break in the tape and this point. The tape picks us after the session has begun.]

[In progress] **LS:** —which is a living proof that what we are doing in this course is not antiquarian. I read:ⁱ

I would briefly review the context of this question. In your discussion, you stated that when one wants a cure for cancer, one seeks out a knower of the cure—the physician. Similarly, when one wants a decision of how to build a bridge, one seeks out one who knows or is an expert—an engineer. But when one wants a *political* decision, one consults, not an equivalent expert, but a prudent judge of all the experts. The problem for Plato, as well as for modern democracy, was stated as whether the multitudes are the best judge of the advice of the experts. I then raised the question [**LS:** the “I” is Mr. Boyan], in what sense does a physician *know* the cure of the disease, either in Platonic terms or speaking in modern terms? Your exposition of Platonic knowledge was very illuminating. [Laughter] [**LS:** I'm sorry, I have to read that] But your answer as a whole leads to further questions. That answer suggested that one should not forget “horse sense”—that the physician *knows* that he has been administering a certain drug for the purpose of curing pneumonia, and pneumonia is not the killer it once was in the population. Keeping to common sense, however, the physician knows this in two senses. First, as a result of controlled experimentation. In this case of drugs administered to pneumococax bacteria, with it being observed that certain quantities of certain drugs kill these bacteria or prevent them from reproducing. Secondly, it is a statistical observation that the administration of this drug lowers the rate of pneumonia in the population.

My question is: Can a political problem ever be the subject of knowledge in this same sense? If so, is not modern social science justified? [**LS:** This is, of course, the question.] For is it not so that modern social science sets up controlled experiments, such as small groups, to test the effects of, let's call them, “social drugs,” on human organisms? And secondly, doesn't modern social science establish statistical relationships between various influences on human behavior? And would not the politically prudent man, far from being skeptical about modern social science, from the Platonic point of view, eagerly await the results so he can exercise judgment concerning advice of these knowers of political matters or experts? But if this is not so, and the answer to the opening question of this paragraph is also negative, must the prudent man judge among only men of opinions or not-knowers?

ⁱ LS now reads a question written by a student, Mr. Boyan. LS's interjections, as he reads, are in brackets.

P.S. If you have an infinite amount of time, you might broaden your response to include *your* view as to what help, if any, the result of modern social science can be to the politically prudent man in making political judgments. [Laughter]

Good. Now, this is a very long question, and,¹ in order to help you, I will give you this article by Walter Berns on “Law and Behavioral Science” in *jurimetrics*,ⁱⁱ because he can go into much greater detail than I possibly can. And you may lend it to other students who are interested in it, with the understanding that I am the owner. [Laughter]

Now the point to which Walter Berns leads his argument is very simple. It is an absolutely negative answer, in agreement with my suspicions and on this very simple ground: physicians are all right because² they claim to know what a healthy body is, and there is a broad agreement as to what is a healthy body. But the physicians of the *soul* do not have a notion of the healthy soul. Because if they say a healthy soul is “an *adjusted* man,” this is obviously an impossible suggestion, because a man may be wonderfully adjusted, and be the most despicable human being you can imagine. Walter Berns develops this at much greater length. You see, if there were a notion of the health of the soul which underlies the science, then the whole fact–value distinction would break down. But it is axiomatic that the fact–value distinction is necessary. Hence, they cannot have a notion, a universally valid notion, of the health of the soul. Now I knew once a young psychiatrist who was my student, and when we discussed that, he admitted that his argument was wrong. But he said there is a very simple answer to that. The psychiatrist takes *that* notion of health of the soul which is predominant in his society. So if there are values, they are strictly supplied from the outside: they are *presupposed* by the science and in no way confirmed, qualified, or rejected by science. So, for example, the psychiatrists in Japan would start from an entirely different notion of health of the soul than the psychiatrists in this country, and of course in different centuries there would be different notions of health of the soul, etc. This, I believe, is not acceptable to most psychiatrists, but it is in a way the more consistent view than the one of the more commonsensical psychiatrists.

Now as for this question,³ you can take almost any of the problems where social science is said to have settled the issue to see that it is not true. Take this very hot item: the problem of segregation. The psychiatrists or sociologists allegedly proved the adverse effect of segregation on negro schoolchildren. Let us assume they had proved it—I mean, I have not read the proofs and cannot say anything, but would this by itself settle the issue? Of course not, because there are other considerations: for example, what about a possible adverse effect on the schools in general? In the most recent statement I read in the papers there was a question that two things have to be considered in all school questions: equality and excellence. But how to balance these two things? The social sciences cannot tell you anything more than what any one of us can say. And this is, of course, the key question. I mean, if it is such a simple case that you have to know a series of facts, and knowledge of the facts makes all the difference between wise and unwise

ⁱⁱ Walter Berns, “Law and Behavioral Science” in *Law and Contemporary Problems* 28 (1963): 185–212.

policy, by all means get these facts. That is surely Plato's view and the view of every man of ordinary common sense. But the trouble is that we are today frequently confronted with allegedly scientific findings which are in fact not sufficient as a basis of policy.⁴ In the case of foreign affairs, it is obvious that the two parties—say, those who believe that the Kennedy foreign policy is wise and those who believe that the Kennedy policy is unwise—know *exactly* the same facts, and it is only a matter of how to estimate *possible* trends—will Soviet Russia become milder or will she not become milder?—which no one can know. No one can know. And straws in the wind blow both ways all the time. Test ban treaty—yes; troubles at Berlin with the convoys are also there. Which is the more revealing of Soviet intentions? Here it is truly anybody's guess. Take another case. I heard of someone, of a child, a young boy, who went to a psychiatrist, and he suffers from what could be called “parental tyranny.” I believe there is something to that in this particular case. The psychiatrist gave the boy the advice, lest his soul become too morbid, just to hit back when he is beaten by one of his parents. Well, one can very well doubt whether this is something within the competence of a psychiatrist. I mean, that it might be in one sense easier for the boy to hit back doesn't prove that it is in the long run the right thing for him to do. But I call this dogmatism of this kind of psychiatry, which is based on the exclusion of very important considerations, not compatible with a very simplistic hedonism. I mean, it ultimately leads of course to the conclusion that the boy who shot his mother because she did not permit him to take the family car and killed⁵ [her] was, after all, not much to blame. A nagging mother is a good reason for killing her. [Laughter] Even in economics, which is, I believe, the most scientific part of the social sciences, from all that I have heard—think of such outstanding economists as Milton Friedman in our university and Walter Heller in Washington. They are both first-rate economists; they reach *exactly* the opposite conclusions. Which would seem to show that economics cannot be as scientific as people say.

This must suffice as my answer to you. I mean,⁶ in order to judge wisely, you have to know the relevant facts, there is no question about that. And these relevant facts must be gathered in the most reliable manner. If there are certain methods today, techniques, which are better for gathering facts than those available in the past, of course we gladly accept them. The question is only whether the facts as facts supplied by these methods are sufficient for right policy decisions. In other words, many things are not facts, many things are distorted facts from a certain party line, i.e., they give only half of the evidence, and in other cases—if you think of foreign policy especially—these are not facts, these are *possibilities*, ultimately, *hopes*. But hopes are not facts. The whole tax reduction question of which we read, you know how controversial that is among *economists*, not only among various classes of taxpayers. At any rate, these considerations give umbrage, to say the least, to the old notion of prudence, that prudence must ultimately evaluate what the experts say. Whether the experts are economists, sociologists or generals does not make any difference in this situation.

But I must add immediately one point. While this is sufficient for practical purposes to defer to prudence, theoretically “prudence” creates a very great problem. What precisely is that? Now we all can read or have read the wonderful statements of Aristotle in the Sixth Book of the *Ethics*. But that there is some difficulty here is perhaps most simply

indicated by the fact that *Plato*, whom we are studying now, does not have this Aristotelian concept of prudence. What Plato calls prudence, in Greek *phronēsis*, is much *broader* than what Aristotle understands by prudence. Plato calls, in one work, *philosophy* prudence. So that the prudence as Aristotle understands it—my choosing the right thing for myself, or the statesman choosing the right things for his society at a given time—is, from Plato’s point of view, not as separable from theoretical philosophy as [it seems to be] in Aristotle’s presentation.⁷ One can state it also as follows, trying to remain as close as possible to Aristotle: There is *de jure* independence, autonomy, of prudence. [LS writes on the blackboard] Let us say there is the sphere of prudence where you have principles, the principles of decency very generally speaking, and you do not have to go beyond these principles of decency as you get them if you are children of decent parents and live in a decent society—which already poses the question [of] what a decent society is. Let us leave it at just this commonsensical notion here.

Now prudence is, as Burke put it, the god or goddess of the nether world, of this world, this sphere.ⁱⁱⁱ But the trouble is that prudence—the whole sphere—is at all times endangered by false theoretical opinions. In our age, we have the simple example of Marxism, which denies the principles of prudence apart from all other considerations, because it believes to know the future.⁸ Prudence in the Aristotelian sense is based on the certainty that the future [either of the individual or of society] is not knowable.⁹ Marxism denies that, and therefore it proposes policies which might deserve being considered if we were absolutely certain to know the future. For example, the sacrifice of millions of human beings could be considered if one could say, “this is the war to end all wars, all the injustice, for all times.” But if it is only one of these outbursts among many, one sees only that it makes men more brutal. Surely this you know: men will become more brutal. But that something good will come out of it, that’s a hope. So Marxism is then one kind of theory incompatible with prudence. But there are at all times such theories. Therefore prudence is essentially in need of being *defended* against false theories. This defense is, of course, a theoretical action. I mean, prudence itself is not sufficient for refuting Marxism. You have to look at Marxism . . . and so on. Therefore prudence, while¹⁰ *de jure*¹¹ autonomous, is *in fact* not autonomous; it always needs this theoretical support. And therefore one could almost say prudence—the whole sphere of prudence—requires a theoretical foundation, although to need a theoretical defense is not exactly the same as needing a theoretical foundation. But this is perhaps too subtle a distinction, and therefore Plato calls . . . a *unique* theoretical foundation for human action, and you cannot make the Aristotelian distinction between prudence and wisdom. Yes?

Student: Could I ask you a question about the economists? You were saying that this was the most scientific. With this tax deduction bill, would you entertain the possibility that there might be one answer that would be right or that would be scientific?

LS: No, I say only when the physicists or chemists *predict* something, there is a broad agreement within the profession. When the economists *predict* something, there is no broad agreement in the profession. And when I defer with particular respect to economics, this is due to the fact that when I look at the particularly scientific man in

ⁱⁱⁱ Edmund Burke, *The Works of Edmund Burke*, II.28.

political science, then I see sooner or later that this is based on models in economics. For example, political scientists now speak sometimes of “input and output.” Where did they get this from? I learned¹² from a friend who is an economist that this is originally an economic distinction, and then was thought to be very helpful for the analysis of political matters, so that you could compare voting to the market, generally speaking. You know, we buy our president, and so on. Yes?

Same student: I mean that in the way that it is in Plato’s cave allegory. In other words, if one of the reflections going on is the perfect tax deduction program, and there was somewhere an ideal form of it—

LS: Ya, but then what do you mean, tax deduction? You have to consider other things. From one point of view, not only tax deduction but tax annihilation is of course most desirable. [Laughter] But there are other considerations—not only a balanced budget, but in the first place the enormous expenses for defense. And how will you balance that? You are confronted with the question: tax deduction *in this situation*, with these and these commitments of the United States, etc. And then this has to be balanced, so that there is no—but even what I read in the newspapers and in some weeklies about the entirely opposed views of the Milton Friedman economists and the Walter Heller economists shows me that this is not something where you can simply claim you have *the* undeniable truth, you know, *the* scientific truth. This seems to be shown.

Same student: I’m just holding out the possibility that the truth might exist.

LS: Ya. Well, in what way? In other words, an *improved* scientific social science would make [prudence] superfluous,¹³ ya? Sure, that is of course what they always say. This is the famous cultural lag of the social sciences. [Laughter] The natural sciences could produce a thermonuclear bomb long before social science could produce the human habits conducive to the healthy character of the thermonuclear bomb; that we hear all the time. But this is of course again a mere hope. It is, in a strict sense, impossible. I mean,¹⁴ [there are] people who say that if psychology and so on¹⁵ [catch] up with physics and chemistry, then we will have a perfectly scientific world. But how can they ever catch up? Impossible, because of the impossibility of value judgments. That is a key point. The natural sciences proper have increased man’s power *incredibly*, beyond all earlier expectations. They have not told us anything, and they cannot tell us anything, about the *use* of this power. Otherwise, they would have to make value judgments. They can put at our disposal *means* of construction and destruction. But how to use them, natural sciences do not teach us.

Now, if psychology and sociology and the other social sciences are constructed on the model of the natural sciences, i.e., value-free, they *too* can increase man’s power still more—for example, techniques of brainwashing compared with which the present techniques are infantile. And yet they cannot teach us anything about how *to use* or *not to use* that power, because that would be value judgment. Differently stated, they would have to have a notion of what is good for man, what is a good condition of the human soul, which by definition they cannot have, because they are value-free theoretical

sciences. These are still backward people who have not understood the full impact of the distinction between facts and values, otherwise they would not raise that claim. Yes?

Student: I think you've gone too far . . . formulate his desires with respect to the primary, tertiary, secondary, and so on, effects . . . but to figure out what works for him. But my desires would be different, and so would yours, and I think there wouldn't be . . . one truth—

LS: Ya, but the point is exactly [that], to the extent to which these sciences are unable to pass judgment on value judgments, they can give at best hypothetical recommendations: “if you want that, do that.” But should you want that?

Student: Well, in pointing out the differences between economists, are you suggesting that Mr. Heller and Mr. Friedman do not agree on what would happen, what *will* happen, as a result of such and such an act by the government? Or is it what they think *should* happen? Is it a value judgment or a fact?

LS: Well, I believe [that] within limits, they agree. For example, I believe they would admit that there will be a greater deficit if there is tax reduction. To that extent, they agree, only Milton Friedman would say that that is rather disastrous, and Heller would say it is salutary because of purchasing power—you know this argument. Well, I know much too little about economics to speak here about it. I mention it only as a layman's, simple citizen's, reaction to what you see about economics in practice. I checked it with someone whom I know quite well who is a trained economist. It in fact was Mr. Cropsey. Some of you know him. And he assured me the limits within which one can speak of scientific certainty in economics are very limited, very small, very narrow. Yes?

Student: Well, can you clarify something for me? You referred to Plato's use of the dialectic as scientific or scientific method. Now you define “scientific” in terms of the modern social sciences. You probably mean it in a very different sense from what—

LS: Ya, well, I could, of course, easily weasel out of that difficulty because that was what Mr. Boyan suggested. But I think it was perfectly legitimate of him. There is *some* connection between Plato's notion of science and the modern notion. I would like to say a few things about that now. But there was someone else.

Student: I just wanted to say, according to my conclusion: What's the value of defending prudence or wisdom if so few people have it? So few people have it, you can't have a true system of justice . . . you do damage . . . if prudence is the preserve of one-tenth of one percent of the population—

LS: No, that was not the Aristotelian view. The point is this: in law, they speak of men of ordinary prudence. So this presupposes that all men (except some, well, really nutty people) are prudent for all practical purposes. For example, how to cross a street, and that if you want to have some money for a rainy day, then you cannot spend everything you earn. These are simple things, and practically everyone understands that. Now when you

come to the higher reaches of political prudence, it is more difficult. It is more difficult, but the question is whether the decisive issues are more complex. For example, whether it is not possible to state the basic issues regarding American foreign policy in terms which every citizen can understand. I believe it is possible. Not when the things become terribly technical, about whether this kind of missile or that kind of manned bomber—then you need experts for that. But the trouble is that the experts also in these matters disagree, and that makes life very uncomfortable. But as for the political issues proper, I think they can always be stated in very simple terms. I'm not speaking now of campaign oratory—you know, in order to get votes. This is of course dishonest, and one must see through the dishonesty if one wants to understand the issues. But the serious issues, I think, can be stated very simply. There is a wise word of Burke, that a refined policy defeats itself.^{iv} Now you know, if it is so subtle that the large body of the governed cannot understand it, this is in itself an objection. Because how can they go with you and be loyal to the thing if they don't know if you do some magic above the clouds? I think, if you take the issue today: Can one assume that the Soviet Union will develop in a more liberal direction, or can one not assume it?—[that] is as such intelligible to everyone. The arguments both pro and con can all be stated such that any literate individual will understand them. This is not the point. Prudence is not such a rarity. *Platonic* prudence, which is at the same time philosophy, that is extremely rare. But not in the Aristotelian sense.

Student: If prudence isn't a rarity, then couldn't the argument be raised that maybe it isn't very well listened to? That's why it doesn't matter whether one has it or not—

LS: Ya, sure. Therefore Aristotle, in his wisdom, begins his *Ethics* with a quotation from Hesiod, where he says, “to *discern* the right thing, that is a matter, if it is of any gravity, [that is] hard. Only a few men can do that. But those men, too, are prudent who *listen* to that man. Those who are altogether useless are those who neither can discern the good nor listen to others.”^v Surely. They really exist. And what one should do about them is hard to say. They are as much voters as those who are willing to listen to reason.

Same student: Some would say they make up the majority of the population.

LS: That's too harsh, I think [laughter]. Too harsh. Yes?

Student: When you talked about Plato's identification of prudence with philosophy—or I think you said earlier that theoretical knowledge provides a framework or a foundation for prudence—then prudence is no longer practical, is that right?

LS: No. I mean, that is exactly the point. We are speaking now of the Platonic version?

^{iv} LS is referring to a famous remark of Burke from a 1775 speech “On Moving His Resolutions for Conciliation with the Colonies”: “Refined policy ever has been the parent of confusion and ever will be so, as long as the world endures.” Strauss quotes this line in *Natural Right and History*, 308.

^v See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1095b10–14.

Same student: Of the Platonic version.

LS: Ya, I wanted to speak about it. Let us now complete this discussion, and I will try to say what I tried to say. Now the difficulty of Plato's position is not so much that prudence in the narrower or Aristotelian sense, requires a theoretical foundation, i.e., prudence is the *same* as wisdom in the fullest sense. But do we *possess* wisdom? Do we possess wisdom? Can we ever have more than *philosophy*, i.e., *quest* for wisdom? That is the difficulty for Plato, because if wisdom itself is not available to us, then it is very hard to understand how¹⁶ we [can] have that limited wisdom which we need for decent action. Here there is a certain external resemblance between the Platonic view and the view which prevails today among—I don't say the positivists—but among many people, positivists and non-positivists. I will try to explain that. I believe that the Platonic view has been wonderfully expressed by a very anti-Platonic thinker: Pascal. Pascal, you know, one of the founders, co-founders of modern mathematics and physics. Pascal said we know too little to be dogmatists and we know too much to be skeptics.^{vi} And I know very few words which, on the face of them at any rate, are so wise as that statement. I mean, the traditional, superficial scheme of philosophy was: There was dogmatic philosophy, i.e., all those philosophers who *taught* something; and the skeptics, i.e., the philosophers who said, "we cannot teach anything." And what they tried to do in the seventeenth century was to get rid of this unpleasant situation once and for all, i.e., to make skepticism impossible for all the future—most clearly in Descartes, but visible also elsewhere. Now, what was the result? The result was modern science, which is neither dogmatic, i.e., *all results* are admittedly subject to revision, nor is it skeptic, i.e., it¹⁷ [does not say that] there are no results.

There is, however, something regarding which modern science *is* dogmatic, and that is *method*. The results are all subject to revision in principle. Of course, details are also subject [to revision]. The overall approach, that the account must be in terms of a kind of mathematics—such fundamental things are not subject to doubt. What Descartes did in his famous fundamental reflection was to show the way toward a new dogmatism which is based on the most extreme skepticism and therefore unassailable to any skepticism. And this notion has been haunting modern man¹⁸ all the time. Plato does not believe in such a dogmatism based on skepticism. How Plato can teach anything—and he surely teaches something—is a very great question. And this question we must always keep in mind. Hitherto, we have seen Socrates has not taught something strictly speaking. He has only shown that Gorgias' position is untenable because it is based on a fundamental contradiction. And we must wait until we come to the point where he does teach.

Now, after having given this lengthy answer, although in finite time, to Mr. Boyan, let us go on. Now first, I remind you of where we stood. We are now in the beginning of the Polus section. Let us read at 463a6. Let us begin there—the beginning of Socrates' speech.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "It seems to me then, Gorgias, to be a pursuit that is not a matter of

^{vi} Cf. Pascal, *Pensées* Lafuma 131, 406 (= Brunschvicg 434, 395).

art, but showing a shrewd—” (463a)

LS: “It”—meaning, of course, rhetoric.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “not a matter of art, but showing a shrewd, gallant spirit which has a natural bent for clever dealing with mankind, and I sum up its substance in the name *flattery*.” (463a–b)

LS: Ya, let us stop here for one moment. Rhetoric is a kind of *flattery*, i.e., it is not an art. Now in order to understand that, we must know what a “flatterer” is. And Plato gives here some definition: the flatterer is, of course, not just, nor moderate, nor wise, but he has courage or fortitude. That may sound strange. His soul is by nature clever, which means in the context that he has an unusually good natural aptitude for adjustment to the powerful—few or many. In other words, something slavish. That is the meaning of that. But as for his capacity to guess and his courage, they are not called natural here. They are *acquired*. This is all we hear for the time being about the flatterer. Now let us read the rest of this speech.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “This practice, as I view it, has many branches, and one of them is cookery; which appears indeed to be an art but, by my account of it, is not an art but a habitude or knack. I call rhetoric another branch of it, as also personal adornment and sophistry—” (463b)

LS: Why don’t we say “cosmetics?” “Cosmetics and sophistry.”

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “and sophistry—four branches of it for four kinds of affairs. So if Polus would inquire, let him inquire: he has not yet been informed to what sort of branch of flattery I assign rhetoric; but without noticing that I have not yet answered that, he proceeds to ask whether I do not consider it a fine thing. But I am not going to reply to the question whether I consider rhetoric a fine or a base thing, until I have first answered what it is—” (463b–c)

LS: “What it is.” We know this distinction: “what it is” as distinguished from “what we see.” There is justice [odd sound, then laughter] and efficiency. [Odd sound] There is more justice than efficiency. [Laughter] Mr. Reinken, why don’t you go on?

Mr. Reinken: I’ll try. [Laughter]

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “until I have first answered what it is; for it would not be fair, Polus—” (463c)

LS: No, “it wouldn’t be *just*.” There is a kind of justice even in theoretical discussions.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “but if you want the information, ask me what sort of branch of flattery I assert rhetoric to be.” (463c)

LS: Yes. Let us stop here. Thank you. We see again Socrates will give his explanation to Gorgias, but the discussion will be with Polus. Gorgias shall listen, not speak. We have discussed this before. Socrates states his view of rhetoric *to* Gorgias, but will not discuss it *with* Gorgias, but with Polus. And we have, then, to see what this means. Now, let us now turn immediately to Socrates’ long speech in 464b2, because we have read¹⁹ what was in between.

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “Now let me see if I can explain my meaning to you more clearly” (464b)

LS: “to you”—to Gorgias. You know, that was only a continuation of his brief dialogue with Gorgias. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “There are two different affairs to which I assign two different arts: the one, which has to do with the soul, I call politics; the other, which concerns the body, though I cannot give you a single name for it offhand, is all one business, the tendance of the body, which I can designate in two branches as gymnastic and medicine. Under politics I set legislation in the place of gymnastic, and justice to match medicine. In each of these pairs, of course—medicine and gymnastic, justice and legislation—there is some intercommunication, as both deal with the same thing; at the same time they have certain differences. Now—” (464b–c)

LS: Meaning, medicine and gymnastics, on the one hand, and justice and the legislative art. Good. Now why does he call the art dealing with the soul, with the health of the soul and the restoration of that health, the *political* art? Is there no better name for it, possibly?

Student: Philosophy?

LS: Ya, but we have not yet heard. I mean, I couldn’t help sometimes anticipating later developments. But there is a more common name, which was in common use at that time.

Student: Psychology.

LS: That is a highly—it’s a term; Plato probably coined it. Psychology is the doctrine of the soul, the account of the soul. No. He was speaking here of arts. What is the art by which men are made good?

Student: Education.

LS: Education. Exactly. *Paideia* in Greek. This would be the natural one. And of course one would say that education consists of two parts: exhortation and dehortation, on the one hand, and spanking, on the other. And therefore this would be exactly the same. Why does he call it the political art? He makes one very important assumption.

Student: The city must better its citizens?

LS: Yes. Exactly. That's the point. But let us state it very precisely. Education as education is education of human beings. But if the good human being is *identical* with the good citizen—and only then can you identify education with the political art. That's a very great premise discussed by Plato and Aristotle. Is a good man simply identical with the good citizen or not? Here it is simply assumed. Yes. Now let us go on here.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Now these four, which always bestow their care for the best advantage respectively of the body and the soul, are noticed by the art of flattery which, I do not say with knowledge, but by speculation, divides herself into four parts, and then, insinuating—” (464c)

LS: “Speculation” is somewhat misleading. “Guessing.” That “speculation” has come to mean “guessing” is a consequence of the modern rejection of metaphysics. So here Plato says, “guessing.” Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “insinuating herself into each of those branches, pretends to be that into which she has crept, and cares nothing for what is the best, but dangles what is most pleasant for the moment as a bait for folly, and deceives it into thinking that she is of the highest value. Thus cookery assumes the form of medicine, and pretends to know what foods are best for the body; so that if a cook and a doctor had to contend before boys, or before men as foolish as boys, as to which of the two, the doctor or the cook, understands the question of sound and noxious foods, the doctor would starve to death.” (464c–e)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. So flattery is directed towards the pleasant, or ultimately towards the most pleasant, whereas art is directed towards the best. And these are obviously two entirely different considerations. But it is somehow implied that flattery does not simply, *frankly* say, “I am only concerned with the pleasant,” but it somehow *pretends* to produce a good and to that extent is a sham. Now the example here used is medicine and cooking. But this cooking is of course not the general art of cooking. It is a special kind, the making of the dessert, one could say. Because the other is *mageirikē*; here it's called *opsopoiikē*. You know, what you eat [in addition] *to* the bread. The bread is the center, as it were, and then you eat something—that may be meat, may be fish, may be cake, cookies, or whatever you have. Good. Among fools, the physician would die from hunger. Among sensible people (that's implied), he will not die from hunger. “Will not

die from hunger” implies that the physician is *concerned* with not dying from hunger. That he is concerned, in other words, with being *paid* for his services is perfectly unobjectionable. And this means, in effect, that the physician, as every other artisan, exercises two arts: the specific art (in this case, medicine) and the art of moneymaking. This point is here not emphasized, but it is always there when Plato speaks about it. But this is unobjectionable. We must, of course, raise here one question on the basis of ordinary common sense: Does the cook, even the one who makes these special delicacies, *pretend* to know more about health than the physician? Not necessarily, obviously. But he could. He could say that, well, the doctor has forbidden you to eat this kind of thing To that extent, of course, he raises an exorbitant claim. In other words, the question is a serious one: Are the considerations of the pleasant and the good *as opposed* to each other as they are presented here? That is the serious element of this simple question. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Flattery, however, is what I call it, and I say that this sort of thing is a disgrace, Polus—for here I address you—because it aims at the pleasant and ignores the best; and I say it is not an art, but a habitude, since it has no account to give of the real nature of the things it applies, and so cannot tell the cause of any of them. I refuse to give the name of art to anything that is irrational: if you dispute my views, I am ready to give my reasons—” (464e–465a)

LS: Ya, now, “habitudes,” the Greek word is *empeiria*, “experience.” Now this word, this Greek word, is very well known now in present day discussions—“empirical,” “empiricist,” and so on—and is almost synonymous with “scientific” in certain quarters. Aristotle uses it in its primary sense: experience and *nothing but* experience. You know the facts and do not know the reasons—that’s *empeiria*. Now I give you an example where I see it, but with particular clarity. It seems to be far-fetched, but it happens to have something to do with what we are doing now: reading Plato. A long time ago, I observed that when Plato enumerates a number of things, preferably an odd number, the center one—say, if there are seven, the fourth one—was always the most important. And if I concentrated on this point, I saw the deeper argument. I had no knowledge *why*. It just was so. I couldn’t say it was always so, but still as far as my knowledge went, it was always so. This is mere experience, stupid experience. And the moment you know *why*, then you have knowledge—and therefore the art, if it is practical [knowledge]. Now the key point in this statement is this. Flattery is distinct from art for *two* reasons: a) flattery aims at the pleasant, whereas art aims at the good; b) flattery is mere *empeiria*, i.e., cannot give an account of what it does, whereas art can give an account of what it does.

Now these are two criteria, and we have to wonder if they are truly, necessarily connected with each other. Is it not possible that there might be arts productive of pleasure, i.e., where the pleasure-producing individual can give an account of what he does? You must keep this in mind as a very important question. In *Republic* 332c and in the *Statesman* 289a, Plato speaks of the art of cooking—I mean not in the narrow sense of delicacymaking—as an art. One can also speak perhaps of a poetic art: the art of finding proper similes, finding the most appropriate images, and so on. And furthermore,

why should there not be a concern with *both* the good *and* the pleasant? For example—the example which was alluded²⁰ [to] somewhere—the physician is concerned *not only* with giving pills to people, but²¹ he will [also] give some thought of whether the pills are absolutely revolting or whether you can swallow them without revulsion. Or [in an] operation, if he can make the operation less painful, he will of course do that, although from the point of view of the future life of the man, it wouldn't make any difference whether a tooth is extracted without any anesthetics. Yet they have discovered, *qua* physicians, the anesthetics. This is also an important question, whether the two considerations are mutually exclusive. We must keep this in mind for the rest of the argument. I would put it this way: the exclusion of pleasure as an object of art is not established. This we have to consider. That there is a human activity which cannot give an account of what²² [it] does—for example, a mere assistant of a physician, who has not studied medicine, no nurse, no preparation—it's clear that no one would call this an art. If you cannot give an account of what you do, know why it is good to do so, then it is not an art. This is the necessary distinction. But the simple rejection of the consideration of pleasure would need reconsideration. Yes?

Student: It's really vague

LS: What is vague?

Same student: It's sort of ambiguous what Plato means by art giving an account, or giving an account of the nature of the things with which it deals.

LS: Why? That's the simplest thing in the world. A shoemaker can give you—you see him do some things which are very strange to you, and you ask him, "Why do you do that?" I mean, I know so little of shoemaking that I cannot give you an example. But I suppose that if we would just enter a shoemaker's shop, we would see all kinds of strange doings which we wouldn't understand. He can tell us.

Same student: But in that sense maybe he is a sham artist?

LS: Ya, that's a question. But let us take, for example, the simple helper of the physician. She gives now this pill to the patient, and an hour later that pill. She could not give you another reason except that "the doctor told me so." So she does not know. But what you say after is exactly the difficulty which I have: Why could there not be an art of producing pleasures? There is a work of Ovid, the *Art of Loving*, *Ars Amandi*.^{vii} Theoretically, that might be possible. There are some modern writers on this kind of subject who treat this in an artful manner. That is in principle not to be excluded. And why could there not be an account, an elaboration? I mean, if you read something particularly delicate, [by someone who] really figured out with a very exact notion of what titillates the tongue to the highest degree (sometimes you read such things, ya? usually not in drugstores [laughter]) and then you say [that] there must have been a lot of thinking, a lot of experimenting, before this thing which just hits it right there has been discovered. And I suppose a man, say, a very superior Chinese cook, could tell you why

^{vii} The work is in fact titled *Art of Love*, or *Ars Amatoria*.

they use a duck or whatever it is in this manner and prepare it this way. Why not? That's my difficulty.

Same student: But then there is another sense of giving an account, of our giving an account of what it's doing in which none of these arts is

LS: Oh, no. That is an analogon to my sphere here.^{viii} Starting from the premise that it is good to protect one's feet against stones and all other kinds of unpleasantness which you might find in the road, if you grant the shoemaker the premise that it is wise to protect one's feet, he can give you an account of everything he does: why he uses this method, for example, why he doesn't ordinarily make shoes of iron but of leather, because obviously—I mean, you can figure it out for yourself [laughter]. And also the various operations he makes in order to produce his shoes. I mean, for example, that he would consider the different sizes of feet would follow necessarily, I believe, from that premise.

Student: Would it necessarily . . . any consideration of the aesthetic form of the shoe, though, be a sham art?

LS: Ya, you use now a word which one must never use in speaking about Plato. Perhaps one should never use it even in ordinary speech. Aesthetic. What is aesthetic? Beauty, ya? But you mean now beauty, as in this context, is a form of pleasure, ya? Plato would probably agree with that. And surely, why not? The best thing would be to have a perfectly good shoe (what they now would call functional, I believe) and at the same time a good looking shoe, you know, not terribly clumsy and so on, so that you like to look at it. Sure, that's my point. Are the two considerations of good and pleasant *as* exclusive of each other as they are presented here? This is in a way the key question of the whole dialogue. Socrates takes here a very extreme view of human life which can be stated in its generality as saying: The good by itself, without any admixture of the pleasant, is perfectly sufficient to make men happy. That is what Socrates is working his way towards. Now where were we? Let us continue from 465b.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "However, as I put it, cookery is flattery disguised as medicine; and in just the same manner self-adornment personates gymnastic: with its rascally, deceitful, ignoble, and illiberal nature it deceives men by forms and colours, polish and dress, so as to make them, in the effort of assuming an extraneous beauty, neglect the native sort that comes through gymnastic." (465b)

LS: You see how excellent the example of cosmetics is. Cosmetics is clearly sham, whereas cookery is not clearly sham. I mean, the cook who says, "I will make very palatable food, you will enjoy it, you will always come back to me," does not make pretenses in any way. He doesn't say, "I'll give you the best medicine"—then we would probably not go to him; whereas the cosmetics man simply says, "I will make you so good looking as if you were health itself," and that's sham [laughter]. Now you see

^{viii} LS is presumably referring to the drawing on the blackboard.

Socrates' technique here. He takes a variety of arts, each of which has its specific character, and drawing inferences from *each* and applying them to *all*,²³ he gets a kind of plausible overall picture which is not, strictly speaking, tenable. And now I remind you again: The men to whom he speaks—in this case, Gorgias and Polus—cannot read and reread that, as we can. And so they hear it only once, and then they have this beautiful proportion, and in each point they get an argument which is absolutely plausible—in the case of cosmetics, flattery is a sham art, a sham-producing art. And they cannot make the necessary distinction in this short time. And, in addition, since they are so much preoccupied with one art, namely, rhetoric, they listen with less care to what is said about the other arts. This is, of course, Socratic rhetoric. There is no doubt about it.

Student: Well, I said before, it seems to me, in the case of cosmetics, it is not clear . . . because someone may be extraordinarily healthy and yet ugly. In which case, cosmetics would be the proper remedy if the pleasant is the more

LS: Ya, on this basis. But still there is this difficulty. I mean, in other words, if someone—that's a very subtle distinction—would have all kinds of cosmetic treatment, of teeth, hair, and whatever it is, merely in order not to offend other people, one could even say that is his duty [laughter]. No, I say this not only for the fun of it—perhaps it is so. And this would show, in other words, that a simple opposition to pleasure, [an unqualified opposition], can even be morally questioned.²⁴ Now then we have three considerations regarding flattery: a) non-rational, b) concerned with the pleasant in contradistinction to the good, and c) sham. But these are three independent criteria. Only the second one, pleasure as distinguished from the good, is necessary. And this applies, of course, to rhetoric, because that is the point which Socrates makes. Now, let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Well, to avoid prolixity, I am willing to put it to you like a geometer—for by this time I expect you can follow me: as cosmetic is to gymnastic, so is sophistry to legislation; and as cookery is to medicine, so is rhetoric to justice—” (465b–c)

LS: Let us stop here. I will only repeat the main point, because we discussed that at the end of the last session. The indication is this: only by obeying the right kind of laws can men become good in their souls. Otherwise, this position of the legislative art doesn't make sense. It can become *good* in the soul, as distinguished from just. The healthy soul is not just; “just” is not the proper word for that. Justice belongs to punishment, to restoration. Justice is restoration of health of the soul. Needless to say,²⁵ it is also implied in the whole thing that justice is an *art*. This is a great problem discussed especially in the first book of the *Republic*: Can justice be an art? And the official thesis there, if I may say so, is justice must be an art in order to have any cognitive dignity. Sophistry corresponds to cosmetics—meaning it is necessarily sham, just as cosmetics is sham. Rhetoric corresponds to cooking, which, according to our analysis, is not necessarily sham if it is straightforward and doesn't pretend. The legislative art corresponds to gymnastics—that is to say, to a very *simple* art exercised frequently by slaves; as art, it is much inferior to medicine. The legislative art cannot be the true equivalent to the sophistic art for the

simple reason that the legislative art presupposes a prior science which speaks of the soul and of the good order, or, in the Platonic sense, is indeed psychology. Yes. Now let us go on where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “But, although, as I say, there is this natural distinction between them, they are so nearly related that the sophists and orators are jumbled up as having the same field and dealing with the same subjects, and neither can they tell what to make of each other, nor the world at large what to make of them—”(465c)

LS: But this is of course an insufficient explanation because, according to that proportion, cosmetics and cookery are also closely related to each other, and no one mistakes the cooks for cosmeticists or vice versa. It has to do with the fact that the people in general don’t know what these magicians, the rhetoricians and the sophists, do. And therefore they ordinarily think²⁶ [they are] more or less the same kind of individuals. That is the point. Yes? Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “For indeed, if the soul were not in command of the body, but the latter had charge of itself, and so cookery and medicine were not surveyed and distinguished by the soul, but the body itself were the judge, forming its own estimate of them by the gratifications they gave it, we should have a fine instance of what Anaxagoras described, my dear Polus—for you are versed in these matters: everything would be jumbled together, without distinction as between medicinal and healthful and tasty concoctions—” (465c–d)

LS: Now, this Anaxagoras, a man who lived in Athens, was expelled in Pericles’ time. He was a friend of Pericles. And this thesis which is here quoted would be, in modern language: at the beginning there was chaos.^{ix} Now Anaxagoras was the first man who had ever taught that the *mind* orders everything. Aristotle says he was the only sober man among the many drunken ones.^x But, as is also made clear by Plato and Aristotle, he did not make any *use* of that mind.^{xi} So in fact it was a mindless world and the chaotic character belongs not only to the beginning but to the whole. That is, I believe, what he ultimately means. Now if everything is identical, so to speak, then the distinction between good and pleasant, in particular, cannot be made. And this has, of course, infinite consequences. And what Socrates suggests is [that] something like Anaxagoras is *your* premise, the premise of *you rhetoricians*. And this could be more developed if you would read the Tenth Book of Plato’s *Laws*, where he gives a sketch of the views of the pre-Socratic philosophers and how these views necessarily lead to the denial of natural right

^{ix} The saying of Anaxagoras, *homou panta chrēmata* (“all things mixed together”), is quoted also in Plato’s *Phaedo* (72c4–5). According to Dodds (231–32), this saying can be traced to the opening line of a lost work of Anaxagoras, which read *homou panta chrēmata ēn* (“all things were mixed together”) and which Anaxagoras used to describe, in Dodds’s words, “the chaos that existence before the intervention of *nous*.” See Fragment DK B1.17.

^x See *Metaphysics* 984b15–20.

^{xi} See Plato *Phaedo* 98b7–99d2; Aristotle *Metaphysics* 985a18–21.

and to something like the simple identification of the good with the pleasant. But this would lead us now too far. Now let us read, then, the end.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Well now, you have heard what I state rhetoric to be—the counterpart of cookery in the soul, acting here as that does on the body. It may, indeed, be absurd of me, when I do not allow you to make long speeches, to have extended mine to so considerable a length. However, I can fairly claim indulgence: for when I spoke briefly you did not understand me; you were unable to make any use of the answer I gave you, but required a full exposition. Now if I on my part cannot tell what use to make of any answers you may give me, you shall extend your speech also; but if I can make some use of them, allow me to do it; that will only be fair. And now, if you can make any use of this answer of mine, do so.” (465d–466a)

LS: You see, Socrates recapitulates here only his thesis on rhetoric, omitting all the other statements about flattery in general—naturally, because rhetoric is the primary theme. And surely it is necessary with a view to Polus. The emphasis in the remark is on the short–speeches–long–speeches question. And it’s high time, because Socrates has made the longest speech hitherto and so he must eat his words, in a way. He can no longer in fairness forbid long speeches. And²⁷ this can be stated as follows: Socrates says, “perhaps I sin, but I deserve indulgence because of Polus’ previous sin; therefore since I sin—however provoked—you may also sin.” You see also in this remark that there is no question that *Socrates* might not understand *Polus*’ answer. It is only a question that *Polus* might not understand *Socrates*’ answer. But I think we should now skip a part in order to finish this book during the quarter.

Student: Could you explain what constitutes an explanation with respect to an art? It seems to me that any explanation of an art would have to go beyond the bounds of what is possible to explain, especially if you consider causal relationships. If you stick with the shoemaker and start asking . . . where did something come from that he uses as a tool, eventually you would be forced into a realm in which you could not get an answer.

LS: Why? Do you mean to say that in order to be a good shoemaker, you have to be a chemist? It amounts to that. I know that what happened in modern times is something of this kind, that all the arts become technologies, i.e., if you want to produce shoes in infinite numbers, so to speak, in factories and so on, this is then no longer done by shoemakers, and here chemists come in. But this was not the primary situation as it exists all the time. And if we want to understand this present day phenomenon—the replacement of arts by technologies—we have first to understand what arts are. Do you see? We cannot understand technologies if we do not see that they are transformations of arts. Does this make sense? I mean, for practical purposes, only for acting now and perhaps for framing bills for such factories, we probably wouldn’t do it. But we want to do more. We want to understand the world in which we live, and therefore we have to see by what transformation, radical transformation, of earlier thinking, earlier understanding, our thinking, our acting, has come into being. Yes, Mr. Boyan?

Mr. Boyan: This distinction that you said may be the key question of the book, between the good and the pleasant here, is there any indication that Plato would think that the pleasant is a component, at least in some sense, of the good?

LS: In one of the most difficult dialogues—I mean, most difficult even at first sight—the *Philebus*, that’s exactly the thesis. The good consists of two components: knowledge and pleasure. Yes. I mean, the people who know Plato’s development because they have discovered Plato’s diaries will of course say that this argument didn’t get considered there. Now I will give a brief survey of the sequel until we come to a passage which we must read.

Now Socrates had spoken of rhetoric with *contempt*. It is something as contemptible as cookery and cosmetics. Rhetoricians are flatterers, worthless people, *powerless* people. Rhetoric, far from being omnipotent, as Gorgias had asserted and also denied,²⁸ is in fact *powerless*. That is now the Socratic assertion. In other words, Polus tries to refute Socrates by having recourse to the *power* of rhetoric: If the rhetoricians are so powerful as we all see, they cannot be flatterers; a powerful man doesn’t have to flatter. That is a simple refutation, which he tries. Socrates thereupon asserts, consistently, [that] the rhetoricians are *powerless*; no one pays any attention to them. Of course, if you remember what Gorgias said about Themistocles and Pericles, to whom much attention was paid, what Socrates says seems to be simply mad. But we will see how he means it. Now Polus uses as a simple proof of power the ability to kill, let us say to kill with impunity. Now Cleon for example—you remember, he could kill with impunity by getting laws drafted that the whole population of Mytilene should be killed.^{xii} That’s a sign of power. Polus says rhetoricians are like *tyrants*, so powerful—which implies, incidentally, as will come out later, that rhetoric is essentially unjust, if it is so similar to tyranny. And from now on the case of rhetoric becomes identical with the case of tyranny, which is due not merely to any slip of Polus but has a deeper reason²⁹—and a very obvious reason by the way. [Why?] Tyranny: coercion, force. And what is rhetoric, as Polus understands it? Fraud. Now fraud and force are *the* alternatives to honesty, to justice, and therefore there is some sense in that.

Now,³⁰ since the case of rhetoric has become identical with the case of tyranny, Socrates must assert that rhetoric is powerless in the same sense in which tyranny is powerless, which makes it in a way harder. Was Hitler powerless, or is Krushchev—not Krushchev perhaps, was Stalin powerless? *Only* justice, knowledge, virtue is powerful. This is a paradoxical thesis which Socrates is now trying to establish. Now Socrates gives one reason for his atrociously paradoxical assertion. What does it mean to have power? To be able to kill? No, but to do what is good for oneself. Did Hitler do what was good for himself? Look at his miserable end. Did Themistocles, an infinitely more respectable man, do what was good for himself? Look at his miserable end as an exile begging from the king of Persia. And even Pericles had, relatively speaking, a miserable end compared with when he was at his peak. Good. Now the argument becomes now gradually more

^{xii} Thucydides’ account of the events at Mytilene is given in the first half of Book 3 (III.1–50). Cleon’s speech to the assembly runs from III.36 to III.40.

precise. Let us begin perhaps in 466e13—that is, shortly before the beginning of 467.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then will you prove that the orators have intelligence, and that rhetoric is an art, not a flattery, and so refute me? Else, if you are going to leave me unrefuted, the orators who do what they think fit in their cities, and the despots, will find they have got no good in doing that, if indeed power is, as you say, a good, but doing what one thinks fit without intelligence is—as you yourself admit, do you not?—an evil.” (466e–467a)

LS: Polus admits that. Now the orators “have sense.”^{xiii} If the orators “have sense,” then rhetoric is a *technē*, is an art. This is here the premise. Otherwise they are just mere stupid routine . . . and routine is not reliable. And then if rhetoric is a *technē*, an art, then the rhetoricians have power. This is what Socrates states—a problem. The orators have no power if rhetoric is no *technē*, no art. The same applies to tyranny. The tyrants have no power if there is no tyrannical art. (The term “tyrannical art” occurs occasionally in Platonic writings.) You see here the identification of art and prudence, which is here made use of without giving us any reason. Whether rhetoric is an art or not depends on its being a link in the chain of the arts leading up to the master art, to the “architectonic art,” as Aristotle calls it. Hence, whether the orators have power—and even the tyrants—depends on the judgment on the master of the architectonic art: Socrates. So if Socrates denies that they have power, they have no power—which sounds atrocious, but is not quite so atrocious as it sounds, because nothing hurts the tyrants more than that there are some people without any power to kill who simply are in no way impressed by them, regard them as simply despicable murderers, nothing else. That hurts them very much. And if they find them out, they refute them in the only way in which they can refute them. [Laughter] That’s a very long speech. I will give you a kind of summary of what follows.

First, Socrates starts from the distinction [between] “to do what one wishes” and “to do what one believes to be good for oneself.” To do what one wishes means to do anything which may cross your mind at the moment, however irrational. Is this something desirable? But to do what one believes to be good for oneself, i.e., what one finds out by *calculation* and not merely because it comes to one’s mind, would seem to be something desirable. But then the argument goes on as follows. What precisely does a reasonable man wish? To do something, or to be in secure *possession* of the good things? Socrates says, “Well, of course, to be in secure possession of the good things is much better than to do.” The famous distinction between the theoretical and practical life is implied in that. All doing or acting is obtaining and securing the good things. All doing or acting belongs to the sphere of *means*; in itself, it is neither good nor bad. For example, sitting, standing, running, or whatever you do, is not good; it is neutral. The ends are the only things that count; in itself, it is neutral. But that means *power* is neutral, because it is not an end but a means. Only the ends can be good and therefore give goodness to the means. One of these ends is here admitted to be wealth. That’s a very grave admission. Yet we must ask: Is not wealth clearly a means as much as power and to the same degree? What, then, does

^{xiii} “Sense” here translates *nous*.

Socrates mean by this argument? The selfish, even sordid, desire for wealth is still more rational than the desire for killing and otherwise harming only for the fun of it. That's the first point which he establishes against Polus: that there is something *crudely* rational in any calculation, for any means whatever, which is superior to mere irrationality, to acting merely on whims.³¹ In other words, a man who kills for a purpose is more rational than a man who kills for the fun of it—for example, trampling men to death just for the fun of it. Polus—his name means “a colt”—he appears here as a kind of colt in human shape, and Socrates tries to instill the elements of rationality in him by pointing out to him this point.

We note here in passing, in 467e, that Polus regards *wisdom* also as a good, i.e., he has a somewhat higher point of view than the popular song quoted in 451e. I give you again the sequel when referring to 468c. It does make sense—no, let us read that. 468c2:

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then we do not wish to slaughter people or expel them from our cities or deprive them of their property as an act in itself—” (468c)

LS: Ya, “so simply”—just for the fun of it. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “but if these things are beneficial we wish to do them, while if they are harmful, we do not wish them. For we wish what is good, as you say; but what is neither good nor bad we do not wish, nor what is bad either, do we? Is what I say true in your opinion, Polus, or not? Why do you not answer?”

Pol.: “It is true.” (468c)

LS: So, in other words, this cannot be made clear in a dramatic dialogue: Polus hesitates to answer that he has said that. It means this: it does make sense to kill—for example, for the sake of wealth. On the basis of mere calculating selfishness, this is of course an open possibility, disregarding all other considerations. In other words, men who are only concerned with wealth would as little *desire* to harm other human beings as to help; they are utterly indifferent. But if it's conducive to their wealth, they would; otherwise, they would abstain from that. Yes, now let us read the sequel:

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then, as we agree on this, if a man puts anyone to death or expels him from his city or deprives him of his property—” (468d)

LS: We do not have to read that; I see that now. I will give you a brief summary of this speech. A man who kills, etc., in the belief that it is good for him, while it is in fact bad for him—now, from a strictly utilitarian point of view, such a man, who is mistaken, then does what *seems* to him to be good; he does not do what he *wishes* to do, because he wishes to do the good for himself. Hence, he is not powerful, because he³² [would be] powerful, not by the mere fact of killing but by the fact of advantageous killing, and this presupposes *some* reason. That's the first point. Let us go on at the speech of Polus, at 468e6.

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: “As if you, Socrates, would not accept the liberty of doing what you think fit in your city rather than not, and would not envy a man whom you observed to have put someone to death as he thought fit, or deprived him of his property or sent him to prison!” (468e)

LS: Ya, or “fettered.” Now you see that Polus is refuted. He’s unable to refute Socrates’ argument. But what Socrates says is *utterly incredible* to him: *anyone* would like to have this kind of power, to be able to kill people just because he doesn’t like them or to inflict any other harm on them. And Socrates is a human being. Ergo, he will have the same desire. So what does Socrates answer there?

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “Justly, do you mean, or unjustly?” (468e)

LS: Ya, now, a tremendous change. Hitherto we have spoken only of advantage and disadvantage on the lowest level, the utilitarian level. Now Socrates introduces the consideration of *justice*, and this will have decisive consequences for the rest of the argument. Let us read on here.

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: “Whichever way he does it, is it not enviable in either case?”

Soc.: “Hush, Polus!” (469a)

LS: Ya, “hush.” Ya, it is a little bit more than that: “God forbid” or something—*euphēmei*. This is a kind of reply to what Polus said in 467b–c, where he said of what Socrates said, “These are wicked things which you say.” Socrates says, “That’s wicked, what you say.” Go on:

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Because we ought not to envy either the unenviable or the wretched, but pity them.”

Pol.: “What! Is that the state in which you consider those people, of whom I speak, to be?”

Soc.: “Yes, for so I must.”

Pol.: “Then do you consider that a man who puts another to death as he thinks fit, and justly puts him to death, is wretched and pitiable.”

Soc.: “No I; but not enviable either.”

Pol.: “Did you not say just now that he was wretched?”

Soc.: “Only he who unjustly put someone to death, my friend, and I called him pitiable as well: if he acted justly, then he is unenviable.”
(469a–469b)

LS: Let us perhaps stop here for one moment. Previously we have been told, in 467e and 468a, that killing is in itself neither good nor bad but neutral, like sitting and standing. Now truly neutral things one may of course do just for the fun of it. I mean, whether I sit

or stand doesn't make any difference. You may sit or stand for the mere fun of it, but obviously you may not kill for the mere fun of it. Killing always needs a justification. It may have a justification; then it's just killing. But it needs one, where sitting and standing³³ [don't]. No one can ask you, "Why do you stand?" in an accusing form. Or, "Why do you sit?" Killing is bad *in itself*. More generally, certain actions are bad in themselves—Aristotle's beautiful discussion in the Second Book of the *Ethics* (1107a), where he says [that] in cases of killing and stealing, we have not to deliberate what is the right form, the right manner, right time and place for killing and stealing, as you have in neutral things, but the question simply mustn't arise. Or, as Socrates states in the First Book of the *Republic*, harming human beings is bad in itself—which doesn't mean that it may not be done *justly*; there may be justifications, but in itself it is bad. Now this is crucial for the rest of the argument. This notion of justice, as here used in the very simple sense, is the commonly accepted view on which all law and hence all forensic rhetoric is based: That there are things which are incapable of justification or in need of justification and things which are not in need of justification. Polus does not know³⁴ [this], this much is clear. Polus lacks that trivial knowledge of the just things which Gorgias admitted that every orator and surely every teacher of orators must possess. Socrates shows Gorgias *ad oculos* that Gorgias' deed—namely, what he did to Polus—disagreed with his claim that he will never send out anyone who has not learned the just things. Polus simply hasn't learned them.

In other words, Socrates' conversation with Polus is *the* refutation of Gorgias: "that is your art" This refutation is made for the sake of Gorgias. This could not be brought out but by making Polus first admit that killing is neutral and then that killing is not neutral. I mean, that he could consider³⁵ for one moment that killing is like sitting and standing shows that he doesn't know the rudiments which he would have to know even if he were willing to become the mouthpiece of *La Cosa Nostra*.^{xiv} Not Gorgias but Socrates teaches Polus the just things. This is surely an important part of the argument here. Needless to say that Socrates could have shown that harming human beings is bad without making the transition from the useful to the just. As a matter of fact, he does this in some dialogues—for example, in the *Euthyphro*, where he uses this extremely utilitarian argument [for] why harming human beings is imprudent.³⁶ He says: If you have a dog and maltreat him, do you expect that this will be a good dog? He will get nasty, especially to you; and horses, the same. And by induction the same implies to human beings. If you want to live with human beings, you'd better be decent to them.^{xv} I mean, a strictly utilitarian argument without any reference to justice as an independent principle. Let us read then the immediate sequel, then we will call it a day.

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: "I suppose, at any rate, the man who is put to death unjustly is both pitiable and wretched."

Soc.: "Less so than he who puts him to death, Polus, and less so than he who is put to death justly."

Pol.: "In what way can that be, Socrates?"

^{xiv} *La Cosa Nostra* is another name for the Mafia.

^{xv} See *Euthyphro* 13a–c.

Soc.: “In this, that to do wrong is the greatest of evils.” (469b)

LS: Have we ever read anything about “the greatest of evils” before?

Student: Ignorance and false opinions.

LS: Ya, false opinions about the important things. Now, what is implied? False opinions about justice is identical with acting unjustly, on the basis of this reasoning which we have seen but which we have not yet understood. Yes? Polus?

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: “What, is this the greatest? Is not to suffer wrong a greater?”

Soc.: “By no means.”

Pol.: “Then would you wish rather to suffer wrong than to do it?”

Soc.: “I should wish neither, for my own part; but if it were necessary either to do wrong or to suffer it, I should choose to suffer rather than to do it.” (469b–c)

LS: Let us stop here. This is the key point, and here we have the big watershed. There is, however, a certain hierarchy stated here which is not fully developed and which we must figure out, perhaps with the use of some parts of mathematical permutations. I give you my strictly non–mathematical results. Now what is the best is neither to do injustice nor to suffer injustice. The second best is to suffer injustice but not to do injustice. The third is to do injustice and not to suffer injustice—the tyrant. The worst is (which is not developed, but which is clear) to do injustice and to suffer injustice, which would follow from this argument. But let me restate it now in terms of killing rather than of doing and suffering injustice.

First, not killing is superior to killing justly, and that is superior to killing unjustly. But here the question arises: What is the place of *being killed*, justly or unjustly? Therefore, I believe we get this scheme: First, not killing and not being killed is best; then, killing justly and not being killed; third, not killing and being killed unjustly; fourth, killing unjustly and being killed justly; fifth, killing unjustly and not being killed justly, if this is a possibility. Killing justly is preferable to being killed unjustly. This is at least not excluded, that killing justly is preferable to being killed unjustly, meaning of course a case of self–defense against the unjust assailant. The right of self–defense is based on this proposition: that killing justly is preferable to being killed unjustly. Now the key consequence, as far as our present context is concerned, is this: If you accuse, through yourself or through a lawyer, someone else of a capital crime, and the man is guilty of this capital crime, you kill justly—whether the hangman does the decisive act, in fact you kill too. In other words, forensic rhetoric can be legitimate, which common sense of course will always admit, but which is somehow denied in the sequel by Socrates, as a consequence of his extreme notion, the severance of every connection between the good and the pleasant. We must find this out the next time. You want to say something? This will be the last question.

Student: I don't understand when you said you would pity a criminal more than you would pity the man who was killed.

LS: Ya, why is it strange? Incidentally, it is not as late as I thought. There can be someone else. What do you mean by that?

Same student: Well, generally, if a criminal wanted to kill a decent man, we would pity the decent man

LS: Ya. Have you never heard of people who are gentle and don't like killing in any manner? Which does not mean that they might not kill in war, for example, and³⁷ they might [even] be compelled to act as executioners. There may be a dearth of executioners, and it becomes necessary to draft someone—that can be imagined at least. What you say is this:³⁸ the desire for revenge, enjoying revenge, is such a healthy feeling that it should not be forbidden. That is what you imply.

Same student: Not at all.

LS: No? Then I misunderstood you.

Same student: No. Doesn't Socrates, when he's talking about pity, say that we would actually pity a man put to death unjustly less than we would the man put to death

LS: But does he go so far?

Same student: He's saying we would pity the death of a decent man less than

LS: No, the man who kills unjustly is miserable and, in addition, an object of compassion. The man who kills justly is neither miserable nor an object of compassion, but not *enviable*. That's something different.

Same student: Then he says—Polus, in my translation: “I suppose, at any rate, the man who is put to death unjustly is both pitiable and wretched.” Socrates says, “Less pitiable than he who puts him to death, Polus, and less pitiable than he who is put to death justly.”

LS: Ya. I mean, say, a man like Socrates, unjustly suffering death, is an object of pity and he is wretched. He says [that] here, ya? But Socrates says, “Yes, but he is less an object of pity and wretched than the unjust killer.” Yes, he will change that in the sequel. That doesn't go far enough for him. Later on he will assert [that] it does not make any difference because the only thing which counts is justice, and not any external fact. But here he still remains somewhat more with the commonsensical view that to be killed is an evil. Now what then is your precise point?

Same student: Well, I thought he had asserted that we pity unjust killers who are then put to death more than the just man who is put to death.

LS: Oh, I see. Yes. But why do you not do this? Go over the passage again. I will also do the same. Elaborate your difficulty in written form and hand it in to me at the beginning of the next meeting. That will be the best procedure. It seems³⁹ there is a difficulty here. In other words, must one really consider each item separately—“miserable” and “object of compassion”—which I did not do. It’s very necessary. Yes?

Student: What does this statement in 469c, what sort of light does it shed on the problem of the *Crito*, where Socrates seems to suffer injustice although he doesn’t commit any injustice?

LS: Ya, the *Crito* fully confirms that. Socrates prefers there suffering injustice to doing injustice. Running away from prison, bribing the jailer, would be unjust; he doesn’t do it. Staying in jail and drinking the hemlock, if Socrates is innocent, is suffering injustice. So he prefers suffering injustice to doing injustice.

Same student: The reason I ask is: Can one suffer injustice from one’s own hands justly? Another way of saying this is: Can one commit suicide justly?

LS: Well, that depends in the first place on whether suicide can be a just action. Now, if committing suicide is murder, then it means acting unjustly.

Same student: So does it shed that much light on the problem?

LS: Ya, but you presuppose one thing which has to be established, that Socrates’ not fleeing from prison was an act of suicide.

Same student: I presupposed simply that he drinks the hemlock as an act of suicide.

LS: Then you must say that everyone who is executed in the gas chamber commits suicide, which is an affront to common sense in itself.

Same student: Yeah, but does that necessarily have to follow?

LS: Well, a man may have managed it this way, so that in fact he commits suicide by committing a crime for which he will be killed by others, perhaps because the executioner is cleverer at killing him than he himself would be—an extreme case which is thinkable, but still unlikely.

Student: If Socrates in the *Apology* loses his case on purpose, that is, sets out to lose, would that be considered to be an act of suicide?

LS: Ya, sure, sure. If he loses it deliberately, it’s suicide.

Same student: Is it your opinion that he does lose his case deliberately?

LS: Well, he loses his case, obviously.

Same student: Deliberately?

LS: Deliberately? That's a long question. I mean, I can give you my answer lest you accuse me of cowardice. I believe he brought it about deliberately, but that is a very controversial view, and, at first glance, contrary. But I believe it is in fact so.

[break in the tape]

—if it was suicide. But most people would deny that, and the first–glance evidence is very much in their favor. In other words, you cannot simply, because I happen to have come to⁴⁰ [this] conclusion, assume that this is the sound view.

Same student: Well, I feel the same way.

LS: I see. Perhaps our reasons are strong. [Laughter] But it would have to be examined. So then next time we will continue with the Polus section.

[end of session]

¹ Deleted “I would say.”

² Deleted “I mean of the body.”

³ Deleted “but.”

⁴ Deleted “but.”

⁵ Deleted “him.”

⁶ Deleted “if.”

⁷ Moved “it seems to be.”

⁸ Deleted “because.”

⁹ Moved “either of the individual or the society.”

¹⁰ Deleted “in.”

¹¹ Deleted “being.”

¹² Deleted “that.”

¹³ Moved “prudence.”

¹⁴ Deleted “the.”

¹⁵ Deleted “have caught.”

¹⁶ Moved “can.”

¹⁷ Deleted “says.”

¹⁸ Deleted “through.”

¹⁹ Deleted “there.”

²⁰ Changed from “the example to which it was alluded.”

²¹ Moved “also.”

²² Deleted “he.”

²³ Deleted “and then.”

²⁴ Moved “an unqualified opposition.”

²⁵ Deleted “that.”

²⁶ Deleted “that's.”

²⁷ Deleted “what is.”

²⁸ Deleted “rhetoric.”

²⁹ Moved “why?”

³⁰ Deleted “Socrates.”

³¹ Changed from “That there is something *crudely* rational in any calculation, for whichever means, superior to mere irrationality, merely acting on whims.”

- 32 Deleted "is."
- 33 Deleted "doesn't."
- 34 Deleted "it."
- 35 Deleted "it."
- 36 Deleted "and."
- 37 Moved "even."
- 38 Deleted "is that."
- 39 Deleted "to be."
- 40 Deleted "the."

Session 6: no date

[In progress] **Leo Strauss**: A very learned question from Mr. Seltzerⁱ: “Could an existentialist consistently regard the fundamental reliances of the sphere of prudence as non-arbitrary, i.e., as something other than a groundless choice?” How would the question come up in this connection? I mean, the primary desires of men for self-preservation and so on, on which this notion of prudence is based—these are not simply arbitrary. But on every level but the lowest, this would not be sufficient, because there is always a tension between sheer self-preservation, let me say, and duty or whatever you call it. Now the content of duty differs from age to age, according to this view, and therefore the decision to be made here and now will always be affected by that. To that extent, that is groundless choice—not arbitrary, groundless.

“May not an argument against the study of philosophy be made in the following way?” (The author of this statement did not give us his name.) “Although the study of philosophy may lead to the discovery of the truth—even the truth for all times and places—the number of people who can know it, for instance, even the number of people who can understand Plato properly, is exceedingly small. We could never hope, for instance, to build a society on the expectation that those knowing the truth would be the dominant, or even powerful, element of it. Furthermore, of those who understand, the number who will be influenced by what they understand will be even smaller. In other words, although they might be acquainted with the best way to live, the irrational parts of their souls will still be their guide in their minds. In proof . . . they would remain servants to their passions. In paraphrase of Paul: For the good that they would, they would not do; but the evil they would not, that they would still do.ⁱⁱ Is there, then, a justification for the study of philosophy by those of us who cannot hope to reach the eternal truth in the first place? And even if we could, it is by an unbalanced soul. Would we not be unable to follow what we have learned because of this imbalance?”

Well, how do you know to which class¹ you belong before you have tried it? And secondly, I would say that it is not entirely left to our whims. Some people when they are confronted with difficulties do not find the minimum of rest until they have taken care of their difficulties. Many people can live thoughtlessly, and not only outside of universities, even inside of universities. I know that. Well, if they live what they regard as happily, they will never have a motivation, as they say, for going into these questions. And then I think it is better if they don't try, because without the incentive nothing can possibly come of it. Those who have the incentive—either without outside influence or through it, that doesn't make any difference—²can't help following it. I can't say more. And if that is a difficult problem for society as a whole, that there are more thoughtless people (in the deeper sense of the word thoughtless) than thoughtful people, then, by God, that society has a very great problem which cannot be [solved]. There are other reasons for assuming that, and wherever you start—the simple place of starting [today] is of course ³to take the

ⁱ Strauss responds to written questions submitted by students.

ⁱⁱ Romans 7:19.

problems of democracy. Wherever you dig a bit deeper, you see that there are very great problems. The question, in other words, is too abstract to be susceptible of a sufficient answer.

Now we come to Mr. Dry. Did you make your picture? That concerns that passage we discussed last time. Now while Mr. Dry is making his picture, I remind you briefly of the overall context before we turn to this passage.

First, another summary of the Gorgias section: there are two contradictions in that. First, rhetoric is omnipotent and rhetoric is not omnipotent—rhetoricians are in danger of being expelled from the cities. Second, rhetoric is not essentially just, it can be misused, and rhetoric is essentially just. On strictly utilitarian, calculating grounds, the rhetorician must assert that rhetoric is essentially just. Otherwise, he gets into trouble. And, in addition, he must even behave justly, because if he merely asserts it and doesn't act according to it, he may be accused, and then his rhetoric is not good enough to make him safe. This is the case: on strictly utilitarian grounds the rhetorician must assert that rhetoric is essentially just and must behave justly, precisely because rhetoric is not omnipotent. If it were omnipotent, he could do as he liked.

Now then we come to the Polus section. Socrates' long speech, which you remember: rhetoric is sham, contemptible, comparable to cosmetics. It is not only not omnipotent, but utterly powerless. Polus contradicts it: rhetoric is comparable in power to *tyranny*, to the greatest human power. The rhetoricians may kill as they please, just as tyrants. But, we must observe, if the rhetoricians are comparable to tyrants, they are rightly distrusted and persecuted by the citizen body, who doesn't want to tolerate any potential tyrants. Of this difficulty, Polus is not aware and it is also not pointed out by Socrates. The critique of Polus by Socrates is along these lines. First, to do what one pleases,⁴ like a tyrant, is not the same as to do what one wishes. To do what one pleases is simply to act irrationally; to do what one wishes is here meant in the sense of acting rationally. To do the things conducive to getting what one wishes, that's rational. One wishes to possess securely what is good for oneself. All doing is for the sake of such secure possessions. All doings are means, in themselves neither good nor bad but neutral. Killing is like sitting and standing up. In other words, it is not particularly good to kill If it is useful, then it is good; if it is harmful, then it is bad. This is not merely a momentary admission of Socrates or of Plato. In the *Statesman* (293c5–e2), you find the following statement. The Eleatic stranger, who there takes the place of Socrates, says:

It is then a necessary consequence that among forms of regimes that one is preeminently right and the only true regime in which the rulers are found to be truly possessed of *science*, not merely to seem to possess it. Whether they rule by law or without law, whether their subjects are willing or unwilling, and whether they themselves are rich or poor—none of these things can be at all taken into account on any correct account. [. . .] And whether they purge the city for its good by *killing* or banishing some of the citizens, or make it smaller by sending out colonies somewhere, or bring in citizens from elsewhere to make it larger, so long as they act in accordance with science and justice and preserve and benefit it by making it better than it was (so far as is possible), that must at that time and

by such characteristics be declared to be the only correct regime.ⁱⁱⁱ

So killing or not killing, that's not a criterion. The main point is whether they make the city better. This we must keep in mind because there is some of this argument of the best ruler implied, although not elaborated, in the *Gorgias*. We may say Socrates argues against Polus from the point of view of art, *technē* (one can say, in present-day language, from the point of view of "rationalism") from a point of view which could seem to be that of Polus himself: That there is truly a master art, the *political* art, which takes care of the city to make it as good as possible and which is not bound by the considerations of legality or constitutionality; it does the intrinsically good thing regardless of any other consideration, and killing or not killing are strictly subordinate considerations, depending on whether that killing is good for the city or not. This problem we must keep in mind for future reference. For the time being, we can only say that Polus is utterly untouched by this distinction between to do what one wishes and to do what pleases one at the moment.⁵ The reason is, I believe, this: because this master art at which Socrates points, the political art in the highest sense, would under no circumstances be *rhetoric*. And⁶ [Polus] is concerned with the place of rhetoric, the high rank of rhetoric. So, since Socrates has not achieved anything by radicalizing this utilitarianism, he introduces the distinction between acting justly and acting unjustly quite suddenly and without any preparation. In other words, certain actions are in themselves bad; [they] need justification. Killing is not like sitting and standing up, [such] that you can simply say, "Well, in this situation it is good for the city that this fellow be killed, and we kill him." No, the point of view of justice means you may not kill him if he is not guilty of a grave crime. From here on, Socrates follows up the demands of justice as distinguished from art. The consequence is that it is better to suffer injustice than to do injustice. This implies [that] it is not good to suffer injustice—by no means—but it is better than to do injustice. And if it is not good to suffer injustice, it follows that it is just to repel injustice. And a corollary to that: forensic rhetoric may be just, namely, if it is used only for the defense of the⁷ [just]. Polus, it appeared, did not know the just things. And this is, in a way, *the* refutation of Gorgias, because Gorgias said, "My pupils either know in advance what the just things are or they learn them from me." Polus has not learned them. Socrates teaches him, in his way, the just things—for example, that killing is not like standing up or sitting down.

Now at the end of this passage, which we discussed last Monday, we are confronted with a difficulty which Mr. Dry and/or someone else pointed out. There is a kind of hierarchy here. Now I went over the passage again, and I will first state my results and then see what Mr. Dry did, [and] if it differs from what I say. Now with a view to 469a–b, the order of rank in ascending order: The lowest is the man who kills unjustly; then comes the man who⁸ [is killed] justly; then the man who is killed unjustly; then the man who kills justly—he is the highest. This implies that killing justly is preferable to being killed unjustly—naturally, we would say. And that is where forensic rhetoric comes in, because by forensic rhetoric you may prevent your being killed unjustly. Mr. Dry, what is your schema?

ⁱⁱⁱ LS is quoting with slight modifications from the translation of Harold N. Fowler.

Mr. Dry: It is consistent with yours, but there are more possibilities there.

LS: Ya, which do you have which I did not have?

Mr. Dry: Well, down at the bottom: killing unjustly and not being punished would be even worse than killing unjustly and being punished for it.

LS: I see. You took in the question of punishment?

Mr. Dry: Yes.

LS: I see. And all differences are connected with this? All differences between your scheme and my scheme are—? I see. All right. But up to this point we agree. Good. Now, we will continue where we left off, in 469c, I think that's where we were, ya, or did we go beyond that? No, I think that's where we left off, 469c3. Socrates had just said, "I wouldn't wish either to do injustice or to suffer injustice, but if it were necessary to do either, I would choose rather to suffer injustice than to do injustice." Now, what does Polus say?

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: "Then you would not accept a tyrant's power?"

Soc.: "No, if you mean by a tyrant's power the same as I do."

Pol.: "Why, what I mean is, as I did just now, the liberty of doing anything one thinks fit in one's city—putting people to death and expelling them and doing everything at one's own discretion."(469c–469c)

LS: So, Polus repeats what he has said already twice before. But there is one change here. He omits now taking away money, that is to say, the most utilitarian of the three actions concerned. Killing, exiling: they are not necessarily profitable in the close sense of the word. But taking away money is. In other words, Polus becomes more irrational, more savage, in this part of the argument. Now let us go on:

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "My gifted friend, let me speak, and you shall take me to task in your turn. Suppose that in a crowded market I should hide a dagger under my arm and then say to you: 'Polus, I have just acquired, by a wonderful chance, the power of the tyrant; for if I should think fit that one of those people whom you see there should die this very instant, a dead man he will be, just as I think fit; or if I think fit that one of them shall have his head broken, broken it will be immediately; or to have his cloak torn to pieces, torn it will be: so great is my power in this city.' Then suppose that on your disbelieving this I showed you my dagger; I expect when you saw it you would say: 'Socrates, at this rate every one would have great power, for any house you thought fit might be set ablaze on these methods, and the Athenian arsenals also, and the men-of-war and all the rest of the shipping, both public and private.'"(469c–e)

LS: You see, the little joke involved in this is that you can all do all these things with a dagger. But Polus is so irrational that he does not even consider this minor technicality. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “But surely this is not what it is to have great power—merely doing what one thinks fit. Or do you think it is?”

Pol.: “On no, not in that way.”

Soc.: “Then can you tell me why you disapprove of this kind of power?”

Pol.: “I can.”

Soc.: “Why, then? Tell me.”

Pol.: “Because it is inevitable that he who acts thus will be punished.”

Soc.: “And is it not a bad thing to be punished?”

Pol.: “Certainly.”

LS: You see, Socrates talks as if he had to explain to a juvenile delinquent the most rudimentary elements of justice. Everyone is most powerful in the sense that he can do the utmost harm to others; everyone can kill anybody else. There is a whole doctrine based on this axiom, as you know. You know who did that? Hobbes. All men are equal because every man can do the greatest harm to everybody else. But if men are equal regarding the *greatest*, then they are equal. Hobbes was a much shrewder man than Polus, but there is some point which they have in common. But of course not everyone is powerful in the sense that by harming others he will benefit *himself*. That is, of course, the interesting kind of power, the only thing which deserves to be called power. Socrates doesn't give examples of robbery, theft, cheating, still less of exiling—of actions, in other words, which require more than the possession of a knife. Obviously, in the case of robbery, you must have not only the gun or whatever you need; you have also to have a get-away car. Otherwise it would be in no way beneficial to you. Now let us read on there:

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “So, my remarkable friend, you have come round again to the view that if doing what one thinks fit is attended by advantage in doing it, this is not merely a good thing but at the same time, it seems, the possession of great power; otherwise it is a bad thing and means little power. And let us consider another point beside; do we not admit that sometimes it is better to do those things that we were mentioning just now—to put people to death and banish them and deprive them of property—while sometimes it is not?”

Pol.: “To be sure.”

Soc.: “Then here is a point, it seems, that is admitted both on your side and on mine.”

Pol.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “Then when do you say it is better to do these things? Tell me where you draw the line.”

Pol.: “Nay, I would rather that you, Socrates, answered that.” (470a–b)

LS: You see, hitherto Polus has been the answerer and Socrates was the questioner. And from now on, the situation changes. We see in this section, when Socrates was the questioner,⁹ there is no reference to justice; the argument is strictly utilitarian. The reference to justice occurred in the section when *Polus* was the questioner and Socrates was the answerer. What does this mean? We must never forget that Socrates, *through* his conversation with Polus, speaks to *Gorgias* and wants to instruct Gorgias. By this change, Socrates gives to Gorgias to understand the following thing: he who must *answer* questions, or he who must give an account of himself, of his whole life, he who is on the *defensive*, as you orators are, must have recourse to justice. The questioner is not the one who has to give an account; he can speak in terms of utility alone. The rhetoricians are essentially on the defensive because of their great power which is not omnipotence. Because of their great power, they are distrusted. If it is not omnipotent, they must have some valid defense. You see here again in b6–7, the agreement between Polus and Socrates: killing is not always bad, i.e., not intrinsically bad.

Now let us go on. Socrates is now again the answerer. He answers now his own question: where to draw the line between actions which are good, in the morally neutral sense, and actions which are bad.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Well, then I say, Polus, if you prefer to hear from me, that it is better when these things are done justly, and worse when unjustly.” (470c)

LS: Yes. You see, Socrates, being again the answerer, brings in the consideration of justice: to kill justly is better; to kill unjustly is worse. He does not say, “to kill unjustly is *simply* bad,” nor “to kill justly is *simply* good.” He seems to make a concession to Polus’ desire. The difficulty is deeper, of course. This doesn’t come out here at all, because “justly” is an ambiguous term. It may mean *legally*—and the laws can be very bad—and it may mean *intrinsically* justly. This is not brought out here. Now, let us see. So Socrates has drawn the line: the good actions are just actions and the bad actions are unjust actions, to simplify matters. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: “So hard to refute you, Socrates! Nay, a mere child could do it, could he not, and prove your words are untrue?”

Soc.: “Then I shall be most grateful to the child, and equally to you, if you refute me and rid me of foolery. Come, do not grow weary in well-doing towards your friend, but refute me.”

Pol.: “Well, to be sure, Socrates, there is no need to refute you with ancient instances; for those happenings of but a day or two ago are enough to refute you, and prove that many a wrongdoer is happy.”

Soc.: “What sort of thing do you mean?” (470c–d)

LS: Now, what does Polus now assert? Many men who commit unjust acts are happy. Ya, but the Greek word *eudaimonos* has a somewhat more powerful meaning than the

English word “happy.” “Blessed” would be too strong, but it is in between “happy” and “blessed”—enviable people. Polus does not say that *all* men who commit unjust acts are happy or blessed. This implies—up to now, he’s denied [that] there may be just men who are happy. And Socrates is easy to refute by fresh examples, by *esempli freschi*, as Machiavelli would say, examples of a very short while ago, i.e., which everyone remembers and everyone can quasi-see with his own eyes. These examples *prove*, according to Polus, that unjust killing is useful to the killers. Well, I believe those of you who have heard Mr. Valachi^{iv} will know that, given a certain condition or judicial system, that’s true. Good. Now, let us read the proof.

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: “I suppose you see that Archelaus, son of Pediccas, is ruler of Macedonia?”

Soc.: “Well, if I do not, at any rate I hear it.” (470d)

LS: Now Archelaus was a very famous man ruling in the north. Thucydides has two chapters on him at the end of the Second Book. He was a friend of letters. Euripides and other famous men went there. And, according to tradition, Socrates also was invited to spend his life at the court of this renowned tyrant. Socrates, however, in contradistinction to Euripides, declined the honor. Good. So these things have some autobiographic background if we may say so. Good.

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: “Do you consider him happy or wretched?”

Soc.: “I do not know, Polus; I have never met the man.”

Pol.: “What? Could you find out by meeting him, and cannot otherwise tell, straight off, that he is happy?”

Soc.: “No, indeed, upon my word—” (470d–e)

LS: “By Zeus, not!” Yeah, that is the first perfectly regular oath of Socrates’ occurring here: the simple formula *Ma Dia*. Now, go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: “Then doubtless you will say, Socrates, that you do not know that even the Great King is happy.”

Soc.: “Yes, and I shall be speaking the truth; for I do not know how he stands in point of education and justice.” (470e)

LS: Let us stop here for one moment. How does Polus prove that the unjust men are happy? Two big examples: Archelaus and the King of Persia. In order to make it easier to understand, you can easily replace them by present-day examples, not necessarily from the field of politics; you can also take them from the field of the plays, you know, the theatre or the movies, because celebrities in that sphere are today perhaps better known than political celebrities. Now what are the men? They are both barbarians, barbarians *without rhetoric*. So if he wants to find the best example in favor of rhetoric, he goes to

^{iv} Joseph Valachi testified before the United States Senate in 1963, becoming the first Mafioso publically to acknowledge the existence of the Mafia.

examples of non-orators. He doesn't know how much he ruins his own case. The fact that he is compelled to have recourse to these examples constitutes *his* refutation. If you want to be truly powerful, then rhetoric is not good enough; this is the way to do it. He admits the powerlessness of rhetoric by having recourse to tyrants. Gorgias' big examples, you will remember, have been Themistocles and Pericles—orators. But, as we see now easily in retrospect, were they *merely* orators? Of course not. They were in the first place excellent *generals*, and this is something which can go with relatively little of rhetoric. So, in other words, the claim of rhetoric to be *the* road to power has now been completely finished. And here read again the last statement of Socrates, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Yes, and I shall be speaking the truth; for I do not know how he stands in point of education and justice.” (470e)

LS: Polus?

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: “Why, does happiness entirely consist in that?”

Soc.: “Yes, by my account, Polus; for a good and honourable man or woman, I say, is happy, and an unjust and wicked one is wretched.” (470e)

LS: Yes. Now, what he calls here—it¹⁰ [is translated] “honorable and good”; more literally perhaps “beautiful and good,” “fair and good.” That is one notion, and [it] is ordinarily translated in English by “gentleman” or “perfect gentleman,” and that's not a bad translation at all. So education and justice, i.e., perfect gentlemanship, are the *whole* [of] happiness; nothing else is required. Formerly, wisdom had been praised, in 467e. We may say wisdom is now replaced by the combination of justice and education, whatever these things may mean. And another implication: If this is the *whole* [of] happiness, happiness does not require wealth, obviously—nor health, nor beauty. The things which were praised in that popular song, in 451, as the highest goods (you remember that), they are not goods to speak of. *The* good is health of the soul, as one could say, but more specifically stated, education plus justice. Justice is not only the necessary condition of happiness, but is itself happiness. The body does not count. Of course, without a body you couldn't live, but its condition is not decisive. Since the body does not count, the difference between the two sexes becomes irrelevant: women and men, no difference there. This point is much more elaborated in the *Republic*, where the equality of the two sexes is explicitly asserted. But this is strange because the expression “a perfect gentlewoman,” if I may translate it, is apparently very rare, if it occurs at all in classical Greece. So Socrates goes now much beyond what he had said before. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: “Then this Archelaus, on your statement, is wretched?”

Soc.: “Yes, my friend, supposing he is unjust.” (471a)

LS: Because, after all, Socrates doesn't know it. He has only *heard* of him, and he has perhaps also heard different stories about him. Now comes the proof.

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: “Well, but how can he be other than unjust? He had no claim to the throne which he now occupies, being the son of a woman who was a slave of Perdiccas’ brother Alcetas, and in mere justice he was Alcetas’ slave—” (471a)

LS: Ya, but, “in accordance with the just” or “the right.” May I say why I say that? Because this “just” to which he refers is, of course, in itself, in our language, the “positive right” of the Macedonians or the Greeks in general. That’s clear. In the first place, we don’t know whether there are slaves by nature. And in the second case, even if there were slaves by nature, it would not necessarily follow that the son of a slave must follow the status of his mother. That’s positive law. And one could of course say, “the positive law might be very unjust.” This only in passing. But read this again.

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: “being the son of a woman who was a slave of Perdiccas’ brother Alcetas, and by right he was Alcetas’ slave; and if he wished to do what is just, he would be serving Alcetas and would be happy, by your account; but, as it is, he has become a prodigy of wretchedness, since he has done the most enormous wrong. First of all he invited this very master and uncle of his to his court, as if he were going to restore to him the kingdom of which Perdiccas had deprived him; and after entertaining him and his son Alexander—his own cousin, about the same age as himself—and making them drunk, he packed them into a carriage, drove them away by night, and murdered and made away with them both. And after all these iniquities he failed to observe that he had become a most wretched person, and had no repentance, but a while later he refused to make himself happy by bringing up, as he was justly bound, his brother, the legitimate son of Perdiccas, a boy about seven years old who had a just title to the throne, and restoring his kingdom to him; but he cast him into a well and drowned him, and then told his mother Cleopatra that he had fallen in and lost his life while chasing a goose. So now, you see, as the greatest wrongdoer in Macedonia, he is the most wretched of all the Macedonians, not the happiest; and I daresay some Athenians could be found who would join you in preferring to change places with any other Macedonian of them all, rather than with Archelaus!” (471a–d)

LS: Yes. So, now here we have the proof of successful injustice or wickedness. But, if we,¹¹ without considering any other sources, read only this account, it is not as clear as Polus sets it out to be. Whom did Archelaus kill, according to this report? Clearly, his uncle and his cousin. He surely did not commit the most abominable crime of killing his own father. Not even Polus has said that. At the time when he committed this act, Archelaus was clearly in possession of the rule which his father Perdiccas had taken away from the father’s brother Alcetas, ya? Now perhaps—we do not know; we know nothing about the death of Perdiccas—but perhaps Perdiccas had been murdered by Alcetas, and Archelaus merely revenged his father. You know? It’s very dark. And, above all, what evidence is here for proving that Archelaus murdered his young half-brother? Maybe he really dropped into that¹² pit while chasing a goose. The mere assertion of Polus does not

establish it sufficiently. In passing, I mention there is no evidence from any other source that Archelaus was such a criminal. We do not know. Is this a piece of Polus' rhetoric, of his accusatory, vindictive rhetoric, or calumniating perhaps? We do not know. At any rate, the case of the prosperity of the wicked is not as easily established as Polus thinks. For example, if someone would—let us take a simple example of our lifetime—if someone would have proven the prosperity of the wicked¹³ [with] Hitler in 1937, the situation looks very different in 1945—no, 1944, even. So even this simple argument needs a bit more reflection than Polus assumes. You see here also from this statement that Polus remembers now very well the just things in the loose sense of the term, for example, that the son of a slave follows the status of his mother—one just thing—and other things. So he is making gradually some progress in a strange way. Good. Now let us continue:

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “At the beginning of our discussion, Polus, I complimented you on having had, as I consider, a good training in rhetoric, while you seem to have neglected disputation; and now, accordingly, this is the argument, is it, with which any child could refute me? By this statement, you think, I now stand refuted at your hands, when I assert that the wrongdoer is not happy? How so, my good friend? Why, I tell you I do not admit a single point in what you say.” (470d)

LS: So Socrates, as we see from here, will not question the facts. So let us grant that Archelaus committed all these murders, and yet he rules Macedonia uncontested and enjoys all the appurtenances of royal power. Socrates says, “Granting all these facts, nothing follows.” Why?

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: “No, because you do not want to; for you really agree with my statement.” (471e)

LS: Ya, that is the point to which Polus comes back time and again, and which will later on become perfectly clear. Polus cannot *imagine* that Socrates does not envy that tyrant. He cannot imagine that. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “My gifted friend, that is because you attempt to refute me in rhetorical fashion, as they understand refuting in the law courts. For there, one party is supposed to refute the other when they bring forward a number of reputable witnesses to any statements they may make, whilst their opponent produces only one, or none. But this sort of refutation is quite worthless for getting at the truth; since occasionally a man may actually be crushed by the number and reputation of the false witnesses brought against him. And so now you will find almost everybody, Athenians and foreigners, in agreement with you on the points you state, if you like to bring forward witnesses against the truth of what I say: if you like, there is Nicias, son of Niceratus, with his brothers, whose tripods are standing in a row in the Dionysium; or else Aristocrates, son of Scellias, whose

goodly offering again we have in the Pythium; or if you choose, there is the whole house of Pericles or any other family you may like to select in this place. But I, alone here before you, do not admit it, for you fail to convince me: you only attempt, by producing a number of false witnesses against me, to oust me from my reality, the truth. But if on my part I fail to produce yourself as my one witness to confirm what I say, I consider I have achieved nothing of any account towards the matter of our discussion, whatever it may be; nor have you either, I conceive, unless I act alone as your one witness, and you have nothing to do with all these others. Well now, this is one mode of refutation, as you and many other people conceive it; but there is also another which I on my side conceive. Let us therefore compare them with each other and consider if we find a difference between them. For indeed the points which we have at issue are by no means of slight importance: rather, one might say, they are matters on which it is most honourable to have knowledge, and most disgraceful to lack it; for in sum they involve our knowing or not knowing who is happy and who is not. To start at once with the point we are now debating—” (471e–472d)

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment. Why does Socrates make this long speech? He gives now examples from [among the] Athenians and, as it happens, from all Athenian parties: oligarchic, democratic, and in-between people. The most respectable Athenians agree with *Polus*, Socrates asserts. Then *Polus*’ assertion appears in a different light. *Polus* can no longer be blamed for [not] believing that Socrates holds the opinions he holds, because everyone except Socrates believes that doing injustice is preferable to suffering injustice. It amounts to this. In other words, very few people would speak in these bold terms in which *Polus* speaks, but this is the maxim on which everyone, with the exception of Socrates, acts—and the pillars of society in particular. That’s a strong point. Therefore some of the blame which we might attach to *Polus* does not belong to him in particular. It belongs to almost all men, with the exception of such men as Socrates. That’s a grave assertion.

You see also here how ridiculous from Plato’s point of view George Grote’s defense of the sophists^v looks when he said, “Plato is very unfair to these people because the principles stated by the sophists and so on, or what they did in fact, is not different from what every MP^{vi} does.” But Plato would turn the tables, of course, and would question the moral character of the MPs, and not only of some people like Profumo—^{vii}in other words, of all people who choose a way of life except that which Socrates regards as the highest. The success of the wicked does not prove the felicity of the wicked. That’s the simple point which Socrates says. *Polus* appeals rhetorically to *doxa*, to reputation: these people are admired and looked up to. He brings witnesses who might prove, perhaps, *visible* facts—for example, that Archelaus murdered his seven year old half-brother—but who can surely not prove, if I may say so, *invisible* facts like happiness or misery,

^v See George Grote, *History of Greece*, vol. 3 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1856), chap. 67.

^{vi} Member of Parliament.

^{vii} John Profumo (1915–2006) was a British politician most famous for his involvement in a prostitution scandal (now referred to as “The Profumo Affair”), which forced him to resign his post in 1963.

because that is well concealed in the hearts of men, and if witnesses appear, they cannot settle this question. Polus has on his side the most known Athenians. He has on his side *opinion*. Socrates, however, is concerned with *knowledge*, and cannot be satisfied with opinion—knowledge regarding the most important things. And these most important things are indicated here by this question: What precisely is happiness? All men strive for happiness, but they understand by happiness very different things. And all men, except Socrates and¹⁴ [his] like, have the wrong view of happiness. That is already the implication from here on. And, more specifically, the question is in here—let us read the rest of the speech, Mr. Reinken, the end of the speech.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “To start at once with the point we are now debating, you consider it possible for a man to be happy while doing wrong, and as a wrongdoer, since you regard Archelaus as a wrongdoer, and yet happy. We are to conclude, are we not, that this is your opinion?”

Pol.: “Certainly.” (472d)

LS: Ya, now, what is the more specific question then? I translate literally: “Can a man who does wrong and is unjust be blessed?” Now, the unjust man, that’s a man of the unjust disposition. And the man who does unjust acts does not have to have an unjust disposition, and vice versa. Must the unjust disposition and the unjust action come together in order to impair or destroy happiness? Is happiness impaired by an unjust disposition which never issues in an unjust act—for example, out of indifference or out of cowardice, fear of consequences? On the other hand, is happiness impaired by a *single* unjust act? We are reminded of this important difference between the unjust disposition and the unjust act by this use of the term. And we must always keep [this] in mind, because later on the issue will be extremely simplified, and Socrates will speak only of unjust *acts*—murder, theft, or whatever it may be, which¹⁵ [are] not the same as an unjust disposition, obviously. Yes?

Mr. Glenn: Does Plato develop that any place? I know Aristotle does. But does he develop this distinction?

LS: Very well, Mr. Glenn. Aristotle develops it indeed. We have read it—you know where. Well, tell the class where,¹⁶ [since] someone might not know it and would like to read it up.

Mr. Glenn: It’s in the *Ethics*.

LS: In the Fifth Book, ya . . . good. Yes, but on the other hand, I could not offhand tell you whether Plato makes the distinction ever. It is very simple. By consulting the Plato lexicon one could probably find an answer to this question. So it’s not very difficult. But I would say, apart from that, when you read Aristotle’s analysis, you see that is not merely an Aristotelian discovery. That was known. I mean, that a man who is an honest man occasionally makes a grave slip can happen. And yet while it might be fatal to his reputation, in the vulgar sense of the term, equitable people would say, “Nevertheless, I

trust him for all the future, because it was a rare concatenation of circumstances which brought it about.” At any rate, I put to you the question in this form: Why does he use this clumsy expression, “one who is a doer of unjust acts as well as unjust,” unless there is a big difference here? Yes. Good. So now the issue is clearly joined on these terms. But with this great ambiguity, whether the distinction between the man of unjust disposition and the man of an unjust action¹⁷ is relevant. We will see in the sequel it is perfectly sufficient to consider only the unjust act, which, after all, is the only one which is of importance to a law court. No one is punished for having an unjust disposition, obviously. There is no such crime. But people are accused and condemned for having committed an act of murder, theft, or whatever it might be. Now, let us go on. Is there any other point? Let’s go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “And I say it is impossible. There we have one point at issue. Very good; but then, will a man be happy in wrongdoing if he comes in for requital and punishment?”

Pol.: “Not at all, since in that case he would be most wretched.”

Soc.: “But if the wrongdoer escapes requital, by your account he will be happy?”

Pol.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “Whereas in my opinion, Polus, the wrongdoer or the unjust is wretched anyhow; more wretched, however, if he does not pay the penalty and gets no punishment for his wrongdoing, but less wretched if he pays the penalty and meets with requital from gods and men.”

Pol.: “What a strange doctrine, Socrates, you are trying to maintain!”
(472d–473a)

LS: Ya, more literally: “You attempt to say absurd things, Socrates.” Socrates enlarges the thesis. Socrates is again the questioner. Socrates says here that the man who commits an unjust act and is unjust is altogether wretched, but less wretched than when he pays retribution and when he is being punished by gods and men. The duality of the unjust disposition and the unjust act is matched by the duality of paying retribution and being punished by gods and men. That’s the first reference here to divine punishment in this dialogue. Now we can see the connection between the two dualities I mentioned. Men punish only the men who commit unjust acts; the punishment for unjust disposition can only be divine punishment. This is not clear? For example, someone who always does the just things and never does an unjust thing, but¹⁸ [who] does it only out of laziness—it’s too complicated to commit crimes—or out of indifference or out of sheer fear of the consequences, is obviously not a just man. But no human being can punish him; gods can punish him. This is the reason why this comes up. Polus asserts that that man who commits an unjust act, if not punished, is happy; if punished, he’s wretched. In other words, the moral idea which everyone knows from criminals, you know? If they are *caught* for robbery, then they are losers. But if they are not caught, they celebrate the haul with their “dolls,” or whatever the fashionable expression at the moment might be. Successful unjust action is the condition of happiness: no happiness without committing

unjust acts. Polus goes now further than he ever did before. But the implication, which we must never forget, [is] that Polus does not mean to speak of *criminals*; he means to speak of the finest people in Athens and elsewhere. Only the criminals do it in such a crude way—you know, that’s not the good thing. The pillars of society do it in a much more rewarding manner. That is what he means. Good. Now, let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Yes, and I will endeavor to make you too, my friend, maintain it with me: for I count you as a friend. Well—” (473a).

LS: Well, does this mean Socrates will help him because he is a friend? Does this mean that he will help *only friends*? And if this is true, is Socrates an altogether just man? There is the famous saying by Polemarchus in the First Book of the *Republic*, “justice consists in helping friends and hurting enemies.” And in a dialogue now regarded as spurious by most people, the *Cleitophon*—the introduction to the *Republic* in the traditional order of dialogues—this definition is said to be the Socratic definition of justice.^{viii} Now this is a very complicated story, but it is at any rate a point which we have to consider. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Well now, these are the points on which we differ; just examine them yourself. I think I told you at an earlier stage that wrongdoing was worse than being wronged.”

Pol.: “Certainly you did.”

Soc.: “And you thought that being wronged was worse.”

Pol.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “And I said that wrongdoers were wretched, and I was refuted by you.”

Pol.: “By Zeus, yes.” (473a)

LS: That’s the only time in the Polus section that Polus swears. So he must have had a particularly strong conviction that here he was on safe ground. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “At least to your thinking, Polus.”

Pol.: “Yes, and true thinking too.”

Soc.: “Perhaps. But you said, on the other hand, that wrongdoers are happy, if they pay no penalty.”

Pol.: “Certainly.”

Soc.: “Whereas I say they are most wretched, and those who pay the penalty, less so. Do you wish to refute that as well?”

Pol.: “Why, that is still harder to refute, Socrates, than the other!”

Soc.: “Not merely so, Polus, but impossible; for the truth is never refuted.” (473b)

^{viii} *Cleitophon* 410a–b.

LS: Let us stop here for one moment. On the whole, Socrates here merely restates his thesis, and Polus his, as before. But now in the simple form. He speaks now only of the wrongdoers—no longer of the men of unjust disposition—which simplifies the situation greatly, because it is, to repeat, the only form of injustice which is punishable by men. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: “How do you mean? If a man be caught criminally plotting to make himself a tyrant, and he be straightaway put on the rack and castrated and have his eyes burnt out, and after suffering himself, and seeing inflicted on his wife and children, a number of grievous torments of every kind, he be finally crucified or burnt in a coat of pitch, will he be happier than if he escape and make himself tyrant, and pass his life as the ruler in his city, doing whatever he likes, and envied and congratulated by the citizens and foreigners besides? Impossible, do you tell me, to refute that?” (473c–d)

LS: The laughing of some of you seems to indicate, if I understood it correctly, that you find that Polus [has] got a point. [Laughter] In other words, there is a certain amount of common sense in this assertion. It is important to observe that he uses the present tense in the main point: “You know, this fellow here, now he is being tortured and he sees how his wife and children—he *sees* that.” And then let us make a simple experiment. I don’t know whether you remember the name of Skorzeny.^{ix} This was one of Hitler’s friends who saved Mussolini from imprisonment in ’43 in Italy. Now let us assume, in such a situation, the tyrant has just undergone this punishment. Skorzeny plus ten other crack men *liberate* him. Now the question is: Will he be happier after the liberation? From his point of view, we can safely say he will feel happy. But what is much more important for the whole argument, because the implication of Socrates is, as will become clearer from every step, [that] punishment makes men *better*:¹⁹ Will the tyrant, after having undergone part of the punishment, be a milder tyrant or a more savage tyrant? And I believe we all would say the chances are that he will be much more savage after having undergone this experience than before. You see, Polus does have some rhetorical gifts. This was a very powerful statement. The soul of the tyrant is not obviously improved if he and his children and his wife are tortured and otherwise badly treated in such a situation. Yes. Good. Now, Socrates must have an answer to this argument. What does he say?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “You are trying to make my flesh creep this time, my spirited Polus, instead of refuting me; a moment ago you were for calling witnesses. However, please refresh my memory a little: ‘criminally plotting to make himself a tyrant,’ you said?”

Pol.: “I did.” (473d)

LS: Now, this brings up another problem. Can you justly plot to become the tyrant? You know, otherwise Socrates’ question doesn’t make sense. What does this imply?

^{ix} Otto Skorzeny (1908–1975), an SS officer. The event to which LS refers took place in 1943 and is now known as the Gran Sasso raid.

Previously, when tyranny came up in 469c, it was understood to be *simply* bad. Here it is implied you may justly strive for tyranny. Is this a unique suggestion of Socrates here? Or is there some further Platonic evidence that the problem of tyranny is a bit more complicated? Well, two mentions occur to me immediately. One is in the *Phaedrus*, where Socrates gives an enumeration of various jobs, professions, which can be exercised nobly or badly.^x And at the top is, of course, the philosopher, and then the king and so on. At the bottom is the tyrant, but with the implication: tyranny can be exercised nobly or badly. That's one place. And the other is a passage in the *Laws*, when the legislator, the perfect legislator, is asked, "What do you need in order to establish a good city with good laws?" The legislator says, "Give me a young tyrant, i.e., a man who has that power, [so] that I can introduce that code which I regard as good."^{xi} So the problem of tyranny is in a way identical with that of killing. Is killing one possible means, as²⁰ was stated in the passage of the *Statesman*, or is it impossible under any conditions, except of course as punishment for a proven crime? This is a grave question, and we cannot possibly disregard it. And there is something else which we must not overlook. Socrates accuses Polus again: "You are using *rhetorical* means. Formerly, you tried to solve it by bringing in witnesses, who in the nature of the case had to be incompetent. Now²¹ [you are] using frightening as a means. Frightening—that's no argument." But of course Socrates is not quite fair. Polus' argument has a certain power, and it is not merely meant to frighten. I mean, Socrates wouldn't be frightened by it. But it is a difficulty. Now, let us see where this all leads up to:

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "Then neither of them will ever be happier than the other—neither he who has unjustly compassed the tyrannic power, nor he who pays the penalty; for of two wretched persons neither can be *happier*; but still more wretched is he who goes scot-free and establishes himself as tyrant. What is that I see, Polus? You are laughing? Here we have yet another form of refutation—when a statement is made, to laugh it down, instead of disproving it." (473d–e)

LS: You see, that's the third: bringing witnesses, frightening, and laughing—rhetorical means.²² [They] cannot refute, which is in a way of course perfectly correct. But the question is whether sometimes laughing is a reaction to a manifestly absurd assertion, so that the laughing is only a consequence of the implied true refutation, which must be spelled out, of course, that what has been asserted is absurd. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: "Do you not think yourself utterly refuted, Socrates, when you make such statements as nobody in the world would assent to? You have only to ask anyone of the company here." (473e)

LS: Ya, now Polus becomes now serious and says: "You are mistaken, I do not argue rhetorically by these means, like frightening, laughing, and so on. I refute by reference to what was later called the *consensus omnium*, the 'universal consent.' That is the reason

^x *Phaedrus* 248c–e.

^{xi} *Laws* 709d–e.

why what you say is so ridiculous or so absurd, because all men would admit that the point as I stated it is correct.” If something is universally agreed to, there is no possibility of criticizing it. That’s a long, long story. And today we are taught in school from very early in life that this is of course absurd, because everyone knows that up to a certain point people believed that the Earth is in the center and the heavenly bodies move around it, and yet while there was a *consensus omnium* regarding that, since Copernicus and so [on], we know that is not true. They introduce a simpler example:²³ all men who are not astronomers believe that the sun is perhaps as big as the building here, but that the sun is much, much bigger than the earth, which is against the *consensus omnium*, is found out by the astronomers. Well, there is, of course, a case: here we can rightly say we are not by nature competent to judge the size of the sun—it’s too far away. But in human things, where no one can be more competent than human beings are, there the consensus of all is a perfectly sufficient criterion. How does Socrates get out of that?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Polus, I am not one of your statesmen: indeed, last year, when I was elected a member of the Council, and, as my tribe held the Presidency, I had to put a question to the vote, I got laughed at for not understanding the procedure. So do not call upon me again to take votes of the company now; but if, as I said this moment, you have no better disproof than those, hand the work over to me in my turn, and try the sort of refutation that I think the case requires. For I know how to produce one witness in support of my statements, and that is the man himself with whom I find myself arguing; the many I dismiss—” (473e–474a)

LS: No, “with the many I do not converse.” That should be translated more literally.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “there is also one whose vote I know how to take, whilst to the multitude I have not a word to say—” (474a)

LS: No, I am sorry, this was the one: “with the many I do not converse.” This is the one which means “with the many I do not converse.”

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “with the many I do not converse. See therefore if you will consent to be put to the proof in your turn by answering my questions. For I think, indeed, that you and I and the rest of the world believe that doing wrong is worse than suffering it, and escaping punishment worse than incurring it.”

Pol.: “And I, that neither I nor anyone else in the world believes it. You, it seems, would choose rather to suffer wrong than to do it.”

Soc.: “Yes, and so would you and everyone else.”

Pol.: “Far from it; neither I nor you nor anybody else.” (474a–b)

LS: Let us stop here. Polus has had recourse to the universal consent. Now strictly speaking, there was of course no universal consent, because it was the consent, at most, of everyone minus Socrates. But in addition, one can rightly say: In what sense can you

have universal consent? There are always madmen, and madmen are people who do not consent to what all sane human beings say. That's a difficulty. You see from this reply of Socrates that Socrates says, "the consent of all speaks in favor of me, of my assertion, not in favor of your assertion." *Both* have recourse to universal consent. What does this mean? Socrates first gives an example which seems to be relevant. Now what is that example? That example was probably the vote in the trial of the generals of the Arginusae, who won the sea battle of the Arginusae^{xii}—whether that or another occasion is unimportant. This was a situation where, of course, there existed no agreement: the majority was in favor of condemnation, and the minority was against the condemnation. But this is not the immediate reason why Socrates uses the example. Generally speaking, universal consent is of course never provable, empirically provable, because at all times the number of dead human beings is much greater than the number of the living ones, and universal consent means of course not only the consent of people now but the consent of all men. This can never be empirically established. Yet, in spite of it, *both* men claim *universal* agreement to their assertion—in such a way, however, that Socrates says the decision will entirely depend on the outcome of his dialogue with Polus: if Polus will agree to what Socrates asserts, then the universal consent is established. Now, is this not very strange? What does he mean by that? I mean, how can the agreement by a single man make sure that *all* men will agree? Mr. Dry?

Mr. Dry: Well, it would be if that single man

LS: Ah, I see. At least universal consent *de jure*, let us say; *de facto* he would not have it, of course. But this would be sufficient. In other words, all men who take the trouble to think about it would come around to Socrates' point of view. And this presupposes, however, that the argument of Polus is *the* watertight and absolutely rational argument. If not, it would at best prove that people of the *kind* of Polus would always agree with it. Is that clear? You want to say something, Mr. Wegner?

Mr. Wegner: No.

LS: No? Good. Let us read again—this sentence, by the way, "I do not converse with the many," this reminds of a passage in Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, 37a6–7, in which Socrates calls his speech—his sole forensic speech, his speech of defense—his "conversation" with the Athenians, i.e., with the many. One has to consider our passage here in trying to understand the *Apology*. If Socrates *never* converses with the many, then

^{xii} LS is referring to the Battle of Arginusae (406 B.C.), the largest naval engagement of the Peloponnesian War. Although the outcome was an Athenian victory, a severe storm prevented the Athenians from rescuing the crews of damaged ships and recovering the bodies of the dead for burial. Of the eight surviving generals, two refused to return to Athens, and the remaining six were tried and convicted for what was regarded as an egregious neglect of duty. That the six generals were tried as a group was a clear transgression of Athenian legal procedures. For this reason, Socrates, who by chance was serving as a chairman of the council at the time, refused to take part in the trial, after strenuously urging the council to try them in strict accordance with the established legal procedure. See *Apology of Socrates* 32a–c; Xenophon, *Hellenica* I.6–7, *Memorabilia* I.1.18, IV.4.2.

the *Apology* cannot be a true conversation, and it can only be a piece of *rhetoric*, and with all the implications which this has. Now, let us repeat the sentence with which this speech of Socrates ends. “I believe,” he says—

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “that you and I and the rest of the world—” (474b)

LS: “and the other human beings,” ya?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “believe that doing wrong is worse than suffering it, and escaping punishment worse than incurring it.” (474b)

LS: And what does Polus say?

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: “And I, that neither I nor anyone else in the world believes it. You, it seems, would choose rather to suffer wrong than to do it.”

Soc.: “Yes, and so would you and everyone else.”

Pol.: “Far from it; neither I nor you nor anybody else.” (474b)

LS: You see, here there is a subtle difference between the consent appealed to by Socrates, on the one hand, and by Polus, on the other. Socrates says: “All men—whether they admit it now or not—all men *believe* that doing injustice is worse than suffering injustice.” And Polus says—Polus doesn’t use the expression “believe”—“accept” or, to make it better, “choose.” Socrates refers to what people *think*; Polus refers to what is *operative* in all men. Now, if stated in this form, *both* men could be right: that all men *say* the one thing, but *act* on the other. It would, of course, be a very sad situation if this were the last word. But this is not formally a contradiction. This is the key to the refutation of Polus, not only to the substance of the refutation but also to its limitations, to its mode. Socrates refers to the consensus in *holding*; Polus refers to the consensus in the *feeling* on which people act. So in other words, a man might very well say one should undergo these tortures which the tyrant undergoes. “But consider yourself in the situation,”²⁴ Polus says: “When you are burned and tortured and see your family [suffer these things], will you then still act upon it?” And what counts ultimately is, of course, those feelings on which men act, and not merely the views which they hold when they are in the study and where they do not have to act. This we must keep in mind for the rest of the refutation. Socrates asks, then, Polus²⁵ [to] answer, namely, [to] answer²⁶ the questions which follow. Socrates is now again the questioner. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then will you answer?”

Pol.: “To be sure I will, for indeed I am eager to know what on earth you will say.”

Soc.: “Well then, so that you may know, tell me, just as though I were asking you at the beginning, which of the two seems to you, Polus, to be the worse—doing wrong or suffering it?”

Pol.: “Suffering it, I say.”

Soc.: “Now again, which is fouler—doing wrong or suffering it? Answer.”
(474c)

LS: Why does he say “answer”? Because Polus hesitates, ya? Polus hesitates. This cannot be said by Plato because this is a dramatic dialogue, so it must come out as a speech of a character in the dialogue: “Answer.” What does Polus then answer?

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: “Doing it.”

Soc.: “And also more evil, if fouler.”

Pol.: “Not at all.”

Soc.: “I see: you hold, apparently, that fair and good are not the same, nor evil and foul.”

Pol.: “Just so.” (474c–d)

LS: Now, let us stop here. What, then, is the thesis of Polus? Polus’ present thesis seems to be a bit closer to Socrates’ assertion than the earlier [one] was: Suffering wrong is worse than doing wrong, but doing wrong is fouler—more ugly, base—than suffering wrong. And this will be the basis of the refutation of Polus. But let us first consider the connection. We have come across a distinction, which I mentioned before, between “holding” and “feeling,” as I called it. [LS writes on the blackboard.] Now, there is a connection between holding and feeling. This prepares Polus’ present assertion. Men *hold* that doing injustice is fouler than suffering injustice. They *hold* it. But they *act* or *feel* that suffering injustice is worse. Now what about these two terms which he uses, which we must briefly explain? Good or bad. [LS refers to the blackboard.] “Good and bad.” And the other, let us call “noble and ugly,” or “noble and foul.” This distinction, the whole discussion will turn around it. What does this mean? We can say that “good and bad,” at least at first glance, is a utilitarian consideration: what is good or bad for me in the sense of what helps me or what hurts me. “Noble and foul” refers rather to *reputation*.²⁷ So the man who does injustice has a bad reputation, or gets a bad reputation. But he still may be *better off*—that refers to the first conversation. A criminal, a successful large-scale criminal, is better off than many honest people. But he has a worse reputation. Does this make sense? And that is what Polus means: these are two radically different considerations. But he *admits* that these two considerations exist. In other words, he²⁸ [admits] what even the criminals admit. You know, they speak of us—I don’t say we are just people, but we are technically not criminals, I take it—they refer to us as the “squares.” And they call themselves the “crooks,” i.e., they admit that it is foul to be a criminal—you are called a “crook.”²⁹ But on the other hand, they laugh at us because we are fools because we are satisfied with our poor incomes or what we have, and don’t go in for these big hauls, and that is stupid. Surely the criminal logic is exactly that of Polus. Only what Polus asserts is this, which we must never forget: Polus asserts that this criminal logic is the logic of 99 percent of men, or perhaps even 99.9 percent—otherwise, it would not be interesting, if it had to do only with these people.

To repeat, then, after some hesitation Polus admits that *doing* injustice is *better* but *fouler*

than *suffering* injustice. And this admission will prove to be fatal to him in the sequel. The first question is: Why does he admit it at all? Because he has learned from Socrates to take the just things somewhat more seriously than he did before. He has reminded himself even of the importance of common opinion as evidenced by common speech. Certain things are condemned when we hear of them, especially if we are not involved. You know, if we hear of a murder somewhere else, our first reaction is: "It's murder—bad." There is a common opinion, a common condemnation of that. Men *act* on the view that suffering injustice is worse than doing injustice, but they *say* that suffering injustice is better than doing injustice. This is the meaning of Polus' assertion. And what happens in the sequel is, very briefly, this: that Polus forgets, in a way, the meaning of³⁰ "fouler," or, stated differently, "more beautiful," "nobler." What does that mean? And then Socrates gives his simple analysis of what noble, the opposite of foul, means. [LS writes on the blackboard.] He gives an analysis of that, and one element of it proves to be the pleasant. Polus never for one moment remembers the *pleasure of reputation*, of a good reputation. And he thinks only of *other pleasures*. Therefore, he gets into great troubles. For example, the man who is punished severely—I mean, bodily—suffers bodily pain. He's spanked, or whatever it may be. But on the other hand, however, the non-criminal has the pleasure of *sounds*, of what they *say* about him, of reputation. This will prove to be³¹ [Polus'] downfall. Now, let us first see whether there is any point which we can discuss before we go on. Mr. Glenn?

Mr. Glenn: I wonder if you might not be being a little bit unfair to this combination of Polus and Gorgias in one respect. We noticed, when Socrates was speaking earlier in the dialogue, that he gave a very strict definition of justice, as I recall. I don't remember exactly how it was worded, but—

LS: Who?

Mr. Glenn: Socrates. He spoke of killing as being simply unjust.

LS: Right. Do you regard this as a strict definition of justice? If he gives one example of an unjust act, it would not be a definition of justice. No definition of justice has ever been attempted. You can say, very simply, the rhetorical character of the whole discussion—Socrates included—is proven by the fact that no term has been defined.

Mr. Glenn: Right, right.

LS: I mean, the only thing which could *look* like a definition is this famous definition of rhetoric—you know, that proportion which Socrates gave in his long speech. Justice was never defined. That means, of course, that every participant, especially, of course, Polus, simply uses justice in the loose common sense, which is sufficient for most practical purposes but very vague. You know, because it doesn't make any distinction between what is *intrinsically just* and *the legal*. That's the main reason. But go on.

Mr. Glenn: But didn't Socrates earlier in the dialogue refer to killing as simply unjust?

LS: No. There was this ambiguity: In certain sections, killing was regarded as indifferent, neutral, *adiaphoron*, it depends; and then in another context killing was regarded as always in need of justification, in contradistinction to sitting down and standing up, so that, in itself, it is bad, but it can be justifiable. There was here no assertion that killing is simply unjust. The maximum you can say—which was not even explicitly asserted—was that killing is always in need of justification. It is not an indifferent act, like the two examples that I gave. Yes?

Student: If killing, then, may be justified—it is not simply unjust—going back to the paradigm which you developed earlier in terms of the lowest claims, how then would it be better to be killed unjustly than to kill justly?

LS: No. This is not implied. For example: an unjust assailant. You defend yourself; you kill him; you kill justly; you prefer killing justly to being killed unjustly. And this is not regarded as an unjust act. There are, later on, passages where this simple admission seems to be obscured, but not hitherto as far as I can see.

Student: Aren't there some societies, at some times, starting with There are a lot of people nowadays who In 1930's, though, Will Rogers commented that

LS: Ya, but, in other words, that would prove that there can be—well, that was of course a special circumstance. You mean the prohibition era?

Student: Yeah.

LS: Ya, but this had something to do with the fact that a law was enforced which was regarded by a considerable part of the population as a foolish law. And therefore the transgression of the law was not regarded as intrinsically bad. This was part of the story. But, apart from that, there are of course people—quite a few—who glorify criminals because they find it [an] extremely, you know, interesting way of life. I think there is a whole literature of this nature. What does this prove? That would merely prove that there is no universal consent regarding the badness of criminality, which we know anyway. But what other conclusion can we draw from it?

Same student:

LS: Oh, I see. Ya, but—all right. But still, we regard such situations as somewhat strange, don't we? I mean, where criminals are glorified and so on.

Same student: Well, we do, but there are other societies, I would venture to say—I would guess

LS: Ya, all right. Then one would have to go back to the reasons why, generally speaking, criminality is regarded as bad and, however, other parts of the population regard criminality as not bad. You would have to go back to the reasons. We would have to know first why men make laws, criminality being habitual transgression of the law.

We would have to make this effort. And if the reasons why men make laws are sound, then we might reach the conclusion that the condemnation of criminality is sound, being a necessary conclusion from the goodness of laws as laws, even if the laws are not perfect. One would have to know that. In other words, one cannot leave it at mere opinion. The mere fact that there is disagreement is the most simple incentive to going deeper into the question. Mr. Lyons?

Mr. Lyons:

LS: Well, first of all, in what sense can you speak of an abstraction from politics? In one sense, yes. Socrates admits that he has no knowledge of such simple things as how to take a vote. Do you mean that?

Mr. Lyons: Well, I was thinking particularly of the tyrant, who

LS: Because the polis as such is opposed to the tyrant?

Mr. Lyons: Yes

LS: What does this mean? I mean, in a city ruled by a tyrant there is only one tyrant. What do you mean by that?

Mr. Lyons:

LS: I really cannot follow you.

Mr. Lyons: Yes, well the importance of

LS: Ya, but that would of course not be a tyrant who indulges his desire for killing and exiling senselessly. Surely not, no. That is really an absolutely impossible thing. It wouldn't last for any length of time—you know, because his very bodyguard would feel endangered. I don't believe that this is a grave difficulty.

Student: He seems to somehow trap Polus

LS: Ya, in the sequel. We have not yet reached that point. We have reached the point only where Polus makes this assertion: that the distinction between good and bad contradicts in the most important case the distinction between the noble and the foul, so that what is good is foul and what is noble is bad. This is the problem. And only Callicles, later on, will get rid of the difficulty by simply saying, "This distinction is merely conventional; this [other] is the only natural distinction; only a fool will be bothered by considerations of noble and foul;³² [a real man] will only seek the good and avoid the bad." And Polus is ruined by making the *two* assertions. And Socrates, in a way which is by no means free from difficulties,³³ asserts that the two things lead to a simple contradiction. That we will discuss next time. Yes?

Student: When you answered a question from the other side of the room a few minutes ago, you were saying that the just man would prefer to kill in self-defense because to kill justly is more just than to be killed unjustly. And I find that to be a contradiction of what you said—

LS: No. What I said was this: killing justly is preferable to being killed unjustly. I did not say “more just.” That would need a special investigation. But if the good is roughly identical with the just, as Socrates seems to assert, then your conclusion would follow. But the explicit assertion is that killing justly is preferable to being killed unjustly. And I appeal to your feeling: Is this not so? I mean, if you are unjustly attacked, say at twelve o’clock somewhere on the Midway,^{xiii} and if you were in the position to get rid of your assailant by killing him, would your action not be justified?

Same student: Well, the word “justified” here, I suppose—

LS: Ya. Would you not *prefer* surviving, and in such a way that your preference would not only be regarded by you as your accidental preference, but, for example, a court of law would say you rightly prefer it? Because there are such laws to the effect that there is justifiable homicide, and especially under such conditions. That is, I think, only commonsensical, up to this point. What will happen later on is another matter. And this implies of course that if killing justly is preferable to being killed unjustly,³⁴ forensic rhetoric is legitimate. If you are accused of a capital crime of which you are innocent, then the accuser desires to kill you unjustly. By opposing the accuser, by proving your innocence, well, you do not exactly kill unjustly, but under certain conditions it might be that you kill justly. Because, for example, if you are accused of a crime which has been committed but which you have not committed, by proving that you have not committed it but someone else did it (what Perry Mason does all the time), then you kill justly the murderer, and your action prevents your being killed unjustly. Is that not clear? Good. Is there any objection possible to this preference?

Same student: Well, I don’t want to talk about whether there is an objection to this preference or not. What I am confused about is: we first started with listing the scale of justice, and being killed unjustly was placed higher in the list than—

LS: Now, let me have a look at my list. It’s the one I have here. The lowest was unjustly killing; then the justly killed man; then the unjustly killed man; and at the top the justly killing man. Justly killing is preferable to being unjustly killed; unjustly killed is preferable to being killed justly, of course. I mean, if you are unjustly killed, you are innocent; but if you are justly killed, you are guilty. And the lowest is, of course, unjustly killing, meaning without any punishment, because then there is no retribution; you do not get what you deserve, namely, being killed for it. These are the simplest cases because we limit ourselves entirely to the case of killing with the assumption that capital punishment is legitimate. Surely this can be questioned, and you know there are many people who question it today. We must face that issue, especially in view of the fact that Socrates’

^{xiii} The Midway is a park that runs between 59th and 60th Streets through the University of Chicago campus.

teaching about punishment in the sequel seems to ascribe transcendent virtues to punishment, almost going so far that all justice in the world is due to the institution of punishment, which goes very far, as you can easily see. Yes?

Student:

LS: Yes. That is true.

Same student:

LS: Ya, but I think we must state it more precisely now. I have spoken of the difference between *holding* and *feeling*. If you say that Socrates does not truly discuss *feeling* but limits himself to the sphere of *holding*—is that what you mean? ³⁵“Holding,” meaning having opinions which are not necessarily operative; “feelings” are these kind[s] of things going on in man which determine his actions. Let us look at the end. At the end of the Polus section, which we will reach in about a week’s time, Polus has been refuted in the sense that he has been silenced. He must now *hold* what Socrates held all the time. But is his *feeling* affected? I would say no. He feels exactly as he did before, namely, that suffering injustice is worse than doing injustice. But he can no longer *maintain* it, because whenever he maintains it, Socrates can refute it. If that is what you mean, ³⁶ I think to some extent one can say that, because political life depends, of course, at least as much on how people feel, on the feelings which are operative in them ³⁷ [as] on what they say or hold, only what they say and hold is not as negligible as the late Bentley asserted. You know, that is not as simple as that. By Bentley, *Principles of Government*^{xiv} (I don’t remember the title), which I think most of you have read. But *prima facie* it makes sense to say [that] what people feel, the principles on which they act, are more important than the principles which they merely maintain, to take the extreme case, to which they only pay lip-service. Now Polus is refuted, i.e., to be more precise, he is *silenced*. Socrates is an infinitely better arguer than he is. The same happens later on on a much larger scale to Callicles. And the question is: Is this enough, and is this the best which Socrates can do? Now if this is the best ³⁸ [that] Socrates can do, then his “power,” in Socrates’ sense of the word, is very small. Would this be surprising, if this were proved to be true? Why not? I mean, perhaps someone can quote chapter and verse: What is the condition, according to Socrates’ solemn statement, for the cessation of evil, of misery, in the cities and among men generally? What is it? Yes?

Student: The philosophers have to rule as kings.

LS: The coincidence of philosophy, which Socrates has, with political power. Without political power, this cessation cannot take place. So Socrates doesn’t have political power. The maximum he can do when confronted with people who are not potential philosophers (and neither Polus nor Callicles is a potential philosopher) is to *silence* them. But we know very well that this does not settle the issue, because if people are unconvinced, they do these actions which they cannot defend but of the rightness of which they are absolutely convinced. They say: “Whether I can give an account of it or

^{xiv} Arthur F. Bentley, *The Process of Government* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1967).

not, that doesn't make any difference; these are these clever intellectuals." (There is another word which was used some time ago in this country about these people, you must remember: eggheads! Eggheads!). "And well, they have a certain strange quality comparable to tightrope dancing, but that's not important. We act on our feelings and we know that's right." And in some situations that is of course correct because there can be such a thing as sophistry which men may not be able to unravel, and yet [can] with horse-sense see "that's not a sound policy." That happens too. That is of course a deeper difficulty: How can a man who is not a philosopher distinguish Socrates from a clever sophist? I mean, he can take external signs which are not altogether irrelevant: Socrates not being greedy for money and prestige; and the sophists, generally speaking, greedy for it. That's something. But of course it doesn't completely settle the issue. And therefore, since Socrates is from the point of view of the non-philosophers hard to distinguish from the sophists, they will treat him like a sophist. And proof? His fate. That cannot be changed. But nevertheless it doesn't abolish the difference. Only the difference is not recognizable to every man, [but] that doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. People who are color-blind cannot distinguish the colors, and yet the difference of colors exists. That is indeed the issue.

As I stated it on an earlier occasion, these three things [LS writes on the blackboard]. [The] first two: speech and deed. And speech [is] subdivided into, let us say, scientific speech or dialectics (however you like to call it) and rhetorical speech, merely persuasive speech. This [LS indicates his blackboard notation] is coercion, speechless. It is never totally speechless, but it is relatively speechless. I mean, the final act—say, cutting off the head—can be absolutely speechless, as you can easily see. And it is very important, you know, for the individual concerned. All three elements are essential to society, *in the proper order*. The due order would be that wisdom controls both persuasion and the use of coercion. But that means philosophers must rule. And this is very improbable, to say the least, according to the statements of Socrates in the *Republic*. And therefore what do you have in fact? Some rudiments of wisdom³⁹ [are] there—without it no society could live—somewhere. They may be very powerless, but in one way or the other they are there. What will be in control will be some form of persuasion, in constitutional governments, as we say, and coercion, in tyrannical governments. But even the tyrannical governments need some persuasion. You know, there is *Pravda*—literally translated, "truth" (at least I think that's the correct translation, I don't know), and nothing can be done about that.^{xv} This schema stands. And here,⁴⁰ of course, in one sense the abstraction from politics is necessary. After all, this is not a political debate. They do not discuss whether they should build more ships or should make war against Sparta or Persia. It's not a political debate; nor is it a judicial debate. It is a strictly private debate. No political consequences in the narrower sense can follow from that, that's clear. But in this private debate, *the* elements of the *polis* are discussed, come to sight. To the extent to which Socrates says, as he *seems* to say if you take the dialogue as a whole, "this is uninteresting"—you know, when he says, "the tyrants have no power" (you remember?), "coercion, no," "rhetoric is sham"—to that extent, of course, he is absolutely unpolitical, because this would be possible only in a society all the members of which were

^{xv} The newspaper *Pravda* was an official publication of the Soviet Communist Party. LS's translation is correct.

philosophers. It would not even be valid of the best polis of the *Republic*, because there you have *both* coercion and persuasion, coercion exercised by the soldiers, by the auxiliaries, and persuasion exercised by the philosophers primarily towards the soldiers. Is this now a bit clearer?

Student: . . . in the dialogue, of the genuine—

LS: Oh, I see, of this proportion, yeah. The four, ya, or eight.

Same student: . . . had nothing whatsoever to do with pleasure—

LS: With pleasure? Ya, sure.

Same student: . . . would the abstraction from—

LS: That is fraught with enormous consequences: the abstraction from pleasure, we can say. That is perhaps the formula for the *Gorgias*: the abstraction from pleasure. And that means, of course, a wholly unreal picture of life, surely. That's clear. And the foundation for this is laid by this proportion. For example, the discussion with Polus which follows now, his refutation, turns around pleasure. And the insufficient reflection on pleasure is the reason why Polus is so relatively easily refuted.

Now one thing I might perhaps say as a kind of transition to our further discussions. When one reads the Polus section as a whole, one sees first (as I have stated today) that Polus says, in effect, “from the point of view of power, the tyrant is superior to the orator.” Which makes absolute sense, because if you analyze Gorgias' cases of successful orators—Themistocles and Pericles—you see it was not merely their rhetorical power but also their strategic qualities which gave them the positions they had. And strategy is not the same as oratory. I mean, a man can be a first rate general and rather poor in speech. I mean, you might take General Eisenhower as an example [laughter]; [and] in a way, even Montgomery. This is perfectly possible. So in other words, Polus is driven away from oratory to tyranny, and tyranny belongs of course to coercion. And in the later argument,⁴¹ which we have now begun, rhetoric proves to be useful only for making people willing to undergo punishment, which implies [that] men do not—at least unjust men do not—become just by *speech*, but by *punishment*, coercion. So we move here in the Polus section from tyranny to punishment proper. The examples are preferably bodily punishments. [LS writes on the blackboard] One form, unjust coercion; [another form], just coercion. To that extent, it is a movement from injustice to justice.

But it is more important for the deeper part of the argument that it is argument from one kind of coercion to another kind of coercion. That means that⁴² the whole argument, the whole Polus section, is based on the premise of the relative inefficacy of speech: not speech, but brachial power, whether in the case of tyranny or in the case of just punishment. This is the very strange happening here, and connected with this is the fact that extraordinary virtues are ascribed to punishment.⁴³ I think we can show this by an analysis of Socrates' refutation of Polus. To mention only one point, an implication of

this refutation is that punishing justly is pleasant for the punisher—of course not for the punishee.⁴⁴ Now this is of course a somewhat inhuman—I mean, there are such people. You need them even. How could you get the necessary supply of executioners if there were not people who would enjoy doing that? But, still, we don't think that people who enjoy punishing are good men. But somehow the implication of this praise of punishment, as we can say, is that the just punisher feels pleasure in punishing.

Now that is in a way of course what Polus deserves, after having praised Archelaus so much—you know, in having shown this kind of savagery. And at the same time you must not overhear the undertone: he is not simply jealous or envious of Archelaus; there is also an element of *indignation* that this fellow got away with murder. And his speech is a kind of accusatory speech against Archelaus. How⁴⁵ he [would] enjoy seeing Archelaus impaled and all the other nice things of which he speaks! So for this somewhat savage Polus, it is with a view to him, this vindictive doctrine of punishment is somehow in order. But how these two items are connected is perhaps not altogether difficult to understand. The denial of the efficacy of speech puts the emphasis on *deed*. And this deed, in the clearest case, is simply hitting and hitting hard—and, well, just revenge, *irrational* revenge. This element will come out. But the refutation is a strict refutation only to⁴⁶ [the] extent that it shows, a) that the rhetoricians are unable to give an account of what they do, and b) that they are unable to defend this commonsensical assertion—this *half*-commonsensical assertion, because common sense contradicts itself here—that in one sense, everyone would say,⁴⁷ at least in certain times and moods, that suffering injustice is better than doing injustice. But you only have to turn it around—that is, I believe, [what] the point which one of you made meant. Taking insults lying down, instead of being able to insult the other fellow—there is a certain notion of virility in the world that would say that taking insults lying down is inferior to being able to insult. Yeah? You know, it's not manly So, you see, common sense contradicts itself on this point. We have to make up our minds. The word “manly” is somewhat misleading, because in Plato's account of these matters, which he gives at the beginning of the eighth book of the *Republic*, when the best regime decays and he gives the example of how the best family decays—

[end of tape]

¹ Deleted “do.”

² Deleted “those who have the incentive.”

³ Moved “today.”

⁴ Deleted “which.”

⁵ Deleted “to do.”

⁶ Deleted “he.”

⁷ Deleted “unjust.”

⁸ Deleted “kills.”

⁹ Deleted “486e10 to 469c4” because LS obviously misspoke.

¹⁰ Deleted “translates literally.”

¹¹ Deleted “read only.”

¹² Deleted “this boy fell into that.”

¹³ Deleted “of.”

¹⁴ Deleted “such.”

- 15 Deleted "is."
- 16 Deleted "so."
- 17 Deleted "whether this distinction."
- 18 Deleted "he."
- 19 Deleted "now."
- 20 Deleted "it."
- 21 Deleted "he is."
- 22 Deleted "both."
- 23 Deleted "if."
- 24 Deleted "is what."
- 25 Deleted "he should."
- 26 Deleted "to."
- 27 Deleted "to reputation."
- 28 Deleted "does."
- 29 Deleted "ya."
- 30 Deleted "what does it mean."
- 31 Deleted "his."
- 32 Deleted "he."
- 33 Deleted "Socrates."
- 34 Deleted "it implies that."
- 35 Deleted " I mean, you know."
- 36 Deleted "and."
- 37 Deleted "than."
- 38 Deleted "what."
- 39 Deleted "being."
- 40 Deleted "we have."
- 41 Deleted "in."
- 42 Deleted "in."
- 43 Deleted "extraordinary virtues which."
- 44 Deleted "Is pleasant."
- 45 Moved "would."
- 46 Deleted "that."
- 47 Deleted "that."

Session 7: no date

[In progress] **LS:** —459. There's a question from Mr. Butterworth. Well, the reference is not quite correct, therefore I can't find it easily. Pardon?

Mr. Butterworth: 459d.

LS: Ya, I looked that up. It may be in the neighborhood somewhere, but it doesn't make such a great difference. "When Socrates says of the rhetorician that he has 'imagined' a process of persuasion suitable for making those who do not know *believe* that x is y , what is the significance of the term 'imagined'?"ⁱ

Well, I am sure the word is not "imagine" in the original, but something like "believe." But "imagine" might very well render the meaning in the context, and it would then mean something like a polite understatement: "I know this very well, that this can be done, but—." You know, an understatement would be, "I can *imagine* that it can be done."

Mr. Butterworth: It's not

LS: I don't think so, no. It would be easier if I had the passage in front of me, but I cannot do that now, because it is my firm intention, if feasible, to finish today the discussion of the Polus section. But we cannot do that properly without reminding ourselves of where we stand. We have heard Polus' thesis in 474, which will be his undoing. The thesis, briefly [is this]: suffering injustice is worse than doing injustice, but suffering injustice is less base than doing injustice. In other words, he makes the distinction between the good and the noble, or the beautiful, fair, or whatever you might call it. Let us remind ourselves again how he arrives at this thesis. He started from the assertion that rhetoricians are powerful, very powerful, as powerful as tyrants. They can kill, etc., as they please. Socrates countered that by saying that there is a difference between what a man does and what he wishes. All doing is mere means and in itself neutral. Doing is good or bad only to the extent it helps or hinders one's well-being. If killing helps, it is good; otherwise, it is harmful and it is bad.¹ Doing what one pleases is [not] the point, but doing what one wishes. Socrates asserts the tyrants do at best what they please, but not what they wish.

This argument has no influence at all on Polus, and we can understand that. Because why should there not be tyrants who are really shrewd, from a selfish point of view, in their killings, etc.? Then Socrates makes the second attack. Not all actions are in themselves neutral. For example, killing is not neutral. But implying: killing may be justifiable, and this then is good. The line which Socrates draws here between good and bad action is just or unjust action: just actions are good, unjust are bad. Suffering injustice is therefore better than doing injustice, obviously, because suffering injustice, you don't do anything bad. Again, no impact on Polus. Then Socrates makes Polus admit something very

ⁱ Strauss reads a question submitted by Mr. Butterworth.

trivial—we² read this last time—that killing followed by punishment of the killer is bad. You remember this very vivid statement? Now there is agreement between Socrates and Polus for the first time in 470b. Killing is sometimes good and sometimes bad; they agree as to this point. But the question is: How do the two men understand that in which they agree? We have to figure out for ourselves how Polus understands it, because it is not made explicit. But it is easy to see: killing followed by punishment is bad; not followed by punishment is good. But the tyrant is by definition beyond the reach of punishment. Hence the tyrant can kill as he sees fit, and the tyrannical life remains the most enviable life. In other words, we are exactly where we started at the beginning.

At this point, Socrates repeats why this is nevertheless not a waste of time. We have partly seen it, and we [will] partly reconsider, and then we are through. At this point, Socrates repeats his assertion: just killing is preferable to unjust killing. I understate it a little. Now then, at this point Polus proves his assertion by the example of the arch-criminal Archelaus, and ultimately—and that is the decisive step—by the universal consent: all men agree that a life like that of Archelaus is enviable. Socrates grants to Polus that the pillars of society in Athens and elsewhere agree with the criminals in this respect. So while he doesn't admit that there is universal agreement, he admits there is an *almost* universal agreement, which is quite a point. But Socrates also asserts that his thesis—namely, that suffering injustice is preferable to doing injustice—is supported by universal consent. In brief, common sense maintains two contradictory theses, the thesis that doing injustice is better than suffering injustice and the opposite thesis that suffering injustice is better than doing injustice.

But here a subtle distinction appears which disposes, it seems, of the contradiction. Because Socrates says that all men *hold* this view; Polus says that all men *act* on his view. Now, it is of course perfectly possible that these things can coexist: *holding* one thing, by asserting one thing, and *acting* on something else. Differently stated, the *speech* of men is moral, the *actions* of men are immoral. Now, of course, a man who maintains that would have to explain why this is so, why men are hypocritical. But the theses in themselves are not contradictory. What men hold, what they assert, expresses the noble, the resplendent, the impressive. In what they do, they are guided by the good, by the useful. This is the starting point of Polus' assertions. So the two opinions do not necessarily contradict one another. But they are of course not quite satisfactory, because there is such a radical contradiction between speech and deed. And Socrates is looking for a speech which agrees with the deed, and not for this antagonism which Polus had asserted. At this point we stopped last time, and we will now go on in 474d3. Or is there any point you would like to clear up before we go on? Because if you have not understood Polus' assertion, you cannot very well understand Socrates' refutation of that assertion. Good. Then, Mr. Reinken, you begin.

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “But what of this? All fair things—” (474d)

LS: Ya, now, “fair” or “noble” or “beautiful”—that is the same word in Greek, *kalon* What Socrates³ is trying to do is now to make clear what precisely does the “noble” or “fair” or “beautiful,”⁴ to which Polus had referred, [mean]. Yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “All fair things, like bodies and colours and figures and sounds and observances—is it according to no standard that you call these fair in each case? Thus in the first place, when you say that fair bodies are fair, it must be either in view of their use for some particular purpose that each may serve, or in respect of some pleasure arising from when, in the act of beholding them, they cause delight in the beholder. Have you any description to give beyond this of bodily beauty?”

Pol.: “I have not.”

Soc.: “And so with all the rest in the same way, whether they be figures or colours, is it for some pleasure or benefit or both that you give them the name of ‘fair’?”

Pol.: “It is.”

Soc.: “And sounds also, and the effects of music, are not these all in the same case.”

Pol.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “And further, in all that belongs to laws and observances, surely the ‘fairness’ of them cannot lie beyond those limits of being either beneficial or pleasant or both.”

Pol.: “I think not.”

Soc.: “And is it not just the same with the ‘fairness’ of studies also?”

Pol.: “Doubtless; and this time, Socrates, your definition is quite fair, when you define what is fair by pleasure and good.”

Soc.: “And foul by their opposites, pain and evil?”

Pol.: “That needs must follow.”

Soc.: “Thus when of two fair things one is fairer, the cause is that it surpasses in either one or both of these effects, either in pleasure, or in benefit, or in both.”

Pol.: “Certainly.”

Soc.: “And again, when one of two foul things is fouler, this will be due to an excess either of pain or of evil: must not that that be so?”
(474d–475b)

LS: Now let us stop here. So the noble or fair or beautiful is noble either with a view to some *need* or with a view to some *pleasure* or *both*. For example, we call a horse—or a Greek, at least, would say a “fine horse.” He may think of its goodness for running, he may think of its looks, and he may think of both. Here, you see there are subtle differences. The first pleasure mentioned is the pleasure of looking, of beholding, not other pleasures. Polus states the conclusion somewhat more generally: the noble or fair is that good which is pleasant. For example, an operation is good, otherwise no one would undergo it. But no one would say it is pleasant. Therefore, one cannot speak of a “beautiful operation,” strictly, in this meaning of the thing; and naturally, if this is the fair, then the ugly or base is defined by pain and/or evil. Now in order to understand that, you must remind yourself of what Polus originally meant by his assertion that doing

injustice is baser, fouler, than suffering injustice. He means by it that doing injustice brings bad reputation. And that is a painful thing, primarily painful—namely, the pain of *hearing* or of *sounds*, to use a very external description but which is necessary to keep here in mind. Or if you don't want to hear⁵ [anything] of that, use a favorite expression of present-day America: a bad reputation is a bad *image* of you, so something to behold which is offensive to the eyes. But of course the noble or fair has a certain pleasure and possibly also certain advantages, because good reputation has some advantages which everyone knows. But these advantages are not comparable in solidity to the pleasures and advantages of tyranny. That is the implication. But the tyrant has a bad reputation, one cannot deny that. But he is not particularly concerned with it—well, otherwise he wouldn't be a tyrant.

Now let me first finish that. Why does⁶ [Polus] accept Socrates' analysis, which sweeps this side of what Polus understands by noble or fair, namely, reputation, completely under the rug? Well, we must never forget he's a rhetorician who as such is concerned with the noble or fair—I mean, a man who possesses the art of rhetoric, which is to make not only good, effective speeches but also fine speeches, well-turned phrases. Rhetoric is something noble, [as] was said by him before. In other words, he recognizes his own doing in what Socrates says about the noble, that it is useful and pleasant. That is what the rhetorician wishes to be. He should be useful—he should get an acquittal of his client—and also everyone should enjoy that speech. This is, I think, the simplest explanation. But you had a question?

Student: Well, couldn't he admit that by “fouler” it would be more harmful to others? Couldn't Polus have admitted that?

LS: Ya, but how does this affect this fundamentally selfish man of whom he of course thinks? Only—

Same student: If rhetoric is better for the doer, but harmful to the person for whom it is done, that would be—

LS: Ya, but there must be some way in which⁷ what happens to others affects the doer. Now, from his point of view, it can affect him only by what they say about him.

Same student: Yes. Good point. But how did you conclude originally that—well, in other words, if you don't assume that he originally meant by doing justice being fouler that one gets a bad reputation, then you have no explanation of why he thought Socrates—

LS: No. Well, you see, the problem we have to solve is this. Before this issue comes up—you know, before it came up—the original position of the absolutely enviable character of the tyrannical life was still unimpaired. Socrates had not made any impact on⁸ [Polus]. And this will lead to his downfall. Therefore we have to understand him very carefully. How far does this lead? In what precise *way* does this lead to his downfall? And before we can do that, we have to understand the bearing of his assertion.

Same student: Well, how do you conclude that by [in]justice being foul, Polus meant that it gave him a bad reputation? How do you reach that conclusion as to what he meant?

LS: Because these gentlemen of Athens of which Socrates spoke, these noble families, they of course never praise injustice. They *act* on it, but they always keep up good appearances. The peculiarity of the tyrant is that he doesn't have to keep up appearances anymore because he cannot be called to account. Yes?

Student: . . . Polus' idea of disgraceful, at this point, is having people say bad things about you.

LS: Ya.

Same Student: Doesn't Socrates' definition of disgraceful say either disutility or hurtful? Displeasure or disutility, isn't that what he said?

LS: Ya, but this is exactly the point. Socrates speaks explicitly of specific pleasures, of seeing, hearing, and so on. For example, if he called a horse beautiful and had in mind a certain pleasure, the pleasure is different than if he called sounds beautiful. That's [not] the pleasure of hearing, but of seeing. But what he gradually leads up to is that he forgets the *specificity* of the pleasures and thinks simply of pleasure without any qualification. And this leads eventually to Polus' downfall, in a very few steps, which you will see immediately. I would like to emphasize that in this section, in 474d–e, he speaks more than once of a *certain* pleasure, i.e.—you have to watch that—this kind of pleasure or that kind. The expression which he uses here in what we just read: When we call things beautiful, we do this “looking away towards,” more literally translated.ⁱⁱ I do not know how he translated that. “Do you call in each case things beautiful *looking away toward* nothing?”ⁱⁱⁱ That is of crucial importance for Plato's whole doctrine. What he calls here [“looking away toward”]—the phenomenon is known to us commonsensically as *abstraction*. When I call something beautiful, I abstract from quite a few things and I have in mind only its quality of “beautiful.” Plato calls it, “I look away from *x* and towards *y*, and what I mean is the *y* in calling it beautiful.” This is a very provisional indication of what Plato means by his doctrine of ideas ultimately. That's only the first entering wedge of this doctrine. I mention this in passing. Regarding the specificity of pleasures, one would have to raise the question, for example: Are *sounds* ever called beautiful because of their *usefulness*? For example, if someone gives a very shrill sound for calling a dog or maybe whistles in order to get the attention of a human being, that would never be called beautiful, although it is undeniably useful. Another indication that the *abstraction* at which we arrive here—the beautiful means either the useful⁹ [or] the pleasant or both—is in need of some qualification. Now, let us go on where we left off:

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Come then, what was it we heard just now about doing and

ⁱⁱ The Greek word in question is *apoblepō*.

ⁱⁱⁱ LS gives his own translation of the passage just read at 474d.

suffering wrong? Were you not saying that suffering wrong is more evil, but doing it fouler?"

Pol.: "I was."

Soc.: "Well now, if doing wrong is fouler than suffering it, it is either more painful, and fouler by an excess of pain or evil or both; must not this also be the case?"

Pol.: "Yes, of course."

Soc.: "Then let us first consider if doing wrong exceeds suffering it in point of pain—if those who do wrong are more pained than those who suffer it."

Pol.: "Not so at all, Socrates."

Soc.: "Then it does not surpass in pain."

Pol.: "No, indeed."

Soc.: "And so, if not in pain, it can no longer be said to exceed in both."

Pol.: "Apparently."

Soc.: "It remains, then, that it exceeds in the other."

Pol.: "Yes."

Soc.: "In evil."

Pol.: "So it seems."

Soc.: "And so, if it exceeds in evil, doing wrong will be more evil than suffering it." (475b–c)

LS: . . . Did you follow? Doing injustice is fouler than suffering injustice. "Fouler" means either more painful or worse. [LS writes on the blackboard.] But is doing injustice more painful than suffering injustice? Think of any example, of hitting a fellow over the head. Who is hurt? [Laughter] So it is not that. Hence it must be worse. So that is fundamentally the refutation of Polus. Yes?

Student: But just a little while ago he said the idea of doing injustice being foul, it was foul because it was painful to hear people say that you didn't have a good image. So couldn't you say that—

LS: Ya, but don't you see that by this generalization of pleasure,¹⁰ we are invited to forget the pain of hearing, of sounds, of a bad reputation, or the pain of seeing or beholding, of bad images, and [to] think [instead] of the bodily pain, of the pain of touch? That's the point. And Polus is not able to think about it. You must not forget we can read this *n* times, as I have said so often, and poor Polus has no opportunity to say all the time, "Let me consider that carefully; I don't want to say yes or no now; tomorrow I may answer you." He couldn't say it. Well, why could he not do that, which we could easily do if we were in such a situation? Why could he not do that? Well, he has to consider his *reputation*. There his potential customers are around. What impression would they get if he would say at every point, "I can't make such a quick decision?" Therefore one should never raise high claims, you see, because otherwise you get into trouble. Polus' reply is due to the fact that he thinks of torturing and other unpleasantnesses, or burning at the stake or otherwise rather than of the pain of a bad reputation or of a bad image. Good. We must keep this in mind, and we will find even more things of this kind. But this is not a

refutation of Polus; it is the *silencing* of Polus. And we must later consider what the usefulness or the opposite of such a procedure is. Now let us go on here. Next sentence. Socrates.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Now it is surely admitted by the mass of mankind, as it was too by you in our talk a while ago, that doing wrong is fouler than suffering it.” (475d)

LS: Do you see now? That it is fouler is not merely a concession of Polus or a view of Socrates; it is held by most people. It is an *endoxon*, as Aristotle calls it, something which exists in opinion, as much as the other exists in opinion. I mean, the average man would also think that doing injustice is better than suffering injustice. For both coexist in opinion, and therefore we are compelled to leave this sphere of common opinion because of the contradictory elements¹¹ [of] which it consists. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “And now it has been found to be more evil.”

Pol.: “So it seems.”

Soc.: “Then would you rather have the evil and the foul when it is more than when it is less?” (475d)

LS: Ya, literally, “would you accept,” i.e., “choose.”^{iv} You know, we are not speaking any more of *holding*, but of *choosing*. Polus is now compelled to say at least that he will choose rather suffering injustice than doing injustice. A great step. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Do not shrink from answering, Polus; you will get no hurt by it: but submit yourself bravely to the argument, as to a doctor, and reply yes or no to my question.”

Pol.: “Why, I should not so choose, Socrates.”

Soc.: “And would anybody else in the world?”

Pol.: “I think not, by this argument at least.”

Soc.: “Then I spoke the truth when I said that neither you nor anyone else in the world would choose to do wrong rather than suffer it, since it really is more evil.” (475d–e)

LS: Ya, okay. Can you imagine a quicker refutation of such a position as we find here? He must now admit that he would *choose*, and *all men would choose*, to suffer injustice rather than to do injustice. This is a terrific event. How long can this have taken? Ten minutes. Yet he had first stated the other opinion, the other *endoxon*, that suffering injustice is worse than doing injustice. Socrates has made Polus contradict himself. Yes, that he surely did, but is this enough for a refutation? We have now two contradictory statements:¹² doing injustice is worse than suffering injustice; and the opposite, suffering injustice worse than doing injustice, ya? We have a clear contradiction. Now what follows? If a man says *a* is *b* and *a* is non-*b*, what follows from that? Pardon?

^{iv} The verb is *dechomai*.

Student: One of them must be wrong.

LS: Yes, sure, but *which*? Which is wrong? [That] does not follow from the contradiction—obviously not. You can only say either this or that, either *a* is *b* or *a* is non-*b*. You cannot say more. But Socrates *picks one*. With what right? Because the only right he could have is that Polus said *a* is non-*b* later than he says *a* is *b*. But he says this on the basis of a very dubious argument that doesn't settle the issue. Good. So we have to see whether Socrates reaches anywhere a point where a true refutation is achieved. Let us go on where we were:

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “So you see, Polus, that when one proof is contrasted with the other they have no resemblance, but whereas you have the assent of every one else except myself, I am satisfied with your sole assent and evidence, and I take but your vote only and disregard the rest.” (475e–476a)

LS: So now Socrates compares his *argument* to Polus' *argument*. The word he uses is *elenchos*, which means something like refutation or cross-examination. But the cross-examinations are very different. Socrates' refutation is not a rhetorical refutation. This is implied. But both belong to the same genus: both are refutations or cross-examinations. Let us not forget that. Socrates reminds Polus of the opposite opinion which all men, including Polus but excluding Socrates, admit—namely, that doing injustice is preferable to suffering injustice. But that opinion has been rendered ineffective as far as Polus is concerned, [Polus] who has been overcome by Socrates or has been defeated by Socrates—no more: *healed*. That's the term which he implies. Polus has undergone an operation, a painful operation. It was painful to him, naturally, to his vanity at least. And Socrates healed him from that. Rhetoric is then, we learn, a medicine. You remember in the long speech of Socrates rhetoric was described as cooking, a sham imitation of medicine. Now we see it is the genuine stuff: medicine. Polus ought to consider not the pain of the operation but the good which it brings. He prefers now suffering injustice to doing injustice. But *on the wrong ground*, because this is not a sufficient ground, this ambiguity regarding the noble or fair.

What does this mean? In a way, he has acquired right opinion, the right opinion that doing injustice is worse than suffering injustice. To that extent, he has acquired right opinion. Right opinion may be based on wrong reasons; it is still right opinion. So we get now an inkling of what Socrates' rhetoric is. Socrates' rhetoric is rhetoric [that] produces right opinion, and this does not mean that the *grounds* are sound grounds. As productive of right opinion, it can be practiced only by a man who knows the truth, because only he is in a position clearly and reasonably to distinguish between right opinions and wrong opinions. Socratic rhetoric. Socrates shows us a kind of rhetoric which is a true art and not sham, productive of right opinion on insufficient grounds. Therefore the lesson which it conveys is not scientific, in Plato's sense of the word, and yet it is right opinion.

Now what has been proven? Again, what has been asserted? That the wrongdoer is

wretched. The utmost which can be said to have been proven is that doing injustice is bad. But this is not exactly the same as that the unjust man is wretched. This would only be the case if continuous acting justly were identical with happiness. But, as we have seen before, happiness is identical with justice plus x . That x was defined by Socrates as *education*: justice plus education. It is defined by Polus and by ordinary people [as] wealth and power. Justice plus wealth and power—then a man is truly happy. But if the wrongdoer possesses x , regardless of whether the x is the noble thing which Socrates has in mind, education, or the low things which Polus has in mind, wealth and power, then he is not simply wretched, because he has indeed the defect of wrongdoing but the positive things of that x . In brief, the thesis has not been proven. I would also add another point which is not discussed here at all in the Polus section. Now if doing injustice is fouler because it brings bad reputation, is this universally true? I mean, is this universally true or is this true only under conditions? I am sorry that I have to teach you some rudiments of gangsterism if you do not know them. Otherwise, you cannot understand the argument. Yes?

Student: Well, someone like Nietzsche, for instance—

LS: Oh, we don't have to go so far away. Ordinary gangsterism. [Laughter]

Student: . . . Napoleon

LS: That's also too ambiguous, because Napoleon, after all, in a way could claim he was working for the common good, ya? So that's not so simple. Yes?

Student: How about if nobody knows that you're doing that?

LS: Yes! That's it! This argument is developed at great length by Glaucon in the Second Book of the *Republic*. So it brings bad reputation only when it becomes known. But there is, of course, no necessity of it becoming known. An omniscient God: then it would necessarily become known to Him. But here in this argument: silence about divine punishment. This is another difficulty which is in no way solved. Now let us go on where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "Now let us leave this matter where it stands, and proceed next to examine the second part on which we found ourselves at issue—whether for a wrongdoer to pay the penalty is the greatest of evils, as you supposed, or to escape it is a greater, as I on my side held. Let us look at it this way: do you call paying the just penalty, and *being justly punished, for wrongdoing the same thing?*"

Pol.: "I do."

Soc.: "And can you maintain that all just things are not fair, in so far as they are just? Consider well before you speak." (476a–b)

LS: You see, Socrates is fair. He gives him a chance to consider carefully. If Polus

doesn't avail himself of the chance properly, that's his fault. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: *Pol.:* "No, I think they are, Socrates." (476b)

LS: So that's the key point: all just things are fair. Good. And therefore just punishment is fair. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "Then take another point: if a man does anything, must there be something which is also acted upon by this doer of the thing?"

Pol.: "I think so."

Soc.: "And does it suffer what the doer does, and is the effect such as the agent's action makes it? I mean, for example, when one strikes a blow something must needs be struck?"

Pol.: "It must."

Soc.: "And if the striker strikes hard or quick, the thing struck is struck in the same way?"

Pol.: "Yes."

Soc.: "Hence the effect in the thing struck is such as the striker makes it?"

Pol.: "Certainly."

Soc.: "And so again, if one burns, something must be burnt."

Pol.: "Yes, of course."

Soc.: "And if one burns severely or sorely, the thing burnt is burnt according as the burner burns it?"

Pol.: "Certainly."

Soc.: "And again, if one cuts, the same may be said? For something is cut." (476b–c)

LS: You see, the examples are of course very pertinent because we are discussing punishment, or medicine. Good.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "And if the cut is large or deep or sore, the cut made in the thing cut is such as the cutter cuts it?"

Pol.: "Apparently."

Soc.: "Then putting it all in a word, see if you agree that what I was just saying applies to all cases—that the patient receives an effect of the same kind as the agent's action."

Pol.: "I do agree."

Soc.: "Then this being admitted, is paying the penalty suffering something, or doing it?"

Pol.: "Suffering it must be, Socrates."

Soc.: "And at the hands of an agent?"

Pol.: "Yes, of course; at the hands of the punisher."

Soc.: "And he who punishes aright punishes justly?"

Pol.: "Yes." (476c–e)

LS: More literally: “he who punishes *correctly*”—say, technically correctly—“punishes justly.” Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Doing what is just, or not?”

Pol.: “What is just.”

Soc.: “And he who pays the penalty by being punished suffers what is just?”

Pol.: “Apparently.”

Soc.: “And what is just, I think we have agreed, is fair?”

Pol.: “Certainly.”

Soc.: “Then of these two, the one does what is fair and the other, he who is punished, suffers it.”

Pol.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “And so, if fair, good? For that is either pleasant or beneficial.”

Pol.: “It must be so.”

Soc.: “So he who pays the penalty suffers what is good?”

Pol.: “It seems so.”

Soc.: “Then he is benefited?”

Pol.: “Yes.” (476e–477a)

LS: It’s *either* that [or]—you see, he does not even make clear here the end. [At] 477a, when he says, “if it is fair, then it is good, for it is either pleasant or useful,” he does not even take the trouble of making it clear that suffering punishment is of course not pleasant. But since it is fair, it must be beneficial, because it cannot be pleasant. Good. So undergoing just punishment is then better than not undergoing it, for this reason: *all* just things, like just punishment, are fair. What kind of a thing the doer does, the same kind of things the sufferer suffers. But the just punisher acts justly, and the justly punished suffers justly. But since what is just is noble, the justly punished man suffers nobly, which means either pleasantly or beneficially—but obviously not pleasantly. Hence the justly punished man is benefited by his punishment. Now is this argument foolproof? Yes?

Student: Just one small point: that one of the earlier examples he uses is burning violently or painfully. What is burned must be burned in a corresponding way. It doesn’t seem to me you have that logical correspondence that you had in the other examples. Is something that is being burnt . . . burning takes place or—

LS: There is a certain difficulty. Ya, you are quite right. But still, [to] the doing,¹³ to the inflicting of pain, there corresponds the receiving of pain. And to the inflicting of severe pain, there corresponds the receiving of severe pain. To that extent, it is tenable. Yes?

Student: . . . punishment would be beneficial only in the best case, with a man—

LS: Oh, yes. You do something forbidden. We have to stick here to the argument as

stated. Of course one must do this kind of thing that you say. But what we are concerned with first is [this]: What is wrong in the argument as argument, without taking into consideration facts which are most relevant and which we have of course to consider? But I believe we are guided to these very relevant facts if we stick to the argument stupidly, as it were, and see where its defects are, because Plato surely knew where the defects are.

Same student: But Socrates doesn't say why

LS: Yes, surely he doesn't say that. But he starts only from Polus' premises, which he has granted Socrates, and he draws all conclusions from them. Yes, Mr. Hern?

Mr. Hern: I think the problem is the just things are not necessarily noble.

LS: Exactly. That is the first point. Ya, why not? Now, what does it mean [that] just punishment is noble? "Noble" means always here of good repute, or the opposite would be disgraceful. Now, just punishment is of course regarded as disgraceful. And the just punisher is also not regarded as doing a *noble* deed—a just deed, but it's nothing to boast of. The just and the noble are not the same thing. That is the key point. Aristotle, in the *Rhetoric*, says somewhere, "To be punished justly is more disgraceful than to be punished unjustly."^v That's exactly the opposite. I mean, this elementary observation had occurred to Plato too. Furthermore, not only to undergo just punishment is just and hence noble, but also to inflict it. But if it is noble, it is either beneficial for the punisher or pleasant for him. Yet the just punisher is not *improved* by punishing others; that is not necessary. Hence, we can conclude with equal right [that] just punishment is pleasant for the punisher, which is contrary to some earlier observations. But it follows as legitimately as what Socrates asserts. The whole premise—to inflict or to undergo punishment is noble—is wrong. Hence, it does not follow that to undergo just punishment is useful to the criminal. You see, this simple observation, which is today drawn by many people, perhaps by too many people on too many wrong grounds, that inflicting punishment is not useful to the criminal, follows even without our looking at the facts, by simply seeing the defects of Socrates' argument. Someone—yes, Mr. Lyons?

Mr. Lyons:

LS: Well, that there is a certain correspondence of the acting and the acted upon, this is not the difficulty. I believe the most obvious difficulty is this: ¹⁴ the transition (we [will] come to that later) ¹⁵ from the assertion that suffering injustice is better than doing injustice to the entirely different assertion that if you have done injustice you are in need of improvement. Surely. But that this improvement is brought about by *punishment*, that is a very special additional assertion in need of special scrutiny. Plato will enable us to do it by what follows. But you see how important it is to distinguish. I mean, you cannot take any assertion which Socrates makes and say "Socrates says so." For example—I give you here an example. At the beginning of what follows immediately here, in 477a5, I found the following comment by Mr. Dodds. That the man who is punished justly

^v See *Rhetoric* 1366b32–33.

becomes better in his soul, he says: “No proof of this proposition is offered. Socrates *assumes* the remedial theory of punishment.”^{vi} Nonsense! Socrates assumes nothing. But he draws a conclusion from Polus’ premises. Whether there is not some element of truth in the remedial theory of punishment, this we must investigate, but by ourselves, perhaps helped by Plato to some extent. But one cannot say Socrates assumes it. He has inferred it very clearly from what proceeded. Whether the argument is sound syllogistically or not is another question. It is I think quite unsound, but it is a *rhetorical* inference. Now, Mr. Glenn?

Mr. Glenn: Now, what is the meaning of this argument? Socrates asks Polus, “He who punishes aright punishes justly?” and Polus answers, “Yes.” That is obviously not simply true, and yet there is no attempt made by Polus to distinguish in which sense it might be true—

LS: Ya. No, the word “aright,” I would translate it “correctly,” to make it quite clear. “Correctly,” you know, according to the . . . you can cut correctly—food, or whatever it may be. You can punish correctly. Whether correct punishment is identical with just punishment is not obvious, because just punishment might simply mean punishment according to law, and if that law is foolish, then the correct punishment would not be the legal punishment. So that’s an indication of this difficulty. But¹⁶ it is here somehow taken for granted all the time that the just is the legal, which is another grave premise.

Mr. Glenn: Yeah, well it would seem to me that Polus would have . . . if he could have . . . this assertion or this question—

LS: Ya, but, you see, he had nailed himself down to this first thesis: Suffering injustice is nobler than doing injustice, and the opposite, doing injustice is better than suffering injustice. And furthermore, he had nailed himself down to Socrates’ alleged analysis of the noble: that the noble is the beneficial or the pleasant or both. And he cannot jump out of that so easily. Think also of these brief steps. I mean, he cannot at each moment say, “Wait, wait, wait!” So that Socrates would say, “Why do you hesitate?” Do you remember? A few cases occurred. He must answer. And there is an element of the comedy here, without any question. Was there someone else?

Student: May I ask a question going back a little to your description of the effects of Socrates’ rhetoric, namely, that it’s productive of right opinion, whether or not the grounds for holding the opinion are adequate? I think you could argue that Socrates tries to pin Polus to the wall where he asks him if he would prefer more or less evil. And Polus already holds the right opinion, namely, that the public will always say that you should prefer—

LS: Ya, but you miss the point. You see, this position, as I tried to state it at the beginning, the position which Polus holds at the beginning, is not self-contradictory, you know? It becomes self-contradictory only by virtue of his accepting Socrates’ analysis of the noble. And then he is led to the conclusion that he both asserts and denies that

^{vi} See Dodds’s commentary, 253. (Italics in Dodds.)

suffering injustice is better than doing injustice. This, I think, is the point. I believe we have considered that. Can we go on now? Because if possible I would like to be finished today with this section.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “It is the benefit I imagine—that he becomes better in soul if he is justly punished?”

Pol.: “Quite likely.” (477a)

LS: Ya, because it has now been “proven” that one is improved by punishment. Now the question: “In what respect?”

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then is he who pays the penalty relieved from badness of soul?”

Pol.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “And so relieved from the greatest evil? Look at it this way; in a man’s pecuniary resources do you perceive any other badness than poverty?”

Pol.: “No, only poverty.”

Soc.: “And what in his bodily resources? You would say that badness there is weakness or disease or ugliness or the like?”

Pol.: “I would.”

Soc.: “And in soul too you believe there is a certain vice?”

Pol.: “Of course.”

Soc.: “And do you not call this injustice, ignorance, cowardice, and so forth?”

Pol.: “Certainly I do.”

Soc.: “So now in property, body, and soul, these three, you have mentioned three vices—poverty, disease, and injustice?” (477a–c)

LS: Let us wait here for one moment. You see, the man who is punished justly is benefited. But in what respect? Not in respect of wealth, obviously, because the punishment might be a fine; nor in respect of health. Hence, in respect of the soul, because there is no third part. He mentions three defects of the soul: injustice, ignorance, cowardice. Question: Does punishment also make men—assuming that it makes them just—does it make them brave? Does it make them knowers? This particular thing¹⁷ is hurt, but not necessarily more. I mean, because in order to make men wise, the best place¹⁸ to go [is] to school or to such things, but not to the judge. But one can say it makes some sense at first glance, that it makes men just. If this is so, a crucial implication: *that justice is not knowledge*. You do not acquire knowledge by being punished, but you might acquire justice by punishment. And this would explain of course why speech is insufficient for making men just, if punishment is needed for making men just. You see, he mentions here three defects of the body and three defects of the soul: weakness, sickness, and ugliness, he mentions in the case of the body; and injustice, ignorance, and cowardice [in the case of the soul]. The center one in the case of the body is sickness, and the center one in the case of the soul is ignorance. Now of the three

defects of the¹⁹ [body], I would not hesitate to say that the worst is sickness, because while one might not like to be ugly or weak, it is not comparable in being evil to sickness. Now if this is true, then one might entertain the notion that ignorance is the worst defect of the soul, worse than injustice or cowardice, because in a way it is the root of it. In agreement with Socrates' view, as we have seen in 460b6–7, justice is a form of knowledge. So this reminds us of this grave question: Is justice just one virtue among a number of virtues, or is it *the* virtue compared to all virtues? This is very important for deciding the question of whether men can become just by punishment. If the essence of virtue is knowledge, then virtue cannot be acquired by being beaten or tortured or jailed, to say nothing of executed. But if justice is a special virtue, a very special virtue, then maybe punishment is a way to it. We will see that as it develops. Let us go where we left off: “Now, which of these evils is the foulest?”

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then which of these vices is the foulest? Is it not injustice—in short, the vice of the soul?”

Pol.: “Far the foulest.”

Soc.: “And if the foulest, then also most evil?”

Pol.: “How do you mean, Socrates?” (477c)

LS: In other words, he has already forgotten. We know already now: it must be because of this analysis of the noble which he has given before. Socrates expands on that then.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Just this: the foulest is foulest in each case because it produces the greatest pain or harm or both; this follows from our previous admissions.”

Pol.: “Quite so.”

Soc.: “And foulest of all, we have just agreed, is injustice and, in general, vice of soul?”

Pol.: “Yes, we have.”

Soc.: “So then either it is most painful, that is, foulest of these vices by an excess of painfulness, or else of harmfulness, or in both ways?”

Pol.: “Necessarily.”

Soc.: “Then do you think that being unjust, licentious, cowardly, and ignorant is more painful than being poor and sick?”

Pol.: “No, I do not, Socrates, from what we have said.” (477c–d)

LS: Ya, “at least on the basis of what we have said.” In other words, he has a certain awareness that what followed followed by certain admissions and that maybe these admissions were premature. Yes. Good.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Portentous then must be the extent of harm, and astonishing the evil, by which the soul's vice exceeds all the others so as to be foulest of all, since it is not by pain, on your view of the matter.”

Pol.: “Apparently.”

Soc.: “But further, I suppose, whatever has an excess of harm in the greatest measure, must be the greatest evil in the world.”

Pol.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “So injustice, licentiousness, and in general, vice of soul, are the greatest evils in the world?”

Pol.: “Apparently.” (477d–e)

LS: Let us wait here. Now injustice, etc. is the basest evil. Polus grants this because Socrates speaks now of the *whole* evil or vice of the soul, including cowardice and ignorance. Hence, injustice carries with itself either the greatest pain or the greatest damage. But injustice is not extremely painful. It is, for example, less painful than starvation; hence, it must be most harmful. You see, always the analysis of the noble into pleasure or benefit is basic. He refers here partly to all cardinal vices opposed to the four cardinal virtues, and then also only to two of them, namely, injustice and what he calls licentiousness or intemperance. The Greek word is more revealing.^{vii} It is derived from the word for punishment: “the habit of being unpunished.” I could translate it well into German, because there is a German word which corresponds to it (you know German), *ungezogenheit*. *Ungezogenheit* is exactly what the Greeks meant: the habit of not having been spanked properly, and that is intemperance.

Student: The opposite of well reared.

LS: Ya, but—

[A partial recording of another course interrupts the tape here].

LS: —expression. Good. So here we have the indication which I mentioned: it seems, then, that injustice and intemperance, rather than the other vices, can be cured by punishment, which makes some sense. I mean, that is clear: if someone is²⁰ too much [given] to food, then by imposed abstinence—closed off from all ice boxes and so on—he can conceivably become more temperate. That is, he will gradually get accustomed to the new situation. There is, however, this point which we must keep in mind: intemperance is also not less painful than temperance, if we consider the consequence of intemperance, and it is surely more harmful than temperance. Then intemperance would be a greater evil than injustice. In a way, that is the thesis of the Callicles section, that it is intemperance which is the greatest evil under which injustice is somehow subsumed. Let us see. In the next section, Socrates suggests *all* the answers. Polus has practically no choice. Let us see what this means. This draws our attention to a very important question. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Now what is the art that relieves from poverty? Is it not money-making?”

Pol.: “Yes.”

^{vii} *akolasia*.

Soc.: “And what from disease? Is it not medicine?”

Pol.: “It must be.”

Soc.: “And what from wickedness and injustice? If you are not ready for that offhand, consider it thus: whither and to whom do we take those who are in bodily sickness?”

Pol.: “To the doctor, Socrates.”

Soc.: “And whither the wrongdoers and libertines?”

Pol.: “To the law–court, do you mean?”

Soc.: “Yes, and to pay the penalty?”

Pol.: “I agree.”

Soc.: “Then is it not by employing a kind of justice that those punish who punish correctly?”

Pol.: “Clearly so.”

Soc.: “Then money–making relieves us from poverty, medicine from disease, and justice from licentiousness and injustice.” (477e–478b)

LS: Yes. Now, this is a wonderful parallel. We have three vices or defects and three arts curing them. But is the parallel so strict? I mean, in the case of disease, we bring them to the physician. In the case of injustice, we bring them to the judge. What do we do in the case of the poor men? Do we bring them to the teacher of moneymaking? In other words, there are defects where we have no artisan who cures them, unless we assume now certain notions of the welfare state. But in olden times there was no artisan for relieving the poor. Now if this doesn't work in the case of poverty, maybe it doesn't work in the case of justice, either, so that the comparison of the physicians to judges is not quite valid. Maybe the state of injustice is in this respect comparable to that of poverty, where the true healing must be done by the man suffering from the defect rather than by some artisan, ya? That we do not know. Here it is clearly implied of course that right, or some kind of justice, is a *technē*, an art. But it is only that art which liberates the unjust from²¹ [their injustice]. But whether the justice of the just man is an art is an entirely different question. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Which then is the fairest of these things?”

Pol.: “Of what things, pray?”

Soc.: “Money–making, medicine, justice.”

Pol.: “Justice, Socrates, is far above the others.” (477b)

LS: Ya, “justice,” though, is not properly translated. I would translate it, stupidly and literally, “right,” meaning in the context the inflicting of punishment, nothing else. Yeah?

Student: How does Polus come to admit this, that injustice is the greatest evil?

LS: Ya, I answered it, but probably I answered it beneath my breath, you know, not audible. You remember that it is an evil, you remember?

Same student: Yeah. I don't follow *why evil*.

LS: Ya, this is so. We know now that injustice is evil. And it is an evil, not of one's pocket, nor of one's body, but of the soul—that's also clear. Now why is it the greatest evil? And that is due to the fact—

Same student: Why does *Polus* think it is, not why is it simply? Why does Polus—

LS: Ya.²² I have no other interest than to understand what is going on in Polus' mind. In other words, in a way we have to do what they now call "depth psychology." [Laughter] What is going on in Polus' mind?—because Polus is somehow in us too, that's the reason why; it is not idle curiosity. This—when Socrates speaks of injustice, he adds in this paragraph, as you will easily see, not only intemperance, but cowardice and intelligence, as they would call it already, say, wisdom. Now, that it is worse to be a coward and a fool than to be sick or poor—that of course Polus admits, because a man who is manly and shrewd can always get money when he needs it.

Student: And then cowardice and—

LS: No, Socrates suggests here all the defects of the soul together. And Polus does not have the presence of mind—naturally, after the beatings he has received—to say, "Wait a moment! Injustice and intemperance, they are here. They are uninteresting. *These* are the virtues of a man." Calicles will do that. Calicles will say, "This is ridiculous! *These* are the virtues. And then justice would only hamper them." Well, you see that. So this bringing in [of] all the vices simultaneously with injustice, this has this effect. Good.

Student: . . . put on poverty . . . fault? . . . a matter of choice here, with disgrace?

LS: Ya, that is such a difficulty. How shall I explain that? You see, the principle: the discussion takes place on a level between Socrates' and Polus', so to speak, always. In other words, it is never the highest point of view but a kind of average point of view. Now from an average point of view, I think people would always say that to be poor is not a desirable condition.

Same student: But it is not a disgrace. Disgrace means that you chose ignobly.

LS: Ya. Oh, that is not so simple. I mean, quite a few people—not only wealthy people but also poor people—do [sometimes] regard²³ poverty as a disgrace. Oh yes, I mean, you must not assume a somewhat sophisticated sense. The poor, the have-nots, can very well turn, very easily turn, into that. I mean, poor people are also susceptible of despising themselves for being poor. Not all people have this simple wisdom. It's really simple wisdom to see that money is not a very high thing.

Same student: Well, disease. Is that a disgrace? You have absolutely no control over it . . .

LS: Pardon?

Same student:

Another student: . . . What is a woman is raped? It is not her fault because it is felt to be a disgrace.

LS: You know, in other words,²⁴ the sound views on these matters are not presupposed here. Socrates is compelled—and I believe I can give you a²⁵ neat[er] formula later on—Socrates is compelled to argue on Polus’ premises. You can state it very simply as follows: that the position that Polus maintains and Callicles will maintain is the *vulgar* view, the ignoble view. That is perfectly legitimate to say. But then you must add immediately, this vulgar view is very powerful among men, very powerful, and not limited by any means to the inmates of Joliet^{viii} and other remedial institutions. Quite a few people outside of criminal institutions act on it, and some of them even confess²⁶ [it]. If you go carefully over social science analyses sometimes, you will be amazed how close these principles are to those of criminals. I have read²⁷ an article a short while ago about authority, in which it is taken for granted that [a] superior official in the bureaucracy owes his authority entirely to the use of the carrot or the stick to his inferiors. What a notion of authority! I mean, that there is an obligation to obey him because he is your superior is wholly disregarded—only whether²⁸ he is nice and gets raises of salary and this kind of thing, this is the point to which the authority of superiors is traced. What kind of an understanding of morality is that? So in brief, the vulgar view—the “morality of success,” I believe one can call it—is very powerful everywhere and at all times. Socrates has to try to refute this “success view” in these particularly interesting cases of Polus and Callicles, and we must see how he proceeds in each case. He cannot truly convince them, because—and that is, of course, crucial—from Socrates’ point of view *the* alternative to the success morality, the vulgar morality, is philosophy. I mean, there are certainly halfway houses, but they are not truly consistent; they are of dubious validity. That is indeed the point. That is the radicalism of Socrates, yes. To mention one point which I have mentioned before in other classes: in Plato there is no notion of moral virtue. Moral virtue has been *discovered*, as far as philosophy or doctrine is concerned, by Aristotle. That term never occurs in Plato. For Plato, there are two things: true virtue is knowledge; vulgar virtue, this is based on mere calculation—in other words, exchange of one low thing for another. Vulgar courage is fundamentally fear of the fear of disgrace, not genuine courage. And vulgar temperance is control of one kind of desires, low desires, with the view to indulging another kind of low desires. Whether Plato is right in this matter is a long question, but we must surely consider that Platonic point of view. Now where were we? 478b3.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Now again, if it [justice] is fairest, it causes either most pleasure or benefit or both.”

Pol.: “Yes.”

^{viii} LS refers to a prison located 40 miles outside of Chicago.

Soc.: “Well then, is it pleasant to be medically treated, and do those who undergo such treatment enjoy it?”

Pol.: “I do not think so.”

Soc.: “But it is beneficial, is it not?”

Pol.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “Because one is relieved of a great evil, and hence it is worth while to endure the pain and be well.”

Pol.: “Of course.”

Soc.: “Is this then the happiest state of body for a man to be in—that of being medically treated—or that of never being ill at all?”

Pol.: “Clearly, never being ill.”

Soc.: “Yes, for what we regarded as happiness, it seems, was not this relief from evil, but its non-acquisition at any time.”

Pol.: “That is so.”

Soc.: “Well now, which is the more wretched of two persons—” (478b–d)

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment. The example of medicine shows that the art—in this case medicine—does not supply pleasure but solid benefits, which are²⁹ [painful], and furthermore of course that this improvement, non-pleasant improvement, is inferior to never-impaired goodness. In other words, to be operated upon is better than not to be operated upon, but it is of course inferior to never having needed operations. And this implies that suffering punishment is unpleasant but good. But *needing* punishment, to repeat, is inferior to being just. But let us now again look at the case of wealth. Is liberation from poverty painful, as the liberation from sickness is likely to be painful? Do the poor feel pain if they receive money, when they are relieved of their poverty? But if this is so, could the liberation from injustice not be comparable to the liberation from poverty, as distinguished from an ulcer? And therefore could the liberation from injustice not be pleasant too, just as in the case of both money and justice there are no experts or teachers as in the case of the body (namely, the physician)?

Well, now, we cannot truly read everything. In the sequel, he establishes the order of rank: at the top is the good man; and second, the bad man if punished; and third, the bad man if not punished. [Then he discusses] what follows from that. And then he makes clear that Archelaus, the tyrant, the arch-criminal, and the orators belong to the third group, to the bad men who are beyond punishment, because they are beyond the reach of punishment. They are very gravely sick and are afraid of the bitter medicine—the bitter medicine being punishment. What is the trouble with this beautiful simile? What’s the difference between the man sick in body and the sick in soul, like Archelaus and such people? Yes?

Student: Well, the man sick in body would like to be well, but he is afraid of the process of getting well, whereas the man sick in soul doesn’t really know he’s sick.

LS: Ya, they don’t *feel* it. I mean, they have no incentive whatever to do that. Now Archelaus, furthermore, and the others, are men who did the greatest wrong, and they are said to be most wretched. But they are subjectively, if I may say so, not wretched,

because for the time being they feel well. But what about the case of the man who is sick and poor and commits a *minor* wrong to alleviate his misery? Does he become more miserable by committing that minor wrong than he was before? In other words, Socrates makes the case³⁰ [simpler] by discussing only the case of very little interest to most people, namely, of the arch-criminal. What about the ordinary wrongdoer? Or must we not make here a distinction? Let us read 479b3.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Since he was ignorant, it would seem, of the virtue of bodily health and fitness. For it is very probable, from what we have just agreed, that something like this is done also by those who evade their due penalty, Polus; they perceive its painfulness, but are blind to its benefits, and are unaware how much more wretched than lack of health in the body it is to dwell with a soul that is not healthy, but corrupt, unjust, and unholy; and hence it is that they do all they can to avoid paying the penalty and being relieved of the greatest of evils, by providing themselves with money and friends and the ability to excel in persuasive speech. But if what we have agreed is true, Polus, do you observe the consequences of our argument? Or, if you like, shall we reckon them up together?” (479b–c)

LS: Ya, now, let us stop here. The ordinary use of rhetoric, the vulgar use of rhetoric, is not like that rhetoric which Gorgias practiced when persuading his brother’s patients to take bitter pills. You remember; there Gorgias acted rightly. These people were foolishly afraid of the bitter pills, and then the rhetorician showed them they could overcome that fear. But in other matters, the rhetoricians do exactly the opposite: they *discourage* patients from taking bitter pills because they are bitter, and they do it by defending criminals and preventing the just punishment of these. Gorgias, or the rhetoricians, ought to do regarding the sick in soul what they have been doing regarding the sick in body. I think that’s a very powerful rhetorical argument. It’s very striking. You see Gorgias sitting here, when he goes with his brother, he behaves like a sensible man, and when he goes before a law court, he does just the opposite: he prevents the cure of these sick people. Ya, but what about this parallel of sickness of the soul and sickness of body, and hence of medicine of the soul and medicine of the body? What do we understand by mental disease? Is injustice the same as a mental disease?³¹ And then, therefore, punishment cannot exactly be identified with *healing*. You know, this complication, this grave complication, that we can call vices the illnesses of the soul only metaphorically, indicates a difficulty. And in another way it shows that Socrates’ argument is rhetoric, because it is based on this metaphor.

Now there is then a summary given in the rest of 479, which, I think—I mention only one point. At the end, in 479e7, Socrates says: “Has it been demonstrated that the true thing was said?” Polus: “It appears so.” Socrates makes sure that Polus admits that Socrates’ thesis has been demonstrated. But again we must ask a question, and that is in a way a summary of the whole difficulty: *Which thesis?* This is of the greatest ambiguity. The wrongdoer is wretched. But *which* kind of wrongdoer, a man who commits the most atrocious crimes, like Archelaus, or the *minor* wrongdoer? This is one point. Secondly, we have seen the difference between the man of an unjust disposition who never commits

an unjust act, and a man who commits unjust acts and may not have an unjust disposition. More simply stated: Socrates commits an awful blunder against the basic rule stated by him at the beginning of the very dialogue here. What did he blame Polus for at the beginning? Do you remember? Pardon?

Student: Not answering the question.

LS: Ya, ya, but what did he do? What was the question?

Student: Confusing what something is and whether it is—

LS: No, more precisely, answering the question whether it is noble or base before having determined what it is. And that thing was rhetoric at that time. But what is good for rhetoric is good also for justice. And now Socrates has here decided the question and convinced or persuaded Polus that injustice is worse than justice without having made clear in any way what justice is. I mean, in a general way we know what justice is, but this is not sufficient for a true demonstration, of course. Now do you remember a passage in Plato elsewhere where this is exactly the theme: that they have settled the question of the goodness of justice without knowing what justice is?

Student: The end of the First Book of the *Republic*.

LS: Very good. Socrates has proved against Thrasymachus, another rhetorician, that justice is preferable to injustice. The arguments are as defective as those which we have seen here. At the end, Socrates says: “Well, it’s not quite good. We have answered the question of whether justice is good before we know what justice is. It’s impossible. We have to do the whole thing all over again.” Now here, that is never done in this dialogue, at any point. We must see what follows on that.

Now in 480, the question is brought back to the original question: What follows from these things regarding the status of rhetoric? Now that rhetoric can no longer have the function of getting oneself acquitted if one is guilty goes without saying. I mean, that would mean not to go to the hospital because one is afraid of the pain and thus is not seriously concerned with getting well again. What did you want to say?

Student: I thought you asked a question about that.

LS: Oh, no. Now what then is the rule? Perhaps we read that, in 480. Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Very well: so if this is true, Polus, what is the great use of rhetoric? For you see by what we have just agreed that a man must keep a close watch over himself so as to avoid wrongdoing, since it would bring a great deal of evil upon him; must he not?”

Pol.: “Certainly.”

Soc.: “But if he is guilty of wrongdoing, either himself or anyone else he

may care for, he must go of his own freewill where he may soonest pay the penalty, to he judge as if to his doctor, with the earnest intent that the disease of his injustice shall not become chronic and cause a deep incurable ulcer in his soul. Or what are we to say, Polus, if our former conclusions stand? Must not our later ones accord with them in this way, and in this only?"

Pol.: "Yes, what else, indeed, are we to say, Socrates?" (480a–b)

LS: So in other words, that's clear: no forensic rhetoric for getting acquitted for clear crimes which one or one's friends or clients have committed. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: Then for pleading in defence of injustice, whether it is oneself or one's parents or friends or children or country that has done the wrong, rhetoric is of no use to us at all, Polus; except one were to suppose, perchance, to the contrary, that a man ought to accuse himself first of all, and in the second place his relations or anyone else of his friends who may from time to time be guilty of wrong; and, instead of concealing the iniquity, to bring it to light in order that he may pay the penalty and be made healthy; and, moreover, to compel both himself and his neighbors not to cower away but to submit with closed eyes and good courage, as it were, to the cutting and burning of the surgeon, in pursuit of what is good and fair, and without reckoning in the smart: if his crimes have deserved a flogging, he must submit to the rod; if fetters, to their grip; if a fine, to its payment; if banishment, to be banished; or if death, to die; himself to be the first accuser either of himself or of his relations, and to employ his rhetoric for the purpose of so exposing their iniquities that they may be relieved of that greatest evil, injustice. (480b–d)

LS: Let us stop here. So in other words, the best use of rhetoric would be to accuse oneself and one's friends—just the same as going to the physician—either for one's own benefit or for the benefit of his friends. One kind of people he mentions are the parents. Now there is a case somewhere in Plato where a man accuses his father of murder, Euthyphron, and there Socrates disapproves of him. But if this is true, what he says here—if this is simply, unqualifiedly true—the consequence of course follows: that one has to accuse one's parents or anyone, including oneself. Now how does Polus react?

Mr. Reinken: *Pol.*: "An extraordinary one, Socrates—" (480e).

LS: No, "absurd," "strange." Ya?

Mr. Reinken:

Pol.: "An absurd [statement], Socrates, it seems to me, though perhaps you do find it agrees with what went before."

Soc.: "Well, either that must be upset, or this necessarily follows." (480e)

LS: So Polus is not convinced, but he doesn't see what he can do to deny this

consequence. This is clear. I mean, he has been reduced to silence, he has not been convinced. And now Socrates shows another possibility for rhetoric in a way which is obviously ironical. But just as there is irony where there is no obvious irony, in the case where there is obvious irony there is also some seriousness. So we cannot merely leave it at noting the obvious irony. Yes, Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: And so again conversely, supposing it is our duty to injure somebody, whether an enemy or anyone else—provided only that it is not against oneself that wrong has been done by such an enemy, for this we must take care to avoid—but supposing our enemy has wronged some one else, we must make every exertion of act and word to prevent him from being punished or coming to trial, or if he does, we must contrive that our enemy shall escape and not be punished; nay, if he has carried off a great lot of gold, that he shall not refund it but keep and spend it on himself and his, unjustly and godlessly, or if he has committed crimes that deserve death, that he shall not die; if possible, never die, but be deathless in his villainy, or failing that, live as long a time as may be in that condition. Such are the purposes, it seems to me, Polus, for which rhetoric is useful, since to him who has no intention of doing wrong it is, I consider, of no great use, if indeed there is any use in it at all; for in our previous argument it was nowhere to be found. (480e–481b)

LS: Ya, well, you see this Polus section ends, then, even worse than the Gorgias section: rhetoric is useless. Yes?

Mr. Glenn: What is the meaning of Socrates' summary here of the uses of rhetoric? To me it seems, the use of rhetoric thus far [has been] in a way that is not included in the summary.

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Glenn: I think that Socrates, in this dialogue, has used rhetoric either—

LS: Ya, sure. But I have to discuss this at some length. But let me first see what he explicitly says here. You see, one must contribute everything one can to the condemnation of one's friends, if they are guilty. One must do everything in one's power to get acquittal of one's enemies, because the principle is help the friends and hurt the enemies. You help the friends if you help them receive punishment if they deserve it. And you hurt your enemies by preventing their cure. But this follows from principle that justice consists in helping friends and hurting enemies. Now if this is, however, not just, if it is not just to hurt enemies, then it follows that rhetoric has *no* use. In the other case, if hurting enemies is part of justice, then it is of some use, ya? But the height of the obvious irony is when he says, "If one's self is being hurt by someone, this of course you must repel; but if he hurts someone else, let him do it—that does not affect you." This is a very remarkable ending of this point, and we surely have to try to understand this thing and take into consideration what Mr. Glenn said. We cannot leave it at what he said about

rhetoric; we must also consider the rhetoric which has been *practiced* by Socrates, otherwise, the view is manifestly inadequate. Well, why is it manifestly inadequate, and absolutely impossible as stated? The simplest and most obvious case: after all, a man may be unjustly accused. And what is wrong in his trying to get an acquittal? After all, in the case of Socrates himself, however narrow and undeveloped Plato's thought might have been when he wrote the *Gorgias*, he wrote the *Gorgias* after the experience of Socrates. So this we can always assume

Now the thesis is, then, that rhetoric is useless. He had said more than that, worse things than that. He had said it is worse than useless, it is *flattery* or *sham*—the severest indictment of rhetoric which one can imagine. Now why can we not leave it at that? Why can we not leave it at regarding this as *the* Socratic teaching? For the same reason for which one cannot leave it at Socrates' claim that the right kind of speaking consists in *short* speeches in contradistinction to long speeches. You know, this is also said by Socrates, and then he gives the longest speech hitherto. So therefore Socrates says certain things which are only very crudely and superficially true. In addition, Socrates speaks of some minor legitimate use of rhetoric, even in the last statement. But above all, the most important consideration why we cannot leave it at this is because his proof is *invalid*, based on all kinds of premises which are untenable and on reasonings which are untenable. We must therefore draw the conclusion that Socrates discusses rhetoric *rhetorically*. Therefore there is a rhetoric different from the rhetoric discussed, the rhetoric inherent in what Socrates *does*. The true teaching on rhetoric is presented by Socrates' practice. Rhetoric practiced by Socrates is legitimate.

Now what is the character of that rhetoric? Superficially, of course, short speeches: questions, answers. But such short speeches as are based on the premises of Polus. And this is done for the benefit of Gorgias, as we have seen. Now the utmost degradation or debunking of rhetoric which Socrates effects serves the purpose to counteract Gorgias and Polus' exaltation of rhetoric. And it is a very general rule, in medicine and also in morals, that a vicious extreme of one kind must be fought, at least for some time, by the vicious extreme of the other kind, ya? Aristotle's *Ethics*, if you have a natural inclination to extravagance, you will not become normal in this respect unless you go through a period of extreme thrift, and then you will gradually settle in the right mean. Gorgias is to be brought to see that the rhetoric which he practices is not an art but sham. Perhaps Gorgias is to be led toward another kind of rhetoric. The kinds of rhetoric which Gorgias practices are the *epideictic* (the show-off), the deliberative, and the forensic rhetoric. The emphasis in the discussion is altogether on forensic rhetoric. And³² [it] must be understood why.

Now in Gorgias' great praise of rhetoric, he spoke of the power of rhetoric, and this power of rhetoric showed itself in *political* speech—think of Pericles and Themistocles. And at the same time he spoke also of the danger in which the rhetoricians are: they are persecuted. And with a view to persecution, they need, of course, forensic rhetoric, not deliberative rhetoric. In other words, forensic rhetoric becomes most important from the point of view of the self-interest of the rhetorician in the first place. So this self-interest calls for much greater respect for legality, for justice in the ordinary sense of the word,

than Gorgias and Polus show. Without such respect, their forensic rhetoric will be very poor. This is a lesson which goes through the whole thing. But this is a minor lesson, because the danger threatening the rhetorician also threatens *other* people, who do not exercise a sham art. It threatens also the philosophers. Will forensic rhetoric be sufficient for defending *philosophy*? Socrates, obeying the law, made a forensic speech when he was accused, but he failed. And this example seems to show that forensic rhetoric is not sufficient for defending philosophy.

Now Plato has given a recipe for defending philosophy and for making it safe on the largest scale, and that is the *Republic*. If the philosophers are kings, then they are safe, they control the whole power of the city. Yet I do not believe what we are supposed to believe, namely, that Plato did not yet think of this possibility when he wrote the *Gorgias*—I mean, because no one can know that; he could have thought of it. But still, this possibility is surely highly improbable, that the philosophers would ever be kings. What then can be done for the protection of philosophy in the cities not ruled by philosophers? One thing one can say: it can *only be done by rhetoric*, because the coercive power will be lacking, *but* by a kind of rhetoric of which Gorgias has no inkling. We have not yet an answer to that. We will perhaps gradually get it.

Now in order to find the way toward the right kind of rhetoric, one must first know what rhetoric in general is, its limits for good or ill. Now explicitly it was said in the *Gorgias* section [that] rhetoric is the faculty of persuading ignoramuses exercised by an ignoramus. You remember that? Now this is evidently insufficient. It is not necessary. Consider Socrates' own rhetoric. Why should it be necessary that rhetoric be exercised by an ignoramus? Rhetoric might be exercised by a knowing man. Why can the persuader not be a knower adapting his speech to the capacities of the non-knowers? This is a provisional inkling of what we might have to see.

Now what does the Polus section in particular teach us regarding rhetoric? We have seen that Polus replaces, in the first part of this section, rhetoric by tyranny. The examples which he favors are those of tyrants. And then in the later part, when Socrates achieves control, the emphasis shifts to punishment. Both tyranny and punishment are acts of coercion: tyranny, unjust coercion; just punishment, just coercion. But common to both, tyranny and punishment, is that they are possible because of the inefficacy of *logos*, of speech—which inefficacy is also shown by the fact that Socrates does not convince Polus, he can only silence him. So rhetoric cannot be the highest. Rhetoric can only be a servant. It cannot be, as Gorgias claimed, the highest good. This is true from every point of view. But could rhetoric not be the most beautiful *art*, as Polus claims? Under what conditions would rhetoric be the highest art? If justice were the highest good but men were by nature unjust—i.e., by nature concerned only with their own good—hence, *the* way toward justice is to undergo punishment, to get rid of this natural injustice. And since, if all men are unjust, no coercion toward justice can be expected from them, *the* way to undergo punishment would be *persuasion* toward undergoing it. Under these conditions, rhetoric would be the highest art. But the question is: Are these assumptions reasonable? In the first place, does punishment necessarily improve men? Differently stated, is punishment justified only if it improves the wrongdoer? Is it not justified as

deterrent or as the protection of the others? But does the understanding of punishment as deterrent or protection not mean that we use human beings, these criminals, as a mere *means*. (That's, of course, a Kantian way of stating it.) I.e., is this kind of punishment not immoral? If this is so, then all criminals, if they are to be punished, must be supposed to be *curable*, or, as they say now, susceptible of rehabilitation, if punishment is justifiable. Plato assumes that there are incurable criminals; therefore he cannot have had this view. And this implies, since these incurable criminals are to be punished, that not all actions are just *because* they are for the benefit or the good of the individual on whom the action is inflicted.

According to Plato, we can say as based on the *Republic* [that] justice means two different things at the same time: first, giving to each what is good for his soul, and³³ [second], the common good. Now these are two different considerations, and there is not necessarily a harmony between the two considerations; therefore the question of justice is so difficult. One must consider the individual, what's good for him, but one must also consider the good of society, which is a different consideration. At any rate, punishment does not have the virtues which it *must* have if rhetoric is to be the most beautiful or highest art. So this view which I sketched is untenable. Yet—otherwise Plato would not even suggest it—it *reflects* the truth. Now, in which way?

For Plato, justice in the full sense is philosophy, number one. Number two: according to Plato, most men are by nature incapable of philosophizing. From these assumptions it follows that justice is the highest good, and men are mostly by nature unjust. Now the sequel of the argument stated before is due to the fact that, from this moment on, Plato substitutes vulgar justice for justice in the true sense, i.e., for philosophy. So in other words, the argument contains a reference to philosophy, a reference not made clear. We can say that the Polus section is characterized by the fact—and of course the Gorgias section, too—by the fact that Socrates abstracts from philosophy. Unfortunately, I have not read it this time with the necessary care, and so I do not know whether there was not a mention of philosophy—but none [that] I remember now. I believe philosophy was never mentioned; surely it was never mentioned with any emphasis. Then I would have kept it in mind. The Polus section abstracts from philosophy, and that means the Polus section abstracts from *nature*. The term nature occurs barely, if at all. But in the Callicles section, to which we turn, almost at the beginning the themes philosophy and nature come to the fore. And therefore a much more fundamental reflection is there.

Now a last point. I believe it is connected with this fact, with the peculiar mixture of *consideration* of philosophy with the *abstraction* from philosophy, which leads to this result, namely, to the emphasis on punishment, which implies that one should really derive pleasure from punishing, which is surely not Plato's or Socrates' view. Now who are the kind of men who are most likely to derive pleasure from punishing?

Student: Sadists?

LS: Well, this is a dogmatic assertion because we have no revelation to the effect that cruelty is necessarily connected with a certain sexual perversion. Why not call it

“cruelty”? Because, honestly, we would have to make an infinite study whether there is a necessary connection between cruelty and a specific sexual perversion. We don’t know. Therefore I would never use the term. Cruelty. But what would be Plato’s analysis of cruelty? Which part of the soul is particularly engaged in cruelty?

Student: Anger?

LS: Ya, sure. According to the simple schema (which is by no means sufficient) of the *Republic*, there are three parts of the soul: reason, spiritedness, and desire. Anger has very much to do with that—anger, a kind of thwarted desire. And this thwarting brings in the malice; the desire itself is not necessarily malicious. And this is a great theme of the *Republic*, especially this spiritedness, which is in a way the link between reason and desire. Indeed, I believe that the abstraction from philosophy and yet consideration with philosophy leads to the consequence of punitiveness, i.e., desiring pleasure from punishing and, in other words, spiritedness. Now Polus is definitely spirited in the ordinary sense of the term. His very name [is] “Colt.”

Well, it is rather late now, and we will next time begin with the Calicles section. The Calicles section is as long, roughly, as everything we have read hitherto. And there, if anywhere, Socrates must settle the issue no longer rhetorically, because Calicles is not a rhetorician but an Athenian citizen, a man bent on political greatness. And we must see whether Socrates genuinely refutes Calicles.

[end of session]

ENDNOTES TO SESSION SEVEN

¹ Moved “not.”

² Deleted “have.”

³ Replaced “Socrates, what he” with “What Socrates.”

⁴ Moved “mean.”

⁵ Deleted “nothing.”

⁶ Deleted “he.”

⁷ Deleted “this.”

⁸ Deleted “him.”

⁹ Deleted “and.”

¹⁰ Deleted “through which.”

¹¹ Deleted “with.”

¹² Deleted “we have now two contradictions.”

¹³ Deleted “the inflicting of pain.”

¹⁴ Deleted “is.”

¹⁵ Deleted “the transition.”

¹⁶ Deleted “this is, of course, in no way.”

¹⁷ Deleted “that.”

¹⁸ Moved “is.”

¹⁹ Deleted “soul.”

²⁰ Moved “given.”

²¹ Deleted “the just.”

²² Deleted “That is what I.”

²³ Moved “sometimes.”

- 24 Deleted "what are."
- 25 Deleted "more."
- 26 Deleted "them."
- 27 Deleted "in."
- 28 Deleted "if."
- 29 Deleted "harmful."
- 30 Deleted "more simple."
- 31 Deleted "Yes."
- 32 Deleted "this."
- 33 Deleted "(b)."

Session 8: no date

LS: So here is another question from Mr. Butterworth:

At the end of the class last Thursday, you made the following summary of Plato's point thus far: justice is the highest good, but men are by nature unjust. This is implied from the fact that the argument contains an unclear reference to philosophy, i.e., the Polus section is characterized by an abstraction from philosophy and therefore an abstraction from nature. Assuming that this is a correct statement of your argument, I don't understand the connection, or rather the implication.

Well (where is Mr. Butterworth?), it is not a correct statement of my argument. We have finished last time the Polus section, and what is so striking here is this: first, the purely rhetorical character of the refutation, and secondly, the enormous boosting of the virtues of punishment. These are the most manifest features. Now the question arises: Why that? What is the idea behind that? Or differently stated, since Polus is a rhetorician, and the issue is the status and the importance of rhetoric, I phrased the problem as follows: Under what conditions is rhetoric the highest art? That it cannot be the highest *good*, as Gorgias had asserted, was clear from the Polus section, because regardless of whether you take Polus' point of view there or Socrates', rhetoric cannot be the highest good. Because from Polus' point of view, tyranny is the highest good (a tyrant being much more able to get what he wants than an orator), and from Socrates' point of view, as stated there,¹ the chief value of rhetoric is to induce men to undergo punishment, i.e., to go to the doctor of the soul and to get the necessary whipping for the restoration of mental health.

But also here the key point is punishment, i.e., also some form of coercion, in contradistinction to the *speeches* which only induce men to undergo that coercion. So rhetoric cannot be the highest good. But rhetoric could still be the highest art. And now the question is: Under what conditions would it be the highest art? And then I stated it: If justice is the highest good but men are by nature unjust, and so on. Because if they are by nature unjust, they can become just only by an *art*. And the art which makes them just, according to this argument, is punishment. I mean, no, what makes them just directly is punishment. But what induces men to undergo punishment is rhetoric. This is what I said. Then I made the remark [that] while these presuppositions are untenable, do they not reflect something which is Socrates' serious conviction? And I said, yes, to some extent that is true, insofar as for Socrates justice is philosophy, and furthermore by nature most men are unable to become philosophers. Now, if we replace again philosophy by justice, we may reach the conclusion: justice, Socratically understood, is the highest good, but most men are by nature, Socratically understood, unjust. That was what I stated. And surely there are very great difficulties, and we can only hope that by studying the rest of the dialogue, these difficulties will be resolved. But I do not make any promises to that effect. As of now, I still am myself very much in the dark. Yes?

Mr. Butterworth: Just what is the . . . of the absence of philosophy in this section?

LS: Well, here that's very simple: philosophy is never mentioned.

Mr. Butterworth: That's not the same point, because if that absence implies—

LS: Ya, but, well, philosophy is absent in one sense, even apart from mentioning or not mentioning, because the argument Socrates uses against both Gorgias and Polus is not a philosophic argument, ya? It is a rhetorical argument. But the question is whether philosophy will be present in the second half. In one sense, surely, philosophy will be mentioned right at the beginning. But whether the argument will be philosophic is a long question. We must see that. We cannot judge that in advance. Yes, Mr. Glenn?

Mr. Glenn: Mr. Strauss, what does it mean to ask the question, "Are men by nature just or unjust?" I just don't quite know what that means, because it would seem that, if nature is that which is everywhere the same, you're either asking something which is sort of . . . or in some sense it doesn't mean very much to me.

LS: Well, it is very simple. You must have heard, at least from the First Book of Aristotle's *Politics*, where he develops the view that some men are by nature slaves, that there were people who were of the opinion that men are by nature unequal. Now if men are by nature unequal, there may be some men who are by nature fit to philosophize and others who are not by nature fit to philosophize—I mean, that is to say, *congenitally*, and you cannot do anything about it later by any art. Now the difficulty is this. In our ordinary understanding—not only we living in a democracy but of course the Greeks as well (proof: Aristotle)—moral virtue is regarded as something of which every human being is capable. Well, extreme cases like morons excluded, but practically all men are capable of moral virtue. Now by justice we understand, of course, a moral virtue, if not the highest moral virtue. Now the difficulty here arises that for Socrates or Plato there is no moral virtue: virtue is knowledge. In order to make the meaning of² this very enigmatic proposition clear, I replace knowledge by philosophy. So virtue is philosophy, and in particular justice is philosophy. But if justice is philosophy, it follows necessarily that most men are by nature unjust. It has nothing to do with any modern Hobbean or other doctrines, it follows from these premises. Is that not clear? Shall I repeat the syllogism? It is a genuine syllogism, not a rhetorical enthymeme.

Mr. Glenn: Yeah, just about the last three sentences of the syllogism. [Laughter]

LS: So, good. Not all men are by nature able to philosophize. But to philosophize means to be just. Hence, only some men are by nature able to be just or to act justly. But since they are unable to act justly, they are unjust, by nature.

Mr. Glenn: But the problem is: The ability to be just, the ability to philosophize, I understand how that can be by nature—[that is], how the ability to philosophize and the ability to be just can be by nature—but it is a different thing to say men are by nature just or unjust?

LS: All right, Mr. Glenn. That is extremely simple. The men who are by nature unable to philosophize, can never philosophize. It is true that some men who are by nature able to philosophize may by self-neglect never philosophize, and therefore always remain unjust. They are not by nature unjust, but by their self-neglect. But the more interesting case is that of those who are by nature unable to philosophize, i.e., by nature unjust.

Mr. Glenn: You mean, then, that to say that a man is by nature unjust means that he is by nature *unable* to be just?

LS: Ya, sure.

Mr. Glenn: Oh, now I understand.

LS: Ya, sure. I see [what] you mean now: by nature unjust, but by *art* you could become just. That is what Machiavelli and Hobbes mean in a way, ya? Machiavelli has this beautiful expression for that: a prince must *make* his ministers good and *keep* them good. So by nature they are bad, thinking only of their own interests, but the prince can make them just, fundamentally by a proper combination of carrot and stick, obviously. Make them just—that is not what Socrates means. Ya? Good.

But we have now reached a turning point in the dialogue, and this is a good place for making a pause. Now we have heard suggestions like these: True justice is philosophy; happiness or bliss is philosophy; and implicitly, there is no moral virtue, for Plato, there is only genuine virtue, i.e., philosophy, and its implications, and what he calls vulgar or political virtue; the only salvation for mankind is the rule of the philosophers; rhetoric, that's to say, the right kind of rhetoric, is indispensable both in a perfect setting like that of the *Republic* and in the imperfect cities; and some other things which I had to say. What is the relevance of all this and the like for us today? Or more simply, what is the use of studying the *Gorgias* for modern, up-to-date political scientists? [Laughter] I will answer this question. I have already said something at the beginning. But I think it doesn't do any harm if I repeat it, because in the meantime we have gotten some more evidence. I will try to answer the question on two levels.

Now let us forget about Plato and look at our political situation with which our political science is concerned. What strikes everyone is the *global* character of politics today. Everyone has to be concerned, either professionally or indirectly, with what is called foreign cultures, which means something more than just foreign nations, and in particular, of course, the new nations in Asia and Africa of which we hear more and more, and will hear more and more. Surely, we must understand them. They are no longer objects of Western politics which can be molded by Western men. They are subjects of politics now. What does it mean to understand cultures not our own? Can we understand them by simply using what is called our categories? Are these categories, by means of which we understand them, not the outgrowth of our culture, so that by applying³ [them] to foreign cultures we distort them, namely, by trying to understand them by means of our categories? Do we not imply that we understand these foreign cultures better than they understand themselves if we apply psychoanalysis, sociology,

etc. to them, because they are wholly unable to understand themselves in psychoanalytical or sociological terms? Do we not illegitimately absolutize one culture, namely, our own? Surely, we listen to the answers which these people give to our questionnaires. We listen to *their* answers. To that extent, we do not absolutize our own. But our questionnaires themselves embody, dogmatically, our answers to the most fundamental questions—for example, such a distinction between religion and law, between economics and art, and so on, which are not necessarily intelligible in terms of all cultures.

Now our culture, as everyone knows, stems from the coming together of two cultures different from our own: the Greek and the Hebrew. Thus these cultures are therefore more directly accessible to us than the other cultures, because in a way they are within us. The study of these two cultures provides a kind of training ground for understanding foreign cultures in general. By studying any of these cultures—and of course in the political science department, the Greek culture has priority—we experience difficulties. We are reminded all the time of the way in which our categories prevent us from understanding, say, what Plato says; we observe all the time the danger of schematisms. And if we turn from the *Gorgias* to a chapter in a general history of civilization about Plato, or maybe even some more learned things, we see how superficial these categories—“Greek culture,” “Renaissance,” or what have you—are. And this is especially true, of course, and most visible, in the case of the highest phenomena of these cultures. The highest phenomena—say, Plato, compared with some inscription containing a tribute list of Greek cities of the time of the Peloponnesian War. This may be impossible to decipher because of the poor condition of the inscription, but there is no deep problem in understanding it if it could be deciphered. But in the case of Plato, if you have the text of Plato in tolerably good shape, as you have it in any edition, this is no question, deciphering: the question is of understanding. Now here is this little thing, which I said as a matter of course: highest phenomena, which is of course a value judgment and I will make no bones about that. But this experience again is very valuable, the experience, namely, of the impossibility of studying human things without making value judgments. How to justify them and show that these are the true value judgments and so on, that is always a concrete question which cannot be answered in terms of a general methodology. This is my first point, to repeat: That any serious study of phenomenon belonging to a foreign culture, wherever we would start, is necessary, I believe, if we want to be properly prepared for the difficulties which confront us when we study any foreign culture. But this is not my main argument.

I come back again to the point that political science is the study above all of present-day politics, in this country or elsewhere. But what is politics? “Who gets what when?”ⁱ has been proposed. [Laughter] Now this is not specifically political because “Who gets what when?” is a question also in families, even in classrooms. The same⁴ [thing that] is true of “Who gets what when?” is of course true also of power. Power exists everywhere, wherever human beings are. It is somewhat better to speak of public power—at least you make a distinction, although one may not understand what public, in contradistinction to non-public, means. In long-forgotten times, people,⁵ when they said what political

ⁱ Harold D. Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (New York: P. Smith, 1936).

science [is] about,⁶ spoke of the state. Some of the older ones among you may remember that time. It was the key term in nineteenth century and early twentieth century political science. But this term, and what goes with it, has become somewhat pale. And this is no accident, because state was always understood, at least in the Western world properly, west of the Rhine, in contradistinction to society. And is not society much more important, much less pale, than the state? So acting on this impression people reached the conclusion that the true political science is political sociology, a conclusion with which you all are familiar. But political sociology means, in almost all cases known to me, the understanding of political things in terms of the subpolitical, of things which are not in themselves political. Therefore it is preferable not to go the way to political sociology with its peculiar difficulties, but to correct what was wrong in the notion of the state or theory of the state—namely, to correct this conception in terms of the question: What *kind* of state? Because that was characteristic of the theory of the state, that it did not as such raise the question what *kind* of state, and spoke of the state. Now state seems to be neutral to all qualitative differences among states. Now this is feasible, surely, in one sphere of political science, within limits—namely, at least in international law. Because before the neutral tribunal of international law a state is a state, and you must not have any intervention and all the other nice things, and you are not concerned with what kind of a state it is.

In brief, political science must take its bearings by what is *politically* important. Now the word political has, of course, many meanings, and there is one vulgar meaning which is I think very helpful. When they speak about the superintendent of schools, or of the sanitary district or whatever it may be, and they say he is “playing politics,” what does it mean? It means he is not objective. It is not technical. It is *controversial*. The political is the controversial. And this leads us deeper, because today on the largest and most massive scale the political is, as everybody knows, the Cold War. And the term “war” makes quite clear that there is some controversy here. And what is the controversy about? Well, it has to do with the fact that the powers in question have different regimes, among other differences. The difference of regimes is the primary important thing. Not the state, in other words, but the regimes, are the specifically political thing: in the language of Aristotle, the *politeia*, not the *polis*. And everyone knows what these things are: liberal democracy, communism, fascism, even relics of feudalism, etc. There is a famous topic in political science called the “isms.” This is indeed what I have in mind. These “isms”—say, communism, democratism, or fascism—⁷indicate principles of legitimacy, because there is a communistic legitimacy, a democratic, and a fascist. But this principles of legitimacy is again a good example of the difference between the political and the sociological approach, because from the political point of view one is of course concerned with the *substantive* principles of legitimacy, like democracy, fascism, and so on, and not with the *formal* ones pointed out by Max Weber—rational, traditional, and charismatic—which are not helpful for political understanding. If you take the famous example of Roosevelt, who was in a sense surely a charismatic leader—I believe more than any other president since the time I⁸ [have been] in this country—he surely had this, what they mean by charismatic leader. But was this the ground of his legitimacy? Of course not. In the first place, a certain version of democracy *and* his particular ability. Even in the case of Hitler, his legitimacy was not merely based on his so-called

charismatic qualities, which I would simply state⁹ [as] certain kinds of abilities which he had. It was at least based on his alleged concern and dedication to country and dedication to Germany's transcendent greatness. So if we do not take into consideration these substantive titles to legitimacy, we do not understand the phenomenon.

Now the doctrine of regimes is presented to us in the most perfect form which it has ever received in Aristotle's *Politics*. But we must add immediately that the presentation in Aristotle's *Politics* is not complete, and it fails us precisely in the cases of both regimes which are of immediate concern to us. Aristotle's analysis is not sufficient for understanding present-day regimes. We must, then, raise the question: What are the essential limitations of Aristotle's *Politics*? And this is for practical purposes identical with the question: What is the essential difference between present-day regimes and the regimes discussed by Aristotle? This question can be simply answered: What is characteristic of all present-day regimes is exactly those "isms" of which I have spoken before. All present-day regimes are based on ideologies. There is no ideological basis of the regimes as discussed by Aristotle. Let us take a simple example: oligarchy is the rule of the rich, democracy is the rule of the poor. Aristotle states the arguments of the rich, on the one hand, and of the poor, on the other. There is not a single ideological element there. The rich say, "We pay the taxes, and the poor just enjoy what is done with these taxes; we have the greatest stake in the whole thing; we want the power." And the poor say, "We fight in the wars as much as the rich do, and this is the greatest service which a man can do the city, that he fights for it." There's no myth, no ideology, no general theory involved. So this is the first difference. And the second difference, which is also obvious, is that the modern regimes are in fact based on technology, on modern technology, i.e., on modern science. But science in the modern sense is the basis also of the ideologies. Take dialectical materialism, or the racial science or, in a certain democratic view descended from John Dewey, the method of science is the method of democracy—so close is the connection between science and a certain modern regime. Contrast this with, say, the Japanese notion that the legitimacy of the emperor goes back to his descendants from the Moon goddess. Do I remember well? This has obviously an entirely different character than the reference to these kind of doctrines which *claim* to be scientific, rightly or wrongly. But that they raise this claim, and that they recognize in their way the authority of science, is a remarkable thing.

Now these two things—the presence of ideologies and of technology in modern times—makes Aristotle's analysis, I do not say obsolete, but insufficient. In order to understand however these things, the ideologies and technology, we must go back to Aristotle or Plato and see what the reason, the theoretical reason, for this difference is. And that is the different view of the classics regarding the relation of science and the *polis*. The *polis* is the city, the ancestor of our "state." Now the answer is very simple: Science or philosophy (the distinction didn't exist) *transcends* the city. You remember perhaps from an earlier meeting, when we discussed the question of prudence or *phronēsis* and the sphere of *phronēsis*, which is closed. But *phronēsis*, prudence, is of course not science or philosophy. And we¹⁰ also discussed at that time the complication that this closed sphere is in need of a defense which cannot be given by prudence itself but only by science. But this only as a reminder. Now why does science or philosophy transcend the city? Because

the end of the city and the end of the philosopher are radically different, radically different. Therefore we are in need of a bridge between the two, because the philosophers have to live in cities, and cities are well advised to tolerate philosophers, so there must be some *modus vivendi*, some bridge must be found. And that bridge is *rhetoric*, because that is the only way in which the philosopher can talk to non-philosophers.

Now in modern times¹¹ [a] radical change has taken place, which can be stated as follows: the end of political society and the end of philosophy are *identical*. How can this be? Well, very simply: If the task of science is to increase man's power in order to relieve man's estate (as Bacon [said]),ⁱⁱ if science is *the* way toward what everyone wants, say, comfortable self-preservation (to use another of these famous phrases, this one by Locke),ⁱⁱⁱ [then] there is no longer a gulf between what the philosopher intends and what the man in the street intends.¹² Then you¹³ no longer need rhetoric, because the bridge is technology, of course, the applications of science. You no longer need rhetoric, you no longer need fine words, because you have now solid achievements—the fighting of infant diseases and so on and so on. But this is not the whole story. The application of science is one stem. And the other stem is the *diffusion*, the methodic diffusion, of the results of science to non-scientists, simply called “enlightenment.” So this is the second of these kind of bridges. Now the end result of course is a kind of fusion of science and society. And today it is a theme of political science, as you surely know, to study the function of scientists in politics. [That] is now a political theme, because that the sciences do have an immediate political relevance is a fact. And one has only to consider along the lines of the farewell speech of President Eisenhower,^{iv} at least of the problem stated there, whether this is such a simple thing or whether it doesn't carry any dangers with itself.

I will make two more remarks [so] as to remind you of what one must somehow consider in order to have an access to such things as the *Gorgias*. Now the position of the classics can simply be stated as follows. Sometimes they are called totalitarians, a word which has too many meanings. But one thing must never be forgotten. In one respect, they were surely not totalitarian; they admitted that there is one pursuit which transcends the *polis*, and that's philosophy. But philosophy is the *only* pursuit which transcends the *polis*—i.e., not art, for example. In the Biblical tradition, one can say, at least as it developed in Christianity, that faith—that's to say, the true faith, and everything belonging to it—transcends the *polis*. Now you see here the great difference, because philosophy is meant to be the preserve of a natural elite, those who are by nature fit to philosophize. Faith¹⁴ in a way also belongs to an elite, but an elite not by nature but by grace. But the very notion that there is something in man which transcends the *polis* is underlying the modern development. But modern liberalism changes the thesis of both the Greek philosophers and the Biblical tradition. Modern liberalism,¹⁵ in its original form, which is still effective up to the present day in a somewhat diluted manner, [states that] the *individual* with his rights, with the fundamental rights, transcends the *polis*, which found its theoretical expression in the doctrine of the state of nature antedating civil society But here the

ⁱⁱ *The Advancement of Learning* I.5.11.

ⁱⁱⁱ See *Second Treatise of Government*, chap. 8, §95.

^{iv} “Eisenhower's Farewell Address to the Nation,” his last public speech as President, was broadcast on January 17th, 1961.

individual is of course not qualified by either philosophy or faith, the individual as he comes from the hands of nature, every man. No virtues, intellectual or theological, are required. Now when I say this is still effective up to the present day: these fundamental rights are, of course, the only natural rights; they are the only absolute fact in morality. Everything else is subject to discussion, modification, manipulation, but not the fundamental rights. And this is of course impossible to assert in the age of [so-]called relativism, that there should be anything absolute. Maybe. But as a matter of fact, when you see the discussions about freedom of speech and other freedoms of the First Amendment, you see that they are in fact treated, precisely by the more liberal part of the community, as *absolute* rights, although they have to the least degree a theoretical basis for making this assertion. So in the case of the classics, it is philosophy which gives the title to full membership; and in the biblical tradition, faith; in modern liberalism, the individual with his rights, regardless of any virtues.

But there is an alternative which played a certain role in the emergence of modern thought during the period called the Enlightenment. At that time, it was said by Montesquieu that the principle of democracy, in contradistinction to aristocracy and monarchy, is *virtue*. It was implied, not by Montesquieu but by some later theorists, that the morally virtuous individual as such transcends the city. Moral virtue is the one thing needful and sufficient, not philosophy nor religion; and moral virtue is at the same time *the* social bond, taking the place of religion, i.e., of particular religion. And one can understand it externally: that this was the consequence of the religious wars where people tried to find a common ground between all religious parties, and one thing which all religions admitted was the importance of moral virtue—“let this common ground be the sufficient ground.” And moral virtue is by definition within the reach of everyone: every man can be morally virtuous if he only makes the effort. Now this moral virtue of course is not the same as what Aristotle meant by moral virtue in the full sense. Aristotle understands by moral virtue what he also calls “perfect gentlemanship,” and this is not such an easy thing to get. But moral virtue was also quite diluted to be something like a “nice guy,” and this would seem to be something which can be expected of anyone. Somehow, it seems—and we must investigate that—that the *Gorgias* suggests that moral virtue is the one thing needful. It is not called here moral virtue, but justice. But some doubt is cast on this proposition immediately because of the importance attached by Socrates to philosophy. And we will see, then, how this works out. Which point did we reach last time? The end of the Polus section. Yes?

Student: You might repeat that last statement in regard to the *Gorgias*.

LS: In modern times, the view was of great political importance that moral virtue, which by definition is within the reach of everyone non-moronic, is *the* one thing needful, the only thing of “absolute worth” as Kant calls it, and at the same time *the* bond of society. Now the *Gorgias* seems to suggest that justice, which is in its way the same as moral virtue, does have this status and this significance. I said in advance that this is not in fact the case. But by keeping this question in mind, I believe we will understand Socrates somewhat better than we otherwise would. Yes?

Student: You said . . . that we must discover the relationship, for Plato and Aristotle, between science and the *polis*. And then you went on to say that science is above the *polis*, and you posed the question, “Why?” And then you said, “because the ends of the city and the philosopher are radically different.” Now, is this because of the fact that philosopher and the scientist are identified?

LS: No, this has nothing directly to do with that. The distinction between philosophy and science is an outcome of the modern developments since the seventeenth century. Very briefly—too briefly, but sufficiently for our present purposes: philosophy and science were identical. But in the seventeenth century, a new philosophy or science turned against the old philosophy or science. This new philosophy or science led to a development by virtue of which philosophy and science became distinguished from each other. I could elaborate on that, but we have to turn—yes?

Student: Would you tell me what you mean by ideology? There are so many modern political theorists who use the words ideology and philosophy as synonymous.

LS: Ya, sure they do, because they have no inkling of what philosophy is. And they call—one of my simple examples is: It is my philosophy to have two eggs for my breakfast. In other words, they call every maxim a philosophy. And, of course, people speak of “the philosophy of foreign relations” of Secretary of State Rusk or Dulles.^v That is . . . I read a book—or, not a book, but a book title, *The Philosophy of the Consumer* [laughter]. So we all have philosophies, and for the asking—anyone. That is, of course, a disgrace and not worthy of any concern. But then one should avoid the word philosophy, and say: Philosophy is bunk; that was an error of the past; we know now only science is possible. That is much more honest. Good. Now, what precisely was your question?

Student: What do you meant by ideology?

LS: I see. By ideology, I mean, as it originally meant, an *erroneous* doctrine which claims to be true on the basis of *science*. Whether that science is defined in terms of positivistic methodology or in the terms of dialectical materialism or this kind of mixture of various methods called racial science, I am not now concerned. But the key point is that there is a reference to something which is accessible to the unassisted human mind and not based on any particular ancestral tradition, as the myth of Japan would be. In other words, I would make a distinction between ideologies and myth. But we have to take up the question of myth when we come toward the end of this book, where Socrates will make a certain long speech at the beginning of which he will say, “This is a *logos* and not a myth, although you Callicles will believe it is a myth.”^{vi} Then we have perforce to raise the question: What is myth? Good. Yes?

Student: You said . . . three levels—

^v Dean Rusk (1909–1994) was the U.S. Secretary of State from 1961 to 1969. John Foster Dulles (1888–1959) was the U.S. Secretary of State from 1953 to 1959.

^{vi} LS paraphrases 523a1–3.

LS: Two, two, two. Sheer acoustical . . . Yes? This is the last question.

Student: You said that, for Plato, philosophy and justice are the same thing—

LS: That is a provisional statement and, for provisional purposes, perfectly good. But it needs some refinement.

Student: Does that come out of the statement, “to know justice is to do justice”?

LS: Ya, it’s connected to that, yes, an assertion to which we have to return more than once. Good. Now let us read the beginning of the Callicles section, the first two speeches.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “Tell me, Chaerephon, is Socrates serious about this, or is he only joking?”

Chaer.: “He seems to me, Callicles, to be very serious indeed. Still, there is nothing like asking him.” (481b)

LS: Now let us stop here. Why does Callicles address Chaerephon and not ask Socrates point blank: Are you kidding? How do you mean it? Now I think that is rather clear: because if Socrates is in the habit of kidding, his reply will also be suspect of being made jokingly. Of Chaerephon, he knows [that] Chaerephon never jokes and therefore you can get from him the straight answer. This last remark of Chaerephon, “nothing like asking him,” is an identical repetition of what was said at the beginning by Callicles to Chaerephon, or Socrates, about Gorgias, “nothing like asking him,” namely, Gorgias. You see here the change which has taken place: at the beginning the central individual, the life of the party, was Gorgias; now the center has shifted completely to Socrates. This is a great change which has taken place, unobserved as it were, and which proves one thing, surely: That Socrates is by far superior to the others in this kind of speeches, which he calls conversation, but which I think is better described as a particular form of rhetoric. So after Callicles has been assured that Socrates means it exactly as he has said, Callicles goes on:

Mr. Reinken: *Call.:* “Upon my word, just what I want to do.” Tell me, Socrates, are we—” (481c1)

LS: Ya, not “Upon my word.” “*By the gods.*” That’s the first time that this most comprehensive oath occurs. Not a single god omitted.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “By all the gods, just what I want to do. Tell me, Socrates, are we to take you as serious just now, or joking? For if you are serious and what you say is really true, must not the life of us human beings have been turned upside down, and must we not be doing quite the opposite, it seems, of what we ought to do?” (481c)

LS: Ya. So Callicles grasps fully the bearing of what Socrates has said: If this is true,

then we all lead the wrong kind of life, and we must put it upside down from this moment on. Callicles, in contradistinction to Polus, regards it as possible that Socrates means what he says. (You remember, Polus didn't believe that any man could believe what Socrates says he believes.) To that extent, he is more open-minded than Polus. But, above all, the question from now on concerns no longer rhetoric but our whole life: How should we live? Callicles is more serious than Polus. This much appears already now. Now how does Socrates reply?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "Callicles, if men had not certain feelings, each common to one sort of people, but each of us had a feeling peculiar to himself and apart from the rest, it would not be easy for him to indicate his own impression to his neighbor. I say this because I notice that you and I are at this moment in much the same condition, since the two of us are enamoured each of two things—I of Alcibiades, son of Cleinias, and philosophy, and you of two, the Athenian Demus, and the son of Pyrilampes." (481c–d)

LS: No let us stop here. Socrates starts with a general reflection. There are "feelings," as he translates. I don't know what is the best translation [of] *pathos*, which became on the way over to Latin, "passion." But¹⁶ [to] the original sense of the term, the present use of "experience" corresponds roughly: you are *hit* by something, you *suffer* something, you are *affected* by something to which you respond. Now there are such passions which no one else shares with one; and there are passions which some or many men share with one; and there are, finally, passions which *all* men share. The passion mentioned here is one which is shared only by *some*, in particular, by Socrates and Callicles, i.e., not by Polus and Gorgias. Socrates and Callicles are both *lovers*, *passionate* men, *dedicated* men. This is the main point. Now *eros*, the word used here, is something beautiful and at the same time beautifying. *Eros* beautifies the beloved, obviously. The famous example which Plato gives in the *Republic*: when a snub nose of a beloved girl is called, I don't know how—you know, we beautify the beloved.^{vii} But it beautifies also the lover. A human being in love is more beautiful than a human being not in love. I say "in love" in contradistinction to sexual excitement, which is a somewhat different story.

But Socrates and Callicles, while erotic men, love different things in two ways: different youths and different *pursuits*. Callicles loves the Athenian *demos*, and Socrates loves philosophy, which implies that Socrates does not love the Athenian *demos*. There is a kind of either/or here implied: either you love the Athenian *demos* or you love philosophy. And this is traced later on to the distinction between justice and injustice. The just man, in the full sense of the term, will love philosophy; the unjust man will love, if he is an Athenian, the Athenian *demos*. And this is not merely meant¹⁷ [anti-democratically,] as we will see. And you note also that he doesn't say "the *demos*." He says "the *Athenian demos*." i.e., the question is not standing up for democracy against oligarchy or whatever it be; it is the *Athenian demos*. To explain that: If you take the posture of Douglas against Lincoln, Douglas really loved the American *demos* and gave a damn for the *demos* elsewhere, whereas Lincoln was generally concerned with

^{vii} *Republic* 474d–475a.

democracy. I believe Ernest Bevin, the British Labour leader, was also someone who loved the *British demos* regardless.^{viii} This kind of thing, of course, always exists. Callicles' love for the Athenian *demos* implies an endorsement of Athenian imperialism, where the Athenian *demos* subjugated the *demos* of other cities. Philosophy has nothing to do with the *demos*—we have already heard Socrates saying, “I do not have conversations with the many”—and therefore the need for rhetoric in order to bridge the gulf between the philosophers and the non-philosophers. Callicles' two darlings, the Athenian *demos* and this young man, have the *name* in common: both are called “*demos*.” Do Socrates' two darlings, which do not even have the names in common, have *anything* in common? We do not know. So let us go on from here.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Now I always observe that, for all your cleverness, you are unable to contradict your favorite, however much he may say or whatever may be his account of anything, but are ever changing over from side to side. In the Assembly, if the Athenian Demos disagrees with some statement you are making, you change over and say what it desires; and just the same thing happens to you in the presence of that fair youth, the son of Pylilampes; you are unable to resist the counsels and statements of your darling, so that if anyone showed surprise at the strangeness of the things you are constantly saying under that influence, you would probably tell him, if you chose to speak the truth, that unless somebody makes your favourite stop speaking thus, you will never stop speaking thus either. Consider yourself therefore obliged to hear the same sort of remark from me now, and do not be surprised at my saying it, but make my darling, philosophy, stop talking thus. For she, my dear friend, speaks what you hear me saying now, and she is far less fickle to me than any other favourite: that son of Cleinias is ever changing his views, but philosophy always holds the same, and it is her speech that now surprises you, and she spoke it in your own presence.” (481d–482b)

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment. The son of Cleinias is, of course, Alcibiades. Now since Socrates and Callicles love different things, philosophy or the Athenian *demos*, they behave differently toward their individual darlings, Alcibiades or Demos son of Pylilampes. Both darlings of Callicles are fickle. And Callicles follows them. He is subject to them. But Socrates' chief darling, philosophy, is not fickle—never changes his mind—and therefore it is easy for him to resist Alcibiades' changes of mind. Socrates claims here also that what he had asserted in the Polus section was not his assertion but the assertion of philosophy. His only hope is that Callicles, because he is an erotic man, has some access to Socrates. That's the only bridge between them. When he speaks of the son of Pylilampes, he calls him “the beautiful youth.” This Demos, the son of Pylilampes, is beautiful; the other *demos*, the Athenian *demos*, is not. Now, the *demos* was personified, especially in Aristophanes' comedy *The Knights*, as a good natured, somewhat foolish, old man, and . . . too—so by no means beautiful. The question is: Can one love such a fellow? I mean, can one have an erotic desire for that fellow? And it is, of course, also implied here that the conversation with Polus was a philosophic discussion.

^{viii} Ernest Bevin (1881–1951) was a leading figure of the British Labour Party from 1922 to his death in 1951.

We know now that this is a somewhat unjustified claim, and we must keep this in mind. Now let us go on where we left off.

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “So you must either refute her—” (482b)

LS: Namely, philosophy. Ya?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “as I said just now, by proving that wrongdoing and impunity for wrong done is not the uttermost evil; or, if you leave that unproved, by the Dog, the god of the Egyptians, there will be no agreement between you, Callicles, and Callicles, but you will be in discord with him all your life.” (482b)

LS: Ya. So Socrates claims here that Callicles cannot reject Socrates’ thesis, which is not the thesis of Socrates, but of philosophy, without contradicting himself. You cannot contradict the truth without contradicting yourself. This should be clear. Now what is this oath, “by the Dog,” which has occurred before in this dialogue? But here we have the only explanation ever given of this strange oath: the god of the Egyptians. What is peculiar to the Egyptians? Well, according to Herodotus, the Egyptians are exaggeratedly pious, i.e., they regard millions of things which do not deserve to be called gods as gods.^{ix} So therefore also dogs. But the cat was at least as important. Why Socrates is more interested in the dogs than in cats? I mean, the dog has some great merits. It has nothing to do with modern dog worship; it is much more solid.

Student: The philosophic beast?

LS: The philosophic beast, ya, of the *Republic*, because he likes acquaintances and hates strangers. And this shows his criterion for preferring his knowledge [laughter]. Now the true thing, of course, is that the dog is, because of this preferring acquaintances and hating strangers, the prototype of the citizen. That is the deeper reason. Well, you see, and also when you observe a dog barking, the similarity to an orator is quite striking [laughter]. I mean, especially in some cases. For example, I remember the case of Sam Rayburn: when he talked, it reminded one immediately of a dog barking, which I say without any disrespect.^x Xenophon, by the way—I mention this in passing—Xenophon is much more subdued in every point than Plato is. Xenophon never has Socrates swear by the dog, but he makes Socrates tell a story in which a dog swears by Zeus [laughter].^{xi} That was the utmost he¹⁸ [could] do. Surely this oath is a comical touch, and in considerable contrast with the gravity of the subject. This we must keep in mind. Will you go on Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “And yet I, my very good sir, should rather choose to have my lyre, or some

^{ix} See, e.g., *Histories* II.37.1

^x Sam Rayburn (1881–1961) was a Democratic Congressman from Texas. He served as Speaker of the House for a total of seventeen years (1940–47, 1949–53, 1955–61).

^{xi} *Memorabilia* II.7.14.

chorus that I might provide for the public, out of tune and discordant, or to have any number of people disagreeing with me and contradicting me, than that I should have internal discord and contradiction in my own single self.” (482b–c)

LS: Ya. So Socrates, in contradistinction to Callicles, regards as a worse thing the lack of agreement with oneself. Lack of agreement with *others*, with the *many*, is much less serious from his point of view. Philosophy produces agreement with oneself. Without philosophy, men are in disagreement with themselves, whereas rhetoric produces agreement with the others. But it follows from this difference between philosophy and rhetoric that the agreement produced by rhetoric is *never* free from self-contradiction. Whether the rhetoric is vulgar rhetoric or Socratic rhetoric doesn’t make any difference. Good. Now, the chorus here to which he refers is one example. Socrates visualizes himself for a moment as a leader of a chorus. He would not be too greatly concerned with the harmony of that chorus—much more with the harmony of each member of the chorus with himself. We see already here something of the overall effect of Socrates’ reply to Callicles. Socrates claims that his assertion is an assertion of philosophy, not his own. Yet, or for this very reason, Socrates’ is less grave than Callicles’. Let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “Socrates, you seem to be roistering recklessly in your talk, like the true demagogue that you are; and you a declaiming now in this way because Polus has got into the same plight as he was accusing Gorgias of letting himself be led into by you. For he said, I think, when you asked Gorgias whether, supposing a man came to him with no knowledge of justice but a desire to learn rhetoric, he would instruct the man, Gorgias showed some shame and said he would, because of the habit of mind in people which would make them indignant if refused—and so, because of this admission, he was forced to contradict himself, and that was just what suited you—and Polus was right, to my thinking, in mocking at you as he did then; but this time he has got into the very same plight himself.” (482c–d)

LS: Ya, let us stop here for just one moment. So here Socrates had said philosophy had spoken through him. Callicles emphatically denies that: “You have not talked like a philosopher; you have talked like an ordinary, vulgar orator, like a demagogue.” In the case of Gorgias, Socrates exploited Gorgias’ fear of popular disapproval. That was grossly unfair. But Callicles’ statement of Gorgias’ mistake is much clearer than Polus’. Yet Callicles, too, doesn’t bring out the fundamental error or mistake committed by Gorgias. Do you remember what that fundamental mistake of Gorgias was?

Mr. Reinken: Rhetoric is and isn’t omnipotent.

LS: Ya, but this was not thematic.

Student: You mean the implicit mistake?

LS: Explicit mistake.

Student: Defining “foul” as . . . the distinction between what’s equal and what’s fair.

LS: Not Polus, but Gorgias. Gorgias’ mistake. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: When he said that the orator . . . injustice . . . that he should chased from the city . . .

LS: No. Pardon?

Student: To know justice is to do justice.

LS: Ya. Say it so others can hear you.

Same student: To know justice is to do justice.

LS: Ya, to know the just things means to do them. That is what led to Gorgias’ downfall. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “For my own part, where I am not satisfied with Polus is just that concession he made to you—that doing wrong is fouler than suffering it; for owing to this admission he too in his turn got entangled in your argument and had his mouth stopped, being ashamed to say what he thought.” (482d–e)

LS: So in other words, Polus made fundamentally the same mistake: *out of shame*, he didn’t say what he thought and therefore he got into trouble. They also have a *pathos*, an affection, Gorgias and Polus, but not *eros*, but sense of shame—also a disturbing affect. Yes? Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “For you, Socrates, really turn the talk into such low, popular clap–trap, while you give out that you are pursuing the truth—into stuff that is ‘fair,’ not by nature, but by convention. Yet for the most part these two—nature and convention—are opposed to each other, so that if a man is ashamed and dares not say what he thinks, he is forced to contradict himself. And this, look you, is the clever trick you have devised for our undoing in your discussions: when a man states anything according to convention you slip ‘according to nature’ into your questions; and again, if he means nature, you imply convention.” (482e–483a)

LS: Ya. Now Socrates is a vulgar orator who pretends to seek the truth, but is only a vulgar orator. And why? Because he takes seriously the *nomos*, the convention, the law, in contradistinction to nature. Socrates’ whole refutation of Polus is based on the confusion of what is by nature noble and what is noble by convention. Now, here¹⁹ [Callicles] in fact appeals to philosophy *from* Socrates, who non–philosophically accepts the *nomos* or popular thought. He says, as it were, “I am the lover of philosophy, while you, Socrates, are the lover of the *demos*, concerned with popular applause because you

reproduce what is accepted popularly.”

Now we have to consider for one moment this distinction between nature and convention. According to the textbook version, that [distinction] is an invention of the sophists. But this cannot be correct, because the traditional distinction, known up to the present day, between natural and positive right, or natural and positive law, is based on that distinction, because what is here called “positive” is the same as “conventional”—posited by men. Yet one could say, “All right, but in the distinction between natural and positive law, the relation of the natural and positive is not understood as an *opposition*, or as a necessary opposition, as it is understood here.” This is true, but the understanding of the relation of nature and convention as *opposites* is the key assertion of that most unsophistical book, Plato’s *Republic*, where it is made clear that absolute communism, i.e., communism regarding property, women and children, and the equality of the sexes are according to nature, whereas the prevalent habits—no communism and inequality of the sexes—are merely by *nomos*, opinion, convention. So I have shown briefly enough, but I think clearly enough, that this distinction, which includes always the possibility of an opposition, is much older than the sophists and goes in a way back to the origins of Greek philosophy. I will mention here only one point. Why do these historical errors regarding the distinction of nature and convention arise? Why has this distinction become unintelligible or obsolete?

Now when you look back to the seventeenth century, where our modern thought was founded, “convention” means of course [that] there are certain things which are not natural, clearly, [but] only convention. Now the thesis then advanced was [that] *everything* that is or happens is natural—what was later called “naturalism.” But in that peculiarly modern sense—everything that is or happens is natural—the so-called determinism of the seventeenth century, as a result of which the science of society became a social physics. Now this implies that *all* conventions are necessary for the people concerned. So if you have monogamy in this tribe and polygamy in that tribe and another arrangement in tribe number three, this is necessary—caused by natural causes (climate and what have you). Then, from this point of view, of course, the conventions are as natural as everything else. But if you think this through, as you see, it implies that all laws are sound. Anywhere, the laws, wherever you find them,²⁰ are exactly right for the people concerned.

Now one could feel that this is a somewhat sanguine view of laws and [has] other difficulties. And at the end of the development, more or less at least hitherto, I find the book by Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*,^{xiii} which I frequently quote because it is the only book of cultural anthropology which I have ever read [laughter]. And when she discusses the question why tribes differ, say, three red Indian tribes in Florida or wherever they were,²¹ she comes to the conclusion that climate and any other such causes doesn’t explain it, because the climate is the same, the race is the same, and everything else. And she ultimately arrives (I do not know the words she uses) [at the conclusion] that the difference is due to the fact that these different tribes freely or arbitrarily adopted either value system A or value system B. In other words, the ultimate fact behind which

^{xiii} Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1934).

you cannot go is an inexplicable *decision* of a society. This is what was meant originally by *nomos*: a decision which is no longer explicable, and behind which you cannot go. So, in other words, in a strange way the distinction reappears in present-day thought. This much may suffice for the time being. But, to repeat, the distinction *physis/nomos* is not a preserve of the sophists—only a certain *use*, which is made by Callicles here *in the way in which he makes it*. We will see that his main assertion will consist of two parts, half of which is identical with what Socrates and Plato assert; one half is not compatible, because he truly didn't understand what this distinction meant. Now, let us go on here.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “In the present case, for instance, of doing and suffering wrong, when Polus was speaking of what is conventionally fouler, you followed it up in the sense of what is naturally so. For by nature everything is fouler that is more evil, such as suffering wrong: doing it is fouler only by convention. Indeed this endurance of wrong done is not a man's part at all, but a poor slave's, for whom it is better to be dead than alive—” (483a–b)

LS: So here is one reason given, the first reason given by Callicles for his assertion that suffering wrong is worse and more base than doing wrong: it is unworthy of a *man*, of an *hombre*, not to be able to take care of himself or to take suffering wrong lying down. It is clear that this is a conventional view. In other words, this man who claims to present the purely natural view is more a slave of convention than anyone else in this dialogue. Yes? Now?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “as it is for anybody who, when wronged or insulted, is unable to protect himself or anyone else for whom he cares. But I suppose the makers of the laws are the weaker sort of men, and the more numerous. So it is with a view to themselves and their own interest that they make their laws and distribute their praises and censures—” (483b–c)

LS: You see, he goes over from “law” in the singular, *nomos*, to *nomoi*, “law” in the plural. But this has a very clear meaning. Because what is “law” in the sense used by him, which we translate ordinarily by “convention”? This he makes clear here by making the distinction: the laws, the praises, and the blames. In other words, it is not limited to law in the narrow sense of the term. All the social premiums, and also all praises and blames, are as much a part of the overall law, of the overall convention, as the laws proper. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “and to terrorize the stronger sort of folk who are able to get an advantage, and to prevent them from getting one over *them*, they tell them that such aggrandizement is foul and unjust, and that wrongdoing is just this endeavor to get the advantage of one's neighbors: for I expect they are all well content to see themselves on an equality when they are so inferior. So this is why by convention—” (483c)

LS: So let us stop here for one moment. Now what does he explain? For a *man*, i.e., for one part of the human race—let us call them “he–men”—it is better to do injustice than to suffer injustice. What about the others, the many? They make it a *nomos*, a convention, that the desire to have more than others, as distinguished from equal, is base. For this convention is *useful* to them—naturally, because they would always get even less—whereas for the superior man doing injustice is both useful *and* noble. And what he claims is that only these standards of the men, he–men,²² [are] natural. And what’s the reason for that? Why is not the standard [of] the many equally natural? Because this equality, which they claim, is a fictitious thing: no one wants the equal; this is only a kind of deliberate and arbitrary compromise which they make. The falsehood is the assertion of equality for all, whereas there is no falsehood implied in what the he–men assert. This is, I think, the point. And now we are still in need of a *proof* of this assertion. Now the proof follows in the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “So this is why by convention it is termed unjust and foul to aim at an advantage over the majority, and why they call it wrongdoing: but nature, in my opinion, herself proclaims the fact that it is right for the better to have advantage of the worse, and the abler of the feebler. It is obvious in many cases that this is so, not only in the animal world, but in the states and races, collectively, of men—that right has been decided to consist in the sway and advantage of the stronger over the weaker. For by what manner of right did Xerxes march against Greece, or his father against Scythia? Or take countless other cases of the sort one might mention. Why, surely these men follow nature—the nature of right—in acting thus; yes, on my soul—” (483c–e)

LS: “by Zeus!” “by Zeus!”

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “by Zeus, and follow the law of nature—though not that, I dare say, which is made by us; we mould the best and strongest amongst us, taking them from their infancy like young lions, and utterly enthrall them by our spells and witchcraft, telling them the while that they must have but their equal share, and that this is what is fair and just. But, I fancy, when some man arises with a nature of sufficient force, he shakes off all that we have taught him, bursts his bonds, and breaks free; he tramples underfoot our codes and juggleries, our charms and ‘laws,’ which are all against nature; our slave rises in revolt and shows himself our master, and there dawns the full light of natural justice—” (483e–484b)

LS: “of natural right,” ya. Now Callicles’ proof is then that nature herself shows the just itself—namely, that the better are more powerful, should have more, than the inferior or weaker: the lion has more than the lamb, etc. Now, he gives the example of the Persian king against the Greeks—a war against the Athenian *demos*. You see, Callicles can rise above the particular: he doesn’t speak here as an Athenian patriot, he speaks of the natural. But also, what he does not say is that this enterprise led to Salamis and Plataea,^{xiii}

^{xiii} Decisive Greek victories over the invading Persian forces led by Xerxes.

i.e., to a situation in which the Athenian *demos* was stronger than the Persian king. He is silent here on the Athenian imperialism. He doesn't mention that, of course—quite naturally, because Gorgias is present, from Leontini in Sicily, and the major act of Athenian imperialism was the Sicilian expedition. This is very tactful of him. Now look at the terms which he uses. He speaks first of the “nature of right,” an expression used also by Glaucon in his speech in the Second Book of the *Republic*. This is a relatively neutral term. Even a man who denies natural right has to raise the question of what is the nature of right; one [answer] could be [that] right is convention. But then he speaks of the “right of nature,” of what is just according to nature. And then, finally, he speaks of the “law of nature.” That's the first time that this term occurs. He²³ [says] in this context,²⁴ “by Zeus, the law of nature.” The connection between law and Zeus, in contradistinction to a human law, is still present there. Callicles cannot, in spite of his opposition of nature and law,²⁵ overcome the desire for law. And you see at the end of this passage which we read, Callicles regards himself not as one of these true men; he counts himself among the *demos*, the many, when he says “our slave,” “we have enslaved him,” i.e., “I do not belong to them.”²⁶ Just as he²⁷ [rises] above the peculiar interest of the Athenian *demos*, he²⁸ [rises] also above his own interest. He bows to that which is greater than he: the law of nature which favors the strong. He is in this sense a noble man; he can forget his own private interests. Well, this passage has a parallel in Glaucon's speech in the Second Book of the *Republic*, which one should carefully compare. The most striking difference is this: that in Glaucon's presentation natural right doesn't have that *splendor* which it has in Callicles' presentation. And this is also expressed in the following fact: that Glaucon does not speak of a natural *right*. “Right” is positive right. What is natural is indeed that the stronger overpowers the weaker, but this is not more *just*. Justice belongs entirely to the conventional sphere. Callicles gives nature the whole splendor hitherto given to justice and the noble. Now we get another argument of Callicles.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “And it seems to me that Pindar adds his evidence to what I say, in the ode where he says—

Law the sovereign of all,
Mortals and immortals,

which, so he continues,—

Carries all with highest hand,
Justifying the utmost force: in proof I take
The deeds of Hercules, for unpurchased—

the words are something like that—I do not know the poem well—but it tells how he drove off the cows as neither a purchase nor a gift from Geryones; taking it as a natural right that cows or any other possessions of the inferior and weaker should all belong to the superior and stronger—”
(484b–c)

LS: Now, in addition to the argument taken from nature herself, he gives an argument

taken from *authority*, the authority this time being the poet Pindar. But this authority is much less emphasized than what nature herself shows, of which he had spoken before. And Pindar is a witness to the truth that the true *nomos*, true law, legitimates violence. He is not particularly concerned with knowing poets. You see that here. He doesn't remember that poem; he doesn't care particularly; he doesn't care,²⁹ in our language, for "culture." And that means, to use a somewhat loose term used by the Greeks, he doesn't care for philosophy. And this will come out in the immediate sequel. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: "Well, that is the truth of the matter; and you will grasp it if you will now put philosophy aside and pass to greater things. For philosophy, you know, Socrates, is a charming thing, if a man has to do with it moderately in his younger days; but if he continues to spend his time on it too long, it is ruin to any man—" (484c)

LS: "corruption"—a famous term because Socrates was accused of corrupting the young. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: "However well endowed one may be, if one philosophizes far on into life, one must needs find oneself ignorant of everything that ought to be familiar to the man who—" (484c-d)

LS: Now, these terms—"familiar," "ignorant"—all mean "experienced" or "inexperienced." I say this once for all. Yes? So, "of which a man must become who wants to be a perfect gentleman and well known." Yeah?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: "For such people are shown to be ignorant of the laws of their city—" (484d)

LS: "inexperienced" again, ya. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: "inexperienced in the laws of their city, and of the terms which have to be used in negotiating agreements with their fellows in private or in public affairs, and of human pleasures and desires; and, in short, to be utterly inexperienced in men's characters. So when they enter upon any private or public business they make themselves ridiculous, just as on the other hand, I suppose, when public men engage in your studies and discussions, they are quite ridiculous. The fact is, as Euripides has it—

Each shines in that, to that end presses on,
Allotting there the chiefest part o' the day,
Wherein he haply can surpass himself— " (484d-e)

LS: Ya. Callicles had spoken hitherto as a philosopher against the orator Socrates. But we

have seen his appeal to *nomos*, and, incidentally, also the frequent use of the term “I believe,” *oimai*, which occurs seven times in this speech. [This] shows that he himself is an orator of sorts. Socrates does not know the truth, he asserts. That is to say, in his conduct, in his conversation with Polus, he did not merely *play* with Polus, but he was, so to speak, plainly ignorant. And the reason for his ignorance is that he has not transcended philosophy, going beyond philosophy to some mysteries. And therefore he has become corrupted by philosophy, or too much philosophy. He has not acquired experience of these greater things. And these are the political or the human things. Among them are, of course, the laws. So in other words, very strangely, Socrates now appears as a man who knows nature, to the extent to which a philosopher is a man who knows nature, but not the law. But surely, in order to be able to evade the laws as a true politician must, one must know the laws, and Socrates therefore is wholly unfit for the political life.

Callicles’ thesis in itself is, of course, of the highest respectability. It occurs with slight modification in the most solemn statement of Athens at that time, Pericles’ Funeral Speech, when Pericles says, “We Athenians love wisdom, philosophize, with thrift.” Ya, that’s it: “Do not go too far, do not waste your life on that.” And a modern example, which I remember dimly, is Kipling’s poem “If,” which I myself liked very much but I was told it is very old fashioned, especially in Kipling’s own country, not to smile at that and to be amused by that poem. Some of you will know it. Remember “If”? And then when he speaks of the thinker: “If you are only a thinker”—that’s not good. Yes. Now go on where we left off. You see, here he quotes Euripides, and he will quote him again. So he has some knowledge of the poets—naturally, when he was young, he did this kind of thing. But when he became mature, he did things becoming a mature man—marketplace and not school. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “whereas that in which he is weak he shuns and vilifies; but the other he praises, in kindness to himself, thinking in this way to praise himself also. But the most proper course, I consider, is to take a share of both. It is a fine thing to partake of philosophy just for the sake of education, and it is no disgrace for a lad to follow it: but when a man already advancing in years continues in its pursuit, the affair, Socrates, becomes ridiculous; and for my part I have much the same feeling towards students of philosophy as towards those who lisp or play tricks. For when I see a little child, to whom it is still natural to talk in that way, lisping or playing some trick, I enjoy it, and it strikes me as pretty and ingenious and suitable to the infant’s age; whereas if I hear a small child talk distinctly, I find it a disagreeable thing, and it offends my ears and seem to me more befitting a slave—” (485a–b)

LS: Well, because slave children could not afford to remain children as long as children of the free. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “But when one hears a grown man lisp, or sees him play tricks, it strikes one as something ridiculous and unmanly, that deserves a whipping. Just the

same, then, is my feeling towards the followers of philosophy. For when I see philosophy in a young lad I approve of it; I consider it suitable—” (485b–c)

LS: No, “becoming,” “decent.” You see how much he is an Athenian gentleman going by the conventions of his society. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “and I regard him as a person of liberal mind: whereas one who does not follow it I account illiberal and never likely to expect of himself any fine or generous action. But when I see an elderly man still going on with philosophy and not getting rid of it, that is the gentleman, Socrates, whom I think in need of a whipping—” (485c–d)

LS: Everyone sees of course whom he means, which elderly one. [Laughter] Ya?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “For as I said just now, this person, however well endowed he may be, is bound to become unmanly through shunning the centres and marts of the city, in which, as the poet said, ‘men get them note—’” (485d)

LS: “Men” always has the clear meaning “male human beings,” ya? And also the addition of social standing and wealth. Like *hombre*—this is the best example which I have from a modern language. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “he must cower down and spend the rest of his days whispering in a corner with three or four lads, and never utter anything free or high or spirited—” (485d–e)

LS: Ya, let us stop here for one second. He teaches now the correct thing—a kind of Emily Post of Athens. [He teaches] what is the proper and becoming thing regarding philosophy. Socrates, we know, deserves to be spanked—naturally, spanking being a milder form of killing. I mean, it is not exactly killing, very far from it, but it is on the way toward it: affecting the body in an adverse manner. Now this lisp—“stammering” would be a more literal translation—may be an allusion to Alcibiades, who was known to lisp. In other words,³⁰ not only Socrates but also Alcibiades gets a dig. You know, this kind of babyish way of talking is very nice in a baby but unbearable in a man, in a grown up being. Now, Callicles turns, in a way, the tables on Socrates. Socrates had said, “You love the *demos*”; and Callicles says by implication, “No, I love the *polis*.” He, Callicles, in contradistinction to Polus and Gorgias, is a political man, and as such he must oppose Socrates.

This is altogether a very important question for the Platonic dialogues as a whole. In the *Apology*, Socrates is presented, or says of himself, that he³¹ [talks] especially to the political men, to the artisans, and to the poets. But if you look at the Platonic dialogues, you will find a very few dialogues with poets, none with artisans, and very few with

political men, i.e., with men who are already politically active (I am not speaking now of young boys who want to go into politics), very few. And especially if you limit it: *Athenian* political men. Very few, much less than one would think. Callicles is a clear example. And *the* dialogue with political men, in my opinion, is the *Laches*, where Socrates talks to four political men at the same time: two famous generals, Laches and Nicias, and [another] two, the sons of famous generals, Milesias and Lysimachus. They are very rare. So here we have a confrontation of Socrates with *the* Athenian political man. Good. Now let us finish, if we can, this section.

Mr. Reinken: *Call.:* “Now I, Socrates, am quite fairly friendly to you—” (485e)

LS: Ya, that is good, well translated. In other words, he doesn’t claim to be too friendly because we have seen Socrates deserves being whipped.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “and so I feel very much at this moment as Zethus did, whom I have mentioned, towards Amphion in Euripides. Indeed I am prompted to address you in the same sort of words as he did his brother: ‘You neglect, Socrates, what you ought to mind; you distort with a kind of boyish travesty a soul of such noble nature; and neither will you bring to the counsels of justice any rightly spoken word, nor will you accept any as probable or convincing, nor advise any gallant plan for your fellow.’ And yet, my dear Socrates—now do not be annoyed with me, for I am going to say this from goodwill to you—does it not seem to you disgraceful to be in the state I consider you are in, along with the rest of those who are ever pushing further into philosophy? For as it is, if somebody should seize hold of you or anyone else at all of your sort, and drag you off to prison, asserting that you were guilty of a wrong you had never done, you know you would be at a loss what to do with yourself, and would be all dizzy and agape without a word to say; and when you came up in court, though your accuser might be ever so paltry a rascal, you would have to die if he chose to claim death as your penalty. And yet what wisdom is there, Socrates, in ‘an art that found a man of goodly parts and made him worse,’ unable either to succour himself, or to deliver himself or anyone else from the greatest dangers, but like to be stripped by his enemies of all his substance, and to live in his city as an absolute outcast? Such a person, if one may use a rather low expression, can be given a box on the ear with impunity. No, take my advice, my good sir, ‘and cease refuting; some practical proficiency induce,’—something that will give you credit for sense: ‘to other leave these pretty toys,’—call them vapourings or fooleries as you will,—‘which will bring you to inhabit empty halls’—” (485e–486d)

LS: Because he’s poor. These are constant quotations from Euripides inserted into the prose. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “and emulate, not men who probe these trifles, but who have means and repute and other good things in plenty.” (486d)

LS: Yes, this is the end of that long speech. Callicles believes [himself] to be Socrates' friend, in a way even his brother, like Zethus and Amphion. His affection, his *pathos*, towards Socrates is of course not *eros*, for [there is] no *eros* between brother and brother. He has a certain sympathy with Socrates, good will. He appeals here again to his primary reason, which is not that theory of natural right but that it is unmanly not to be able to defend oneself against *unjust* accusation. This unjust accusation has to be distinguished from Callicles' own *just* accusation, according to which Socrates is corrupted and hence corrupting. You see, there are two sides to that. Now this case of being able to defend oneself against unjust accusation is the evidently sound case for forensic rhetoric, and we must see what happens to this later on in the dialogue. In the verses which he quotes from Euripides (the whole play is not preserved, but this much is known), ³²he replaces Zethus' recommendation of *arms* (that his brother, a music man, should train himself in arms) by the recommendation of forensic rhetoric. Forensic rhetoric is a *weapon*, a weapon to defend oneself. He does not have recourse to his "immoral" teaching which he has stated before. Why does he not do that? Why does he limit himself to the most defensible part of his argument, that a man should be able to defend himself against unjust accusation? That doesn't make sense. I believe there is this connection. Perhaps there is a necessary link between the perfectly legitimate concern with one's self-preservation and the desire for having more and more. Perhaps this is what Socrates has in mind.

Does this suggestion remind you of anything that you have heard or read before? That the desire for self-preservation by itself leads to the desire for having more and more? Hobbes, sure. That's Hobbes' argument, that³³ if the *end* is legitimate, the *means* are legitimate. And since it is absolutely impossible to say, in a state of nature, what means are conducive to your self-preservation and what not, because anything can come in handy, and errors of judgment of course do not make your action unjust, every man has the right to everything, deduced from the perfectly sound right of everyone to self-preservation. We must keep this in mind.

He speaks in e7 of the fact that the nature of Socrates' soul is fair. Naturally, the nature of Socrates' *body* was not fair; he was notorious for his ugliness. Callicles refers to the possibility that Socrates might be condemned to death. But still he seems to regard it as more likely that Socrates will lose his fortune which, according to Socrates' own estimate, was very small, or that he will get his ears boxed, which would of course be a very grave thing. Now if we look at Callicles' speech as a whole, we see he despises rhetoric, public oratory—he accuses Socrates of having behaved like a vulgar orator—and yet he *needs* public oratory, and even *praises* it. He appeals to philosophy, by speaking of nature versus convention, and yet he also despises philosophy. He behaves like Socrates' brother, and yet he acts already as his accuser. Now one can of course say that these are low contradictions but that he chooses in each case the right mean. For example, public oratory? Yes, but not in a private conversation. Philosophy? Yes, but only up to a certain age, and so on. But how is that right mean established for Callicles? By the rules of Athenian gentleman propriety, by *nomos*. This is surely his fundamental contradiction. Callicles, then, attacks Socrates on two grounds in this speech:³⁴ the first, regarding the issue of justice, and, second, the issue of philosophy. Now, what for

Callicles are two entirely different issues are for Socrates one and the same issue, if justice is philosophy, as I still would maintain. Mr. Dry?

Mr. Dry: Is it possible to see Callicles' expression of natural right as not having anything to do with philosophy for Callicles? He learned that very important lesson as a political man, and philosophy is something that children

LS: Ya, but that is very interesting and gives me a good opportunity to apply a simple lesson to you. Before he speaks of Xerxes and the cities and so on, he speaks also of something else, as a proof of the right of the stronger (and this is natural right): the animals. This can be easily overlooked, but this alone guarantees that it cannot be considered merely conventional, because the animals too have it. I think this much, somehow, he has learned. One must know philosophy. Philosophy is the only way to liberate the mind from convention. But once you have achieved this liberation, which alone will enable you to engage in politics without foolish reservation, then of course you have to learn the trade, to go into politics, on the job training. That Socrates never did. And therefore Socrates is *inferior* to him, because Socrates knows only this sphere of philosophy which Callicles himself also knows, and Callicles, in addition, knows politics. So who is the better judge?

Student: Is it accurate to say that for Callicles the only important teaching of philosophy is this simple understanding of the law of nature

LS: Ya, but it has considerable implications, especially regarding the gods. If you want to understand this passage better, you should also read the dialogue between the Athenians and the Melians in the end of the Fifth Book of Thucydides' history, because there the same question is discussed, where the Athenian ambassadors to Melos in a strictly political conversation try to persuade the Melians to hand over their city to the Athenians. The Athenians need it for their war against Sparta. There the question is [the following]. The Melians³⁵ are old fashioned, kind of Spartan gentlemen, and they believe in right in the ordinary, traditional sense of the term. And then the Athenians reject this consideration, fundamentally on this ground: the natural right is the right of the *stronger*. And they show that the very Spartans who claim to be more pious and just than any other nation act more on that natural right than any other nation. But the difference, of course, is that in the Melian dialogue, the beings who are declared to be entitled to do these things are only political societies, not individuals. And one of the deeper things in Thucydides' argument is: Does it not necessarily follow, when you apply this principle of the right of the stronger to the cities, [that you are]³⁶ compelled sooner or later to admit the same regarding the individuals, so that this principle would be destructive of the city itself? And I think, at least to that extent, that it is a very good argument in favor of tyranny, because the tyrant exercises as an individual the right of the stronger. And what can you say against tyranny if you as a *city* exercise tyrannical rule, as she was said to do during the years of her greatness? So while the argument of the Melian dialogue is much more political—on a much higher level from this point of view than what Callicles says here, and what Glaucon says in the Second Book of the *Republic*—and yet it seems to lead eventually to the cruder argument of Callicles and Glaucon. Because, I mean, if the

city claims that these things are nobly done if done by the city, and basely done [if done] by the individual, somehow the city [sooner or later] destroys the basis of its prohibitions if it says the city can do what the individual cannot do.³⁷ But here the question becomes immediately the individual, although he had spoken of the cities. That's quite interesting: he had not spoken there of individuals; he had spoken of animals and political societies, including of course kings, who however are acting, as kings act, on behalf of political societies; he had not spoken of the mere individual. This will come out in the sequel. So. Well, is there any other point some one of you would like to bring up? Yes?

Student: Why does Socrates, in his first speech to Callicles, make Callicles [inaudible word] philosophy? Why does he bring philosophy into the dialogue altogether? He didn't do it with Polus.

LS: Ya, the discussion with Callicles becomes much more radical than it was with Polus.

Same student: But did it come out of what preceded it? Socrates wanted to show Gorgias what his ideas are—

LS: No, who is the first who brings up philosophy in³⁸ [the dialogue]?

Same student: Socrates.

LS: Socrates. Socrates knows Callicles to some extent before of course. He thinks now we must bust the case wide open, and therefore also bring up the subject of philosophy. But in Callicles' argument, I think the inner link is this: the clear and explicit opposition between nature and convention is made on the basis of philosophy, and therefore the subject of philosophy should come up. And Callicles' correction consists in this: philosophy is indeed necessary in order to establish this distinction with all its interesting consequences, but then that's all—that's all we need. Once we have learned this grave lesson, then we have to learn the practice of politics, which the philosophers, [such as] Socrates, never attempted to do, and therefore they are in a deplorable position in the city. Good? Then we will meet next time.

[end of session]

ENDNOTES SESSION EIGHT

¹ Deleted "because."

² Deleted "that clear."

³ Deleted "it."

⁴ Deleted "what."

⁵ Deleted "spoke."

⁶ Deleted "they."

⁷ Deleted "these 'isms.'"

⁸ Deleted "am."

⁹ Deleted "on."

¹⁰ Deleted "have."

¹¹ Deleted "the following."

¹² Changed from, "if the task of science is to increase man's power in order to relieve man's estate (as

Bacon called it), then what everyone wants, say comfortable self-preservation (to use another of these famous phrases, this one by Locke), if science is *the* way toward comfortable self-preservation, there is no longer a gulf between what the philosopher intends and the man in the street intends.”

¹³ Deleted “do.”

¹⁴ Deleted “is.”

¹⁵ Moved “states.”

¹⁶ Deleted “in.”

¹⁷ Deleted “anti-democratic.”

¹⁸ Deleted “can.”

¹⁹ Deleted “Polus.”

²⁰ Deleted “they.”

²¹ Deleted “and.”

²² Deleted “is.”

²³ Deleted “uses.”

²⁴ Deleted “he says.”

²⁵ Deleted “he cannot.”

²⁶ Deleted “He forgets.”

²⁷ Deleted “raises.”

²⁸ Deleted “raises.”

²⁹ Deleted “for.”

³⁰ Deleted “so that.”

³¹ Deleted “is talking.”

³² Deleted “that.”

³³ Deleted “because.”

³⁴ Changed from “Callicles attacks, then, in this speech Socrates on two grounds.”

³⁵ Deleted “who.”

³⁶ Deleted “are you not.”

³⁷ Moved “sooner or later.”

³⁸ Deleted “philosophy.”

Session 9: no date

[The tape begins with LS reading a question from a student named Mr. Mathie about the beginning of the Callicles section.]

Leo Strauss:

Socrates appeals to Callicles at the start of the conversation on the basis that they have something in common, as lovers. You have indicated that the difference of names of Socrates' loved ones, as contrasted to the identity of the names of Callicles' loved ones, indicates a significant difference between the loves of each man. In a sense, Callicles loves one and the same, in that he follows each obediently on an irregular path. Socrates equally obeys philosophy, but it seems to lead on a more regular path. What, then, can be the nature of Socrates' love for Alcibiades?

Well, Socrates has one stable darling, philosophy, and therefore he is able to be stable also towards his fickle darling, Alcibiades, whereas Callicles' two darlings are equally fickle, and he is not saved from fickleness by any of them.

It would seem that the love of philosophy excludes¹ [Socrates'] love for Alcibiades. Why? I would like to know the reason. Why is Alcibiades mentioned, and to what extent is it true that Callicles and Socrates have something in common as lovers?

Well, truly *qua* lovers they have something in common, and that distinguishes them from the non-lovers, presumably, in this dialogue, Polus and Gorgias. But their loves differ, because not only do they love different human beings, but they love also different causes, if I may say so: philosophy on one hand, and the Athenian *demos* on the other. But why should the love for a cause be incompatible with the love for a human being? . . . closer to what we know of young men than to girls. Why cannot a lover also Where is Mr. Mathie? I do not know you. Oh, I'm sorry. I know you of course, but I don't know you by your name. Yes?

Mr. Mathie: . . . see the love for Alcibiades as being something like the love Callicles has for [the] *demos*.

LS: Ya, but if you love, on the one hand a rock, and on the other hand something like gelatin, do you not have something to fall back on from the beloved gelatin? That's all. And there's no such in the case of Callicles. Good.

Now I would like to say a few words before we begin our discussion. Now the issue raised in the *Gorgias* by Polus, and more emphatically and clearly by Callicles, is in a way still alive, at least practically. This is surely true: that the question whether one should prefer doing injustice or suffering injustice is of concern to every human being. The question is whether it is still alive theoretically. Now the position of Callicles was apparently restored by Nietzsche. There is an appendix in Dodds's commentary on the relation between Nietzsche and Callicles, and there are some passages in Nietzsche which

seem to be of the same effect. This is only a very superficial point in Nietzsche, but apparently there are such statements in Nietzsche. More clearly, perhaps, the social Darwinians: “survival of the fittest” is only another way of saying “survival of the stronger.” The position which Socrates takes leads to the natural right doctrine in the traditional sense of the term, i.e., to something which in the now-fashionable language is called “absolute values,” which are questioned by present-day social science, as you know. The favorite term in political science now is “power.” Now whether [the struggle for who gets what when is] between the nations or within the nations,² this is fundamentally the same. But people frequently believe that the position stated here by Callicles is the same as social science relativism. And that, I think, is very wrong, and I say this not out of any love for social science relativism, but for the sake of clarity. One could of course say, then, that there is a powerful school within social science which does not admit anything other than power. Think of Lasswell’s famous formula: Safety, income, deference.¹ These are the only goals of political life. And, of course, this would seem to agree with what Callicles says. But this does not go to the root of the matter, because Lasswell’s position is not that one which is universally accepted.

Now what is then the peculiarity of, say, Callicles (or for that matter, Glaucon’s position in the *Republic*) and what we hear today? Now the key point is this: for Callicles, there are things which are by nature good for man as man. Maybe it is only self-preservation, but that is by nature good. And when he says, in effect, that what is already understood by justice is only convention, he says this on the basis of an alleged knowledge of what is *by nature*, and it is understood that there are certain things which are good by nature—for example, health, life itself. Social science relativism denies that there is anything which is by nature good. This is implied in the distinction between facts and values, or in the distinction between the “is” and the “ought.” All values or all “oughts” are *not* natural, but freely posited. There cannot be any values which are by nature, because then they would no longer be arbitrary and dependent on choice. For example, if a man’s values were determined by his heredity and environment, the “ought” would follow from the “is,” which is excluded by the basic premise: no transition from facts to values, no transition from “is” to “ought.” Now the same would, of course, be true if a man’s desires would determine his values, because his desires are imposed on him; he is not responsible for the mere desire as desire. And this is shown simply by the fact [that] a man has a desire; he can fight that desire, perhaps even successfully; he surely can disapprove of his desires; and his values would not be the desires but that in the light of which he disapproves of his desire. Now when you come to the question, “What is the basis of his values as distinguished from his desires?” you come ultimately back to a free act which can no longer be accounted for rationally. I am aware of the fact that in most of the literature this distinction is not properly made, as they should make it, but this is not my responsibility. If I were a fact-value man, I would surely insist on that. All ends or values are posited. Therefore, for example, self-preservation cannot be a natural end, as it was according to Locke, Hobbes, etc., and of course according to Socrates, too. There cannot be any values imposed on men by nature. The proof is: well, you may choose death as your value instead of life, as the relativists of course assert.

¹ Harold D. Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (New York: P. Smith, 1936), 6.

I will restate this now in historical terms. Social science relativism presupposes the liberation from the apron strings of nature, which Kant³ effected at the end of the eighteenth century. There are no ends, as Kant still called them, imposed on us by nature, and all ends derive from the exercise of our freedom. By the way, the influence of Kant on present-day social science relativism can be seen more simply by the following fact. The theoretical-philosophic school which they follow is called “*logical* positivism.” Now what distinguishes logical positivism from the earlier positivism is exactly the influence of Kant. The logical positivism has learned—they are no longer followers of Hume, as they claim to be—and the key point [is] the insight into the so-called “genetic fallacy,” i.e., that if you explain the *genesis* of causal thinking, you have elucidated the *validity* of causal thinking. This simple point they learned directly through Kant or Kantianism, and so this Kantianism is even effective in their way of stating the ethical problem. This much so that we do not assume that there is a direct connection between the so-called sophistic position and present-day social science. That in effect they work in the same way as the sophists do, this I would not deny, but the theoretical position is very different. Yes?

Student: Why does a man who makes the fact-value distinction, why *must* he assume that values are not in turn modified?

LS: Because otherwise they follow from the—well, environment or heredity, we don’t have to make a distinction—the “*is*.” Because if the value which a man has—say, here is a man, A, and here are the values, alpha. If that is his personality, as they call it now, and the personality A necessarily leads to the values alpha, then this is as much *factual* [as] values for this man. Or replace it by a social group; the same would be true.

Same student: I know, but when they say facts can’t be derived from values, they don’t mean it in that sense. They mean it in the sense that there is no rational derivation of values from facts—

LS: Ya, but how can the question for A ever arise—which values he should choose—if the values follow necessarily from his “*is*”?

Same student: Well, there would be no choice then, for that—

LS: Ya, but then the whole—

Same student: That doesn’t affect the fundamental issue that, logically speaking, a value cannot be derived from a fact. . . .

LS: Well, what does “logical” mean? That’s a large question. But is it not so that, if there were a one-to-one relation between a given “*is*” and given values, the problem would lose all its practical importance?

Same student: What problem?

LS: Pardon?

Same student: Which would?

LS: The fact–value distinction would lose its practical importance. Because by speaking of a variety of “is”s, you would in fact already speak of a variety of values. But you say this is true of the *actors*—that is really what you imply—of the actors *observed* by the social scientist. But what about the social scientist himself, who [only] observes them⁴, and who makes value proposals of his own? Is this what you mean?

Same student: No. I was just saying that⁵ there are many social scientists who are determinists and who make the fact–value distinction nonetheless and who say that values can’t be derived from facts. I don’t see any particular inconsistency between determinism and the proposition that values can’t be derived from facts, because when they say values can’t be derived from facts, they don’t mean to deny that a man’s values are⁶ determined by the facts of his life. They simply mean that there is no true system of values, there is no objective system of values, there is no I mean, they seem to be talking about a different sense in which values I don’t see any inconsistency there.

LS: Well, let me put it this way. The crudest version of this kind of people say, “values are simply the objects of desires. And, therefore, since our desires can change all the time, there is no”—you know, the famous story of the typist who has, on the one hand, the value system which induces her to work in order to get recompensation, and on the other hand, she also has momentary whims, which are theoretically of course as good as her more permanent desires.

Same student: Well, they have to

LS: Ya, sure. So if she suddenly spits into her employer’s face and therefore is fired, there is nothing to be said against that, because—sure, you know that. Ya, but the more reflective people see that this cannot be as simple as that, because⁷ [the] fact that someone has a desire for something does not mean that he stands up for that something. And somehow we imply that having a value is a bit more than having a whim, and even more than having a constantly recurring desire of which you disapprove. So what, then, is that other thing? I mean, we must make a distinction then between *desiring* and *choosing*. Good. But this choice presupposes freedom, because this choice, that you adopt value A in preference to value B, cannot be guided by any rational consideration, because all values are equal. It can therefore be guided only by inexplicable, arbitrary decision. Ya? And therefore there are no values which can ever be rationally justified. There are no natural values: all values are based, as values, on free positing on the part of individuals, maybe of groups. This was the point I wanted to make. In other words, the key difference is that there is no longer any *nature* which imposes on men values and a certain hierarchy of values, as the older view was. And this, I believe, is connected with Kant rather than Hume or any other people. By the way, historically that is very simple because the man who brought in the fact–value distinction, at least as far as social science was concerned, was of course Max Weber, who grew out of a neo–Kantian philosophic environment. You wanted to say something?

Student: You use the term “nature” here so generically? I was wondering if you could define down further, distinguishing between, say, the Kantian definition of nature and nature in Socrates’ point of view.

LS: Well, of course, I was using it now in this connection, I believe, in the modern sense, which is the Kantian sense, say, the whole system of spatial–temporal events.

Same student: Just the physical?

LS: Ya. “Physical” is the same as “natural.” *Physis* is nature. But the main point is that there is a system of physical, spatial–temporal events in which you cannot strictly speaking speak of a hierarchy: one event is as high and as low as any other. It may be more permanent; that doesn’t make it any higher in any sense. In other words, I took “nature” in the sense [in which it is used] now, which came out in modern times, in the sense of natural science.

Same student: They do speak of hierarchy in a sense. Certain psychologists, assuming that’s the nature of a human being, talk about hierarchy and meaning and these kinds of thing.

LS: Ya, to that extent, they are borrowing from the older way of looking at things, I would say. Yes. Well, such schools like Gestalt psychology—the very name indicates that. They have tried to restore something older. They are therefore rebuked by the orthodox men as “wholists.” Have you ever heard that word? Ya, because whole is something which stems from the older view that the whole is more than the parts. From the modern point of view that should not be said: there cannot be, strictly speaking, wholes.

Student: Are you suggesting that the determinist who makes the distinction between facts and values—

LS: No, there is, in itself, no connection. The older determinists (say, of the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth century) never made a fact–value distinction. But part of the story is—but this is now too complicated to go into—that the simple determinism (you know, of the modern scientific tradition) is no longer so popular in the social sciences. This is now called “necessitarianism”—you must have heard of that—which is no longer regarded as necessary. Well, think, for example, of the importance of statistical regularities in contradistinction to strict laws, because statistical regularities do not imply necessitarianism. Yes?

Student: Does Callicles give a justification of his assumption that nature should be a guide and not convention? I mean, why does he accept nature?

LS: Oh, that is a good question, and perfectly necessary question. They all take it for granted, you can say.

Same student: As part of Greek—?

LS: Ya, “Greek”—that is what the first answer would be. But the question is whether there was not more than that. In other words, stated negatively, if something is said which is *incompatible* with the nature of man, then I think common sense at least would say, then men should not even try to do it. And this difficulty was also disposed of in modern thought by quite a few people, but Kant is probably the most important in this respect, namely, in the first place, if human nature is unusually malleable, then there is practically nothing which you can exclude on the grounds of human nature, except perhaps digestion, but even that can be arranged in one way or the other. But Kant makes this more solid by this formula: “thou canst for thou oughtst,” i.e., if you know what the moral law commands, without any squinting at human nature you know that’s possible. You do not have to study human nature at all in order to know what your duty is and in order to know what the best possible community is, because that is dictated by the ought. This is the other side of the is–ought distinction: it liberates the oughts from any consideration of *facts*. In other words, it makes possible an idealism, to use one of his slogans, which was never possible in the past.

Student: Do we go into this question in this dialogue?

LS: No. But in a way we do it. You have raised the question—that is exactly the point. Regardless of what Plato teaches—true or false—he surely goes very deep into these questions, and therefore he confronts us, as it were, with *our* premises. I mean, Plato states certain things which to begin with are wholly unacceptable to us, and then it becomes clearer to us than it otherwise would have been that we make very specific assumptions—for example, the one which you brought up—just as Plato made assumptions which are not evident to us, and we are compelled to think about our basic assumptions.

Same student: But he doesn’t give us any guidance. It’s not like If a fool thinks about assumptions and a wise man thinks about assumptions—

LS: Sure, sure.

Same student: Then we don’t need Plato to guide us—

LS: Ya, but we always need guides, teachers. I mean, in other words, the belief which some high school teachers in this country seem to have—that a 14 year–old child is able to write an essay on, “What should we do in South Vietnam?” etc.—is not a sound assumption, ya? Sure. Yes?

Student: You made the point just before that the psychologists who speak of a hierarchy of values—

LS: *Certain, certain.* Ya.

Same student: —are borrowing from the older view. And I was thinking that, it seems to me, there is a problem here in that psychologists who speak of a hierarchy often culminate with the notion of “self–realization,” which is the peak of this hierarchy. But self–realization is not the same as the older view because it really does presuppose a relativism, namely, that this self–realization is subjective with the individual.

LS: Ya, this is a sign. In other words, in olden times, they spoke less of the self than of the soul. And it was assumed that there is a certain structure of the soul, [that] there are higher and lower faculties, and that the perfection of the soul means in proportion to the order of the parts. So therefore, if someone develops to the highest possible degree his ability to do tightrope dancing, well, it may have its value for him and it may also have its value for people who like to see that man who lives so dangerously, but nevertheless it is only a kind of excrescence of a very special thing and one doesn’t have the proper balance of what is important and unimportant. Surely the word “self–realization” is very, very characteristic of modern thought, stemming fundamentally from German idealism rather than from British empiricism. That’s a long question. Yes, Mr. Nicgorski, and then Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Nicgorski: Would you review what you understand as significant difference between logical positivism and positivism?

LS: The word logical [laughter]—i.e., it is no longer *psychological*. That was a big fight in logic around 1900: What is the proper way of laying the foundation for the sciences, psychology or logic? Ya, this was a big fight around 1900, before and even after, and in this fight the logicians won. And the proof of the victory is that the successors of the so–called empiricists, Mill and such people, are now logical positivists, i.e., no longer psychological. That is a very rough answer. The brief point is this: The objection of the logicians, of the strict logicians, to the psychologists was, “You commit the so–called genetic fallacy—you believe that by giving an account how the sense of causality arises, you have *justified* that sense of causality.” That is what Hume, in a way, did. And this won. I think today there is a very general awareness that you must not do that. I mean, in all parts of the population, if I may say so, that has won out.

Student: Can one say that the rise of legal positivism is somehow a product of logical positivism?

LS: No, no, no. Legal positivism is only a special form of positivism in general, and legal positivism antedates logical positivism very much. Legal positivism is simply the view that the only laws that are are the positive laws, and that is as old as the hills—of course, Thrasymachus in the *Republic*, and so on. Good. And now, Mr. Mr. Reinken? That’s the last question.

Mr. Reinken: I cede it.

LS: I see. Now we began last time to read the Callicles section and especially and above

all this long rhetorically powerful speech of Callicles. Now I remind you only of one point which I made, that this attack on Socrates by Callicles consists of two main parts: First, the issue of justice which is treated at much greater length than the other; and then the issue of philosophy. For Callicles, these are two entirely different issues. For Socrates, it is one and the same issue, because justice is philosophy. But this is of course not yet clear; it will come out in the sequel. I think at this point we should take up, in 486d2, Socrates' speech.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "If my soul had happened to be made of gold, Callicles, do you not think I should have been delighted to find one of those stones with which they test gold, and the best one; which, if I applied it, and it confirmed to me that my soul had been properly tended, would give me full assurance that I am in a satisfactory state and have no need of other testing?"

Call.: "What is the point of that question, Socrates?"

Soc.: "I will tell you—" (486d–e)

LS: "Now." "I will tell you now." Ya?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "I will tell you now. I am just thinking what a lucky stroke I have had in striking up with you."

Call.: "How so?" (486e)

LS: You see from the two questions of Callicles that he does not understand what Socrates means. Socrates' statement is enigmatic. Now what does he say? Callicles, as has been shown by Callicles' speech, is the touchstone for finding out whether Socrates' soul is golden or not. This statement is *the* reaction of Socrates to Callicles' long speech, i.e., it is not a reaction to Callicles in general, to Callicles as Socrates knew him before. This speech gives Callicles this particular importance, that he is *the* touchstone. The speech⁸ was quite tough; you remember that he made it clear that Socrates deserves to be whipped. Socrates is not made indignant at all, but he regards it as a challenge. Socrates implies there is no question of Callicles possessing a golden soul. Callicles is only valuable for testing Socrates' gold, if any. Socrates believes that he has a golden soul, i.e., that his soul has been "well tended," which must be understood literally: he does not claim that he has a soul which is golden *by nature*. Well tended. If Callicles comes to agree with this belief, then Socrates will know that his soul is well tended. So, in other words, for Socrates it is of the utmost importance, the first time in his life that he can find out whether his soul is golden or not, an examination surpassing in importance all examinations which anyone of us has undergone at any university. Good. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "I am certain that whenever you agree with me in any view that my soul takes, this must be the very truth." (486e–487a)

LS: Now he speaks no longer of the soul, merely as soul, but of the opinions which the soul has. Ya? Good.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “For I conceive that whoever would sufficiently test a soul as to rectitude of life or the reverse should go to work with three things which are all in your possession—knowledge, goodwill, and frankness.” (487a)

LS: Let us stop here. A well-tended soul is a soul which grasps the truth, at least to the extent that it opines the truth or that it has right opinions. Hitherto, Socrates only *believed* that he had right opinions. If Callicles should come to agree with him, or rather to agree with what Socrates believes to be true, the things on which they agree will in fact be true. Prior to that agreement, he doesn’t know it. To have true thoughts is equal to the soul⁹ [living] well—a natural consequence of the equation of knowledge and virtue. Why then is that agreement so important between Socrates and Callicles? You remember that both Polus and Socrates appealed to the consent of all—Polus for his assertion, and Socrates for his. And yet they did that while they disagreed among themselves. Now it’s clear, none can have strictly speaking universal consent on his side, as is shown by the mere fact of their disagreement. Socrates had made clear to Polus that Polus has practically all men on his side, but not all men: *practically* all men. For Socrates, however, it would be perfectly sufficient if he could get the consent of Polus *alone*. Let all other men disagree, that is of no importance. In brief, no *consensus omnium*, no consent of all, but only the consent of *one*, or maybe a few. Once you state it in these terms, it is trivial. The consent of *qualified* people, of people who are competent to judge—the question is: What are the qualifications? And here he mentioned three: knowledge, good will or benevolence, and frankness. The Greek word for frankness, *parrēsia*, means, literally translated, the habit of saying everything, having no inhibitions. Now, read on, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “I meet with many people who are unable to test me, because they are not wise as you are; while others, though wise, are unwilling to tell me the truth, because they do not care for me as you do; and our two visitors here—” (487a–b)

LS: “Strangers.” Let us say “strangers,” to make it quite clear, because it is obvious that strangers do not have the same *frankness*, ability to say whatever they think, as citizens. Or does this need a proof, this assertion? They are surely in a more difficult position. Yeah? Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “two strangers here, Gorgias and Polus, though wise and friendly to me, are more lacking in frankness and inclined to bashfulness than they should be—” (487a–b).

LS: Ya, stop here. So we know now the qualifications of competent people. Men possessing these qualifications are exceedingly rare. Callicles is the only man whom

Socrates ever met of this kind—obviously, otherwise he¹⁰ [would have] made that test before. Now we know now these three qualities. Must Socrates possess these three qualities too in order to pass the test? This question is of course not raised here, but I think it wouldn't do any harm to reflect upon it. There is a parallel to this passage in the *Republic*, 450d–e, where Socrates says, “One can say the truth which one knows to reasonable friends.” He adds “the truth one knows,” because the truth which you do not know you obviously cannot say. So to reasonable friends or wise friends: the wise friends will say the truth, will have frankness, when speaking to wise friends. Now assuming that Socrates and Callicles are wise friends, are the many bystanders, whom we must never forget, also wise friends? Now to say the truth one knows in the presence of people who are not wise, who would therefore¹¹ misunderstand or misconstrue almost everything, would prove lack of wisdom and lack of caring. We must keep this in mind if we want to understand the sequel. Let us go on. Yes?

Student: I am sorry to interrupt. The list—[a point] that you mentioned before. You mentioned that the second of the three is very important for the deeper argument. Is this so for every list, like knowledge, good will, and frankness?

LS: Ya, sure, I believe so. I mean, I'm not able to say “every,” but apparently here the good will is especially important. I never said that when you find a sequence of this kind, you know at once *why* the central is important. You have to think about it. But I would indeed draw this inference, although I must warn you there is something which doesn't come out in the translation. Knowledge and goodwill are connected here particularly closely in the Greek. I would translate it literally as follows: “knowledge as well as goodwill *and* frankness.” But this is not to wiggle out from anything.¹² I believe still that the benevolence or good will question is important, but we must wait. Good. Oh yes, Mr.

Student: Isn't it somewhat ambiguous whether Callicles really has the quality of frankness, seeing as how he is described as a lover of the *demos*, and one could question whether he would say things that would make his lover, the Athenian *demos*, not like him? Since he won't say things that—

LS: We have not yet reached the point where we can check on whether Socrates' statement on Callicles is true, because Socrates will later on prove, which he has not yet proven, that Callicles possesses all the three qualities. Then we will examine that. For the time being, it's a mere assertion. But the superficial proof of Callicles' frankness is hitherto, imagine, he said shocking things. And it seems that the simplest proof of frankness is to say shocking things. Don't forget what is now going by the name of sincerity—that's the same thing. Some people who say atrocious things,¹³ which they should be absolutely ashamed to say, are admired because of their alleged sincerity. Have you never heard of this thing? [Laughter] No, honestly, do you not know that this is a very well known phenomenon? That's the same. It's only in a modern, moralistic version. It's called sincerity—what they called “saying everything.”

Same student: Yes, but that would render questionable whether the thing of which

Callicles is most enamoured is really the Athenian *demos*.

LS: Well, there are also some doubts regarding his goodwill and also regarding his wisdom. But, really, postpone it until we come to Socrates' proof. Let us go on where we left off, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “nay, it must be so, when they have carried modesty to such a point—” (487b).

LS: Ya, “sense of shame.”¹⁴ “Sense of shame” is more literal.

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “that each of them can bring himself, out of sheer sense of shame—” (487b)

LS: More literally, “that, out of sense of shame, he *dares*.” Go on.

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “dares to contradict himself in the presence of a large company—” (487b)

LS: “of many human beings”—which reminds us of the fact that this is not a situation in which all bystanders can be presumed to be reasonable friends—“and, in addition, about the greatest things.”ⁱⁱ So lack of daring, which Gorgias and Polus have, leads to *daring*. That sounds paradoxical. They were ashamed, i.e., they lacked daring; and their lack of daring led them to dare. What does it mean? Under all circumstances one must take risks. I mean, this doesn't require a special act of courage, but one takes the risks whether one likes it or not. For example, to follow accepted opinions is safe, because then you have the support of the many who share these opinions. Ya, but not always. It is safe in public assemblies, for example, in relatively quiet times other than But not if the individual who takes the safe course is compelled to give an account of his views among a small group where he cannot count on the support by public opinion. You take a risk whatever you do, whether you take the safe course or the seemingly unsafe course, ya? And of course this reference to the many people indicates also this much: that Socrates too, of course, speaks in front of many people. In a way, Socrates' rhetoric as practiced in the *Gorgias* is also a kind of public rhetoric. Good. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “But you have all these qualities which the rest of them lack: you have had a sound education—” (487b)

LS: No, “sufficient education.” Yeah? “Sufficient education.”

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “sufficient education, as many here in Athens will agree.” (487b)

ⁱⁱ “and, in addition, about the greatest things” is LS's translation of *kai tauta peri tōn megistōn* at 487b5. Mr. Reinken had not yet read Lamb's translation of that phrase: “and that on questions of the greatest importance.”

LS: You see, this is the proof of Callicles' wisdom or knowledge. He has acquired a "sufficient education." It is as if someone would say today, "Your wisdom is assured by the fact that you have a B.A. or an M.A. or a Ph.D." And I think everyone would admit that this is not a proof of wisdom—not even a proof of professional competence. [Laughter] And so whether Callicles is wise, or a knower, is extremely doubtful. Now, from this one thing follows—it's a very obvious thing. Since Callicles lacks the basic qualification, and since an adequate discussion leading to the truth can only take place if the interlocutor of Socrates possesses wisdom, the truth will not come to light in the *Gorgias*. Well, it didn't come to light hitherto, as we have seen by an examination of the arguments used by Socrates in the *Polus* and *Gorgias* sections. But *in advance* we know already this cannot be a strictly philosophic discussion. Yes. Callicles' agreement with Socrates will not be sufficient to test the gold of Socrates' soul, and, on the other hand, Socrates cannot say the truth to him because he lacks that reasonableness which according to Socrates is a prerequisite for laying bare the whole thing. Well now, there are quite a few hands raised. Mr. Dry, if I remember well?

Mr. Dry: . . . What was that basic condition

LS: Wisdom or knowledge. Both terms were used.

Mr. Dry: Did Glaucon have it?

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Dry: If Glaucon didn't have it, then it would seem the *Republic*

LS: That is a very good point, but to which we must say, there are degrees. And Glaucon—I will take this up, I believe, even today—Glaucon is much better prepared than Callicles. Yes?

Student: It isn't wisdom or knowledge in the highest sense, but a certain reasonableness.

LS: But also a certain education. For example, Glaucon is quite well trained in mathematics, which one cannot say of Callicles. Ya, surely, I mean, that is clear: If you use it strictly, then Socrates would always say there is knowledge—there's the shoemaker, or in any special field, including mathematics—but in the highest sense there is only quest for knowledge, philosophy. Sure. Now the next point. Now Socrates proves that he is better—Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Just one quick question. On what ground does Socrates Is it this "touchstone" ground?

LS: All right. Here, in this argument, you can leave it at this. But generally we cannot—let us go on. I mention only one point, which I said at the beginning in my general introduction to the Platonic dialogue: that there is not a single dialogue in which Socrates speaks to an *equal*—I mean, even to an intellectual equal. Never. When there is a

philosopher present, like Timaeus in the *Timaeus* or the Eleatic stranger in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, there is no dialogue between Socrates and that philosopher. Never. There is one dialogue between Socrates and a philosopher of the first order and that is the *Parmenides*, and this exception proves the rule because at the time Parmenides is mature and Socrates is very young. So there is the general rule: no dialogues between equals. That is the difference between a dialogue and a treatise. Yes. Now, let us go on here where we left off. The proof of Callicles' goodwill.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “and you are well disposed to me. You ask what proof I have? I will tell you. I know, Callicles, that four of you have formed a partnership in wisdom—you, Tisander of Aphidnae, Andron, son of Androtion, and Nausicydes of Cholargos; and I once overheard you debating how far the cultivation of wisdom should be carried, and I know you were deciding in favour of some such view as this—that one should not be carried away into the minuter points of philosophy, but you exhorted one another to beware of making yourselves overwise, lest you should unwittingly work your own ruin—” (487b–d)

LS: “become corrupted.” The word is important because corruption occurs in the accusation of Socrates, in the official charge. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “So when I hear you giving me the same advice as you gave your own most intimate friends, I have proof enough that you really are well disposed to me.” (487d)

LS: Ya, or “benevolent to me,” to use The proof is this: Callicles had expressed the same view on philosophy—not on justice, only on philosophy—which he has stated now in public on an earlier occasion in strict privacy, when he was sitting in a corner with his three closest friends. I say “sitting in a corner,” because that is what Callicles said Socrates is doing, sitting in corners and talking to three young men. But the question is minor: How could Socrates know of this strictly private conversation? Perhaps he overheard it. But if it was so easy to overhear, perhaps it was not quite so private. But, however this may be, would this fact prove goodwill to Socrates? Would this fact prove goodwill, that is, that he knows Callicles is seriously of the opinion that one should not study philosophy

Student:

LS: Well, perhaps. You mean, was¹⁵ [Callicles] benevolent to them?

Same student: Yes,

LS: But this he assumed. Socrates knows somehow that they were his most intimate friends.

Mr. Reinken: Is it not reasonable to suppose that Callicles did not seriously expect Socrates to take up the advice? So, even if he detested Socrates, he can have the ironic pleasure of giving him that advice which would be good for him knowing that Socrates won't take it.

LS: Ya, but I would state it as follows: Does this fact that his private advice agrees with his advice given now to Socrates¹⁶ prove more than that he sincerely dislikes lifelong occupation with philosophy? It doesn't prove any particular goodwill toward Socrates. Yes. And another point, which I should also mention here: the private conversation with his friends was on to what extent one should philosophize. The decision was made in favor of the political life on the ground of self-preservation. This is important for the sequel. I read to you one remark of the commentator Dodds: "This report of a conversation comes in oddly. It has indeed the appearance of being dragged in; for as evidence of Callicles' goodwill a reference to 485e3 would have sufficed."ⁱⁱⁱ Now what does¹⁷ [Callicles] say there? "I'm reasonably friendly towards you." I think we can, without being unfair and without being harsh, say that Mr. Dodds shows an amazing naivete. Because if someone says to another even "I am very much attached to you, and I have nothing in mind except your well being," this does not prove simply that the man who says it is benevolent. It might as well prove that he is malevolent, because people say this very frequently—

[break in the tape]

—his endurance or self-control fail, should he be spanked in that case by Callicles? Or box his ears, to give another interesting example Callicles had given? No. Silent disregard. A useless fellow, a weakling who cannot control himself. In his own case, at any rate, Socrates does not suggest punishment as a help toward the good life. We must keep this in mind lest we fall too simply for this—how shall I say it?—for this eulogy of punishment given in the Polus section.

Now to come back to the main point, the conditions of philosophic discussions are clearly not fulfilled in the Callicles section, and hence not in the *Gorgias* as a whole, because Polus and *Gorgias* are already finished because of their proven lack of frankness. The discussion in the *Gorgias* is therefore *rhetorical* and even *publicly rhetorical*, as I have said before. In a philosophic discussion, the participants must have the same qualities, but gold and touchstone do not have the same qualities. This simile at the beginning makes already clear that there is no such agreement in qualifications on both sides. That which makes gold gold is not that which makes a touchstone [a] touchstone. Yes?

Student: If Callicles, though, isn't fully . . . even though Socrates' soul has a different character. Gold is

LS: Ya, in a way, sure. Well, Plato would not have written the book if he didn't think that such a conversation with an unqualified man like Callicles would not be very instructive.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Dodds's commentary, 283.

Sure. But still, he's not the best partner for finding out the truth about the subject. But I think, Mr. Franke, you wanted to say something? Or did I take care of you? Good. Now, let us go on then. This is, of course, of crucial importance for the understanding of the dialogue as a whole. Now, how do we proceed at this point? Socrates begins now the testing. Ya?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "Now, go right back and repeat to me what you and Pindar hold natural right to consist in: is it that the superior should forcibly despoil the inferior, the better rule the worse, and the nobler have more than the meaner? Have you some other account to give of justice, or do I remember aright?"

Call.: "Why, that is what I said then, and I say it now also." (488b)

LS: Ya, you see Socrates recapitulates here Callicles' assertion, making sure of his ground. Now there are three terms used: the *superior*, the *better*, and, let us say, the *nobler*. Are these three things identical? That's the first question: What kind of superiority? And second, when he speaks of the inferior, he speaks first of them in the plural, which doesn't come out in the translation, and in the last case in the singular. He refers, in other words, to the quantitative aspect of society. In other words, is this the overall situation, *one* and *many*? Or is it the situation of *some* versus *some*?¹⁸ [This] would be of importance. Perhaps it depends on the kind of superiority—whether there is a *one–many* or *some–some* relation. This much we can see from the very beginning. Now, let us go on from here.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "Is it the same person that you call 'better' and 'superior'? For I must say I was no more able then to understand what your meaning might be. Is it the stronger folk that you call superior, and are the weaker ones bound to hearken to the stronger one—as for instance I think you were also pointing out then, that the great states attack the little ones in accordance with natural right, because they are superior and stronger, on the ground that the superior and stronger and the better are all the same thing; or is it possible to be better and yet inferior and weaker, and to be superior and yet more wicked? Or is the definition of the better and the superior the same? This is just what I bid you declare in definite terms—whether the superior and the better and the stronger are the same or different."

Call.: "Well, I tell you plainly, they are all the same." (488b–d)

LS: Now Socrates wants to make sure: the better means nothing but the stronger. Callicles had not spoken in his speech of big cities going against small cities. This clarification is brought in by Socrates—the famous case of the big city of Athens going against the small cities, like Melos, and ruling them tyrannically. Well, here is, I think, a sign that Callicles is not altogether frank, but has a kind of political caution because a man from Sicily, Gorgias, is present—you know, where one must not be too open about the aims of Athenian politics. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Now, are the many superior by nature to the one?—” (488d) Are they called the “superior”?

LS: “Superior,” yes.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “superior by nature to the one? I mean those who make the laws to keep a check on the one, as you were saying yourself just now.”

Call.: “Of course.”

Soc.: “Then the ordinances of the many are those of the superior?”

Call.: “Certainly.”

Soc.: “And so of the better? For the superior are far better, by your account.”

Call.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “And so their ordinances are by nature ‘fair,’ since they are superior who made them?”

Call.: “I agree.”

Soc.: “Then is it the opinion of the many that—as you also said a moment ago—justice means having an equal share, and it is fouler to wrong than to be wronged? Is that so, or not? And mind you are not caught this time in a bashful fit. Is it, or is it not, the opinion of the many that to have one’s equal share, and not more than than others, is just, and that it is fouler to wrong than be wronged? Do not grudge me an answer to this, Callicles, so that—if I find you agree with me—I may then have the assurance that comes from the agreement of a man so competent to decide.”

Call.: “Well, most people do think so.” (488d–489a)

LS: Ya, “the many.” “The many think so,” “hold this view.” Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then it is not only by convention that doing wrong is fouler than suffering it, and having one’s equal share is just, but by nature also: and therefore it looks as though your previous statement was untrue, and your count against me incorrect, when you said that convention and nature are opposites and that I, forsooth, recognizing that, am an uscrupulous debater, turning to convention when the assertion refers to nature, and to nature when it refers to convention.” (489a–b)

LS: Now, the argument is very simple. The many are *by nature* stronger than the one. Their laws are the laws of the stronger therefore, and hence of the better. Hence these laws are, according to nature, fine. But the many hold, i.e., establish by law, that it is just to have the *equal* and not to have more. Hence this—to have the equal—is the just according to nature. That’s the argument. Now, what do we think about that argument?

[change of tape]

It is in a way an argument for democracy, obviously, based on the fact that the people are the majority, i.e., the stronger. This argument plays a certain role in the emergence of modern democratic doctrine, as is indicated by the famous words “bullets and ballots,” you know, the force argument in democracy: obviously the many have more bullets, and therefore also more ballots. What do we think of this argument? Now I would state it as follows: From the natural right of the stronger there follows, under certain conditions, the natural right of the majority. *Under certain conditions*, not universally. What are some simple conditions? Well, everyone knows that, that’s one of the rudiments of political science: state of armament.¹⁹ For example, in the time when the strength of an army is in the cavalry, a small force compared with the mass of the foot soldiers, the knights rule. Aristotle states this already. And the same is of course true today, for example, under the conditions of armament where a small elite troop is stronger than the rest of the army. However this may be, but even wholly apart from this, what does not follow under *any* circumstances is that the *opinions* of the many regarding right express what is by nature right. It simply means that they have the force to enforce it, but not more. Yes?

Student: It does follow, though, on Callicles’ assumption, or what he admits here, that the superior and the . . . are the same.

LS: No, the maximum which would follow would be that democracy, generally speaking, is *juster* than any other form of government because the many are stronger than the few. But it would not follow that what the many *opine* is true.

Same student: It is by nature good, according to Callicles.

LS: Yes. But still, this only makes it a little bit more complicated because the just is the same as the noble. He had also said that the noble is good. That’s simple. Mr. Franke?

Mr. Franke: That’s really a perversion of Callicles’ argument, in that Callicles makes a distinction between *individuals* who are by nature stronger—

LS: Ya, but hitherto he has only spoken of strength, mere strength, and that means, of course, primarily brachial strength. And why can you not add up brachial strength, and the brachial strength of two is greater than of one, other things being equal?

Mr. Franke:

LS: Ya, but, I mean, Callicles simply had not taken the trouble, and [he] identified in a preposterous way the better with the stronger. And he gets his deserved spanking for that. Yes?

Student: Why do you think he admits that the many are stronger here in this passage? Its sort of strange, because before he gave the impression he was just talking about the few—

LS: Ya, but, you see, the difficulty with him is this. You have seen when he spoke in this long speech of this wonderful lion-like man to whom he looked up. But in this context it becomes perfectly clear that he did not regard *himself* as such a lion-like man. So he is a man of the *demos* who has some hankering after the man on the horse. I suppose such people are not limited to Athens, you know? You find them in other democracies. Good.

At any rate, something must be very clear: that Socrates' view of justice cannot possibly have this basis—I mean, the basis that most men say that it is just to have the equal. And therefore it is true [that] this cannot have been the Socratic argument. The question which we must also raise is this. Look, Callicles grants hitherto every point, although it was already clear, I suppose,²⁰ [to] every one of you, what Socrates was driving at. Why does he assent? Well, I think partly because he is really slow (not necessarily slower than we are, because we have the benefit of rereading every phrase), and partly because Socrates fetters him by saying “You promised not to be ashamed,” and therefore he answers as Socrates wants him to answer. But at any rate, at the end he sees that he cannot possibly agree to that, and he expresses in the sequel his disapproval of Socrates' conclusion. Now let us see that.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “What an inveterate driveller the man is! Tell me, Socrates, are you not ashamed to be word-catching at your age, and if one makes a verbal slip, to take that as a great stroke of luck? Do you imagine that, when I said ‘being superior,’ I meant anything else than ‘better’? Have I not been telling you ever so long that I regard the better and the superior as the same thing? Or do you suppose I mean that if a pack of slaves and all sorts of fellows who are good for nothing, except perhaps in point of physical strength, gather together and say something, that is a legal ordinance?” (489b–c)

LS: Ya, clear: Callicles never meant that. But he didn't express it properly. Why did he say the better is the same as stronger, if he didn't mean it? Yes. That is all right. Then we must make a further step in clarification. First we must find out what precisely Callicles means, because it is very easy to say the “better” without defining it. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Very well, most sapient Callicles: you mean that, do you?”

Call.: “Certainly I do.”

Soc.: “Why, my wonderful friend, I have myself been guessing ever so long that you meant something of this sort by ‘superior,’ and if I repeat my questions it is because I am so keen to know definitely what your meaning may be. For I presume you do not consider that two are better than one, or that your slaves are better than yourself, just because they are stronger than you are.” (489c–d)

LS: Ya, sure. You see, Socrates pretends for a moment that Callicles had said something new, but then he tells him to his face that he knew all along what Callicles had in mind. But he is trying to make clear to Callicles and also to Gorgias, the chief attendant, how

thoughtless and how inarticulate Callicles is. [Regarding] this passage here, where he says “you demonic man,” in the beginning, in d1, and later on in d7, “you astonishing man,” an old Greek commentator said to these words, “Socrates simultaneously insults Callicles and teaches him a decent character.”^{iv} Socrates is insulting, *hubridzai* in Greek, and this insult is a means of education, of bringing a man to his senses. You must contrast this with his conduct toward Gorgias. Toward Gorgias he was unfailingly polite; he is not so toward Polus and less toward Callicles. Now go on where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Come now, tell me again from the beginning what it is you mean by the better, since you do not mean the stronger: only, admirable sir, do be more gentle with me over my first lessons, or I shall cease attending your school.”

Call.: “You are sarcastic, Socrates.” (489d–e)

LS: Now, literally, “You dissemble.” “You are a dissembler.” That’s in Greek the word “ironic”: “You are ironical.”^v But since “ironical” has acquired so many different meanings, it might be better to go back to the original meaning: “You dissemble, Socrates.” Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “No, by Zethus, Callicles, whom you made use of just now for aiming a good deal of dissembling at me—” (489e)

LS: Let us stop here for a moment. “You dissemble, you merely pretend that you want to learn from me,” says Callicles to Socrates. Socrates’ irony is indeed obvious. But he denies it here under oath, as you see. But the oath is very strange, because it’s an oath, not by a god but by a human being, Zethus, a hero in a tragedy of Euripedes’ to which²¹ [Callicles] has referred. For those who are interested in this kind of thing, I would say, if my counting is correct (I have counted only once), this is the central oath of Socrates in the whole dialogue. Socrates swears in the *Gorgias* more frequently than on the average.²² In other words, there is a certain levity of Socrates, especially in this section. He charges Callicles with irony: Callicles only pretended to feel toward Socrates like a brother. That is Callicles’ irony. Why is the levity so obvious *here*, in this particular section? Now the first defeat of Callicles establishes the natural right of the *demos*, Callicles’ darling, and at the same time of the morality of the *demos*, which Callicles despises. That is particularly grotesque. Do you see that? The morality of the *demos*: equality, everyone should have the same. This Callicles despises. But at the same time he is enamoured of the *demos*, and this being enamoured of the *demos* has been given a reason, namely, if the better are the stronger and the *demos* assembled is stronger than any few, the *demos* is better. Callicles behaves most ridiculously in his assertions; therefore the very obvious irony. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

^{iv} Olympiodorus, *Commentary on Plato’s Gorgias*, trans. Robin Jackson, Kimon Lycos, and Harold Tarrant (Boston: Brill, 1998), Lecture 28.

^v The word in question at 489e1 is *eirōneuēi*.

Soc.: “aiming a good deal of irony at me: but come, tell us whom you meant by the better.”

Call.: “I mean the more excellent.”

Soc.: “So you see, you are uttering mere words yourself, and explaining nothing. Will you not tell us whether by the better and superior you mean the wiser, or some other sort?” (489e)

LS: “The more sensible,” “the more prudent.” You see, Socrates has to remind Callicles that he means the more sensible men. Callicles would have forgotten that. What occurred to him first were the stronger, not the more sensible. Callicles, of course, says, “Of course I mean them.” But he didn’t think of them before. Ya? Good. Callicles had forgotten them.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “Why, to be sure, I mean those, and very much so.”

Soc.: “Then one sensible man is often superior to ten thousand fools, by your account, and he ought to rule and they to be ruled, and the ruler should have more than they whom he rules. That is what you seem to me to intend by your statement—and I am not word-catching here—if the one is superior to the ten thousand.”

Call.: “Why, that is my meaning. For this is what I regard as naturally just—that being better and wiser he should have both rule and advantage over the baser people.” (489e–490a)

LS: You see, now there is an agreement reached between Socrates and Callicles, at least as to what Callicles asserts. But there is some difference, because Socrates says, “*many times* will a sensible man be superior to ten thousand non-sensible ones.” In other words, this is, in his view, a part of Callicles’ opinion. The one sensible man is not *always*, but only in many cases, superior to ten thousand non-sensible ones. And why? One thing would seem to be clear. Prudence or sensibility is not a *sufficient* title to rule according to Callicles. And it will come out very soon that Socrates guessed again right, although Callicles doesn’t know it. Well, later on he will simply say, to use a simple, convenient present-day term, he must also be energetic; sensibility alone won’t do. But Callicles is as oblivious of this energy as he has been before of sensibility. You see, he is truly not very competent. I hope this fact has by now been established. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Stop there now. Once more, what is your meaning this time?”

Suppose that a number of us are assembled together, as now, in the same place, and we have in common a good supply of food and drink, and we are of all sorts—some strong, some weak; and one of us, a doctor, is wiser than the rest in this matter and, as may well be, is stronger than some and weaker than others; will not he, being wiser than we are, be better and superior in this affair?”

Call.: “Certainly.”

Soc.: “Then is he to have a larger ration than the rest of us because he is

better, or ought he as ruler to have the distribution of the whole stock, with no advantage in spending and consuming it upon his own person, if he is to avoid retribution—” (490b–c)

LS: Literally, “to be punished,” if he’s going to avoid being punished. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “but merely having more than some and less than others? Or if he chance to be the weakest of all, ought he not to get the smallest share of all though he be the best, Callicles? Is it not so, good sir?” (490c)

LS: Ya, you see. Let us see the situation. Many human beings of different qualities are together, are assembled, and they have in common food and drink which must be distributed. There is no question of “mine and thine” here—it’s common—and therefore there is no question of justice in the ordinary sense of the term. I mean, in the ordinary view, everyone has his own food and drink, and he may consume as little and as much of it as he likes, as far as *justice* is concerned, as distinguished from temperance. Now, it is, in a word, a kind of communistic society: rule by the wise. The wise man in this particular case is, of course, the physician. Now does a physician, who is a wise man here regarding food and drink, deserve to get more food and drink? Of course not. But does he deserve *to rule* regarding the *distribution* of food and drink? That’s an entirely different proposition. So, you see, Callicles’ biggest mistake is that he doesn’t make a distinction between *ruling*—the right to rule—and [the] right to property. They are two very different things. And the mistake is of course very natural because ordinarily we think that rights go with property. But here Socrates doesn’t leave it at that. But let us follow that up.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “You refer to food and drink and doctors and drivel: I mean something different.” (490c–d)

LS: Callicles evades the issue. He doesn’t understand at all what it means that the better ought to rule the worse, i.e., that the better ought to rule *for the benefit of all*—that is of course meant—which is a defensible position. It’s not a manifestly absurd position. In other words, there is one kind of inequality regarding *ruling*—the wiser should rule—and an entirely different kind of inequality regarding who gets what when, namely, what he needs or whatever it may be. Good. Let us follow that up.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then tell me, do you call the wiser better? Yes or no?”

Call.: “Yes I do.”

Soc.: “But do you not think the better should have a larger share?”

Call.: “Yes, but not of food and drink.” (490d)

LS: In other words, this is not something about which a man, an *hombre*, would care particularly. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “I see; of clothes, perhaps; and the ablest weaver should have the largest coat, and go about arrayed in the greatest variety of the finest clothes?”

Call.: “What have clothes to do with it?”

Soc.: Well, shoes then; clearly he who is wisest in regard to these, and best, should have some advantage. Perhaps the shoemaker should walk about in the biggest shoes and wear the largest number.”

Call.: “Shoes—what have they to do with it? You keep on drivelling.”

Soc.: “Well, if you do not mean things of that sort, perhaps you mean something like this: a farmer, for instance, who knows all about the land and is highly accomplished in the matter, should perhaps have an advantage in sharing the seed, and have the largest possible amount of it for use on his own land.” (490d–e)

LS: Let us stop here. Socrates gives now other examples of wise men, wise in some specialty, of what they deserve to possess more than the unwise men. The competent weaver should walk around wearing the most garments and the most beautiful garments. The competent shoemaker should walk around wearing the biggest shoes and the largest number of shoes—in other words, in every walk, another pair of shoes. The competent farmer should get the maximum of seed corn and use the maximum of seed corn for every plot of land or every piece of land. Now there are five things here to be distributed: food, drink, garments, shoes, and seed. The garments are in the middle, done by weavers. Weaving is frequently the work of women. And here we see a simple thing: If competence is *the* title to rule, why should not women rule if they are more competent? Have you ever heard that argument, I mean, from Plato or Socrates?

Student: The *Republic*.

LS: The *Republic*. Here you have a brief sketch of the argument of the *Republic*—very important here. But here it is as it were suppressed for reasons which we must gradually find out. Yes, and of course the example of weaving is also interesting for the following reason. The best should not only *rule* (that we can easily see) but also be the most richly dressed and exhibit their dress to the public. Does this ring a bell? I mean, that the rulers should *look* differently by their dress than the nonrulers and of course exhibit it? Are there not some externals necessary for rulers so that they are recognized as rulers? Have you ever heard of honors? That is an allusion to that: the honors which the rulers must have—the honors, the badges of various sorts, which are acquired. You will see that this is very important for the immediate sequel. Now let us go on.

By the way, the case of the farmer is of course somewhat different. The others get more for their consumption; the farmer gets more things for, we might say, his production. That is interesting. So a certain notion of justice is suggested: giving to everyone the means of production which he can best use for the common good and the means of consumption which are best for his well-being. This is the thought underlying the

Republic. Yes. Now, go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “How you keep repeating the same thing, Socrates!”

Soc.: “Yes, and not only that, Callicles, but on the same subjects, too.”
(490e)

LS: In other words, Socrates is firm and Callicles is fickle, as we know from before. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: *Call.:* “I believe, on my soul—” (491a)

LS: No, “by the gods.” Again, this comprehensive oath, which he has made before.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “by the gods, you absolutely cannot ever stop talking of cobblers and fullers, cooks and doctors, as though our discussion had to do with them.” (491a)

LS: He changes the examples somewhat. He omits the weavers, who might remind us of women, and also the farmers, because farmers are a special case—after all, they can also be gentlemen farmers, and they are not to be despised by Callicles. Good. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then will you tell me in what things the superior and wiser man has a right to the advantage of a larger share? Or will you neither put up with a suggestion from me nor make one yourself?”

Call.: “Why, I have been making mine for some time past. First of all, by ‘the superior’ I mean, not shoemakers or cooks, but those who are wise as regards public affairs and the proper way of conducting them, and not only wise but manly, with ability to carry out their purpose to the full; and who will not falter through softness of soul.” (491a–b)

LS: So now he has made clear what he wants. He means that those who are *politically prudent* should rule, surely. There’s no question that this is a dictate of reason. And he wisely adds they must also be manly, which corresponds to what we mean today by energetic or will power. This is a sensible proposition. But how long did it take him? And we must see whether he’s able to maintain it. That will come out very soon in the sequel. *Phronēsis*, or prudence, or wisdom, or knowledge, is not sufficient according to Callicles, *nor according to Socrates*. There is a very important passage regarding this subject in the second book of the *Republic*, 374d, where it is made clear that what any knower needs is not only the *knowledge*—say, of shoemaking, carpentry, or whatever it may be—but also the *concern*, the *dedication*, as we could say, which is not the same as knowledge. We must never forget that, and let us always keep this in mind: “virtue is knowledge” is an enigma, and what it means we have to figure out. That it is untenable as it stands, although there is some evidence in favor even of what it says as it stands, is another matter. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Are you going to criticize this argument of Socrates against Callicles? It seems like a very unfair argument of his point, and I wonder why—

LS: Oh! In the sequel—

Mr. Butterworth: This one which we just considered.

LS: But is this not perfectly fair? I mean, if Callicles is so foolish not to think of that, what he really meant, is this unfair of Socrates? You see, this is a man who makes this big speech about the right of the stronger. He cannot put two and two together, and he makes such a speech! Is this not a deserved spanking?

Student: . . . if I put myself in Callicles' position

LS: But after he has said the better are the stronger. And a moment's reflection shows that this is wrong. If the stronger are a bunch of slaves or other scum, he would of course never say they deserve to rule, although they are brachially stronger. And then Socrates suggests to him, "You mean the more intelligent, the more sensible?" "Oh yeah, sure!" But he hadn't had the sense to think of that. But he does think—I admit now—of the *manly*, which Socrates had not mentioned and which is important. But, on the other hand, instead of saying from the very beginning "I mean of the *politically* intelligent and not of the *technically* intelligent," he went through the whole rigamarole. And then in addition, he will be in great troubles regarding the other question, to which we have not yet come. I mean, we know now what kind of knowledge he has in mind, and people of what kind of knowledge [he thinks] should rule, and then they also should have more. Wait. Wait. It is his fault if he gives an impossible answer. Now, there was someone else. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Why should they have more? That's the point that I don't understand. Those who are superior in one way or another, why should they—

LS: Ya, but this is Callicles' opinion which will be accepted by many men. Well, not by Marx and quite a few others.²³ [What] is the Marxian formula? "From everyone according to their abilities, to everyone according to his needs." So these first-rate rulers, say, Kruschev, to take a relatively legitimate Marxist example, should not have more than the simplest worker, and especially if this simple worker has ten children and sickness in the family and Kruschev has only grown-up children without sickness. But still Kruschev has his *dacha*^{vi}—if that's the proper pronunciation of the Russian word—and not every Russian worker has a *dacha*. Now what would Kruschev say in justification of his *dacha*? That he must *concentrate* on these big things he plans to do, and this he cannot do in an apartment house in a slum area [laughter]—which is a good reason. That is a good reason for saying that the rulers should have more than [the others], ya? Commonsensical.

^{vi} A *dacha* is a Russian vacation home.

Student: . . . put in a situation where the man who rules becomes one who is excellent in a certain art. Then he could have more—

LS: Ya, but that was—

Same student: Why not have more money, or more women, or more horses, or—

LS: Ya, but the question is: What does he need? For example, that he should have a secretary, whereas not every worker in a factory has a secretary, is perfectly reasonable. Because he must concentrate, as I say, and if he has to do all this dictation, then he couldn't talk to the ambassador of Upper Volta and other places. [Laughter] But whether he should have more women, for example, there is no necessary connection—unless you believe that any inference can be drawn from Governor Rockefeller [laughter], I mean, legitimate inference. ²⁴Let us go on now, because we must come today up to a certain point. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Do you perceive, my excellent Callicles, that your count against me is not the same as mine against you?” (491b)

LS: Literally, “you accuse me and I accuse you.” They both accuse one another. There is an atmosphere of the courtroom here. You will see that later more and more. Socrates is now also accusing. Callicles is no longer merely the judge as he was a short while before. Socrates accuses Callicles and therefore indirectly, of course, Callicles' darling, the *demos*. Now this has again a parallel in the *Republic*. You have seen some indications here of the theme of the *Republic*. Who accuses Socrates in the *Republic*? Thrasymachus, the teacher of rhetoric. Ya, but he accuses him and he claims to be the judge of Socrates, as it were; he sits in judgment of Socrates. But what is the difference? In a word, Thrasymachus *plays* the *demos* or the *polis*. Callicles does not simply play the *demos*. That is a bit more real than what Thrasymachus does. We must keep this in mind. But if you wanted to say something and then forgot.

Student: You said

LS: I see, so you're finished. Good. Now let us go on where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “For you say I am ever repeating the same things, and reproach me with it, whereas I charge you, on the contrary, with never saying the same thing on the same subject; but at one moment you defined the better and superior as the stronger, and at another as the more sensible, and now you turn up again with something else: ‘the manlier’ is what you now tell us is meant by the superior and better. No, my good friend, you had best say, and get it over, whom you do mean by the better and superior, and in what sphere.”

Call.: “But I have told you already: men of wisdom and manliness in public affairs. These are the persons who ought to rule in our cities,

and justice means this—that these should have more than other people, the rulers than the ruled.” (491b–d)

LS: Yes. Let us stop here. We won’t go beyond this point. Now Callicles, to repeat, says now [that] the just thing is that the politically wise, and at the same time manly, energetic, should rule and that they should have more than the ruled. One little thing strikes us, I believe, immediately. He does no longer say it is *by nature* just. And can you imagine a reason why he could have dropped “by nature”? Well, this might be connected with the fact that he is now speaking of the city, and the question is: Is the city natural? If the city is not natural, there would be a certain complication that this situation would be natural. Now if we take this commonsensically—and we must always, especially in the case of a man like Callicles, assume that he means something commonsensical—he says, “political power should be with the wise and wealthy.” If you read this statement entirely by itself, you know, he says, “the wise should rule and the rulers should have more than the ruled”—more property of course. As they said in the nineteenth century, in the second half, “the circles of culture and property.” I know this phrase only from Germany, but I suppose similar phrases must have existed also in this country. You know, the people who have education and wealth, they should have control. In our age, I read a statement by Peter Viereck^{vii} in one of his books about the particularly interesting cases of President Kennedy and Averell Harriman,^{viii} where the virtues of wealth are especially emphasized. Somewhat differently (and this, I believe, comes closer to the issue which Socrates has in mind), the sensible and courageous should rule the cities and should have more—of what? What is necessary to give to the rulers, because²⁵ property might be a question? One could rightly say²⁶ property only to the extent to which it is necessary for the fulfillment of their function. But one thing the rulers must get. Yes?

Student: Honors.

LS: Honor, surely. *Republic* 4; very clearly stated. They must have honor, naturally. Now if we would say they must have honor, then it would correspond exactly to what Plato says, or Socrates says, in the *Republic*. Now Mr. Butterworth, I address this especially to you: this Socratic–Platonic view, that the reward for rule, that [of] which the ruler should have more than the ruled, is *honor*, is not discussed in the *Gorgias*. In the *Gorgias*, the discussion, we can say, is prevented by Socrates’ next step. Socrates asks immediately afterward, “Should they rule themselves?” And then²⁷ [Callicles] says, “Of course not! Then they would be too inhibited, frustrated all the time. They should not have self–control!” And then we come to the issue of self–control and so on. And the issue of honor is never brought up.

Now what does this mean? First, why is it not brought up in the *Gorgias*? This we would have to ask. Well, it’s the fault of Callicles. Why did he not bring it up? Naturally, this is only postponing the question: Why did Plato pick Callicles as a character? This [question] would, of course, remain. I will suggest this point only now. The theme of this

^{vii} Peter Viereck (1916–2006) was an American poet, historian, and early conservative intellectual.

^{viii} Averell Harriman (1891–1986) was an American businessman and diplomat.

whole dialogue is rhetoric, vulgar rhetoric. In the *Republic*, where the issue of honor is in a way discussed, the theme is justice. Now justice is, on the face of it, a much higher theme than rhetoric. Just as he chooses Glaucon and Adeimantus [for the discussion of justice], for the discussion of rhetoric he chooses a lower man for the discussion of the lower theme, rhetoric. But the argument regarding honor can be stated very simply. There are certain type[s] of men, and generally the more lively ones and in a sense also the more far-seeing ones—I mean, I am not speaking now of those who want to have badges for all kinds of occasions, that's very petty—but those who look for greater honor have, generally speaking, a somewhat wider horizon than others who are completely free from that desire. And so if we look through that, we arrive at the view that the man who is bent on outstanding honor, being honored more than anyone else, will be the tyrant because he will be honored by the whole city, of course. Xenophon's *Hiero*, chapter VII, contains a magnificent statement on this subject. In a way, that is the inner starting-point of the *Republic*. The argument can be stated as follows. The tyrant is very desirable from the point of view of honor. But look at how petty it is from the point of view of honor, because what would be the greatest honor? Naturally, immortal glory, and not just that you are honored and people bow to you while you are alive—I mean, that is very petty. Immortal glory. Immortal glory cannot be obtained by being a tyrant, because a tyrant is a man who exploits the city already in existence for his purposes. The true glory belongs to the founder or founders who established a city lasting for many generations, and especially, of course, a good and noble city—say, the glory of George Washington and some of his companions is not comparable to that of a general or a decent President and so on as such. (I mean, the case of Lincoln may be a very special case. This is another matter.) But in olden times this was of course much more visible because of the religious honors which were given to the founder as well. So *the founder*.

Well, let's look at the founder. The founder is concerned with his glory, surely. But how will he achieve it? Only by absolute dedication to the common good of the city he founds. In the moment he thinks of his private interest other than that of his immortal glory, he will be bad, he will abandon his concern with immortal glory. So the concern with immortal glory is something very high. And this is, one can say, the fundamental conversion which takes place in the action of Plato's *Republic*. It is necessary to remember that there is still a higher conversion, the true conversion, where all thought of one's own ceases because of the manifest impropriety, and that is the quest for truth, philosophy. This is roughly what goes on in the *Republic*. Now this whole way, leading to honor in the ordinary sense and then to the highest stages, is closed off completely in the *Gorgias*. And this is due surely to Socrates' immediate action, but this action is adapted to what he can reasonably expect from Callicles. Callicles is fundamentally in the best case not more than an average Athenian politician. Pericles and Alcibiades, when you read their speeches in Thucydides—they are concerned with everlasting glory. Now they would not have forgotten it in the way in which Callicles forgets it. I would draw one conclusion, which is as much a question as an answer: What seems to be peculiar to the *Gorgias* is this disregard of honor, this abstraction from honor, and therefore the emphasis shifts entirely to the bodily pleasures. The emphasis shifts entirely from the pleasure deriving from honor to the pleasures deriving from bodily satisfactions. This is characteristic of the rest of the argument. Yes?

Student: Since we have seen Callicles' downfall, don't we have to reconsider his first definition of natural right, the right of the stronger? If he gets tripped up on this, maybe that first discussion

LS: Ya, but compare these two assertions. By nature it is right that the superior rule the inferior, which suffers from insufficient definition because the wiser are not the stronger, you know. The difficulty is that both elements, wisdom and strength, are important titles to rule. They are *different* titles, but none of them can be entirely disregarded. You remember our simple scheme of deed and speech at the beginning of this course?

Same student: Well, I was thinking particularly of Xenophon's Cyrus. You don't really have to have wisdom. Cyrus really was stronger than everyone else. He made himself—

LS: Well, good—he was infinitely weaker than one platoon of his infantry.

Same student: Yeah, but they never went against him.

LS: Ah, but this is not bodily force. These [forces] are what they call today, I believe, psychological, namely, that they were very grateful to him, that he had an excellent use not only of the stick but also of the carrot, so it paid for them to obey. Ya? He was shrewd. He was very shrewd. You remember that?

Same student: But with that expanded understanding of strength, I feel . . . of natural right has not been refuted. The stronger, the one who is able to keep himself on top always Has that been refuted?

LS: No, that has not been refuted. But it has been indirectly refuted, I believe, by Callicles' most recent statement, because what he says here—that those who are wise regarding the affairs of the city and at the same time manly should rule the cities—I think every impartial man confronted with this thesis would admit that. In itself, I mean. Further consideration[s]—whether it is not good for the wise and manly to hold their position²⁸ [by] popular election, and [whether] they must give account of their administration—that's another matter. But in themselves, we surely don't elect people for their *lack* of intelligence and energy, do we? I mean, that is simple common sense, I would say. Now the question is: What about Cyrus? I mean, as you understand him now, is he a man concerned only with self-aggrandizement? Is that the point?

Same student: Honor, a higher good.

LS: Honor. Ya, all right, but how does even Cyrus get the honor? By *pleasing* his subjects. And this is the point which Callicles here is wholly oblivious of. I mean, one can also state it in a slightly more noble manner: that honor is the reward for service. You know, the mutuality of the thing. If someone is merely concerned for *power* in this silly sense in which Polus stated it—that he can kill whomever he pleases, that's silly. If a man has acquired power, like Napoleon had for example, then he might conceivably gratify his personal dislike of some individual and have him killed, which is of course [a]

disgrace wholly unworthy of him, but nothing can be done to him because you can't destroy the whole governmental system because he committed an act of murder. That is very terrible, but true. Yes?

Same student: Cyrus completely understood himself in

LS: Ya, sure. That is, I think, what Xenophon means.

Same student: If Cyrus' disciple or Cyrus himself defended his understanding of natural right against Socrates, not Callicles, would he not be able to make the stronger argument? Because²⁹ [Callicles] keeps talking about bodily pleasures.

LS: Ya, but you have read *The Education of Cyrus*, and how would Cyrus behave? Cyrus would of course never say these terrible things which Callicles said (and that is a sign of lacking prudence) but would have said, "Of course equality and justice, absolutely! And that is what I am giving you. And if I am the ruler and even the absolute ruler, that is because the absolute ruler is a 'seeing law,'"—a term used in this book, meaning not a blind law, like a law established in advance which is not necessarily applicable to the new case—"I judge each case on its merits, and therefore I have absolute power. And why do I have this enormous wealth? In order to honor the most public spirited men. It's very simple." Where would the difficulty arise? The difficulty which you have in mind comes up in this book too. That is, political life as a whole—you see, the very farsighted, absolutely selfish tyrant and the very intelligent just man would have fundamentally the same policy. That's the point. I mean, there would be some cases, which are of no great political importance but which are of considerable *human* importance, where the difference would show but, politically speaking, farsighted calculation and decency are no different. That's the trouble. Now, one conclusion which is drawn from this is that the whole political sphere is fairly low. This conclusion is clearly drawn in this book, where not only Alcibiades and Pericles but even those politicians who were respected by the better people, like Cimon and so on, are all said [to be] no good, and the only true politician in Athens is Socrates. That's a consequence. I think one must consider this possibility. In other words, one must go through this stage if one wants to have fair judgment on politics, i.e., if one wants to have fair and reasonable expectations and not just rising expectations. Because the fact that they are rising doesn't prove they are sound; I hope this will be

Student: Again, I am not satisfied with Callicles as the interlocutor

LS: Nor am I. But the question, as I said before, is: What do we get through such an interlocutor³⁰ [that] we would not get through another? Because otherwise Plato would be very blameworthy. Let me state this as follows. If the formula which I suggested tentatively, abstraction from honor, is correct, we have to see *why that?* What's the purpose? That's the same question. Namely, we have to see what is the result of the abstraction from honor, because that result can [be] supposed to be the intention of Plato. What to us comes to sight as the result, as the end, is—as every end is—for the author, for the maker, the first. What did Plato intend to reveal [to] us through the choice of

Callicles which we could not equally conveniently have shown us by any other choice? That is the question which we must try to solve, and needless to say that I am under no commitment to solve it, because I don't know But one must state even such questions as one cannot answer. I hope that is regarded as legitimate by you. Yes?

Student: Is the “abstraction from honor” saying, for Callicles, the highest man would not be a political lion but rather a very rich . . . who can hire a very intelligent lawyer to protect him?

LS: Ya, but apparently he is sufficiently impressed by the splendor attending political power.

Same student: That might not be honor though. It's not clear—

LS: Ya, Callicles is not clear about himself. That's quite obvious. I mean, he is not for example a man like Alcibiades, at that age, was. Surely not. But as I say, there must be some merit in having Callicles in a dialogue to bring out something of fundamental importance which could not so well be brought out in another case. Good.

[end of tape]

ENDNOTES TO SESSION NINE

¹ Deleted “his.”

² Moved “the struggle for who gets what when.”

³ Deleted “has.”

⁴ Moved “only.”

⁵ Deleted “what you hear at least, well.”

⁶ Deleted “not.”

⁷ Deleted “there is a.”

⁸ Deleted “which.”

⁹ Deleted “lives.”

¹⁰ Deleted “had.”

¹¹ Deleted “would.”

¹² Deleted “But.”

¹³ Deleted “of.”

¹⁴ Deleted “ya.”

¹⁵ Deleted “he.”

¹⁶ Deleted “does it.”

¹⁷ Deleted “he.”

¹⁸ Deleted “which.”

¹⁹ Deleted “if.”

²⁰ Deleted “by.”

²¹ Deleted “he.”

²² Deleted “here in this dialogue.”

²³ Deleted “How.”

²⁴ Deleted “now.”

²⁵ Deleted “the.”

²⁶ Deleted “the.”

²⁷ Deleted “Gorgias.”

²⁸ Deleted “to.”

²⁹ Deleted “he.”

³⁰ Deleted “what.”

Session 9: no date

Leo Strauss:ⁱ

It seems to me that Socrates makes an unfair criticism of Callicles' argument that the most intelligent should rule and should receive a reward for so doing. There is no reason to force Callicles to appear to imply that the most intelligent should receive the product of his trade or the material over which he exercises his intelligence. Nor is there any reason to say that this man should receive a superfluity of that product or material. Socrates reduces Callicles by turning his argument into an absurdity. And whereas Callicles passively followed the tortuous path of Socrates' reasoning earlier, this time he protests vigorously against such a procedure. Why does Socrates use this admittedly fallacious method of argument, *reductio ad absurdum*? Surely he can walk circles around Callicles without resorting to such methods. How does this advance the argument of the dialogue?

Well, these are very pertinent questions, but I do not know whether the facts are exactly as Mr. Butterworth stated them. I propose that I will repeat, we will study . . . and you take it up at each point when we come to the passages. This is preferable. Good.

Now I would like first to bridge the gulf between the last meeting and today's meeting, and start from a general reflection. In the first place, I suppose more than one among you has been somewhat disturbed, not only by these difficulties of the kind which Mr. Butterworth mentioned, but something¹ [simpler], what one may call in modern language, the unsystematic proceedings of Plato. One would also find something of this kind in Aristotle, although not so pronounced. Now I would like to read you a remark by a very profound student of the ancients who was also most competent in the question of philosophy, namely, Hegel, what he says about the difference between the proceedings of the ancients and of the moderns. I read to you in a rather literal translation: “

The manner of study in ancient times is distinct from that of modern times in that the former consisted in the veritable training and perfecting of the natural consciousness.” [LS: Now “natural consciousness” means about the same [as] what we mean today by common sense.] Trying its powers at each part of its life severally and philosophizing about everything it came across, the natural consciousness transformed itself into a universality of abstract understanding which was active in every matter and in every respect. In modern times, however, the individual finds the abstract form ready made.ⁱⁱ

So I think one can recognize something in these somewhat baroque phrases of Hegel: The ancient way of philosophizing was to start wherever something called for reflection—

ⁱ Here Strauss reads a question submitted by Mr. Butterworth.

ⁱⁱ LS reads, with slight modifications, from J. B. Ballie's translation of *The Phenomenology of Mind* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1931), 94. LS quotes the same passage with the same changes in *What Is Political Philosophy?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 75.

wherever, at any point—and indeed nothing was excluded, nothing was so low as not to be a possible starting–point for thinking. Out of this training, of this unsystematic but unceasing training of common sense, there emerged then a series of concepts, of philosophic concepts. In modern times, the individual finds these concepts ready–made; he does not have to acquire them from pre–philosophic thought. And, moreover, these concepts at the end of the ancient development took the form of something which one may call a system. But the system is at *the end* of classical philosophizing; it is at *the beginning* of modern philosophizing. And since we, however ill–trained or non–trained in philosophy we may be, we are the heirs of modern philosophy even by our training in grammar school,² it is very difficult for us to find our way in this primary philosophizing, which we may be inclined to regard as *primitive*, not yet fully developed. And that is a very great danger.

Now in this particular case in the *Gorgias*, the subject is rhetoric. This is one of the *n* themes which might occasion thinking, reflection—that is, one part of the totality of the themes. But one cannot study any part without some notion about its place within the whole. For example, here Socrates is not able to make a single step without opposing rhetoric to dialectics. If he did not know of this alternative, dialectics, he could not elucidate rhetoric. Rhetoric and dialectic, we may say, are *the* two kinds of persuading speeches, as distinguished from other kinds of speeches: for example, command. Command does not persuade, by definition. But speeches, even if we take all speeches, are still distinguished from something else, deeds, which means both deeds of human beings and facts in general. Now the broadest theme that becomes clear in the Callicles section is: How should we live, how should man live? In other words, the whole here seen is the whole of human life, as distinguished from any partial activity—that which one can also call “happiness,” the question of what makes human life complete, what makes man happy. But here the overriding consideration is: Is happiness to be understood in terms of the good or of the pleasant? And this is the horizon in which the question is discussed. But the question arises: Can one even leave it at the whole of human life? Is not man and all his possibilities a part of a whole comprising man? And what is that whole? This question is also raised, as we shall see later on in the Callicles section. So while the procedure is starting from this particular phenomenon, the whole is necessarily visualized and made the theme. I thought I should bring in this point for once.

Now let me first try to link up what we studied last time with what we shall discuss today. Now we have read the passage in 491b6–d3, where Callicles says ³what he understands by justice: It is just that the politically prudent as well as manly should rule, and they should have more than the ruled. This can be given a simple and reasonable political interpretation: The rulers, who must have these excellences of understanding and manliness, must of course also be the wealthy, which is a very commonsensical view at that time. Aristotle in the *Politics* refers somewhere (I think in the Seventh Book) to the fact that the rulers should also be those in possession of the landed wealth, at least, of the society. But here a question arises which is not explicitly discussed and which we nevertheless must make explicit; otherwise we would not be able to follow the argument. Callicles had spoken of the just, of justice. Now what is justice? Can one take this for granted, for example: The fact of wealth, and of course the unequal distribution of

wealth? More simply stated, according to a common view which happens to be the traditional view of justice, justice means to give or to leave to everyone what belongs to him . . . “to everyone what belongs to him”—this is the just man. But here some difficulty arises. How is it determined what belongs to anyone? The answer, of course [is] “by law,” by positive law. But what if the positive law is unreasonable? What if it gives very great wealth to a good-for-nothing playboy who ruins himself and many other men by this wealth instead of giving it to the worthy people? So there is a question here. You must still obey the positive law and be just in the sense of obedience to the positive law, but there is a certain difficulty here in obeying unreasonable laws. How can we find a better solution, at least theoretically, to this question? I must here remind those of you who have already heard it frequently from me (and the others will hear it for the first time), the simplest statement of this question was made by Xenophon in *The Education of Cyrus*. There were schools of justice in Persia, and the young Cyrus, the later king and empire builder, went to the school and, as a boy, he was confronted with this question. There was a big boy who had a small coat and a small boy who had a big coat, and the big boy with the small coat took away from the small boy his big coat and gave him his small coat, which seemed to be the sensible thing to do. Cyrus was, of course, spanked for this action because, as the teacher told him, “You were not supposed to do what is *fitting*, to give each one what is *fitting* for him, but to give each one what *belongs* to him, either by inheritance or purchase or in any other legitimate way.” But still, there is the question: Is it not *better*, is it not *juster*, to give everyone what is good for him, what *fits* him? And of course also for the time for which it fits him, so [that] when the small boy outgrows his small coat, then he must get another one. In a simple word: abolition of private property. But then you must have men, of course, who are in a position to assign to each what is good for him. Who assigns best the food and drink for the bodies? Answer: the physician. But here we are concerned not merely with the body but with the souls of men. Who will assign best to each what is good for his soul? Of course, the physicians of the soul. That doesn’t mean the psychiatrists, but the philosophers. Therefore the philosophers must do the distinguishing. The philosophers must rule, or be kings. And they must have absolute power, of course; otherwise they couldn’t make the distribution. You see here this extremely simple argument is the nerve in a way of the *Republic*, and follows without any difficulty from the simple criticism of the ordinary definition of justice.

Now we have here of course one clear thing, and this is part of my answer to Mr. Butterworth: clear inequality regarding power or ruling. Only those fit for rule by nature and training must rule; the others cannot rule and can at best rule only in a subordinate fashion. Something entirely different is the inequality regarding the goods to be distributed. Whether they should get much food and drink, or little food and drink: that depends entirely on what is proper for the individual to whom the distribution is made. This is the criticism, the very sensible criticism of Socrates, I think, of Callicles’ assertion. Callicles asserted unreasonably that the two inequalities must coincide, that those who have greater political judgment must get more. Now this has of course a lot of crude, low plausibility—who gets what when—but on the other hand, it is also rather unreasonable. Why should the man who is best [suited] to rule, and therefore ought to rule, why should he get more pancakes, more bathrooms, than everyone else? It doesn’t

make any sense. To that extent, I think Socrates' criticism is absolutely reasonable.

So now of course the rulers must have rewards, because they do in a way much more than anybody else. But this reward would be honor. They are deferred to in a way in which no one else is deferred to. The reward is a reward for service. Ruling can never be what Callicles implies, sheer exploitation of the ruled for one's own satisfaction. Ruling which is not service is against nature. And here we come across this paradox to which I alluded last time: that the selfish concern for honor cannot be satisfied adequately except by complete dedication to the common good, because whenever the concern is qualified by selfish concern then it is no longer loyal to the dedication to honor. And honor means, of course, not merely badges and big splashes in newspapers, but it means immortal glory. Think of the case of Stalin, who had enormous honors in his lifetime, and then now where has he come after he died? De-Stalinization. True honor cannot be "de-whatever-it-may-be." [Laughter] Caesar and Alexander the Great and such men—and quite a few others, George Washington—they are still remembered.

Now what is characteristic of the *Gorgias*, I said last time, is that this notion of honor is practically disregarded, and that means the whole picture of political life, the complete picture, is not given to us in the *Gorgias*. But we must also never forget [that] this abstraction from honor can be justified to some extent on reasonable grounds, because there is a certain delusion in honor, even in immortal—especially if we take the extreme, confused form of immortal glory. How much does immortal glory depend on chance? Where would the immortal glory, say, of Pericles be without Thucydides? And what guarantee was there that Thucydides' history⁴ [would] be preserved? Perhaps works as great as Thucydides' have not come down to us. So in other words, the human being who is concerned with the highest form of glory cannot in any way, however dedicated he may be, guarantee the eternity or immortality of his glory—to say nothing of the fact that eternal glory is of course not strictly speaking possible unless there would be an eternity of the human race, plus eternity of all traditions which spring up in different parts of the world, which is absurd to expect. But now, given this fact that eternal glory, immortal glory, is a delusion, one could then say the only enjoyment which men can have is the enjoyment they have during their lives. And from this point of view, one can give a kind of apology for Callicles: that the enjoyments, the sensual enjoyments, which are for the moment, are more solid than the hope for enjoyment of post-mortem glory.

But I would like to mention still another point. The first is this fundamental question of political life, indicated by the problem of justice: rule of the politically wise and courageous who at the same time must have wealth, according to Callicles. But another question arises: What precisely is *the end* which the rulers must have in mind?⁵ This is taken up somewhat later in the dialogue, 503 or thereabouts. Now the two discussions, first, of who should rule; and, second, what is the end of ruling, are interrupted by the proof that the good is different from the pleasant, since the end is the good in contradistinction to the pleasant. And this is of course perfectly reasonable. We say first [that] the wisest men should rule, and then we say: But with a view to what? What is the end? The end is the good in contradistinction to the pleasant, and only on the basis of that can we answer the question of how this end will look in a political context. Still, we must

raise this question, which we have not yet considered: Why is the theme of the *Republic*—the absolute rule of the philosophers plus communism and of course also equality of the sexes—only alluded to in the *Gorgias* and in no way developed?

In order to answer this question, we must know the *Republic* to some extent. We must at least be able to answer the question: How is the best regime of the *Republic* rendered possible? The general answer is well known: the coincidence of philosophy and political power. This is truly a coincidence, i.e., a matter of chance. There is no essential necessity of their coming together. But when Socrates restates this proposition, he says this best order will come into being if, when the philosophers have become kings, they will expel everyone older than ten from the city and start from scratch. Why does he make that [claim]? Why does he not start truly from scratch, i.e., take men who have never been fellow citizens and build a new city? The reason is this: In order to establish the perfect city, you must have as your material civilized beings, i.e., people who have been members of a city. You cannot start that with people who come from the state of nature straightaway. So therefore, these children up to [age] ten, brought up in a city, are to some extent of course civilized. Yet they are brought up in each case in a peculiar kind of civility, in a traditional civility, in a civility based on convention, on a specific convention. And this is [an] obstruction to the order according to nature which the best regime of the *Republic* is said to present. So we have to expel everyone older than ten, but how can we get that? How can the philosopher, a man who has two arms and perhaps one or two friends—so let us say, six arms—how can he do that? Coercion cannot bring it about, but persuasion, rhetoric. Therefore the problem of the *Republic* stands and falls by the immense power of rhetoric.

Now Plato has indicated this problem by two parallel incidents of the *Republic*. There are two parallel scenes, one right at the beginning and one at the beginning of the Fifth Book. In both cases, we have small cities, i.e., five, six men who vote, and this vote is important for what they do there. And the difference between these two cities is that at the beginning of the *Republic* the rhetorician, Thrasymachus, is not yet present. At the second meeting, the second voting, at the beginning of the Fifth Book, Thrasymachus has become a member of the *polis*. This is in a way the action of the *Republic*. In Books 6 and 7, Socrates discusses the difficulty of getting the best city, the best regime. And one of the specific reasons, of course, is that the philosophers, who alone can make possible the best city, are distrusted by the *demos*, by the common people. But this distrust of the philosophers can be overcome by persuasion. Only for this reason is the best regime possible. So, in other words, whereas ordinarily the men who are likely to be expelled are the philosophers, by their persuasion they can bring it about that the whole adult city is expelled and the philosophers rule those who are ten years and younger. In this very scene, when Socrates proves that the *demos* can be persuaded, we find this remark: Socrates says on a proper occasion, that “I and Thrasymachus have now become friends.”ⁱⁱⁱ The philosopher and the rhetorician have become friends because they have a common task: to make possible the establishment of the best order by the rhetorician *servicing* the philosopher in persuading the *demos* to obey the philosophers. The solution given in the *Republic* of the political problem presupposes, then, an immense power of

ⁱⁱⁱ *Republic* 498c—d.

rhetoric. And it is easy to see that such a power does not exist, and therefore the solution given in the *Republic* cannot be a serious solution. Yes?

Student: There is one other problem that kind of bothers me about the *Republic*, and this is that, to some extent, it is based on a lie. And how can philosophy, which proposes to listen to truth, base . . . on a lie?

LS: Well, I believe we are dealing with the same question.

Same student: Yes.

LS: Because whether you think of this famous lie—but “lie” sounds so terrible; it is called a “beautiful falsehood.” [Laughter]

Same student: But it is not so beautiful . . . a falsehood.

LS: Ya, but let us assume that the truth which the many can grasp would be incompatible with a good order of society. If they could not grasp that truth which is in accordance with the requirements of a good society, then only some “substitute truth” (you can also put it this way), some reflection of the truth, some dilution of the truth, that is already a beautiful falsehood.

Same Student: Well, this, I’m sorry to say, makes the whole . . . I think that by basing the whole system on a falsehood, however beautiful, right then and there they spoil the virtue of it.

LS: Well, let me see. Where is the fundamental point of disagreement? Do you say that saying the untruth is under all circumstances bad?

Same student: No.

LS: Ah, I see, because that is the beginning of the argument. So then we must distinguish between a noble falsehood and an ignoble falsehood.

Same student: I think that the saying of an untruth is probably not a very effective way of achieving a system where the truth reigns.

LS: Where the truth?

Same student: Where the truth would be the ruling value.

LS: Ya, that—I believe it doesn’t come out this way, because the lack of comprehension for the beauty of that order will make all beautiful rhetoric in its favor ineffective, you know? I mean, these fellows who are the blacksmith and the farmers, and so on, they are not impressed by the philosophers. They are impressed, surely, by the guardians, as they are called, the bodyguard of the philosophers. You can also⁶ [put] it this way, you know,

[that] these bodyguards will keep them in order. But who will guarantee the obedience of the bodyguards? That is the difficulty because, since they are not philosophers, since they do not understand the inner necessity of it, they can be persuaded only by something intelligible to them. The reward which they have is that they are looked up to by the farmers and artisans. But they get much less material rewards than these “money-makers,” as Socrates calls the farmers and artisans. Now they may very well see it as more noble to live as armed monks, as they do. But, on the other hand, they will also be attracted by the fleshpots which they don’t have and which the subjects have. And what will they do, [what] are they likely to do, in the long run? I believe no profound experiences are needed to make an informed guess: that they will say, “We want to have a less noble but more lucrative society.” Because that happens all the time, that this argument is very powerful. In other words, Plato knew of course that it is impossible, but Plato raised the question, as it were: Under what conditions would there be, could there be, an order in which what is highest in man is also socially the highest? That would be the *Republic*. But the conclusion is that it’s impossible. What will be socially the highest will never be what is highest in man. That is, I think, the lesson which Plato gives us. And you must admit this is not—

Same student: No, it’s an excellent description of reality. I still don’t see that it’s a necessary part of an ideal or utopia.

LS: Ya, but we must surely raise the question of what is the best society, there is no question. But must we do this in a fantastic manner or in a sensible manner? Now if you want to do it (as you would agree) in a sensible manner, well, then we would of course have to know what⁷ the upper limits [are] beyond which you cannot expect anything. Therefore you have to find out what [they are]. And Plato, by showing to us what would in imagination be the highest and then showing [that] it is only an imaginary thing, shows us indirectly what in truth would be the highest:⁸ that men affected by philosophy, but not philosophers, would be the ruling stratum. In other words, they must have rewards other than the guardians get. They must be the upper class of society in the possession of private property, and if you want to know the details you only have to read the *Laws*, because in the *Laws* this feasible best regime is presented. Now this is surely not the shining temple on a noble elevation which Plato erects in the *Republic*. But perhaps that is a wrong expectation, to believe that there can be a society which is such a shining temple on a noble elevation—which doesn’t mean that there are not great differences between decent and indecent societies, very great [differences], which we must surely be aware of, but we must not demand too much from the *polis*. I think that is the lesson of Plato.

Now if I may come back to the question at hand: what the difference between the *Republic* and the *Gorgias* is. So the solution suggested by the *Republic* is impossible, and one can state the reason of the impossibility very simply as follows. The solution suggested in the *Republic* is impossible because it expects the impossible from rhetoric, because it is based on the assumption of a kind of omnipotence of rhetoric. Now the premise of the *Gorgias* is exactly the denial of that, namely, the assertion of the impotence of rhetoric or at least the weakness of rhetoric. And from here I believe we can

understand the transition to which we come now, namely, the transition to the question of the pleasures. Now Callicles, this person, is here crucial. He is much less hostile to philosophy than the *demos* proper. You know, he says everyone who can afford it should devote himself to philosophy while he is young. And he is an *educated* political man in the ordinary sense of “political man.” Yet he reveals here throughout, as you have seen, as you told me after class, his recalcitrance to philosophy, to *logos*. Now what is the lesson? It is this: What is true of Callicles is infinitely truer of the *demos* as such, so difficult and insoluble is the problem of a harmony between the *polis* and philosophy.

So, this much I want to say. And now we turn to our text, which was, if I remember, 491d4? Yes. Callicles had said what is just, and that these men qualified by intelligence, or wisdom, and courage should have more than the others and should rule them. And Socrates now raises a question.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “How so? Than themselves, my friend? What’s this about rulers and ruled?”

Call.: “What do you mean?”

Soc.: “I mean that every man is his own ruler; or is there no need of one’s ruling oneself, but only of ruling others?”

Call.: “What do you mean by one who rules himself?” (491d)

LS: Now, let us stop here one moment. Socrates gives now the conversation a new turn, away from what it means to have more than the others towards ruling, i.e., ruling over oneself, self-control, not having more than is good for oneself. In other words, he gives the turn from the virtue of justice hitherto discussed to the virtue of moderation or temperance, from actions for which there is no natural punishment, no punishment unless detected—injustice—to actions for which there is a natural punishment. This we have seen when he spoke of the physician in 490c: if he eats too much, he will be punished for it, not by a law court. In other words, the goodness of moderation is much easier to prove than that of justice. Moderation, we may also say, is not political, and there is no inequality in this respect. In other words, they have reached a tacit agreement that the rulers ought to have wisdom and courage. That both Socrates and Callicles admit; they disagree as to whether the rulers must be just. Can they perhaps reach some agreement by turning to the fourth cardinal virtue, temperance? The possibility of doing without justice on the basis of temperance alone is experimented with by Plato on more than one occasion, based on this very simple thing: a truly moderate man, who demands very little for himself, has no great incentive to injustice. To that extent, moderation can almost take the place of justice. Now Callicles, as you have seen, has difficulties in understanding Socrates’ question, because that question could have a political meaning, namely, that the rulers in one respect, for instance, the generals, are ruled in another respect, by the civilian government—or more simply, in a democracy everyone is ruler and ruled in turn. So Callicles does honestly not know because of this political preoccupation, that Socrates is moving in a very different direction. Now let us go on here.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Nothing recondite; merely what most people mean—one who is temperate and self-mastering, ruler of the pleasures and desires that are in himself.”

Call.: “You will have your pleantry! You mean ‘the simpletons’ by ‘the temperate.’” (491d–491e)

LS: Now, let us stop here for a moment. You see, Socrates refers again to something very common, nothing far-fetched, what the many know, namely, that self-control, control of one’s desires and pleasures, is good. And the funny thing is that the elitist Callicles—who at the same time takes over the popular notions, is a “lover of the *demos*,” as it is called—simply doesn’t see what everyone seems to see. You will see later on whether it is as simple as that. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.*: “How so? Nobody can fail to see that I do not mean that.” (491e)

LS: Ya, in other words, Callicles rejects self-control as sheer stupidity, as simple as that. How does Socrates try to solve that? Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “Oh, you most certainly do, Socrates. For how can a man be happy if he is a slave to anybody at all? No, natural fairness and justice, I tell you now quite frankly, is this—that he who would live rightly should let his desires be as strong as possible and not chasten them, and should be able to minister to them when they are at their height by reason of his manliness and intelligence, and satisfy each appetite in turn with what it desires. But this, I suppose, is not possible for the many; whence it comes that they decry such persons out of shame, to disguise their own impotence, and are so good as to tell us that licentiousness is disgraceful, thus enslaving—as I remarked before—the better type of mankind; and being unable themselves to procure achievement of their pleasures they praise temperance and justice by reason of their own unmanliness.” (491e–492b)

LS: In other words, they themselves would like to have the same thing, only the grapes are too sour—that’s all there is to it. So there is universal agreement, or almost universal agreement, that the maximum satisfaction of the maximum desires is preferable to anything else. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “For to those who started with the advantage of being either kings’ sons or able by their own parts to procure some authority or monarchy or absolute power, what in truth could be fouler or worse than temperance and justice in such cases?” (492b)

LS: You see, one moment, well, he shouldn’t [have translated it] “by their parts”; [rather] “by nature.” You see, our great admirer of nature becomes completely indifferent to the difference between nature and convention when it suits him. The sons of kings—he doesn’t say that they are *by nature* superior; they are, of course, superior only by law. But people who can afford it, whether by nature or by law, would do that, so little is he loyal

to his principle, the fundamental distinction between nature and law. And he mentions the kings' sons. Why does he not mention the kings? Well, perhaps because they are too old. And then the other thing is because they are busy, of course. You know, this kind of playboy notion of political life is surely incompatible with a very successful political activity, which requires much more attention to business, and even to boring business, than Callicles seems to be aware of. Now let's go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: "Finding themselves free to enjoy good things, with no obstacle in the way, they would be merely imposing on themselves a master in the shape of the law, the talk and the rebuke of the multitude. Or how could they fail to be sunk in wretchedness by that 'fairness' of justice and temperance, if they had no larger portion to give to their own friends than to their enemies—" (492b–c)

LS: That's again one of these conventional points. These are not men who are friends by nature or enemies by nature, but⁹ by convention, because they are relatives, or by chance, because he did him a good turn on a former occasion or a bad turn, and accordingly. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: "and that too when they were rulers in their own cities? No, in good truth, Socrates—which you claim to be seeking—the fact is this: luxury and licentiousness and liberty, if they have the support of force, are virtue and happiness, and the rest of these embellishments—the unnatural covenants of mankind—are all mere stuff and nonsense." (492c)

LS: Now, precisely because Callicles is guided not by the things by nature fair but by convention fair, it is striking that he does not even allude to rhetoric as a requirement. I mention this only in passing. But here's a definite progress beyond his long speech. He reveals now clearly *the end* with a view to which doing injustice is preferable to suffering injustice: to have the maximum gratification of the senses. You see here he identifies virtue and happiness. Virtue or happiness, however you call it, consists in luxury, lack of self-restraint, and freedom plus help—help, what Aristotle calls the equipment. But, contrary to Aristotle, the virtues, i.e., intelligence and manliness, belong to the equipment and are not the end. That is important for what follows. The enjoyment is the end, and the virtues are only the means to¹⁰ [that]. Good. Oh, Mr. Lyons? One moment.

Mr. Lyons: How can the strong men . . . Callicles talking about be enslaved . . .

LS: Perhaps they are not so strong. Callicles is, of course, not so strong, you know. He's not an Alcibiades. Surely, Alcibiades enjoyed, led a very dissolute life, as we know, but he thought of something else. And when you read his speeches in Thucydides, you see that the concern of glory after death is for him very important. No allusion to it in the case of Callicles. Alcibiades was a much greater man. And that Socrates is here in this dialogue presented as being in love with Alcibiades is very meaningful, as you can see. Alcibiades was a man of another stamp, another timber, than Callicles, ya? Now, Mr. Glenn?

Mr. Glenn: Mr. Strauss, what is this justice that Callicles is talking about in 492b?

LS: 492b? Ya, well, he speaks of justice all the time.

Mr. Glenn: Well, in the first part of that speech, he has talked about natural fairness and justice as being indulgence of these appetites, and this is, to him, good. But then when he gets down here to 492—I think it's b, isn't it?

LS: Yes, he speaks of justice all the time here, together with moderation.

Mr. Glenn: He then speaks of the sons of kings being foolish to be bound by this justice, which he has earlier said is a good thing.

LS: Which justice?

Mr. Glenn: Well, that's my question.

LS: Of course, popular justice, vulgar justice.

Mr. Glenn: But not the

LS: No. I mean, that was in his very powerful speech which he gave there. There, justice is the rule of the stronger and only that—and of course, as becomes now clear, the rule of the stronger with a view to their self-enjoyment and nothing else.

Mr. Glenn: This is what he calls natural fairness?

LS: Ya, sure. Justice, as spoken [of] here, means obedience to the law—in this sense, equality, everyone gets the same as everybody else, as the law prescribes.

Mr. Glenn: But then when he says that it's undesirable for these sons of kings to be bound by this justice in such cases—Where is it? 492b, between b and c—I don't understand that.

LS: Ya, because they can afford transgressing it, these man-made bounds. They can afford it. And it is disgraceful for them. It is by nature noble, by nature just, but contrary to human justice.

Mr. Glenn: He, then, is appealing to natural justice here, isn't he?

LS: I think—

Mr. Glenn: Natural justice as he defines it, from the beginning of his speech.

LS: Yes, one can say that, but he speaks more of the noble or fair than of the just here.

Mr. Glenn: Yeah. That's fair.

LS: Ya, good. Now what does Socrates—? Well, first, the beginning.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Far from ignoble, at any rate, Callicles, is the frankness with which you develop your thesis: for you are now stating in clear terms what the rest of the world think indeed, but are loth to say.” (492d)

LS: Ya, but did Socrates not say before, in 491d, that he means the same [as] what the many say, that one should exercise self-control? Or is this no contradiction? Mr. Dry?

Mr. Dry: It's the distinction between holding and feeling.

LS: Exactly. The many hold the same view which Callicles has uttered, but they say the opposite. They say the opposite. They say what Socrates says—the same thing which we have seen before. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “So I beg you not to give up on any account, that it may be made really evident how one ought to live.” (492d)

LS: Ya, that is the question, the simple question, of what later on became moral philosophy: how one should live. In Greek, you can say this in two words—in Latin too, I suppose. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Now tell me: do you say the desires are not to be chastened if a man would be such as he ought to be, but he should let them be as great as possible and provide them with satisfaction from some source or other, and this is virtue?”

Call.: “Yes, I say that.”

Soc.: “Then it is not correct to say, as people do, that those who want nothing are happy.” (492d–e)

LS: Now, wait here a moment. Socrates, in restating Callicles' view, speaks only of virtue and not of happiness. But in stating the opposite view, in e3–4, he speaks of happiness and not of virtue. Why? To need nothing is to be happy. Who needs nothing? Who is literally self-sufficient?

Student: God?

LS: God. *Memorabilia* I, chapter 6, section 10, in case of any doubt. So, not to be in need of anything is divine, but whether the gods have virtues proper is an open question. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “No, for at that rate stones and corpses would be extremely happy.” (492e)

LS: You see, Callicles does not even dream of the gods. That in passing. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Well, but on your own view, life is strange. For I tell you I should not wonder if Euripides’ words were true, when he says:

Who knoweth if to live is to be dead,
And to be dead, to live?

and we really, it may be, are dead; in fact I once heard one of our sages say that we are now dead, and the body is our tomb, and the part of the soul in which we have desires is liable to be over-persuaded and to vacillate to and fro, and so some smart fellow, a Sicilian, I daresay, or Italian, made a fable in which—by a play of words—he named this part, as being so impressionable and persuadable, a jar, and the thoughtless he called uninitiate: in these uninitiate that part of the soul where the desires are, the licentious and fissured part, he named a leaky jar in his allegory, because it is so insatiate. So you see this person, Callicles, takes the opposite view to yours, showing how of all who are in Hades—meaning of course the invisible—those uninitiate will be most wretched, and will carry water into their leaky jar with a sieve which is no less leaky. And then by the sieve, as my story-teller said, he means the soul—” (492e–493c)

LS: Ya, not the “storyteller.” “The man who spoke to me.” It is exactly not the story-teller. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “he means the soul: and the soul of the thoughtless he likened to a sieve, as being perforated, since it is unable to hold anything by reason of its unbelief and forgetfulness. All this, indeed, is bordering pretty well on the absurd; but still it sets forth what I wish to impress upon you, if I somehow can, in order to induce you to make a change, and instead of a life of insatiate licentiousness to choose an orderly one that is set up and contented with what it happens to have got. Now, am I at all prevailing upon you to change over to the view that the orderly people are happier than the licentious; or will no amount of similar fables that I might tell you have any effect in changing your mind?”

Call.: “The latter is more like the truth, Socrates.” (493c–d)

LS: Ya. Now the question is, “Do I persuade you?” Now Socrates says at the beginning here, the way of life praised by Callicles would be terrible if Euripides, Callicles’ own authority, or some wise man, or some fable-telling *hombre* were right. Socrates once had a conversation with a wise man, not with a fable-telling man. This fable-telling man was perhaps a Sicilian like Gorgias, or an Italian. Now the fable-telling man makes similes,

as you see, i.e., he is a rhetorician. Socrates follows him in this and [himself] tells¹¹ fables or images. He tries to persuade Callicles, as he explicitly says, but without any success. Now he refers to three authorities: the poet, the wise man, and the fable-teller. The wise man is, of course, in the center. This “of course” I refuse to explain. But poetry and mythology, while being inferior to wisdom, are not rejected by any means. Socrates gives here a specimen of the right kind of rhetoric, namely, that kind of rhetoric is right which leads a man to the good life. In the Polus section, we recall, there was no such myth or story but only what one can call dialectical rhetoric—you know, no images but an apparent refutation. It is also noticeable that the myth was transmitted to Socrates by the wise man and not by the myth-teller himself. Now what is the lesson conveyed by the three authorities? What we call life is in fact death. This is what the wise man said, whereas Euripides said only that this is perhaps so. And what the mythologists say is surely not literally true, as is here admitted. So what follows if life is in fact death, as the wise man said? Crucial, I think, for the question of rhetoric in the humble sense of the term, which we have discussed before, forensic rhetoric. What follows for forensic rhetoric if life is death?

Student: It’s useless.

LS: Why? The link?

Student: Better off dead than alive.

LS: Surely. In other words, the desire for self-preservation loses its meaningfulness. Sure, that is so, yes. Of course, even if it is a defense of a just man unjustly accused, [it] does not make sense. Another point which we consider here: that part of the soul in which the desires are is in motion—fickle, movable, persuadable. The addressee of rhetoric in us is the desiring part, not reason. Belief in things transmitted by the right kind of rhetoric is a kind of virtue. In c3, unbelief, namely, not accepting such stories, is presented as a vice. But I repeat: Socrates spoke only to the wise man, not to the myth-teller.

There is one point which deserves a moment’s consideration. One thing¹² which the wise man said, and that is a very famous saying: *soma, sēma*, the body is a tomb. But the word *sēma*, which is ordinarily translated by “tomb,” means primarily a sign, a mark, a token, a token by which a man’s identity is certified, the device on a shield by which a warrior is known. Now if we stick to this primary meaning and disregard the meaning “tomb,” we reach this conclusion: *sōma* is the mark by which the individual is certified. In later language, the body is the principle of individuation. The individual can be happy only when he has a body because he can be an individual only within a body, which means either happiness is possible only in this life, or else there is no immortality of the soul proper but metempsychosis, transmigration of souls from bodies to bodies, which is the official Platonic teaching anyway. [Why] could there not be having no wants whatever? Because if there is body, there are wants; but [the body] requires indeed only much smaller wants than a man like Callicles would admit. Also, you see, when he makes a distinction about the jar, the soul is a jar anyway, not only in the case of the unreasonable

man; the soul is a jar also in the case of reasonable men. Why?

[change of tape]

—Or rather, I'm sorry, the soul is a sieve, a sieve in any case. Why is the soul a sieve in any case? What does a sieve [do]? Discern, distinguish, perceive in this sense. I mean, there are some other subtleties which I find interesting; we do not have to go into that. So this is a story containing more than the immediate message to Callicles. And these more subtle things are all said by this wise man, as distinguished from the mythologist. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "Come now, let me tell you another parable from the same school as that I have just told." (493d)

LS: Ya. No, "another image from the same gymnasium," he says. Let us take this a bit more literally. You know, the gymnasium meant in Greek what it means in a way in this country, as distinguished from the German meaning. In Germany, the classical high schools are called gymnasia. But what is in common to the Greek, American, and German gymnasia? You strip. Now, in a gymnasium you strip, of course; but in a school you also strip. I mean, take the simplest example: examinations where you have to lay bare your pudenda. Good. Let us link this up with what we have read before in the Polus section. You remember the proportion? What was the proportion? [LS writes on the board.] Gymnastics to medicine equal to [the] legislative art to penal justice. And these were the arts. And now the shams, which were they? Cosmetics? And of medicine, what is that? Cookery. Ya, let us write it with a capital "C." And here we have sophistry to rhetoric. Now we here get another meaning of "gymnasium." Of course, the gymnasium for the soul was originally called the legislative art. Now, what does it mean? The legislative art—what was originally suggested to be the legislative art—is, in truth, the right kind of rhetoric. The right kind of rhetoric builds up the soul in the proper manner. Mythology in the sense here, the coining of images, of edifying images, takes here the place of the legislative art, which makes somewhat more sense. Now let us go on here, and see what that simile is.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "Consider if each of the two lives, the temperate and the licentious, might be described by imagining that each of two men had a number of jars, and those of one man were sound and full, one of wine, another of honey, a third of milk, and various others of various things, and that the sources of each of these supplies were scanty and difficult and only available through much hard toil: well, one man, when he had taken his fill, neither draws off any more nor troubles himself a jot, but remains at ease on that score; whilst the other finds, like his fellow, that the sources are possible indeed, though difficult, but his vessels are leaky and unsound, and he is compelled to fill them constantly, all night and day, or else suffer extreme distress. If such is the nature of each of the two lives, do you say that the licentious man has a happier one than the orderly? Do I, with this story of

mine, induce you at all—” (493d–494a)

LS: “Persuade you,” again.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “persuade you at all to concede that the orderly life is better than the licentious, or do I fail?” (494a)

LS: “Or do I not persuade you?” This is emphasized for a purpose. This is Socrates’ attempt at *persuasion* in the emphatic sense of the term. Now here the immoderate man has leaking jars and the sober man has entire or filled jars. This simile speaks no longer of water but of more attractive things: wine, honey, and milk. Both are he–men, *hombres*. Both have to be concerned with replenishment. But the moderate man has not to be concerned with his jars, because the jars are in order. And here is also no reference to Hades and death. In other words, the superiority of moderation to its opposite is here established without reference to Hades and without reference to an extreme asceticism, as it was implied in the first speech. So the two similes convey a somewhat different message. Now we are through with Socrates’ attempts to persuade Callicles. Now he will gradually begin to refute him. Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “You do not persuade, Socrates. For that man who has taken his fill can have no pleasure any more; in fact it is what I just now called living like a stone, when one has filled up and no longer feels any joy or pain. But a pleasant life—” (494a–b)

LS: Ya, Callicles says, “This very replenishment which you, Socrates, regard as so bothersome, is pleasure, is pleasant.” To live in a state of perfection, to have no desire, and in particular to have no *eros*—because *eros* is a form of desire, let us never forget that—is like being like a stone. Yes. In other words, inanimate, lifeless.

Student: Doesn’t that also [apply] to the desire to know the truth?

LS: Yes, that is a very good point. This question is never discussed. For reasons which we must try to disentangle, the only question which is thematically discussed in the sequel are the pleasures of the body, especially food and drink. Sure. And the whole thing would have to be reopened when you consider the desire for truth. This commentator,^{iv} who I believe reflects the general opinion of commentators, thinks that these considerations about philosophy, about pure pleasures, as Plato calls it, are wholly unknown to Plato in this stage, as if Plato could be imagined at one moment, after he had met Socrates, to have been unaware of the fact that philosophy is the desire for knowledge and therefore also a desire which may find its satisfaction—it is a kind of pleasure. But these things cannot be helped. We have to face them bravely and with humanity. Good. Now Socrates, in the immediate sequel, opposes Callicles’ image—such a life is like the life of a stone—with an image of his own. This is a very strange bird¹³

^{iv} Cf. Dodds, 309–10.

[that] Socrates brings [in].^v I found helpful for my own purposes—perhaps, I don't suppose, you will too—the simile of a duck. Those of you who have ever lived with ducks will see immediately the pertinence of this example. You know? They are very dirty and have a very quick digestive process. Yes, now someone—yes?

Student: Haven't we had, before these images, an indication that Socrates was going to fail to convince Callicles? Specifically, the distinction between holding and feeling, the previous distinction about whether it was better to suffer or to do evil. With Polus, Socrates was on the side of what people really were¹⁴ feeling, and Polus was advocating what people said, what they were holding.

LS: You know, but the case of Polus was very simple because Polus adopted simultaneously what people feel and what they say, and therefore he contradicted himself. And that was simple. Callicles tries to avoid it. He will say only what people *feel* and forget about what they *say*, because this is merely *nomos*. But Callicles is wholly unable to maintain that. You know? And precisely because he raises a much higher claim than Polus does—"I will not go into that trap into which Polus and Gorgias went"—his defeat is also more terrible for him. Well, first let us read the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: "But a pleasant life consists rather in the largest possible amount of inflow."

Soc.: "Well then, if the inflow be large, must not that which runs away be of large amount also, and must not the holes for such outflow be of great size?"

Call.: "Certainly."

Soc.: "Then it is a plover's life you are describing this time, not that of a corpse or a stone. Now tell me, is the life—" (494b)

LS: In a way, of course, that is a defeat for Socrates, because an animate being is higher than an inanimate one. You see, so Socrates also can make a slip. I'm sure it did not escape Plato. Good.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "Now tell me, is the life you mean something like feeling hunger and eating when hungry?"

Call.: "Yes, it is."

Soc.: "And feeling thirst and drinking when thirsty?"

Call.: "Yes, and having all the other desires, and being able to satisfy them, and so with these enjoyments leading a happy life."

^v The bird in question is the *charadriou* about which Dodds offers the following helpful information: "[The *charadriou* is] a bird of messy habits and uncertain identity. Ol and the scholiast inform us that *hama tōi esthiein ekkrinei* [it excretes while it eats], which explains the comparison with the owner of the leaky jars. . . . [I]t is tentatively identified by D'Arcy Thompson, Glossary of Greek Birds, 311, following Gesner and Linnaeus with the stone—curlew" (p. 306).

Soc.: “Bravo, my fine fellow! Do go on as you have begun, and mind you show no bashfulness about it. I too, it seems, must try not to be too bashful. First of all, tell me whether a man who has an itch and wants to scratch, and may scratch in all freedom, can pass his life happily in continual scratching.”

Call.: “What an odd person you are, Socrates—a regular stump-orator!”

Soc.: “Why, of course, Callicles, that is how I upset Polus and Gorgias, and struck them with bashfulness; but you, I know, will never be upset or abashed; you are such a manly fellow.” (494b–d)

LS: You see, the funny thing is that Callicles regards him as a vulgar orator where Socrates is not a vulgar orator. But when¹⁵ [Socrates] uses rhetorical means, as he does in this speech we are reading now,¹⁶ [Callicles] is not aware of it. You know, when he nails¹⁷ [Callicles] down so that he cannot draw back, that he doesn’t see, that there is rhetoric in that. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Come, just answer that.”

Call.: “Then I say that the man also who scratches himself will thus spend a pleasant life.”

Soc.: “And if a pleasant one, a happy one also?”

Call.: “Certainly.”

Soc.: “Is it so if he only wants to scratch his head? Or what more am I to ask you? See, Callicles, what your answer will be, if you are asked everything in succession that links to that statement and the culmination of the case, as stated—the life of catamites—is not that awful, shameful, and wretched? Or will you dare to assert that these are happy if they can freely indulge their wants?”

Call.: “Are you not ashamed, Socrates, to lead the discussion into such topics?”

Soc.: “What, is it I who am leading it there, noble sir, or the person who says outright that those who enjoy themselves, with whatever kind of enjoyment, are happy, and draws no distinction between the good and bad sorts of pleasure?” (494d–495a)

LS: Now let us stop here for a moment. Now Callicles proves again that he is under the spell of convention. There are things which he would be ashamed to do and of which he would be ashamed even to speak. In other words, he is like a Victorian lady, this admirer of *physis*. He implies that to mention things which are by nature shameful is by nature shameful, i.e., the speaking about it is by nature shameful—which cannot be right, because you cannot say, make clear, that these things are by nature shameful without mentioning them, whether directly or by circumlocution doesn’t make any difference. You see, he is amazingly Victorian, much more Victorian than the Victorians. But still he has another notion of what is proper by nature. To contradict oneself is of course not by nature shameful—that he shows by his own action—while to abandon one’s view, for example, because these views have [been] shown to be self-contradictory, this is by

nature shameful. Namely, why? Why? Why is it by nature shameful to abandon one's views even if they have been refuted? A sign of lacking manliness—you budge, you don't stick to your guns. You know, in other words, he has a military view of intellectual battles, which is of course very unreasonable and against the nature of intellectual battles. Yes?

Student: I'm sorry. Would you say again why it was a defeat for Socrates to ask what he did about the

LS: Oh, this was a minor thing. Because the life praised by Callicles is like that of a duck; the life praised by Socrates is the life of a stone, or a corpse. Now a duck is higher as an animate being than a corpse or a stone, i.e., inanimate. To that extent, Socrates made a slip, although one could of course from a so-called aesthetic point of view, i.e., from a point of view based on convention, say better a clean stone than an unclean bird. That one could say. But that is not reasonable. [Laughter]

Ya, Callicles here suffers a defeat, quite obviously, which is disgraceful for him, namely, because contempt of convention is his standard and he proves again to be a slave of convention. Socrates could not sway him by his rhetoric, by his images, as we have seen, nor by a genuine refutation, as we have here. Callicles is altogether unpersuadable. The particular mixture of nature and convention on which he has settled at the end of his brief journey in the land of philosophy is, while absurd, unshakable; it's a firm conviction, impermeable to any kind of *logos*, of argument. Here we see the difference between him and Polus—very important. We must not follow impressions. Callicles is a much more impressive figure. Compare Polus' masterpiece of rhetoric, the indictment of Archelaus. You remember, with the baby following the goose? It was beautifully elaborated. That is, of course, inferior as a rhetorical piece to Callicles' long speech. Callicles' is much more impressive. But we must not follow impressions. That is a very dangerous thing. Polus is superior to Callicles. Now let us remind ourselves of Polus' thesis: the noble or fair is different from the good. That was Polus' thesis, which means there is a place for the *useless*, i.e., [for that] which is not good, not useful—for that “useless” which is, however, attractive. Now this is exactly [what is] necessary if you want to enjoy rhetoric or, for that matter, poetry. We can also say for the playful. There is no place for the playful in Callicles' order. Callicles asserts that the noble or fair is identical with the good. No place for the playful. You remember the passage where he said how nice playful things are in children and how unbearable in grown up people? One can trace it to the *eros* of Callicles, but one must add immediately, an *eros* of a certain kind, not the kind which Socrates has.

I believe that is all I have to say about this here. Yes. Now go on. So Callicles is without any question refuted, *not* the position which he claims to defend. That is not refuted, because, after all, there are Cynics, as they were called in their time. The Cynics exactly said that. Read only Diogenes Laertius on Diogenes the Cynic. With the greatest shamelessness, Diogenes accepts all these conclusions and cannot be refuted because he does not recognize the *nomos*; he can be refuted by other considerations. It is a defeat only of Callicles. That is the reason why Socrates does not exploit his victory here,

because he knows the problem remains open. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “But come, try again now and tell me whether you say that pleasant and good are the same thing, or that there is some pleasure which is not good.”

Call.: “Then, so that my statement may not be inconsistent through my saying they are different, I say they are the same.”

Soc.: “You are spoiling your first statements, Callicles, and you can no longer be a fit partner with me in probing the truth, if you are going to speak against your own convictions.” (495a–b)

LS: Now, Callicles now reasserts his thesis without holding it any longer. That is the sign of his manliness. Even if you are licked, you must never admit it. Only out of shame does he maintain it, but his shame is obviously different from the shame experienced by Gorgias and Polus. Gorgias and Polus were ashamed, according to Callicles’ analysis, to say unpopular things. Callicles, however, is ashamed to give in. This is an entirely different proposition. Gorgias and Polus were to different degrees cautious, and that’s the reason why they were ashamed to say unpopular things. Callicles, however, is obstinate. Now this obstinacy makes him, of course, unpersuadable. There is a simple presentation of obstinacy and its secret at the beginning of the *Republic*. Socrates and Glaucon are met by a group of men (one of them is Polemarchus), and they say, “You, Socrates and Glaucon, must stay in the Piraeus and not go home to Athens” (as Socrates wanted), “and we are many more than you”—you know, so, in other words: “We can keep you here by coercion.” And then Socrates says, “But can we not try to persuade you?” And then Polemarchus says, “No, if we don’t listen.” Thereupon Glaucon immediately says, “Of course, and so we give in.” But that is a simple device for being impermeable to *logos*: just refuse to listen. And there are various ways in which you can do it. It is not necessary that you go away. You can also make a lot of noise, and repeat stupidly the same thing, “No, no, no.” It doesn’t make any difference how you do it. But obstinacy is irrefutable. Yes?

Student: This is also, isn’t it, the difference between the refutation of Gorgias in the beginning and the refutation of Callicles now, because Gorgias continued to argue with Socrates?

LS: No, but he also knows when he is licked, you see, and Polus too. Polus is not convinced, but he doesn’t sulk as Callicles does and will do more and more in the future, because both [Gorgias and Polus] have naturally a higher respect for *logos*. You can say that is just their professional necessity, because you can’t be a teacher of rhetoric, of the art of speaking, without showing some respect for speech. But¹⁸ [Callicles], being not a rhetorician but a politician and only a pupil of rhetoricians, can afford to look down on speech as such.

Same student: What I was trying to say, though, was that at the end of the Gorgias section, we were able to conclude that wisdom is power, because we could even see

something of this implication, that wisdom is power, because of the wise man defeating the rhetorician. But that would not have been possible unless the rhetorician listened to the wise man.

LS: Very good. And what do we learn from the Callicles section regarding this crucial point?

Same student: That the rhetorician does not have to listen to the wise man.

LS: Exactly, ya, say that the unwise man doesn't have to—but still, Callicles is infinitely more willing to listen than the average Athenian. He has some respect for philosophy, as we have seen. And he looks up to Gorgias. Therefore you can imagine¹⁹ how great the power of Socrates in Athens will be. Good. Oh, no, that was very pertinent. But someone else raised his hand? Oh, you.

Student: I was just wondering: you mentioned that Polus didn't sulk; at the same time, Polus was silenced completely and in a way seemed to have withdrawn from the conversation, while Gorgias continued to make comments and inquire at various points.

LS: Can it not be this: That Polus was simply overwhelmed by this experience, whereas Gorgias, an older man who has seen more things, recovers more quickly than Polus? That could be. Good. Now there is one other point. You remember also this: Callicles was said to be the touchstone for Socrates' life or for the truth of Socrates' opinions. Now he cannot be the touchstone, we know that already; but Socrates²⁰ no longer speak[s] here of Callicles as touchstone. He speaks now of Callicles as a man who examines the beings jointly with him. That's something entirely different from a touchstone, because if two men are going to examine something, they must have fundamentally the same qualities, whereas a touchstone and the gold don't have any qualities to speak of in common. Now, that Callicles is of course disqualified from examining together with Socrates we know already by now, because he is impermeable to reasoning. I mean, not that Socrates' reasonings are all good, far from it, but he is unable to uncover the defects of Socrates' reasoning because of this obsession with his earlier views. Socrates says here, "You destroy your first speeches." That means, "You contradict your long speech," which did not strictly speaking imply that the good is identical with the pleasant, but at most that the good or noble is a certain pleasure, a certain pleasure—which pleasure was undefined. Yes. Now go on here.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: "Why, you do just the same, Socrates."

Soc.: "Then I am just as much in the wrong if I do, as you are." (495b)

LS: Callicles gives tit for tat, it seems, which is within the realm of every human being, however stupid. But the question arises: Does not Socrates in fact speak against his own opinion? Would this make sense, to say that? In what sense?

Student: Irony.

LS: Irony, ya, but more simply, or more clearly perhaps, to the extent to which he argues from the premises of the other, *ad hominem*, to that extent he does not say what he thinks. So it is a bit more—but Callicles, I think, does not mean that. He means simply tit for tat, as I said before. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “But look here, my gifted friend, perhaps the good is not mere unconditional enjoyment: for if it is, we have to face not only that string of shameful consequences I have just shadowed forth, but many more besides.”

Call.: “In your opinion, that is, Socrates.”

Soc.: “And do you, Callicles, really maintain that it is?” (495b)

LS: Well, you recognize, I believe, a common procedure of obstinate people who can’t have a reply: “You think so,” “That’s what *you* say”—without giving a reason why he shouldn’t say so. Good.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “I do.”

Soc.: “Then are we to set about discussing it as your serious view?”

Call.: “Oh yes, to be sure.”

Soc.: Come then, since that is your opinion, resolve me this: there is something, I suppose, that you call knowledge?”

Call.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “And were you not saying just now that knowledge can have a certain courage coupled with it?”

Call.: “Yes, I was.”

Soc.: “And you surely meant that they were two things, courage being distinct from knowledge?”

Call.: “Quite so.”

Soc.: “Well now, are pleasure and knowledge the same thing, or different?”

Call.: “Different, I presume, O sage of sage.”

Soc.: “And courage too, is that different from pleasure?”

Call.: “Of course it is.”

Soc.: “Come now, let us be sure to remember this, that Callicles the Acharnian said pleasant and good were the same, but knowledge and courage were different both from each other and from the good.”

Call.: “And Socrates of Alopece refuses to grant us this; or does he grant it?”

Soc.: “He does not; nor, I believe, will Callicles either, when he has rightly considered himself.” (495b–d)

LS: Let us stop here for one moment. Now, here the thesis of Callicles is formulated

before it is subjected to examination. There are three different things: knowledge, courage, and the pleasant. This is indeed easy to see, that a man should say that these are three different things. Therefore Callicles says to Socrates, “You shrewd man that you see these differences.” But Callicles also asserts that the pleasant is identical with the good. Hence there is this consequence from the first non-equation: Since knowledge, say, is different from the pleasant but the pleasant is the good, that knowledge is also different from the good; knowledge is not good. The same would apply to courage. Socrates refers here to Callicles’ *deme*. You know, the *demes* were the divisions of the Athenian citizen body, and this was a democratic institution. The aristocratic procedure was to call a man by his father’s name, as the Russians do: “son of *x*,” “son of *y*.” And Callicles replies the same way. Now this is a reminder, surely, of the political question, which is now completely unthematic but always in the background for the simple reason that we are speaking about rhetoric. But now, that Callicles comes from this particular *deme*, Acharne, is not without interesting implications. This was a very famous *deme*, one of the most populous ones. Thucydides describes it somewhere in the *History*.^{vi} And moreover—which is more interesting for our purpose—there is a comedy by Aristophanes called the *Archarnians*. Briefly, the Archarnians: they were a rural *deme*, rather rural, the Marathon fighters. I believe an American equivalent would be the American Legion—very warlike and very patriotic. And in this Aristophanean play there is a hero called Dikaiopolis, literally translated, the “just city.” The very name reminds us later-born people of Socrates, and especially of the Socrates of the *Gorgias*. Now the action is this: This Dikaiopolis—justice, political justice incarnate—makes peace with the enemy, Sparta, [a] private peace. So the whole city is at war except Dikaiopolis. And it is not difficult to show that Dikaiopolis is the comic poet himself. He makes peace and he gets away with an act of treason because he can use the rags, certain rags, of Euripides. But the main point which is relevant for our purpose is this: Why does he make peace? For the sake of the pleasures of the senses. Here you have also a hedonist, but very different from Callicles because he is an unpolitical hedonist. And we must also consider this alternative, which is not made a theme, of course, in this dialogue. Yes.

Now we come to a very long argument. I do not know whether it will be possible to read that today. It is no use to read it in small parts. Well, I will simply state the argument of 495e–497a. The starting point: Happiness is a state opposed to misery, as everyone will admit, just as health is opposed to sickness, etc. Obviously, one cannot be healthy and sick at the same time—meaning strictly; of course, you can be healthy in your liver and sick in your eyes. I mean, you cannot be healthy in the same respect in which you are sick at the same time. And moreover you cannot get rid of health and sickness at the same time. Yet happiness includes all good things and misery all evil things. Now if there is something which one can possess together with its contrary—as one cannot possess health and sickness together at the same time—and of which one can get rid simultaneously with its contrary, this thing cannot be either good or bad. But when a man, a thirsty man, drinks, he has both pleasure and pain: the pain of thirst, the pleasure of satisfaction. And when he has satisfied his desire, he has gotten rid simultaneously of pleasure and pain. Hence the pleasant and the painful cannot be the good and the bad. That’s the argument. Well, we have to examine this argument, but I think when you read

^{vi} Thucydides 2.19–21.

it, you will find that this is the substance of the point. We can perhaps next time discuss the argument. Let us read only a little intermezzo. After this argument is through in 497a5, how does Callicles reply, after he has understood what Socrates is aiming at? Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken: *Call.:* “I cannot follow these subtleties of yours, Socrates.” (497a)

LS: The word which he uses is a word coming from “sophist”: “what you sophisticate,” you could say. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “You can, but you play the innocent, Callicles. Just go on a little further, that you may realize how subtle is your way of reproving me. Does not each of us cease at the same moment from thirst and from the pleasure he gets by drinking?”

Call.: “I cannot tell what you mean.”

Gorg.: “No, no, Callicles, you must answer him—” (497a–b)

LS: Gorgias says that.

Mr. Reinken:

Gorg.: “for our sakes also, that the arguments may be brought to a conclusion.”

Call.: “But Socrates is always like this, Gorgias; he keeps on asking petty, unimportant questions until he refutes one.”

Gorg.: “Why, what does that matter to you? In any case it is not your credit that is at stake, Callicles; just permit Socrates to refute you in such manner as he chooses.”

Call.: “Well then, proceed with those little cramped questions of yours, since Gorgias is so minded.” (497b–c)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. Now Callicles, you see, refuses to reply. He is obstinate. He withdraws to silently, i.e., speechlessly, unreasonably, maintaining his opinion. But Socrates insists on the continuation of the conversation in order to bring Callicles to admit that Callicles has blamed Socrates without ground. Now this blame is called, at least in one place, an accusation. Socrates wants to bring Callicles to admit that he has accused Socrates unjustly. But Socrates does not bring his unjust accuser to make this admission. That is a prophecy. He cannot even bring Callicles to do that, still less the accusers in earnest. Yes?

Student: Twice Callicles says, “I’m only continuing for the sake of Gorgias.” I mean, here he indicates that, and then later on.

LS: Ya, sure. Yes?

Same student: And then, finally, he says it a third time, and it’s only when he says it that

third time that Socrates says, “Well, what should we do now? Should we continue or should we not?” Why does he not do—

LS: May we take this up when we come to that, and only limit ourselves to what happens here? Good.

Now only Gorgias’ intervention prevents the cessation of the conversation. Gorgias has authority over Callicles, as you see; Socrates has none. Socrates can rule Callicles only via Gorgias. That is the simple statement of the problem. The philosopher can rule certain people only via the rhetorician. The rhetoricians in this sense, of this dialogue, have a quality which the philosopher as philosopher does not possess. The philosopher has his rhetoric, but that’s the private rhetoric of the *Phaedrus*. It’s not the public rhetoric discussed in this dialogue. Now, why does he intervene? The old commentator Olympiodorus says, “He intervenes lest he be²¹ the only one refuted by Socrates.”^{vii} Well, he means, of course, he and Polus. You know, in other words, after he had been so gloriously defeated, he wants everyone else to be in the same boat. “Surely,” he says—I’m not quite sure that it’s quite correct—“Surely Gorgias intervenes for the sake of Gorgias and the other listeners. He does not intervene for the sake of Callicles.” That’s quite clear. The whole dialogue is for the benefit of Gorgias, as I have said already before, as became clear at the beginning of the Polus section—or in the Polus section, sorry. Yes. Now let us read the next two lines, and then we may call it a day.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “You are fortunate, Callicles, in having been initiated into the Great Mysteries before the Little: I did not think that this was permitted.” (497c)

LS: Now what does this mean? This is a reference to 484c [and] following. Callicles had said [that] in one’s youth, one should study philosophy and then turn to politics. Politics are the greater things, 484c: in other words, first the lesser mysteries of philosophy and then the greater mysteries of politics. Now Socrates says here, in effect, “You have not been initiated into the lesser mysteries,” i.e., into philosophy, contrary to what he had said at the beginning—you remember, when he said Callicles is so perfectly competent in these matters—“and yet you are already initiated in the greater mysteries of politics, and I always thought that this was wrong, religiously wrong.” And this will be, then, a subject in the rest of the dialogue: the non-philosophic politician and the menace which he constitutes to himself and to society. I think we will not read any more, because the passage is too long and we need a coherent discussion of the arguments, the first argument which Socrates uses here in order to prove this key thing, that the good is not the pleasant. I mean, that is Socrates’ opinion without any question, and Plato’s. The question is whether the arguments used here are sufficient to establish it, and what the defects of the arguments might perhaps relay to us. Now is there anyone? Mr. Butterworth? Did I reply indirectly, in fact, to your question?

Mr. Butterworth: I didn’t feel that you did, no. . . .

^{vii} Olympiodorus, Lecture 31.

LS: I wonder to which argument you refer now.

Mr. Butterworth: I think I gave you the reference.

LS: 490a–491a? [Long pause] Oh, this point. But is it not necessary for Callicles to make clear what he means that the better should have more? And since the better were defined as those who know more, Socrates takes some example of knowers. Since Callicles had not deigned to identify the knowers he had in mind, Socrates is perfectly justified to take shoemakers and others until Callicles finally comes out and says, “I mean those wise in political wisdom.”

Mr. Butterworth: Yeah, except that we’ve seen in the past that Socrates has the facility of either leading an argument directly to a sound conclusion or refuting his opponent. And this time, it seems like he spends more time refuting an opponent than—

LS: No, but I think that was very, very helpful because it let us see that he is here concerned with the question of the two inequalities: the inequality regarding capacity or ability to rule and the inequality regarding division of the booty, if I may say so. These are two entirely different considerations. And while it makes sense to say that the man who did more for the community should get more, it is not quite clear [of] what should he get more. You have to use these homely examples which Socrates uses. Should he get more food, more drink, more clothes, more shoes—or larger shoes, maybe? That is, I think, necessary; that Socrates has to use such tons of brick is not his fault but the fault of Callicles. I think that must be made clear. And we would never be able to see that the problem of the *Republic* is present here, without this passage, I believe. So I don’t think that there is any mistake.

Mr. Butterworth: So the sole justification, as you see it, is that it points us to the *Republic*?

LS: Ya, but “to the *Republic*” is too narrow. It points to the underlying political problem, which happens to be elaborated in the *Republic*. But if we do not consider that, we will not understand the treatment of rhetoric in this dialogue.²²

[end of tape]

ENDNOTES TO SESSION TEN

¹ Deleted “more simply.”

² Deleted “therefore.”

³ Deleted “or Socrates for Callicles says—no, Callicles himself says, as a matter of fact.”

⁴ Deleted “will.”

⁵ Deleted “The questions, the two questions, are.”

⁶ Deleted “call.”

⁷ Moved “are.”

⁸ Deleted “The truth would be the highest is.”

⁹ Deleted “by chance or.”

- ¹⁰ Deleted “them.”
- ¹¹ Moved “himself.”
- ¹² Deleted “of.”
- ¹³ Deleted “whom.”
- ¹⁴ Deleted “holding, pardon me, what people were really.”
- ¹⁵ Deleted “he.”
- ¹⁶ Deleted “he.”
- ¹⁷ Deleted “him.”
- ¹⁸ Deleted “Polus.”
- ¹⁹ Deleted “what chance.”
- ²⁰ Deleted “does.”
- ²¹ Deleted “not.”
- ²² Deleted an announcement regarding the date of the final examination for the course.

Session 11: no date

[In progress] **Leo Strauss:** —The question is: Is rhetoric good or bad? The rhetoricians, Gorgias and Polus, say, of course, rhetoric is good. Socrates says it is bad. Now in the Gorgias section, we have seen a twofold contradiction. The explicit one: rhetoric can be used unjustly and, on the other hand, it cannot be used unjustly. The implicit one is perhaps more important immediately: rhetoric is omnipotent, and yet rhetoricians are in danger of being criminally persecuted successfully. In the Polus section, Socrates makes clear that rhetoric is bad because it is not an art but a flattery, a kind of flattery, an art being directed towards a good, and a flattery directed toward the pleasant. Still, at the end Socrates admits that rhetoric could be good if it were used for bringing criminals to justice, and it would be good because punishment makes men just. The issue has then become justice instead of rhetoric. In the Callicles section, the issue becomes even broader. The question concerns how men should live. And here *the* alternative is the life devoted to philosophy or the political life, and it is understood that the life of philosophy corresponds to justice [and] the political life to injustice, which implies that there is no harmony between philosophy and the *polis*, or philosophy and the *demos*. Rhetoric cannot bridge the gulf between philosophy and the *polis*, and therefore rhetoric is powerless in the most important respect.

Generally speaking, as far as we have studied the work hitherto, we can say in the *Gorgias* Socrates debunks rhetoric, just as in the *Republic* he debunks poetry. But on the other hand, lest we are carried away by these impressions, there is also a Platonic dialogue in which rhetoric is rehabilitated, and that is the *Phaedrus*, just as poetry is to some extent rehabilitated in the *Banquet*. Now these two dialogues, *Phaedrus* and *Banquet*, have one thing in common as far as their theme is concerned: both deal with *eros*. And from this we can draw the conclusion that the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*, in contradistinction to the *Phaedrus* and the *Banquet*, abstract from *eros* and therefore reach these negative results regarding rhetoric and poetry. But it is undeniable that the rehabilitation of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* is much more visible than the rehabilitation of poetry in the *Banquet*, because the rehabilitation in the *Banquet* is only implicit; it is not made a theme. So the overall superficial impressions—and they are always very important—is that Plato takes a more favorable view of rhetoric than of poetry. And we will find out, perhaps today, but otherwise next Tuesday, from the *Gorgias*, why Plato has this seemingly strange preference for rhetoric in contradistinction to poetry.

In the Callicles section, *the* contrast is between the philosophic and the political life, as the contrast between the just and the unjust life. Now reduced to its principle, this is the question concerning the relation of the good and the pleasant. Philosophy, justice, and the good, [on the one hand], political life, injustice, and the pleasant, [on the other], belong together. Callicles asserts that the good is identical with the pleasant, and Socrates asserts the opposite. In this discussion of the relation between the good and the pleasant at which we have arrived, Socrates establishes the basis for the contrast between art and flattery—and flattery being, of course, that thing to which rhetoric belongs. But now the discussion

leads to another result. We have observed throughout the course that rhetoric cannot be simply bad, because Socrates uses rhetoric all the time. But this we have only observed; it was never stated. Now it will gradually become stated that there can be a kind of rhetoric which is directed toward the good, i.e., toward justice. What is simply bad is not rhetoric but poetry, as I said before. Now Socrates sketches, then, in the sequel the right kind of rhetoric for the benefit of Gorgias. Callicles is only a kind of guinea pig. The conversation with Callicles, and even the conversation with Polus, is Socrates' *epideixis*, Socrates' showing off of his rhetoric, just as Gorgias has shown his rhetoric before the dialogue; and Plato didn't think it worth his while to present to us a piece of Gorgian showing-off rhetoric, as he surely could have done with ease. Socrates reveals, especially in the Callicles section, the limitations of his rhetoric because he cannot convince, persuade, Callicles. And this means in my view that Socrates suggests to Gorgias that Gorgias should do to Callicles and his like what Socrates cannot do. Socrates does not have the peculiar gifts of¹ [Gorgias], whatever they may be worth, but they are some gifts. Gorgias should not waste his time in further nonsense [as] he's doing at present, with these childish plays he makes, but should do a useful job for people like Callicles.

One point I would like to make supplementing what I said last time. Callicles has been presented to us in what we read last time as coming from the *deme* Archarne, and this reminds us of Aristophanes' comedy, fortunately preserved, the *Archarnians*. I mentioned that the hero there is Dikaiopolis, the "just city." The name seems to fit Socrates more than anyone else, especially Socrates of the *Gorgias*, but the hero there is the comic poet. He is a hedonist like Callicles, a man who enjoys especially the pleasures of eating, and he is presented as preparing a meal with infinite gusto. He is a hedonist like Callicles, but an unpolitical one. He turns his back on the *polis*. He is as unpolitical, we could say, as Socrates—only Socrates didn't care so much for the art of cooking, as we have seen. Now, he makes peace in the midst of war. He commits treason, in other words, and he gets away with that. How? This simple thing I forgot to mention last time: by the clever use of rhetoric. He addresses the Marathon fighters, the intensely patriotic group, by first splitting them into two parties, by attacking Pericles and his whole policy—say, if someone in this country would attack the Democratic administration. And so he splits them into two, and then he has already won, because if you have one party on your side then you are not completely isolated. And then he however succeeds in convincing the whole bunch, also the enemies, by appealing to these simple men's loathing of the brass. You know: Wartime austerity, and then the brass are enjoying themselves and have all good things, and you have to starve. And by these lousy rhetorical means, he wins his freedom. Good. This I thought I should mention.

And now we will turn to our text. We are engaged in the discussion of the relation of the good and the pleasant. And I gave you a summary last time, toward the end, of the first part of the argument. The gist is very simple. The good and the bad cannot exist at the same time in the same being in the same respect, nor can they be lost at the same time by the same individual in the same respect, whereas the pleasant and the painful can exist and [even] *must*² exist in the same individual, as you see from the example:³ if you are hungry, you enjoy eating. You would not enjoy the eating if you were not hungry, i.e., if you do not have the pain of hunger. Now in the moment the pain of hunger has ceased,

the pleasure of eating has ceased. So you get rid of the two things, of the opposites, at the same time. *Ergo*, the good and the bad are radically distinct from the pleasant and unpleasant. This was the first argument. And now we come to the second half of the argument, in 497c5. ⁴The point is this. One argument, one point, has still to be discussed. Perhaps you [should] read first Socrates' speech in 497b1–2.

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “You can, but you play the innocent, Callicles.” (497a)

LS: No, the next speech by Socrates—I mean the question which Socrates addresses there to Callicles.

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “Does not each of us cease at the same moment from thirst and from the pleasure he gets by drinking?” (497b)

LS: Ya. So this cessation, this simultaneous cessation of pleasure and pain, is now discussed by itself. Now go on now where we were, in c5: “whether each of us does not simultaneously cease to.”

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “And so with hunger and the rest, does he cease to feel the desires and pleasures at the same time?”

Call.: “That is so.”

Soc.: “And also ceases to feel the pains and pleasures at the same time?”

Call.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “But still he does not cease to have the good and bad at the same time, as you agreed; and now, you do not agree?”

Call.: “I do; and what then?”

Soc.: “Only that we get the result, my friend, that the good things are not the same as the pleasant, nor the bad as the painful. For with the one pair the cessation is of both at once, but with the other two it is not, since they are distinct. How then can pleasant things be the same as good, or painful things as bad?” (497c–d)

LS: Yes. Now this is a completion of this part of the argument. There will be another one following, which we will discuss later. We have to reconsider the proof and whether it is valid. We have been given some examples here of pleasant and painful things, for example, of eating, drinking, and of hunger and thirst. But we have not been given a single example of good and bad things. He mentioned health and sickness, strength and weakness, quickness and slowness. But they are not given as examples of good and bad things. That's only implied. You see it with particular clarity in 496b5 where these things are distinguished from the good things. Now it is clear that they cannot be good things on the basis of what we have heard before. How could health, strength—and also wealth, by the way—be good if it is doubtful whether life is good or death is bad? Because obviously, if life is bad, sickness is preferable to health because the chances of death are much greater when you are sick, and especially gravely sick, than if you are healthy. What are then the good and the bad things which man cannot possess and lose at the same time? Knowledge and manliness. But no! Callicles had denied that they were good,

495d4–5. So we do not have a single example of a good thing. Therefore the assertion that the good and bad things are mutually exclusive is a general assertion without support, because we don't have a single example of what good and bad is. If the pleasant is good, we do everything for the sake of the pleasant. Everything else is mere means, in itself neither good nor bad. This was indicated in a way in the Polus section. For example, health is not simply good, because it is not simply pleasant. Becoming healthy after sickness may be more pleasant, and hence better, than health—that's to say, a state between sickness and health, becoming healthy, in which health wins out over sickness, just as in the state in which the satisfaction of desire, of eating, wins out over the pain of hunger. In brief: Are there any good things which are not pleasant? No such goods have been indicated to us.

Callicles gets here into trouble because he grants the proposition regarding the good things, namely, that the good and bad things cannot be possessed and lost at the same time because happiness and misery cannot be possessed at the same time—which is, of course, true. But this general thesis regarding happiness and misery does not exclude that happiness is the state in which we can satisfy our desires, and misery is the state in which we cannot satisfy our desires. But this does not mean that the state of happiness is the state of *mere* pleasure, i.e., where there is no pain whatever. Perhaps there is not such a state. Perhaps pleasure and pain are so indissolubly linked with each other that we cannot have the one without the other, or at least in this sense: that we can have pure pain, but never pure pleasure. This would have to be examined. Now behind this discussion, in no way developed here, is the form which hedonism, the view that the good is the pleasant, took in classical antiquity generally speaking. There is modern hedonism as well as ancient hedonism, but there is a fundamental difference between the two. Prepared by Plato and of course also Aristotle, the most famous hedonistic school, the Epicurean school, took the view implied here, [that] the only true pleasures are pure pleasures, pleasures which have no admixture of pain. The sensual satisfactions all have an admixture of pain. Pure pleasures would be such as to have none. Platonic example: the enjoyment of the smell of a rose, for example, has no admixture of pain. The pleasures of mathematical beauty have no admixture of pain.ⁱ But still, at any rate, the concept of the pure pleasures is the end of classical hedonism. The consequence is of course that the ancient hedonists—the philosophers, I'm not speaking now of people like Callicles—were ascetic men, because these pleasures can be obtained for very little, very little. So the Epicurean way of life was as ascetic as the Stoic way of life, only the foundation, literally the foundation, was different.

Now I will read to you from a most important modern text. At the beginning of modern philosophy, Francis Bacon, in his *Advancement of Learning*, in the Everyman's Library edition which I use, page 161:

The question being debated between Socrates and the sophist: Socrates placing felicity in an equal and constant peace of mind, and the sophist [he means, of course, Callicles] in much desiring and much enjoying. They fell from argument to ill words, the sophist saying that Socrates' felicity was the felicity of a block or stone, and Socrates saying that

ⁱ Cf. *Philebus*, 50e–52b.

the sophist's felicity was the felicity of one that has an itch who did nothing but itch and scratch. And both opinions do not want their supports. For the opinion of Socrates is much apparent by the general consent, even of the Epicurists themselves, that virtue bears a great part in felicity. And if so, certain it is that virtue has more use in clearing perturbations than in compassing desires. The sophist's opinion is much favored by the assertion we last spoke of, that good of advancement is greater than good of simple preservation, because every obtaining a desire has a show of advancement, as motion, though in a circle, has a show of progression. [LS: That's almost literally repeated by Hobbes somewhere.] But the second question, decided the true way, makes the former superfluous. For can it be doubted but that there are some who take more pleasure in enjoying pleasures than some others, and yet nevertheless are less troubled with the loss or leaving of them? And it seems to me that most of the doctrines of the philosophers are more fearful and cautionary than the nature of things requires.

In other words, Bacon says, "Much greater risks can be taken. Why not have a much more peppery life—you know, much vinegar and oil, as it were, in it—and also have more spectacular pleasures?" There is a development leading from here straight to Hobbes and Locke, and to speak in terms of social history, the turn of philosophy toward a so-called capitalist or acquisitive society has its theoretical root here: the maximum of pleasures, of satisfactions, enlarging your desires, and not leaving it at the satisfaction of the simply natural desires, is much better. And I trust that you see the connection between that and an acquisitive or capitalist society, because capitalism stands and falls, as you know from every advertisement, by the arousing of desires which people did not have before. You know, for example, who had a desire for such a useful thing as an icebox or refrigerator two generations ago? So this is quite interesting. But this is the background of Plato, here not developed, [but] developed in later Platonic dialogues, so-called later Platonic dialogues.

Now the true argument of Plato, the full argument of Plato and Aristotle regarding hedonism, is not developed here either. And it can be stated very simply as follows: Pleasure and pain cannot be the fundamental fact, because the pleasure or pain which a being senses depends on its constitution. As another Greek philosopher has put it, an ass would prefer hay to gold, of course. (I mean, assuming that gold is something very valuable, he would be completely unaware of that.) So it depends on the constitution, on the nature of the being, and what is pleasant or painful must be viewed in the light of the constitution. That which completes, perfects, the nature of the thing is a good, and this is naturally accompanied by a specific pleasure. When we come into our own by the perfection of something, then we enjoy that—and that is, of course, not merely true of eating and drinking; it is especially true of the human mind.

Now the second comment I have to make is this: The proof given here is divided into two parts through Callicles' sulking, which we have discussed at the end of the last meeting, and Gorgias' intervention. There are altogether two proofs, the one which we have read and the one which we are going to read, just as there were two similes. But the twofoldness is, as it were, repeated within the first proof insofar as it is clearly bipartite, and the partition is made by this brief scene of Callicles' sulking and Gorgias' intervention. The second half of the first proof deals only with the simultaneous cessation of pleasure and pain, as distinguished from the simultaneous possession of pleasure and

pain. Now what can this mean? We cease to have pleasure and pain, say, of thirst, by drinking. When we have drunk enough, both pleasure and pain cease. But is this the only way in which we cease to have pleasure and pain, say, of thirst? There is another very well known way in which we also cease to have pleasure and pains, doubtless familiar to all of you: namely, dying. But by dying, indeed, we lose also both the good and bad things in the ordinary sense of the term. And this could seem to show that the good and bad things are not simply good and bad. Furthermore, philosophy implies the simultaneous possession of knowledge and ignorance, philosophy being a state in between. If philosophy becomes wisdom, if quest for wisdom becomes wisdom, we lose ignorance and possess only its contrary, namely, knowledge. But when we die, we lose simultaneously knowledge and ignorance. According to the criteria here established, knowledge and ignorance are then both neither good nor bad, and so on. We could develop this further, that this makes sense, to concentrate on the question of cessation, simultaneous cessation, of pleasure and pain, as Plato does it here. Now let us go on. Or is there any—Mr. Lyons?

Mr. Lyons: Sir, in 496c, Socrates refers to the

LS: I did not see it, but maybe. What do you mean?

Mr. Lyons: Well, he cautions Callicles to be so very careful with the next argument.

LS: Ya, perhaps because he here puts losing first and possessing afterward. Do you mean that? But that prepares, as it were, the concentration on cessation exclusively in the second half of the proof. I do not see more than that.

Mr. Lyons:

LS: Yeah, in other words, consider both. Consider not only the simultaneous possession but also the simultaneous cessation. Yes?

Mr. Lyons: He could also be referring to Callicles' own

LS: But Callicles behaves rather well. No, here he still behaves reasonably well, and then after Gorgias' intervention still more. He will make troubles very soon again. And then we will see that. Now let us read, then, the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "Or if you like, consider it another way—for I fancy that even after that you do not admit it. Just observe: do you not call good people good owing to the presence of good things, as you call beautiful those in whom beauty is present?"

Call.: "I do."

Soc.: "Well now, do you give the name of good men to fools and cowards? It was not they just now but brave and wise men whom you so described. Or is it not these that you call good?"

Call.: “To be sure it is.” (497d–e)

LS: Ya, but here Socrates reminds Callicles of what Callicles had insisted upon in the first part of his speech, that the men who deserve to rule and whom he admires are the intelligent and the courageous, and the name applied to both⁵ [is] “good”—I mean, good in the sense of excellent. But Callicles will get into trouble on this ground. Let us see. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “And now, have you ever seen a silly child enjoying himself?”

Call.: “I have.”

Soc.: “And have you never seen a silly man enjoying himself?”

Call.: “I suppose I have; but what has that to do with it?”

Soc.: “Nothing; only answer.”

Call.: “I have seen one.”

Soc.: “And again, a man of sense in a state of pain or enjoyment?”

Call.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “And which sort are more apt to feel enjoyment or pain, the wise or the foolish?”

Call.: “I should think there is not much difference.”

Soc.: “Well, that will suffice—” (497e–498a)

LS: Ya, you see, there is no difference between wise men and fools regarding the quantities of joys or sufferings. Callicles grants this. That’s clear. Superficially that is, of course, true. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “In war have you ever seen a coward?”

Call.: “Of course I have.”

Soc.: “Well now, when the enemy withdrew, which seemed to you to enjoy it more, the cowards or the brave?”

Call.: “Both did, I thought; or if not that, about equally.”

Soc.: “No matter. Anyhow, the cowards do enjoy it?”

Call.: “Very much.”

Soc.: “And the fools, it would seem.”

Call.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “And when the foe advances, do the cowards alone feel pain, or the brave as well?”

Call.: “Both.”

Soc.: “Alike?”

Call.: “More, perhaps, the cowards.”

Soc.: “And when the foe withdraws, do they not enjoy it more?”

Call.: “Perhaps.”

Soc.: “So the foolish and the wise, and the cowardly and the brave, feel pain and enjoyment about equally, according to you, but the cowardly more than the brave?” (498a–c)

LS: Stop here. So here the difference regarding courage is clearer than regarding knowledge. This much is clear. The cowards have more joys and sadness than the brave men, whereas in the other case of foolish and wise, this is not true. Now what does this mean? If the pleasant is the good,⁶ the pleasant as understood by Callicles, then cowardice is of course to be preferred to courage. The only virtue which he could conceivably claim is endangered by his opinion that the good is identical with the pleasant. Well, just as in Callicles' view the mixture of pleasure and pain makes the pleasure truly pleasant—the pepper—the same is also true here in this particular case of fear. If you have much more fears and much more frequent fears, and also much more feelings of liberation from fear, the coward gets much more excitement from life than the steady and stolid brave man. The coward does not have to go to central Africa on big game hunting [trips], since there are so many mice and flies around, you know; and he has constant excitement, which Hemingway sought in far away countries and so on. That's a very interesting consideration. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "But further, are the wise and brave good, and the cowards and fools bad?"

Call.: "Yes."

Soc.: "Then the good and bad feel enjoyment and pain about equally?"

Call.: "I agree."

Soc.: "Then are the good and bad about equally good and bad? Or are the bad in some yet greater measure good and bad?"

Call.: "Why, upon my word, I cannot tell what you mean."

Soc.: "You are aware, are you not, that you hold that the good are good by the presence of good things, and that the bad are so by the presence of bad things? And that the pleasures are the good things, and the pains bad things?"

Call.: "Yes, I am."

Soc.: "Hence in those who have enjoyment the good things—the pleasures—are present, so long as they enjoy?"

Call.: "Of course."

Soc.: "Then, good things being present, those who enjoy are good?"

Call.: "Yes."

Soc.: "Well now, in those who feel pain are not bad things present, namely pains?"

Call.: "They are."

Soc.: "And it is by the presence of bad things, you say, that the bad are bad? Or do you no longer say so?"

Call.: "I do say so."

Soc.: "Then who enjoys is good, and whoever is pained, bad?"

Call.: "Certainly."

Soc.: "You mean, those more so who feel these things more, and those less who feel less, and those about equally who feel about equally?"

Call.: "Yes."

Soc.: “Now you say that the wise and the foolish, the cowardly and the brave, feel enjoyment and pain about equally, or the cowards even more?”

Call.: “I do.” (498c–e)

LS: Ya, well, since according to Callicles, pleasures are the good things and pains are the bad things, the men who have pleasures, with whom pleasures are present, are of course the good men; and those with whom pain is present are the bad men. Socrates will summarize it in the sequel again to make it quite clear.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then just help me to reckon up the results we get from our admissions; for you know they say:

That which seemeth well, ‘tis well
Twice and also thrice to tell,

and to examine too. We say that the wise and brave man is good,
do we not?”

Call.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “And that the foolish and cowardly is bad?”

Call.: “Certainly.”

Soc.: “And again, that he who enjoys is good?”

Call.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “And that he who feels pain is bad?”

Call.: “Necessarily.”

Soc.: “And that the good and the bad feel enjoyment and pain in a like manner, or perhaps the bad rather more?”

Call.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “Then is the bad man made bad or good in a like manner to the good man, or even good in a greater measure? Does not this follow, along with those former statements, from the assumption that pleasant things and good things are the same? Must not this be so, Callicles?” (498e–499b)

LS: “Is there no necessity of it?” Now, Callicles has been reduced *ad absurdum*. If the good is identical with the pleasant, knowledge and courage, not being in themselves pleasant, are not good. The good men are those who have the maximum of pleasures, regardless of whether they got these pleasures through their ability—cleverness, and so on—or by chance; of course, that wouldn’t make any difference. But this of course conflicts with Callicles’ admiration for those he—men who get their pleasures by their ability. The argument, one could say, would not be valid if used against people who do not share Callicles’ admiration for the clever and brave, i.e., it would not be valid, for example, for the general run of social science relativists today, who regard such an admiration as a value judgment as subjective as any other. Therefore it follows, for example, a moronic man, who by virtue of his moronic incomprehension is always very gay, a smiling fellow (you all, I’m sure, have seen such people)—he is of course as good

as the wisest of men. He has those values which he alone [holds]. ⁷Or take a bum or a drifter—that is as good as a responsible human being. But what does this mean? That is quite true. In other words, men who have no aspirations as Callicles has or, in other words, deference to something better than themselves, as Callicles has—you know, he looks up to this lion-like fellow—men who have no aspirations or deferences whatever cannot be refuted. That’s perfectly true. If this is what the relativist says, that’s absolutely correct. They cannot be reached by *logos*, by argument, even less than Callicles. A man who by nature or by bad upbringing has no sense for what Socrates would call the noble, *to kalon*, cannot be reached by argument; that’s absolutely true, and to that extent relativism is irrefutable. But the question is, of course, whether such a man, the moronic, the smiling moron, or the bum or drifter, can be a man of science. Therefore this limits the issue somewhat. Can a man understand himself as a scientist without seeing in science, in reason, something high? And must he therefore not be open to the question whether there are other things which are also high—for example, public-spiritedness, art in contradistinction to trash, religion—as in contradistinction to just filling one’s belly and similar things? That is, I think, the question. But you wanted to say something, Mr. Wenger?

Mr. Wenger:

LS: One has the impression that he enjoys

Mr. Wenger:

LS: In other words, you believe that the case for the moron can be refuted? I believe so, too. But you must admit: but not for the moron. He wouldn’t understand. You see, that’s the point. But is a man who is unable to understand such things able to be a scientist? That would be the question. And I doubt that. I think that’s impossible. I mean, I’m willing to make any concession, even the concession most damaging, to these people. But I cannot make that. Good. I’m sorry, it took a minute. Good.

So Callicles has now been refuted. You cannot have respect and admiration for virtues like intelligence and courage and at the same time say the good is identical with the pleasant, because these virtues are not in themselves pleasant. Unless you can prove that *the* means for acquiring pleasure are intelligence plus courage; then, of course, you could say intelligence plus courage are necessary means for the sole good, and therefore good. But this cannot be shown if you take pleasant in this sense in which Callicles takes it—satisfaction of the senses—because that is obvious, that this you can have without intelligence and courage. I mean, there are many people who enjoy these very much who are neither brave nor intelligent, and you only have to go to some public eating places, or expensive public eating places, to convince yourself of this verity, if you have any doubt about that. Now let us see how Callicles now reacts.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “Let me tell you, Socrates, all the time that I have been listening to you and yielding you agreement, I have been remarking the puerile delight with which you

cling to any concession one may make you, even in jest. So you suppose that I or anybody else in the world does not regard some pleasures as better, and others worse!” (499b)

LS: Ya. Now Socrates’ argument is then not only partly insufficient, as an analysis would show, but it is even wholly unnecessary as far as Callicles is concerned. Because Callicles admits, of course, that not all pleasures are good. You remember what he said about the pleasures of scratching oneself. Why did Callicles not say what he says here right at the beginning, and have spared us and Socrates this great trouble of refuting him?

Now let me consider the situation as it appeared from 494c, for instance, where he said all desires are good, and he obviously didn’t mean it, because this led on to the whole thing. He meant of course only those desires which a *gentleman* has, or at least which a gentleman can avow, but he didn’t make this crucial limitation. And why did he not do it? Well, because of his famous courage, or manliness: not to cede a single bit of territory, because that would be cowardly, naturally. No, he didn’t budge. But still, now the situation becomes somewhat uncomfortable for him, and now he makes the best of a somewhat difficult situation, namely, to abandon that territory with grace. That’s what he’s doing here. He says, “I did not mean, of course, what I said. I only meant to put up a mock fight. And you took it seriously as a fight, and you invested all your powers for nothing. You could have had it any time for the asking.” You know that this is a means used in political life from time to time as well. Still, in a way it is of course a victory of Socrates, insofar as he has now forced Callicles to be playful, or at least to pretend to be playful. You know, he was so very serious to begin with. So this is a very—Callicles believes he has now solved this difficulty; Socrates is now defeated, he has fooled Socrates, as Socrates will for his sake now explicitly admit. And fooling is, of course, defeating. Fooling a man means defeating him. Callicles is naturally pleased. Go on where you left off.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Oh ho, Callicles, what a rascal you are, treating me thus like a child—now asserting that the same things are one way, now another, to deceive me! And yet I started with the notion that I should not have to fear any intentional deception on your part, you being my friend; but now I find I was mistaken, and it seems I must, as the old saying goes, e’ven make the best of what I have got, and accept just anything you offer.” (499b–c)

LS: Ya, good. There is a saying of Gorgias—I mean, from the real Gorgias, not from the Gorgias as a Platonic character—that one must reply as an orator to the serious with play and to play with seriousness. Socrates answers, apparently with seriousness, “You have defeated me.” In this connection, I would like to read to you a passage from our commentator: “The *Gorgias* has many echoes of the language of comedy.”ⁱⁱ There is no doubt about that, that this is a correct remark. The funny thing is only that Dodds does not make any use of it, of this fact, in his overall judgment of the dialogue, and finds it is

ⁱⁱ Dodds, 293.

the most bitter Platonic dialogue.ⁱⁱⁱ But how come that the most bitter Platonic dialogue has so many borrowings from comedy? This question he has never put himself, making the common error of not putting two and two together—you know, bitter plus comedy. And that we, of course, do all the time, that we don't do it; but that doesn't make it good, that it is done all the time. Callicles is pleased with himself because he has fooled the clever Socrates, as Socrates himself admits. Therefore Callicles can now gratify Socrates and always answer, you see? You know, we don't need Gorgian interventions anymore for keeping him answering, because he has had a victory. Socrates is a good pedagogue, as you can see. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Well then, what you now state, it seems, is that some particular pleasures are good, and some bad; is not that so?”

Call.: “Yes.” (499c)

LS: Callicles grants now [not only] that there are pleasures which are⁸ inferior to other pleasures—this a hedonist can grant without difficulties; for example, some pleasures are more lasting than others and therefore better than others. He grants now that there are some pleasures which are bad, simply bad, which a hedonist can never grant, because if the good is the pleasant, then every pleasure, however little desirable, has of course the root of the matter, being pleasure, in itself. This becomes decisive later on. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then are the beneficial ones good, and the harmful ones bad?”

Call.: “Certainly.”

Soc.: “And are those beneficial which do some good and those evil which do some evil?”

Call.: “I agree.” (499d)

LS: Ya, “beneficial” is not the right translation. I would translate “useful.”^{iv} Because if the pleasant is the good, if the only good is the pleasant, then there can be—no, I'm sorry, I began at the wrong end. Let us first finish that section and then I will explain it. Let us say “useful.” Good.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “And are those useful which do some good, and those evil which do some evil?”

Call.: “I agree.”

Soc.: “Now are these the sort you mean—for instance, in the body, the pleasures of eating and drinking that we mentioned a moment ago? Then the pleasures of this sort which produce health in the body, or strength, or any other bodily excellence—are these good, and those which have the opposite effects, bad?”

Call.: “Certainly.”

ⁱⁱⁱ See Dodds, 16, 19–20.

^{iv} The Greek adjective is *ōphelimos*.

Soc.: “And similarly in the case of pains, are some worthy and some base?”

Call.: “Of course.”

Soc.: “So it is the worthy pleasures and pains that we ought to choose in all our doings?”

Call.: “Certainly.”

Soc.: “And the base ones not?”

Call.: “Clearly so.”

Soc.: “Because, you know, Polus and I, if you recollect, decided that everything we do should be for the sake of what is good. Do you agree with us in this view—that the good is the end of all of our actions, and it is for its sake that all other things should be done, and not it for theirs? Do you add your vote to ours, and make a third?”

Call.: “I do.”

Soc.: “Then it is for the sake of what is good that we should do everything, including what is pleasant, not the good for the sake of the pleasant.”

Call.: “Certainly.”

Soc.: “Now is it in every man’s power to pick out which sort of pleasant things are good and which bad, or is professional skill required in each case?”

Call.: “Professional skill.” (499d–500a)

LS: Ya, literally a *technikos*—a *technikos* is a man possessing a *technē*, an art—is needed for that. Now, let us see then. Since pleasures may be bad, we cannot take our bearings by the pleasures, but only by the good. An example of the good as distinguished from the pleasant is here given: health and the other virtues or excellences of the body. No such examples were given in the previous argument. Pleasures, we may say, as such are never good strictly speaking; they can only be *useful* for the good. Nor can any pleasures as such be simply bad; they are harmful because they prevent our getting the⁹ [good]. Good are the excellences of the body and, we can say, already anticipating what comes, the virtues or excellence of the soul, as distinguished from the pleasant. Now Calicles does not even try, as one could, to give an account of the distinction between preferable and non-preferable pleasures in terms of pleasure, on hedonistic grounds. In brief, what Bentham calls later on “the felicific calculus”: those pleasures are to be rejected which are so much connected with pain that the total result is an excess of pain over pleasure.^v This is not an invention of Bentham; this whole thought is developed at great length in the Platonic dialogue *Protagoras*, where Socrates leads Protagoras to a somewhat decent view by this kind of hedonistic calculus. Calicles is not smart enough to try that, and he abandons the hedonistic position.

He agrees now with what Socrates and Polus had agreed upon. Socrates, Polus, and

^v Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), a British philosopher influential in the development of utilitarianism.

Callicles form now a triad, from which poor old Gorgias is excluded. Whether he would not still maintain a hedonistic position proper is left to our guess. Yet the subject of the agreement between Socrates and Polus was different. Socrates and Polus had agreed as to this: that all *acts*, all doings of men, are indifferent—for example, killing, you remember that—and become good or bad only if they are conducive to our happiness. Here the question is now extended. What was said to be true regarding actions is now said to be true also of pleasures and pains. In brief, pleasures and pains have the status of means, means which have to be judged with a view to whether they are conducive to the end. Polus, however, does not protest against this interpretation of the agreement between him and Socrates. Polus has been rendered tame a long time ago, and he is quiet. You would see, if you would look at the Greek, that there is the following slight change of expression. Socrates says [that] in some cases, we do or we choose the pleasant things “for the sake of the good things,” in the plural, or [in other cases] “for the sake of the good,” in the singular: *bonorum causa* or *boni causa*—which does make quite a difference. And “for the sake of the good” in the singular occurs, of course, in the center, because that’s the point. And here occurs also the term “the end,” which came out in the translation, “*the end* of all the actions is the good.” This, as Dodds says, and he may be right, is the first occurrence of this term of utmost importance in Greek literature.^{vi} Of course, that presupposes that the *Gorgias* was written before these and these other dialogues, and so on. Good. So we have now reached perfect clarity about that: the good is to be preferred to the pleasant. And we have now some notion of what the good is: the excellences of men, of human nature. And the pleasant or painful has to be chosen or rejected with a view to the good, and it is never chosen for its own sake. Good. Now let us continue.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then let us recall those former points I was putting to Polus and Gorgias.” (500a)

LS: You see, now Socrates brings in what *preceded* his agreement with Polus, what was said *first* to Gorgias and to Polus presupposes what was said afterward—naturally, because the whole dialogue is an ascent, from the derivative to the principle. Regarding this point, however, which he mentions now, there was no agreement between Socrates, on the one hand, and Polus and Gorgias, on the other, whereas there was an agreement regarding the first mentioned point between Socrates and Polus. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “I said, if you remember, that there were certain industries, some of which extend only to pleasure, procuring that and no more, and ignorant of better and worse; while others know what is good and what bad. And I placed among those that are concerned with pleasure the knack, not art, of cookery, and among those concerned with good the art of medicine.” (500a–b)

LS: Let us stop here for one moment. Now he reminds Callicles now of the distinction, which I’m sure you all remember, between a mere routine and an art. But he mentions

^{vi} Dodds, 317.

here only two examples: the art is medicine and the routine is cooking. It is of some interest to observe that the Greek word [used for cooking here]—I do not know how to bring it out in English¹⁰—is not the one used in the long speech. The Greek word is *mageirikē*, and what was used in the long speech is *opsopoiia*. One could perhaps bring out the translation as follows: “cooking” here generally, and the other term, something like “fine cooking,” concerned only with tickling the palate. Pardon?

Mr. Reinken: Gourmet cooking.

LS: Ya, ya, you can put it this way. “Gourmet,” I think, is absent from here. Now regarding the term, this kind of cooking which is mentioned here, that we can see from other Platonic dialogues, is admitted by him to be an art. So there can be an art which leads to pleasure. You remember, we had discussed that at the time whether there could not be arts leading up to pleasure, genuine arts. We will develop this more fully later. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “Now by the sanctity of friendship, Callicles—” (500b)

LS: “By the god of friendship,” meaning Zeus, the god of friendship.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “do not on your part indulge in jesting with me, or give me random answers against your conviction, or again, take what I say as though I were jesting. For you see that our debate is upon a question which has the highest conceivable claims to the serious interest even of a person who has but little intelligence—namely, what course of life is best—” (500b–c)

LS: Literally, “in which manner one should live.”

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “whether it should be that to which you invite me, with all those manly pursuits of speaking in Assembly and practicing rhetoric and going in for politics after the fashion of you modern politicians, or this life of philosophy; and what makes the difference between these two. Well, perhaps it is best to do what I attempted a while ago, and distinguish them; and then, when we have distinguished them and come to an agreement with each other as to these lives being really two, we must consider what is the difference between them and which of them is the one we ought to live. Now I daresay you do not yet grasp my meaning.” (500c–d)

LS: Well, let us stop here for one moment. Now, Socrates speaks here [of] what the meaning and purpose of the discussion is. The question regarding the order of rank between the pleasant and the good concerns the order of rank of the present political life and the life spent in philosophizing. More precisely, not the order of rank of the two ways of life, but an either/or between them: Either the good has to be preferred to the pleasant, the philosophic life for us, or the pleasant has to be preferred to the good, the present

political life for us. “The present” means, of course, Athenian democracy. In the Eighth Book of the *Republic*, in his very nasty critique of democracy, Plato presents democracy, democratic freedom, as freedom for all desires, for all pleasures. This is the point. But of course it is not yet clear whether there are truly¹¹ two [such] lives. We know now, or in a way we know, that the good is different from the pleasant. But that the good, fully developed, is the philosophic life, and the pleasant, fully developed, is the present political life—this we do not yet know. That is, up to now, only an assertion. You see also here that rhetoric is here presented as clearly and unambiguously belonging to the political life, i.e., having no place in the philosophic life. You see also that Callicles calls Socrates to the political life; Socrates does not claim here that he calls Callicles to the philosophic life. Let us keep that in mind. Yes, now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “No, I do not.”

Soc.: “Well, I will put it to you more plainly. Seeing that we have agreed, you and I, that there is such a thing as ‘good,’ and such a thing as ‘pleasant,’ and that the pleasant is other than the good, and that for the acquisition of either there is a certain practice or preparation—the quest of the pleasant in the one case, and that of the good in the other—but first you must either assent or object to this statement of mine: do you assent?” (500d–e)

LS: Now, it has not been agreed upon between Socrates, on the one hand, and Polus and Gorgias, on the other, that the good is different from the pleasant and the consequences from that. It has been agreed upon now between Socrates and Callicles. Now this follows indeed—this consequence that there are two different pursuits follows from the difference between the good and pleasant, not simply, but only conditionally. Let us assume that the good is different from the pleasant. Does it follow that the pursuit of the good is radically different from the pursuit of the pleasant? Does this necessarily follow? No. If the good and the pleasant are indissolubly linked with each other, it does not follow. If you cannot pursue a specific good, say, health, without pursuing at the same time the pleasure going with health, derivative from health, the pleasant feeling coming from being healthy, then there cannot be two pursuits—that is one and the same pursuit, of course. This is here implied. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “I am with you entirely.”

Soc.: “Then try and come to a definite agreement with me on what I was saying to our friends here, and see if you now find that what I said then was true. I was saying, I think, that cookery—” (500e)

LS: Here now the term used before: the gourmet cooking, as you call it.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “gourmet cooking seems to me not an art but a routine, unlike medicine, which, I argued, has investigated the nature of the person whom she treats and the

cause of her proceedings—” (500e–501a)

LS: Not “the nature of the person.” That is already an interpretation, a good interpretation, but not a literal translation. “Medicine has considered the nature of that which it tends.” That can very well be the body, simply, but it can also be, because of the peculiar character of Greek grammar, the man whom it tends, the individual. Yes. Good.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “and has some account to give of each of these things; so much for medicine: whereas the other, in respect of the pleasure to which her whole ministrations is given, goes to work here in an utterly inartistic manner, without having investigated at all either the nature or the cause of pleasure, and altogether irrationally—with no thought, one may say, of differentiation, relying on routine and habitude for merely preserving a memory of what is wont to result; and that is how she is enabled to provide her pleasures.” (501a–b)

LS: Yes. Now medicine, being an art, considers the nature of the thing which it tends, but also it considers the nature of the individual human being whom it tends. Now, if this is important for an art, that it considers the individual—like the shoemaker makes a shoe for this individual, he doesn’t make shoes in general—then it might follow that an art which does not consider the individuals is not an art properly speaking. And of course rhetoric, public rhetoric addressed to multitudes, could not be an art for this reason. I mention this only in passing. But cooking is not an art because it does not consider the nature—he doesn’t say the nature of the body; he says because it doesn’t consider the nature of pleasure. Now let us assume there is a pursuit concerned with production of pleasure, but [which] has studied the nature of pleasure. Could this not be an art? We must see. There is a considerable difference between Socrates’ speech toward Polus and this recapitulation of the speech. The references to nature, these clear references, are absent from the long speech, naturally, because in the meantime something has happened: Callicles has appeared. Callicles has brought up philosophy and the whole question of nature in contradistinction to convention. Callicles is philosophically more radical than Polus and Gorgias. Nevertheless—and that is the paradox of Callicles—he is less rational than Polus and Gorgias are. This can happen. Even today, you can find people who are more philosophically radical and yet less rational than others. Why is this, or why is Callicles more radical? Because he is opposed to the Socratic way of life, whereas Polus and Gorgias exist in a kind of in-between region between philosophy and politics where the whole issue does not come out. Now, Mr. . . .

Student: He says rhetoric is not an art because it appeals to the masses. But if there is something which is the nature of the masses . . . cannot rhetoric be an art?

LS: Ya, sure. We will come to that. But there is a question regarding that. Yes, we will come to that. Only this consideration is a part of the argument as it will come out very soon. Ya? Good. But, in another respect, I should have mentioned that, that was the reason why I thought of it—sometimes one forgets the most important things because one has said them too often. Now, what was the highest art in the original scheme, may I ask?

You remember the proportion?

Student: Justice.

LS: No, no. This you really should know by heart. What did you say?

Student: Legislative art.

LS: Legislative art. What does the legislative art produce?

¹²**Same student:**

LS: No, no. The legislative art produces health of the soul, like gymnastics. But it produces it through laws. Laws are general, do not deal with the individuals. And there is a great question whether laws, because of their generality, are not radically defective. This is developed at great length in Plato's *Statesman*, but the thought is of course already here.

Student: Why is that the highest art? It is less difficult than justice.

LS: Why should a higher art be less difficult?

Same student: I don't think it should be, but according to you it is.

LS: I didn't imply anything of the kind. How?

Same student: Let me go back. It corresponds to gymnastics, the legislative [art]. Legislation is the highest art, so higher than justice.

LS: Ya, according to that scheme, because gymnastics is higher than medicine.

Same student: But gymnastics can be led by a slave.

LS: Ya, sure. Perhaps this is the reason why now we are in the process of [the] legislative art being replaced by another art—this has got to happen. And therefore I emphasize the fact that the arts hitherto mentioned are only medicine and¹³ cooking, the sham art, and not the others. Plato revises that. I mean, generally speaking, all recapitulations, all repetitions, occurring in a Platonic work are never identical. Sometimes the differences are almost invisible. But there are always differences, and this is of course a major difference. Yes. Now let us go on where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "Now consider first whether you think that this account is satisfactory, and that there are certain other such occupations likewise, having to do with the soul—" (501b)

LS: “with the *soul*.” Hitherto we have spoken only of such arts or sham arts dealing with the body.

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “some artistic—” (501b)

LS: Ya, what does “artistic” mean? In our language, it means belonging to the fine arts. That is of course not meant. “Technical” would be a literal but perhaps not intelligible translation: “those of an art character,” or something. “Artistic”—one must keep away the notion of fine arts here completely. A shoemaker is also—

Student: Artful?

LS: “Artful” has the other implication of being sly. Therefore I think I would not take that. Yes? Good.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “with forethought for what is to the soul’s best advantage, and others making light of this, but again, as in the former case, considering merely the soul’s pleasure and how it may be contrived for her, neither inquiring which of the pleasures is a better or a worse one, nor caring for aught but mere gratification, whether for better or worse. For I, Callicles, hold that there are such, and for my part I call this sort of thing flattery, whether in relation to the body or to the soul or to anything else, when anyone ministers to its pleasure without regard for the better and the worse; and you now, do you support us with the same opinion on this matter, or do you gainsay us?” (501b–c)

LS: Now let us stop. What corresponds to medicine regarding the soul is not specified. I repeat, in the long speech addressed to Polus, it had been called [the] legislative art plus justice, in the sense of punitive justice. And there flatteries were called sophistry and rhetoric—you remember that. Here we have one difficulty—I do not know whether it came out clearly in the translation—in [501]c, where he says, “I call everything which is only concerned with pleasure, regarding body, or soul, or anything else . . .” Now what can there be apart from body and soul, I mean, where you can speak of flattering or gratifying?

Student: A god?

LS: Yes, indeed. In the *Euthyphro* that theme is developed: a kind of vulgar piety which is nothing but flattering the gods. And this would also not be an art. Sure, that is correct. Yes. Now what does Callicles reply to this fairly long speech of Socrates?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “Not I; I agree with you, in order that your argument may reach a conclusion, and that I may gratify Gorgias here.” (501c)

LS: Now you see, they speak of gratification, and he gratifies, in this very act, Gorgias,

without telling us whether he does this merely in order to please Gorgias, to give pleasure to him, or whether he has Gorgias' good in mind. Yes. But this is clear. Was this the passage you had in mind, Mr. Seltzer, last time?

Mr. Seltzer: No.

LS: All right, then we'll come to that. Good. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "And is this the case with only one soul, and not with two or many?"

Call.: "No, it is also the case with two or many."

Soc.: "Then is it possible also to gratify them all at once, collectively, with no consideration of what is best?"

Call.: "I should think it is." (501d)

LS: I mean, the thought I believe is perfectly clear. You can gratify one man; you can gratify simultaneously two; you can gratify many; and you can gratify many assembled, obviously. Now, what is he now alluding to by this "gratifying many assembled"? If you don't [know], read on.

Student: Rhetoric?

LS: Rhetoric, sure. But then you get a surprise. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "Then can you say what are the pursuits which effect this? Or rather, if you like, when I ask you, and one of them seems to you to be of this class, say yes, and when one does not, say no. And first let us consider flute-playing. Does it not seem to you one of this sort, Callicles, aiming only at our pleasure, and caring for naught else?"

Call.: "It does seem so to me."

Soc.: "And so too with all similar pursuits, such as harp-playing in the contests?"

Call.: "Yes."

Soc.: "And what of choral productions and dithyrambic compositions? Are they not manifestly, in your view, of the same kind? Or do you suppose Cinesias, son of Meles, cares a jot about trying to say things of a sort that might be improving to his audience, or only what is likely to gratify the crowd of spectators?"

Call.: "Clearly the latter is the case, Socrates, with Cinesias." (501d–502a)

LS: You see, he adds here "Socrates." You know, when we have conversations with people, we sometimes bring in the name of our interlocutor and sometimes not. And Plato has of course considered this very carefully, when to add that. Now the extreme cases, which are helpful for understanding the situation, are these. When the other man says something particularly impossible, then we call him by his name, and say, "Bob"—or

whatever the name is—“how can you say that?” And the other extreme case is when you are squeezed by him and then, as it were, beg for mercy. Then you will also use his name. These are the simple and clear cases. Here the case is, I think, different: namely, here he spontaneously agrees, as if to say, “Now, Socrates, now you say sensible things. This Cinesias, of course no one would ever entertain the notion that he would be concerned with anything but pleasing the audience in order to obtain the prize—naturally.” There will be more and more of agreement now between Socrates and Callicles *in certain points*—I mean, where the judgment of an ordinary, sensible Athenian citizen would be in entire agreement with what Socrates says. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “And what of his father Meles? Did he ever strike you as looking to what was best in his minstrelsy? Or did he, perhaps, not even make the pleasantest his aim? For his singing used to be a pain to the audience.” (502a)

LS: That is not uninteresting, that some people are so poor that not only do they not improve their audience, they even annoy them and pain them. So in other words, if we have to choose pleasure, we should then choose the more pleasant artists. Yes, good.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “But consider now: do you not think that all minstrelsy and composing of dithyrambs have been invented for the sake of pleasure?”

Call.: “I do.”

Soc.: “Then what of the purpose that has inspired our stately and wonderful tragic poetry? Are her endeavour and purpose, to your mind, merely for the gratification of the spectators, or does she strive hard, if there be anything pleasant and gratifying, but bad for them, to leave that unsaid, and if there be anything unpleasant, but beneficial, both to speak and sing that, whether they enjoy it or not? To which of these two aims, think you, is tragic poetry devoted?”

Call.: “It is quite obvious, in her case, Socrates, that she is bent rather upon pleasure and the gratification of the spectators.” (502a–b)

LS: So you see again the spontaneous “Socrates.” Now he is at one with Socrates, as it were. Now Socrates discusses here those pursuits which aim only at pleasure and¹⁴ wholly disregard the good. And to our great surprise he doesn’t mention rhetoric here, but he mentions, let us say, poetry, music. He does not mention also, sophistry, the other thing which he has mentioned. But why does he not mention sophistry? That is a special case. Yes?

Student: Sophistry doesn’t have to please.

LS: No, no, that’s not the point. That was said to please, according to the argument toward Polus. It was said sophistry is also concerned with pleasing only. No, because the

sophist as sophist instructs privately, does not address multitudes. And therefore sophistry is omitted. Now, he mentions here seven things. Yes?

Student:

LS: Ya, I know your objection, it's frequently made. Dodds makes the following remark which I thought I should read to you: "The modern reader may well be startled to find Plato speaking of Attic tragedy in the terms now that a bishop might use in discussing the dangers of commercial television."^{vii} [Laughter] But I think [one] could even say that there were, I suppose, some bishops—and I hope there still are some—who would make the same remarks about poetry. That is possible. Before we take this up, let us first try to understand it in itself. Now, there are seven items. And one thing we must always do in Plato: count. You know, Plato is said to have said no one who has not studied mathematics may enter his academy, and the simplest part of mathematics is simple counting, of course. Now counting here means stupidly counting. If the same item occurs twice, it will be counted twice. Now, let us count: Flute-playing, harp-playing in contests, choruses, dithyrambs, all harp-playing, i.e., not only in contests, again dithyrambs, and seventh, tragedy. He begins with flute-playing, an art or seeming art without speech, as you can easily see that it is impossible to play a flute and speak at the same time, as impossible as to drink and sing literally at the same time. That is important. So this is a silent art—although in another sense it's of course not silent—and, in addition, as the old commentator Olympiodorus says, an art which can influence also irrational animals.^{viii} They are not affected by tragedies, but they are affected by this simple shepherd's music. And of these seven items which he mentions, in the center is dithyrambs. Now why does he put that in the center? I consult the other Platonic dialogues. In the *Republic* 394c, dithyrambs are used as the example, the sole example, of non-dialogic poetry. Drama is of course dialogic. [Dithyrambs are] non-dialogic poetry. In other words, it is a particular kind of lyrical poetry. And in *Laws* 700b, it is called the work of Dionysus, the god of wine. This is quite interesting, because Dionysus can be said to be abstracted from both in the *Republic* and in the *Gorgias*, and perhaps that is¹⁵ [one] of the keys to the work, because there is an art of viticulture, an art called so by Plato elsewhere, which produces wine. Now what is the function of wine drinking? Of course, it can be used for medicinal purposes, but this is (how shall I say it?) not the most natural use of wine. If it has to be done, ya, but then one drinks wine as one would take a pill, you know. We drink wine, we use wine, for our enjoyment, without any question. The wine gladdens men's hearts, as the Psalmist says.^{ix} And that's pleasure. So the art of viticulture is surely one art which is in the service of pleasure. This doesn't mean that it must be used in the service of the dissolute life; that is a different proposition. Aristotle at the end of the *Politics* condemns the dithyramb as orgiastic; that is also perhaps not uninteresting.^x So you see, you would also see, that first he qualifies the harp-playing and dithyrambs to be rejected, but then the qualifications are dropped when they are repeated. Yes. You see also, when he speaks of tragedy, which is of course by far the gravest case,

^{vii} Dodds, 320.

^{viii} Olympiodorus, Lecture 33.

^{ix} Psalms 104:15.

^x *Politics* 1342b1–12.

as we were reminded—we have to think not only of Euripides, who has been quoted here more than once, but Aeschylus and Sophocles, too: How can a man in his senses say that about the *Antigone*? That's just incorrect. At first glance, you are absolutely right, absolutely right. Now here in this connection, what does he say about the non-flattery? Let us read again the section on tragedy.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc: “Then what of the purpose that has inspired our stately and wonderful tragic poetry? Are her endeavour and purpose, to your mind, merely for the gratification of the spectators, or does she strive hard, if there be anything pleasant and gratifying, but bad for them, to leave that unsaid, and if there be anything unpleasant, but beneficial, both to speak and sing that, whether they enjoy it or not?” (502b)

LS: In other words, a good poetry, if there is one, or a good rhetoric, would not be frank—or, to use a favorite expression of our age, it would not be sincere—because it would conceal the pleasant as a vice, whereas Plato, or Socrates, says that poets, especially the tragic poets, do not do that. In order to prepare an answer, let us read a somewhat later passage. No, let us continue and discuss it in detail next time. Read from where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc: “Well now, that kind of thing, Calicles, did we say just now, is flattery?”

Call.: “Certainly.”

Soc.: “Pray then, if we strip any kind of poetry of its melody, its rhythm and its metre, we get mere speeches as the residue, do we not?”

Call.: “That must be so.”

Soc.: “And those speeches are spoken to a great crowd of people?”

Call.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “Hence poetry is a kind of public speaking.” (502c)

LS: Ya, “of rhetoric.” No, “public speaking,” all right. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “Apparently.”

Soc.: “Then it must be a rhetorical public speaking; or do you not think that the poets use rhetoric in the theaters?” (502d)

LS: So, in other words, you see, what he meant all the time when speaking of poetry was of course rhetoric in general, of which poetry appears here to be a part. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc: “So now we have found a kind of rhetoric addressed to such a public as is compounded of children and women and men, and slaves as well as free; an art that we do not quite approve of, since we call it

a flattering one.”

Call.: “To be sure.”

Soc.: “Very well; but now, the rhetoric addressed to the Athenian people—” (502d)

LS: Ya, “to the *demos*”—I mean, that is to say, in a political capacity. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “or to the other assemblies of freemen in the various cities—what can we make of that?” (501e)

LS: Now, here you have it, why rhetoric is higher than poetry. Rhetoric addresses only free men, grown up men, citizens, whereas poetry addresses an indiscriminate crowd consisting of men and women, grown-ups and children, free men and slaves. Therefore rhetoric is higher. You see, Plato can be very nasty. That is the¹⁶ [reason] why, as I mentioned before in my introduction to today’s lecture, the overall impression that you get when you look at the work of Plato [is] that rhetoric has a better fate than poetry. While rhetoric is, as it seems, debunked in the *Gorgias*, it is rehabilitated and more than rehabilitated, in the *Phaedrus*. There is no rehabilitation of poetry equally visible anywhere else. And the reason is here stated. It is of course an extremely crude reason, as most of us would say—all of us, as a matter of fact. But still, there is something to that. What is the highest art or knowledge, according to Plato? Philosophy. Now, whom does philosophy as philosophy address? We got an inkling here when Socrates gave a description of the conditions men must fulfill in order to engage properly in a philosophic discussion. You remember? Knowledge, and some other qualities too, were mentioned there. Now philosophy, in other words, addresses only a small part of the *demos*; rhetoric addresses the *demos*; poetry addresses indiscriminately all human beings. It’s a clear hierarchy in that sense. But to come back to the question: How can we understand Plato’s apparently atrocious judgment of poetry? How can we understand that? We have one sure starting-point. For Plato, the highest human pursuit is philosophy, and we can understand his judgment on poetry only if we remember the supremacy of philosophy. Yes?

Student: Isn’t poetry more of a rival to philosophy than rhetoric is? I mean, a poet as poet claims to have certain insights.

LS: Yes, that is very true. But still, if we take literally what you say, it means that there was a kind of vulgar rivalry between Plato and, say, Sophocles, and he wanted to get at his enemy.

Same student: No . . . the poet also, even if he does accidentally, you might say, hit the truth every once in a while, he can’t explain why what he says is true, whereas the philosopher has a detailed knowledge of what he claims.

LS: Well, this is of course a long question, whether such people like Euripides or Shakespeare could not have given articulate accounts of what they meant, say, by *Hamlet* or *The Tempest* or whichever you take. That we do not know; they did not deign to write

such books. But one could say a man who could write these plays was surely able articulately to say, for example, why he choose this subject matter, Hamlet, and why he made these and these deviations from the old accounts in—I forgot now the name of the source which he used; you know, there was a source for *Hamlet*—and why he deviated with this change, added this, subtracted that. I have no doubt that they can do that. In other words, I don't believe that this notion which Plato sometimes presents, that the poets are simply vessels of inspiration by the Muses and they don't know what they do, is true and even is meant to be true by Plato. Yes?

Student: . . . Plato's view of poetry by saying that insofar as poetry is said to be rhetoric, doesn't the philosopher also need poetry?

LS: Sure, well, there is no doubt about that. But we must first try to understand Plato's critique of poetry in order to see why, or even whether, the philosopher needs poetry. Yes?

Student: Isn't it true that the subjects which excite a poet are antithetical to the type of life that leads to philosophy? How shall I say it? The fight over the Crown of England excites Shakespeare, whereas sitting around thinking about the forms excites Plato

LS: Ya, but must a man who presents these exciting stories¹⁷ [about] Lancaster and York not think about civil society and war and peace in the way in which a philosopher must think about it? Miss Venning?

Miss Venning: Isn't his point, though, that poets mainly engage with emotion and feelings, whereas philosophy engages with knowledge and beauty?

LS: Yes, but do the poets not go beyond that? I mean, must you not—

Miss Venning: Oh yeah, but does the message he carries?

LS: Ya, but that is also a question. I mean, when you have been shaken by a great work of art, then I think the true understanding begins afterward. And not only of the techniques used by the poet, which would be the least interesting thing, but of what this "shaking" implies.

Miss Venning: Yes, I agree with you. But I don't see any indications of . . . in Plato's critique of poetry

LS: Well, there are some things to this effect somewhere in the Second Book of the *Laws*. But I would take a much broader view; and let us take the most extreme statement of Plato against poetry, and that occurs in the Tenth Book of the *Republic*. It goes much beyond what we read here and what we read in the Second and Third Books of the *Republic*. Now what does he say there?

Miss Venning: He says there

LS: No, that is not the theme of Book 10.

Miss Venning: Oh.

LS: That is the theme of Book 2 and 3. No. But what he does there is this. He makes the following tripartition. The truth, the true thing—and that he calls the idea, say, the idea of a bed, that is one of the examples he uses—this of course is the object of the philosopher. And then there is what we in our folly call the true bed, that which the carpenter makes; so, the carpenter[’s] bed, this is a visible bed, but a true bed. And then we find someone who paints a bed, the painter, and you cannot even rest on that bed which he paints. And therefore the art of the carpenter (or for that matter of the shoemaker, because as you know one can also paint shoes, although I believe the Greeks didn’t do it but some modern painters did) and then you have, let’s say, the “imitating artist,” whether that is painting or music or poetry, it doesn’t make a fundamental difference.

Miss Venning: Poetry is

LS: Ya, but here it is an imitation of an imitation, and therefore it is very low. The ordinary arts, which are very humble and unpretentious, are infinitely higher than these arts of Sophocles and Pindar and Phidias. That’s what he says. Yes?

Student: The depreciation of poetry by Plato would seem to be connected with the depreciation of what Aristotle called moral virtue as vulgar virtue.

LS: Ya—no, let me continue here. That subject comes in somehow, but not perhaps in exactly the way in which you say it. Good. Now, the question is: This is obviously, at first, clearly nonsense, that the poets are imitators of imitators; from which point of view can it appear to make some sense? Then we would have first to identify the artisans or artists whom the poets imitate. Whom do the poets imitate? Now, of course, human artists. But we have already a precise formulation of the question: Which artists or artisans do they imitate? The greatest enemy of Plato that ever was was Nietzsche, and Nietzsche says more than once [that] the poets have always been the valets of a morality. That is exactly what Plato means. The artists or artisans whom the poets imitate are the legislators, legislators now in the full sense and not in the narrow sense in which we use it today, those who set up the “values” of a society. All poets mold what they present on these things. When Homer presents the heroic Achilles, and on the other hand Odysseus, he follows standards of on the one hand, this Achillean kind of heroism, and then of the very different kind of Odyssean heroism which were accepted by decent Greek nobility, and that is that. Now the implication is this: What the legislators, in this radical sense, set up is narrow, is only one view, a one-sided view peculiar to this particular society, and in addition not the highest view. What is the simple proof? Is there any tragedy ever, in which a philosopher is presented? A wise man? Is there any? Do you know of any in which a wise man is presented?

Student: *Faust.*

LS: Faust is not a wise man, see what he does! [Laughter] I mean, he is a professor, but dissatisfied. He believes¹⁸ [he is] wise. He says, “I have studied everything.” That’s not wisdom. He learns the rudiments of wisdom the very hard way, at the end of the book, you know.

Student: Teiresias is a seer.

LS: Ya, but still that is a kind of wisdom, but then I would have you refer to Father Vaughan and what Vico says about this kind of wisdom.^{xi} Surely Teiresias is a relatively wise man, but only that. Prometheus is, of course, not wise. You only have to read the *Prometheus* to see that he is not wise. He is a great inventor, sure—almost a man who could have built an atomic bomb if technology had been advanced. But as he shows in the play itself, he is very soft-hearted and completely unable to withstand these soft-hearted things, instead of acting truly wisely. Yes?

Student: I’m thinking of comedies, but not of tragedies.

LS: Ah, that’s a different story. But incidentally, there is one great case of a presentation of a wise man, but it is not a tragedy. Ya, I think it would have to be called a comedy, although it doesn’t look like a comedy. And that is Shakespeare’s *Tempest*. Prospero is a wise man; there’s no question. But that is not a tragedy. But Shakespeare is also a modern poet, not a classical poet. In comedy they occur, and naturally so because, to take the famous story of the first philosopher, Thales, who studied the stars and fell in a ditch—now that’s extremely funny, isn’t it? [Laughter] Philosophers are funny people in this sense. But you must also admit [that] in a comedy, the virtue of the philosophers doesn’t come out, only the side from which they are legitimate objects of laughter. In brief, the poets cannot present the highest human possibility, and therefore what do they present? They present all ways of life except the highest—say, the hero, the lover, and so on—i.e., they present ways of life which either have no way out (tragedy) or an inept way out (comedy). Simply stated, this kind of poetry—what we call poetry—would have to be called from Plato’s point of view autonomous poetry. Autonomous poetry believes that the non-philosophic life is self-sufficient, autonomous. If this is untrue, that the non-philosophic life [is autonomous],¹⁹ then the only kind of poetry which is good is ministerial poetry, poetry which serves philosophy, poetry which presents the philosophic life. And that is, of course, the Platonic dialogue. These are works of art. Even externally, you see that they have something in common with tragedies or with comedies. But they are in prose; these questionable adornments and charms—meter, and so on—are scrupulously avoided. So I think Plato expresses in a shocking manner, surely shocking, something which is not shocking at all. That Plato had a very high admiration especially for Homer appears from very clear utterances which Socrates makes in his comments. And of course I would assume this: that Socrates probably admires Euripides more than Aeschylus and Sophocles. There is some external evidence for this view, and that is not so easy for us to understand because for us, on the whole, Aeschylus and Sophocles are

^{xi} Rev. Lawrence J. Vaughan (1863–1908) was an American Catholic priest and popular lecturer who wrote a series of “Sermons from Shakespeare.”

more impressive than Euripides is. But this is a long story. Yes?

Student: I still feel that basically he didn't understand the nature of art. I mean, anyone that says that art is only good if it is useful I really think is going to sound a lot like Russian art today.

LS: Like what art?

Same student: Russian art, in the Soviet Union, where—

LS: Ya, but the trouble is that Khrushchev's sights, or Stalin's sights, or Lenin's sights for that matter, or Marx's sights, were not high enough. That is what Plato does provisionally in the Second and Third book of the *Republic*, where he judges poetry from the point of view of the needs of a good city. Ya? But this he leaves far behind in the Tenth Book, where he judges poetry from the point of view of philosophy. By the way, the first consideration—considering art from the point of view of city or morality (that, for Plato, is the same thing)—is of course not a wholly arbitrary and unnecessary thing. By no means. I mean, the kind of things which are offered to you today frequently, which give a very powerful presentation of emotions, they're powerful—I don't wish to mention any names, but I have read some of these things. But one must also say: [they are] very narrow men, very narrow men. They know—they are the slaves of these kind of passions, with which one can have compassion. They can even incite, possibly, to plausible social action. I would even not [refuse to] admit that. But I wouldn't sit at the feet of these men, and I would not advise any congressmen to sit at their feet.

Student: Yeah, but suppose someone saw *Oedipus Rex*, for example, might not

LS: Oh, there is no question Plato would admit that. Plato goes even further. One has to read him more carefully. One has also to read the *Laws*, where this same problem is discussed in the Second Book, and in some respects more fully than in the Second and Third Books of the *Republic*. Now one can state Plato's view as follows. On the one hand, the poets have to remain within the limits of decency. Absolutely. I suggested when this question of (how is this called?) obscenities in present day poetry [arose], I suggested to a friend of mine who is a public lawyer that he should try to convince the nine Supreme Court judges, the men set by the United States for the purpose of solving difficult questions, not easy questions, how to draw the line by having a summer seminar on the Shakespearean plays—in which there are some obscenities, as you know. But simply consider the quantitative relation of the obscene passages to the non-obscene passages. That would be of some help perhaps for forming their judgments. In other words, one doesn't have to take the most narrow Victorian view, although very many great things were done in times of very strict rules, like French classical poetry, both comedy and tragedy. But I grant [that] that is perhaps a somewhat narrow circumscription. But there are some limits, I would guess, and Plato has reminded us of these limits more severely than any other philosopher. That's one thing.

But the other point. Now in addition, Plato never meant, in these passages which

foreshadow Racine or Molière, the classicists. He never, of course, suggested edifying trash. He makes it perfectly clear that these poems which have to come in his best city must be *poetic*. And the quality of decency is not identical with the quality of poetic. He makes this a hundred percent clear, number one. Number two, what he says is this: but being decent means, exactly to that extent, obey the legislator. Not in the sense of what this particular Congress says now, you know? Remain within the highest values of the society, as they would call it today, and always be mindful of them. And never write something which, one could say, conveys the message that life is gutter, which can easily be done by a sufficiently gifted and clever man, without making clear that you cannot sense that life is gutter if you have not sensed in the first place purity. You cannot, as it were, feel the stench if you have not felt in the first place fresh air. Now if a so-called poet gives us gutter without giving us that which he must have had in order to sense the gutter, then he is most insincere, because he suppresses his fundamental insight which is the bottom of everything else.

There was the famous case of *Madame Bovary*, a hundred years ago, or roughly a hundred years ago, a story of adultery with all kinds of scenes which one should surely not show to children. There was a trial, and Flaubert was of course a somewhat different man than some novelists of our age, and Flaubert had one very sensible excuse which would be sufficient for public morality: he showed the terrible misery of Madame Bovary. Surely that was not his only purpose; he wanted to show more than that. But there was no recommendation in any way of adultery. That does make, I believe, a difference. And also when Shakespeare presents grave political crimes, none of these plays can be construed as a recommendation of these political crimes. I believe that is the reason why I was so pleased when I came to this country and when I saw these simple Western movies. They surely they are not high art. But one thing which was in Shakespeare: Where in Shakespeare does the criminal ever have the last word? There is always a victory of the decent cause. This thing is, I believe, completely forgotten.

You know, our approach to so-called art is abstract, because we forget the context in which it appears. And whatever must be said against the Communists—*many things* have to be said against them—in a way they're [right]. Have you ever read the critique they made of Pasternak, of Pasternak's book?^{xii} I happened to read that. I believe these were crooks who wrote these critiques—you know, just low class fellows. But the arguments which they have regarding a crucial point is such that Pasternak would be unable to answer it, because of the isolation of art from its *function*, as they say today, from the whole within which art exists. I believe one must be reminded of this. That Plato's statement about art is atrocious is true, but I can only add it is atrocious in his own eyes. He wants to make clear that there is an either/or. If poetry occupies the highest place, then philosophy can at best occupy the second highest place, and that is a perversion. The true order is the opposite. And this does not mean that professors of philosophy should get higher salaries than authors of poetry. I hope that you don't misunderstand me in this way, because a professor of philosophy is not a philosopher of course—I mean, not as such. That should be clear.

^{xii} Boris Pasternak (1890–1960), Russian poet and novelist. His *Doctor Zhivago* was banned in the Soviet Union but received international acclaim.

Now to come back to one point. When Plato says that the poet must listen to the legislator, he also makes clear that the legislator must listen to the poet. Who makes clear the character of the emotions and the full force of them, their attractiveness, their dangerous attractiveness? Of course the poet. So the legislator who has not learned from the poets will be a poor legislator. That is also in Plato, but it is not as clearly visible as the other thing is. Plato discusses somewhere—in the Sixth or Seventh Book, no, Sixth Book, I believe, of the *Laws*—²⁰the subject of funerals, a subject which is with us, as you know, in a different way. But at that time it was not a funeral, interestingly, but the simple thing that rich people were very much concerned with having wonderful tombstones and the poor tried to keep up with the Joneses—this kind of thing. And Plato describes that in a somewhat comical manner, how the legislator should regulate that. And in this context he brings up, say, a widow, a rich widow, and then a poor man, as presented by the poet. The poet, presenting these people and their feelings and their whole circumstances, will make the legislator see better what would be the proper regulation of this relatively minor subject of legislation. I mean, in other words, it is always dangerous to underestimate the intelligence and the breadth of Plato. Plato, this poet of the first order, could afford to say things against poetry which no lesser man could afford. But I think we all should be grateful to him that having this immense privilege, he employed it for counteracting a charm which can be very dangerous. One does not have to fear that philosophy will ever exercise such a charm, because philosophy does not have this kind of charm—I mean, then it is no longer philosophy; then it is a kind of propaganda. But poetry does have this charm. And²¹ the greatest poets will be misunderstood, I believe, if one does not remember that which Plato told us. And first one must go to the simple stage of simple-mindedness which, especially in the Second and Third Book of the *Republic*, presents to us decent poetry, period—no indecent poetry. And then when you go over the great literature of the past—I know that there are certain great works which are from no point of view decent. Think of Rabelais, or of Aristophanes. But it is very interesting: these are then also books written for laughing. They are not written for seduction. That's a great difference. So this—I think it was good that we had this out. [Laughter] I believe it is now rather late. Oh yes. Well, next time we will—

[end of tape]

ENDNOTES TO SESSION ELEVEN

¹ Deleted “Callicles.”

² Moved “even.”

³ Deleted “of.”

⁴ Deleted “ya, no.”

⁵ Deleted “are.”

⁶ Deleted “and.”

⁷ Deleted “Let me finish this, and I’ll answer it. Good.”

⁸ Moved “not only.”

⁹ Deleted “pleasant.”

¹⁰ Moved “used for cooking here.”

- 11 Moved "such."
- 12 Deleted "Student: inaudible words." LS: Pardon?"
- 13 Deleted "the."
- 14 Deleted "are."
- 15 Deleted "some."
- 16 Deleted "point."
- 17 Deleted "between."
- 18 Deleted "to be."
- 19 Deleted "and that is the premise of that."
- 20 Deleted "when he discusses."
- 21 Deleted "I think."

Session 12: no date

Leo Strauss: Now we are still concerned with Callicles. Callicles, I said, is on the one hand, closer to Socrates than Polus and Gorgias, but on the other hand, he is more remote from Socrates than the two rhetoricians. He is closer to Socrates because he is also an erotic man, which we may interpret [as] a passionate man, serious; whereas Polus and Gorgias are in a way shilly–shallying—mere gratification of the ear, play. That passion makes him more radical philosophically in his statements than the two rhetoricians were. It is Callicles who brings up the subject of *physis*, nature, and the distinction and even opposition between nature and convention. On the other hand, however, Callicles is more remote from Socrates than the two rhetoricians are because he is less a friend of *logos*, of speech, argument, than Polus and Gorgias. Without Gorgias' intervention, as we have seen, the conversation between Socrates and Callicles would have come to an end a long time ago. This intervention and its success shows indeed that Callicles has a certain respect for *logos*. Callicles the politician needs rhetoric, Gorgias' kind of rhetoric, but of course as ministerial to his, the politician's, ends, not as the greatest good, as Gorgias—

[interruption in the tape]

—the highest point to which the conversation between Socrates and Callicles has reached hitherto concerns the relation of the good and the pleasant. Socrates makes it plausible that the good is fundamentally different from the pleasant and superior to it. He does not convince Callicles, however. The consequence of the distinction of the good and the pleasant is the distinction between art and flattery, flattery being the human pursuits directed only toward the pleasant. And the example which we have seen again: medicine is an art, pastry cooking (I found out this is the word which they use for this more subtle cooking) is a flattery. Now this coordination of the distinction between the good and the pleasant with the distinction between art and flattery presupposes two things: First, that there cannot be arts directed toward pleasures, and second, that there cannot be arts which aim simultaneously at a specific good and at a pleasure, a specific pleasure, necessarily going with that good. In the long speech which Socrates had addressed to Polus, the analogon to medicine on the one hand, and pastry cooking on the other regarding the soul had been justice, in the sense of punitive justice, and rhetoric. We have to see: Is Socrates going to repeat this in the Callicles section? Last time, we have seen only this much, that the analogon to pastry cooking is poetry and music. On the other hand, the core of poetry has proved to be rhetoric.

So we are on our way toward the restatement of what had been said in the Polus section. I hope you remember all these proportions which Socrates stated there, because otherwise it is not possible to follow the argument, and especially the windings of the argument. Now perhaps I'll put it here again on the blackboard. [LS writes on the blackboard.] Body and soul, gymnastics and medicine. Gymnastics builds up the body and medicine restores the body after it has been defective. And correspondingly here, the legislative art and what there it is called justice, but which has always here the limited meaning of

punitive justice. And now the flatteries: to gymnastics is cosmetics, and to medicine is pastry cooking, and to the legislative art is sophistry, and to justice is rhetoric. I hope—I don't believe that you can read it—but these things which I made here are sufficient to remind you of something which you probably know by heart by now.

Now let us then go on where we left off last time, 502b9. I think that is in this long speech of Socrates which we have already read. No, this cannot be correct. No, we have read that already. The core of poetry, it was said—it is [at] 502b9 [that] we should begin, where Callicles says in reply to Socrates, “This much is manifest, Socrates, that tragedy is directed to a higher degree toward pleasure and to gratification of the spectators.” I have mentioned the fact that here and in the preceding speech in 502a Callicles addresses Socrates by name. This is a considerable change in the conversational situation. We have discussed that. Now let us go on from this point. Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken: We have, I think, been all the way up to 502e2

LS: You are right. We can also leave it at a summary. What Socrates shows then, in the immediate sequel, is that the core of poetry consists of speeches, and not of the musical and other things, stage directions, etc.—of speeches which are addressed to a large crowd or *demos*. Poetry is, then, nothing but public rhetoric. Here we have another remark by our commentator which I believe is of some interest. Here he notes this: “The idea did not originate with Plato: Gorgias [the historical Gorgias] had already said, ‘I believe that the whole poetry is metric speech, speech in metre.’”ⁱ So, good. It is also made clear by implication here that the status of rhetoric is, hitherto at least, not lower than that of tragedy, and tragedy, you must never forget, had a very high prestige, especially in Athens. But this will be changed very soon. Now let us begin at d5.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc: “Very well; but now, the rhetoric addressed to the Athenian people, or to the other assemblies of freemen in the various cities—what can we make of that? Do the orators strike you as speaking always with a view to what is best, with the single aim of making the citizens as good as possible by their speeches, or are they, like the poets, set on gratifying the citizens, and do they, sacrificing the common weal to their own personal interest, behave to these assemblies as to children, trying merely to gratify them, nor care a jot about whether they will be better or worse in consequence?” (502d–e)

LS: Yes. Now rhetoric proper (this was said in the preceding speech, which we have already read last time), being addressed to free men only and not also to women and children and slaves, is higher than poetry.¹ After we were led to believe that rhetoric and poetry have more or less the same status, we come now to the view that rhetoric is superior to poetry because it is addressed to a select audience, whereas poetry is directed toward all. Now here then, in the speech which Mr. Reinken now read, the status of political rhetoric is under consideration, and here a new point of view occurs which has

ⁱ Dodds, 325. The quotation here is from Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen*, 9. Strauss's translation; Dodds keeps the line in the original Greek.

not been mentioned before. The question is not only whether rhetoric is directed toward the good or the pleasant, the good or the pleasure of the citizen, but also whether it is directed toward private gain of the orators or to the common good. Now the alternatives would be [these]: First, there might be a rhetoric directed toward the common good alone, in contradistinction to the private good of the orators as well as to common or private pleasure; and, secondly, a rhetoric which pleases the *demos*, wants to gratify the *demos* not for selfish reasons, but out of sheer love for the *demos*. After all, that is thinkable. Just as in private life a lover might wish to gratify his beloved unselfishly, so to speak, without being concerned with his or her well being, why should this not be possible in rhetoric as well? This enlarges the problem of rhetoric considerably. Good. Now let us read Callicles' reply.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: "This question of yours is not quite so simple; for there are some who have a regard for the citizens in the words they utter, while there are also others of the sort that you mention." (503a)

LS: Now we have again a sincere answer of Callicles. He replies here not merely for the sake of Gorgias, because Socrates has now touched on a point which is of vital interest to Callicles. Callicles takes now the side of the decent, public-spirited orator, contrary to what he had implied in his long speech, which surely you remember, about the true hombre, real man. Now Callicles contradicts himself by taking here this relatively noble view, this relatively unselfish view. But what is the ground of the contradiction? Public spiritedness means here in this case concern with the good of the city of Athens, and of course with the city of Athens ordered democratically. It means, therefore, love for the Athenian *demos*, i.e., collective selfishness: "right or wrong, my *demos*; right or wrong, my country." Yes. Now once you admit the legitimacy of collective selfishness, there is no reason why you should not go on from there to admitting the legitimacy of private selfishness. Something doesn't become better by being more widely spread. And therefore (the problem is stated very clearly in Thucydides) the tyrant city Athens, the imperialistic city, and this leads to the tyrannical individual in Athens, like Alcibiades, or for that matter the ancient Athenian tyrants. You see also the self-contradiction of Callicles when he spoke first of all desires, [saying they] should be gratified, and then only those desires which a gentleman may avow. And furthermore, *eros* for the *demos* and contempt for the *demos*, as is indicated by his admiration for the superior individual. You see that Callicles doesn't speak here of making the citizens better, as Socrates had said, nor on the other hand, of exploiting the citizens for one's own benefit as would seem to be Callicles' desire, but of caring for them. This caring is a kind of intermediate position which conceals the difficulty and the ultimate contradiction. So it is perfectly possible to give a picture of Callicles as a normal Athenian citizen, as we have seen when he said, for example, [in] his first statement, the better people should rule and should have more. This can mean simply that the most intelligent and most energetic citizens should rule and have more honors than the others, which is a perfectly defensible position. It can also mean that those in possession of political power by virtue of their virtue should also be the wealthier people which, while not a very lofty view, is still a politically defensible view, at least in earlier times. So Callicles' view has a certain

plausibility, but the plausibility conceals a contradiction. And if you analyze his position, you arrive, on the one hand, at the extreme Socratic view and, on the other hand, at that extreme view which Callicles had stated at the very beginning.

One point to which I alluded in passing. The public-spiritedness means devotion to Athens, and it means here in this particular situation devotion to the Athenian democracy. Now what is the relation between the devotion to Athens and the loyalty to or devotion to democratic Athens? Well, I referred to the famous saying, "Right or wrong, my country." The country of which we speak in political contexts is never the bare country. For example, today, what does loyalty to this country, to the United States, mean? Of course, loyalty to the Constitution. A communist or fascist might claim that he is loyal to the United States and to the people of the United States—he cares for them—and therefore wishes to transform the United States into either a communist or a fascist regime. But this would never be regarded today as loyalty. Loyalty is always loyalty to the country politically ordered, not to the bare country. I trust that this is clear. There are sometimes loyalty discussions which do not make clear this complication. That is, one can say the essence of politics—that whenever we find a political community, it is always a political community made what it is by the regime which it has. In the language of Aristotle, the mere matter, the *hyle*—the country, the rivers, even the people as people, without any specification—this is only the matter. It becomes a regime by the form. The form is the constitution, the regime, i. e., as they say today, the values. There is no regime which does not have a certain specific end to which it is dedicated. This is what they mean now by values. This is not here the theme, but it is always taken for granted and, since democracy is in a way under discussion here, we must think of it all the time. Good. Now what does Socrates reply to that?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "That is enough for me. For if this thing also is twofold, one part of it, I presume, will be flattery and a base mob-oratory, while the other is noble—the endeavor, that is, to make the citizens' souls as good as possible, and the persistent effort to say what is best, whether it prove more or less pleasant to one's hearers. But this is a rhetoric you never yet saw; or if you have any orator of this kind that you can mention, without more ado let me know who he is!" (503a–b)

LS: Yes. Now what is said here, that the right kind of orator will be concerned that the souls of the citizens be as good as possible, this is surely familiar to many of you from the beginning of Aristotle's *Ethics*, when he speaks of what the task of the true statesman is. There is no difference in this respect between Plato and Aristotle. Socrates admits now for the first time that there can be a noble rhetoric, a rhetoric which is an art. But this noble rhetoric does not exist. More precisely, it does not *yet* exist. It exists to some extent in Socrates, but nowhere else; that will become clear later on. When he said at the beginning that "this, too, is twofold," and not simple, when Callicles had said, "this is not simple what you ask," why does he say, "this, *too*, is twofold"? Could this not also apply to poetry, of which we had spoken shortly before: that there is also another kind of poetry, a poetry which is not "theatrical"—theatrical in the literal sense, presented to

indiscriminate multitudes? Theoretically possible, it would seem. Good. Now let us go on where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “No, upon my word, I cannot tell you of anyone, at least among the orators of today.”

Soc.: “Well then, can you mention one among those of older times who has brought the Athenians into repute for any betterment that started at the time of his first harangues, as a change from the worse state in which he originally found them? For my part, I have no idea who the man is.”

Call.: “Why, do you hear no mention of Themistocles and what a good man he was, and Cimon and Miltiades and the great Pericles, who has died recently, and whom you have listened to yourself?”
(503b–c)

LS: Socrates had mentioned, you will remember, on an earlier occasion that he still had heard Pericles speaking. Now, Socrates denies that there is or was a good Athenian orator, i.e., an orator who made the Athenians better, at any time. But here, the four great statesmen. And Socrates is now confronted with a most unpleasant task: to debunk these glories of Athens. Socrates and Callicles now agree as to the necessity of the noble rhetoric; this is the basis of this disagreement. Callicles says now, “These were orators who were not concerned with their private gain and not merely with gratifying the Athenians.” Noble rhetoric has in one way the same ground as base rhetoric: The overwhelming strength of the many, which we have seen—that Socrates used that as an argument against Callicles at the beginning of the criticism of Callicles, you remember that? When he said that if the stronger are the better, then surely the many are the better. you remember that? They are surely the stronger. Given the overwhelming strength of the *demos*, they cannot be ruled by coercion, but only by speech. So we need rhetoric, and the question is then: What kind of rhetoric? Callicles enumerates here four statesmen: Themistocles, Cimon, Miltiades, and Pericles. On the whole, this follows the chronological order, except Miltiades—he’s in the wrong place. It seems that, when he² [began], Themistocles, Cimon, Pericles would be the proper order, and after having mentioned Cimon, he reminded himself of Cimon’s father, Miltiades, with the consequence that he makes the son precede the father, whatever that may mean. One thing, however, is clear: the first and the last were leaders of the democracy, and those in the center leaders of the wealthy group, the oligarchs. Yes. So Socrates’ immediate task is now cut out for him. What about these four glories of Athens? Were they true statesmen or were they also fakes? Nothing less than that is involved. You can imagine what such a statement meant, [or] means at any time. Now how do we go on from here?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Yes, Callicles, if that which you spoke of just now is true virtue—the satisfaction of one’s own and other men’s desires—” (503c)

LS: In other words, in that case, if this is virtue, then there would have been great

statesmen. Ya?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “but if that is not so, and the truth is—as we were compelled to admit in the subsequent discussion—that only those desires which make man better by their satisfaction should be fulfilled, but those which make him worse should not, and that this is a special art, then I for one cannot tell you of any man so skilled having appeared among them.” (503c–d)

LS: Yes. So the alternative is clear: either indiscriminate satisfaction of desires (then there were statesmen) or not indiscriminate satisfaction of desires (then there were not statesmen). In the first case, Socrates spoke of virtue: “if this is virtue.” In the second case, he speaks of *technē*, or art, not of virtue. Why? What is the meaning of that distinction here? After all, virtue and art are not, apparently, the same. Why does he use in the first case the expression “virtue,” and in the second case the expression “art”? Well, virtue can have the loose meaning of any excellence, without it necessarily implying knowledge. The Socratic understanding of virtue implies, necessarily, knowledge. Therefore he speaks in the second case of art and not of virtue, to make quite clear the intellectual, cognitive element. These men were virtuous, excellent, surely—in a sense, quite obviously. But did they possess that kind of virtue which is essentially knowledge? And Socrates says no. But someone raised his hand there. Yes?

Student:

LS: What does “future” mean here? I mean, this notion that you have to think of, an indefinite future, that was not a part even of Socrates’ understanding of wise statesmanship. You know? I mean, you always have to act on the basis of what you know and what you can know now. Or what do you mean?

Same student: Yeah, well

LS: Ya, well, Socrates discusses that elsewhere in the *Laws*, in which he claims that the true defeat of the Persians was achieved by the land forces, i.e., by Miltiades rather than by Themistocles. We cannot go into that. Let us leave it here at the statement of the question: Are the admittedly greatest Athenian statesmen true statesmen, or are they a kind of fake? That’s the question. And it depends on the fundamental distinction of the good and the pleasant, and its implications as stated before. You see here that Socrates, at the beginning of this speech, when he said “what you, Callicles, said before,”³ asserts that Callicles meant from the very beginning that the ruler must satisfy not only his own desires but also the desires of the ruled. This contradicts, of course, the first impression everyone gets when reading Callicles’ speech, where there is only the right of the stronger and the weaker or the many are simply an object for the exploitation of the stronger. But Socrates knew quite well that this was an extreme statement of the one side in Callicles. And being about to enter Athenian politics,⁴ [Callicles] also had to have this other view. How Callicles solved his contradiction is another matter. He of course never solved it, and we know why: because he would regard it as a disgraceful act of

unmanliness to retract anything he asserts, as we have seen before. Let us go on here.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “Ah, but if you search properly you will find one.”

Soc.: “Then let us just consider the matter calmly, and see if any of them has appeared with that skill. Come now: the good man, who is intent on the best when he speaks, will surely not speak at random in whatever he says, but with a view to some object? He is just like any other craftsman, who having his own particular work in view selects the things he applies to that work of his, not at random, but with the purpose of giving a certain form to whatever he is working upon. You have only to look, for example, at the painters, the builders, the shipwrights, or any of the other craftsmen, whichever you like, to see how each of them arranges everything according to a certain order, and forces one part to suit and fit with another, until he has combined the whole into a regular and well-ordered production; and so of course with all the other craftsmen, and the people we mentioned just now, who have to do with the body—trainers and doctors; they too, I suppose, bring order and system into the body. Do we admit this to be the case, or not?” (503d–504a)

LS: Now let us stop here. So in order to find out the truth about the four statesmen mentioned, we need greater clarity than we hitherto have about what makes a statesman good. But the statesman is one of a class of beings, here called “craftsmen.” Now the Greek word, *demiourgoi*, means people who work publicly, who work for the public, who work in the *demos*—*demiourgoi*. Now what makes any *demiourgos* good? The good craftsman looks at his work with a view to its acquiring a form—in Greek, *eidōs*. He puts what he works on into some order. He brings about harmony in what he works on between the parts by the use of force, in [503]e8: *prosanangkazei*. This is true of all arts, all artisans. Socrates does here not say, as he says on other occasions, that the craftsman looks at the form. (Think of the Tenth Book of the *Republic*: the carpenter looks at the form of the bed or the table and then imposes this form on the matter.) The form is, according to this statement, only in the finished product. This has something to do with the famous doctrine of ideas. Here Plato uses the key word, *eidōs*, “form,” “idea,” but he uses it in a different way. He does not assert here as he asserted in some of the so-called earlier dialogues—so they can’t say he did not yet have his doctrine of ideas; he had it all right, but he doesn’t make any use of it here—a meaning of ideas as beings which are self-subsisting outside of the things which participate in the ideas. Now why does he do that? Now there is a grave question: Does Plato believe that there are ideas of artifacts, as distinguished from natural beings? Aristotle says, “No, Plato denied that.”ⁱⁱ And I would say this would seem to settle the question, because who could know better these things than Plato’s greatest pupil? But some people deny that today, because in certain dialogues, for example, the Tenth Book of the *Republic*, Plato does speak of ideas of artifacts. Very well, that he does. But the question, of course, is how seriously is this

ⁱⁱ See, e.g., *Metaphysics* 991b6–7, 1080a4–6.

statement in the Tenth Book of the *Republic* meant? Socrates and Plato say quite a few things on occasion which are not their ultimate view on the subject matter in question. This may be a reason why Socrates speaks here of ideas or forms as being only *in* the artifacts, and not beyond them.

At any rate, the doctrine of ideas does not come to sight in the *Gorgias* at all. The *Gorgias* abstracts from the ideas proper. And if it is true, as at first going one surely must say, that the core of the Platonic teaching is the doctrine of ideas, and philosophy in the Platonic sense is concerned with the ideas, philosophy will not come to sight in the *Gorgias* in its proper form. You remember that in the Polus section, when we had this simple proportion: the highest art was the legislative art; it was in no way called philosophy. Let me make this tentative suggestion: that in the *Gorgias*, the peak, what Plato regards as the peak, is absent, deliberately absent. *Why* is a longer question. We must also have somewhat more of a proof of that before we can tackle that properly. The good orator makes the soul a well-ordered being. He looks at the anticipated well-ordered soul, which does not yet exist prior to his working—at the anticipated well-ordered souls of the people whom he addresses. But, how? That is still very vague, and this will be explained in the sequel. I note in passing that here Socrates mentions five arts, and if you count, you will find that shipbuilding is in the center. This makes perfect sense: when you speak of the statesman,⁵ you should think of a ship. The ship of state is one of the most common metaphors for society. But building of ships is of course not navigation. Who corresponds to the builder of the ship in the case of the state?

Student: Founder.

LS: Founder, sure, which is the much more important and fundamental case. In this list here in 503e, he mentions first painting. Doesn't he? Ya, painters; and then house builders, and then ship builders. And so he ascends from the merely imitative art of painting, [from the] imitative or *reproductive* arts to the *production* of inanimate things, and finally to the arts working on animate beings, gymnastics and medicine. So there is an ascent here noticeable. An implication which we must not forget: painting is here taken to be an art. Well, is it not fair to say [that] if painting is an art, poetry might also be an art? Or must one assume that Plato has an obstinate loathing of poetry without any rhyme and reason? Unlikely. So let us then be open to the possibility that Plato had a somewhat more intelligent view of poetry than he seems to have at first reading of certain passages in the *Republic* or elsewhere.

By the way, I believe we usually speak of the imitative arts, and that is, in a way, a correct literal translation, but I believe it would be a bit clearer if we would translate it, or interpret it, as reproductive. This may help a bit. You see, the Platonic-Aristotelian notion of imitation is so difficult to understand, because we are too falsely sophisticated and Plato and Aristotle always start from scratch. And that is very hard, to see the most obvious things. Now look at the other arts, say, the shoemaker. There would be no shoes without the shoemaker's art. Shoes owe their being entirely to the shoemaker—production. What does the painter do? Or what does the poet do? This is all, in one way or the other, a reproduction of what exists before. Even if you take certain views which

are now very common, that poetry is an expression of feelings or some kind of feelings, but the feelings are before—they are not made, they are not produced. The expression⁶ is a kind of reproduction. And that is the primary phenomenon from which one must start in order to ascend then to the subtleties.

So let us keep this in mind as the most important implication of this passage. That is the sole reference to the doctrine of ideas, if we can call it that way, in the *Gorgias*. The doctrine of ideas is absent from it. The peak is missing. Mr. Glenn?

Mr. Glenn: What is the Platonic teaching as to who is responsible for the well-ordering of the individual soul? Is it primarily the individual or primarily the statesman or primarily the rhetorician?

LS: Mr. Glenn, you are in as good a position to answer this question as I am. I mean, after all, the whole Plato—that’s an infinite question—but the *Gorgias* we have been reading together. Who is responsible for it?

Mr. Glenn: Well, we appear to be saying that it’s the statesman.

LS: Well, why not leave it at that? I think that corresponds to the facts. This creates a difficulty, but I think he means that.

Mr. Glenn: Yes, it creates a difficulty particularly with a prevalent idea in our own time, which is that the individual is primarily responsible for ordering his own soul.

LS: A four-year-old child also?

Mr. Glenn: Well, I don’t think that’s the prevalent idea.

LS: I see. Good.

Mr. Glenn: But it is in some quarters.

LS: Ya, I believe so. But still, most people still would say you have to have a certain maturity for having this responsibility. Now, if we make the preposterous assumption, which Socrates makes, as we shall see later, that most grown-up people are still children, what would follow?

Mr. Glenn: It would follow that these grown-up people would not be capable of ordering their own souls.

LS: Not ordering them well, yes. Well, I think even today we admit that. I mean, let us not fool ourselves by a certain very superficial and formalistic statement of democracy: each individual fully responsible for his way of life and for what he does. But we know quite well that this is simply not true. Have you ever heard the expression, the distinction between “other-directed” and (what is the other thing?) “self-directed,” “inner-directed.”

But I think the implication is that most people are other-directed: their souls are formed by others. Now these others are not people like Socrates but, say, Hollywood and [the] cosmetics industry—this kind of thing. I mean, how this goes together with the political aspect of democracy—one man, one vote—is a complicated question. But as we have learned from our contemporary political sociologists, the purely political, i.e., legal, understanding of democracy is too narrow. What Plato and Aristotle always meant: you have to take in the whole thing. In other words, radio, TV, is an important part of this kind of modern democracy as it has gradually developed, and we cannot disregard it. These are very important educating influences—“educating,” that means, in an older language, forming the souls. You know? Well, the simple justification is this: Montesquieu had said democracy is the rule of virtue. And this is of course what we would wish somehow. But now this would mean, strictly understood, that only virtuous men can vote. Try to spell this out in legal terms. It’s impossible. The maximum you can get is people who have never gone to jail. And there are many people who have never gone to jail and never been even indicted of anything, and yet would not be called virtuous. It’s impossible to give a legal expression to the perfectly necessary notion of virtuous men. Therefore, you have to leave it at something which can be legally defined: that you are literate, older than 21, and these kinds of things. These can be checked; virtue cannot be checked. The utmost you would get would be the pretense of virtue. I mean, that everyone would look, by cosmetics—you know, a kind of cosmetics which exists—*like* a virtuous man.⁷ But that would not be virtue.

Mr. Glenn: Would it be more correct or more precise to say that the statesman is responsible for producing the conditions under which a person could be virtuous, and that the ultimate responsibility for the well-ordered soul lies with the individual?

LS: Ya, what do the conditions mean? I mean that we can cross Midway without any fear of being assassinated or robbed, this kind of thing?

Mr. Glenn: Yes, well that’s—

LS: That’s one part, security. But what about such interesting questions like censorship of bad, corrupting literature? Is this also one of the conditions for the proper bringing up of children? There you get already a difficulty. Plato would say, “by all means”; Aristotle would say, “by all means.” But today the predominate view is the opposite, as you know. So “conditions” is too general.

Mr. Glenn: Would the position that we took on the question I raised as to the ultimate responsibility for the well-ordered soul⁸ affect our judgment significantly on whether or not these statesmen of Athens were indeed good statesmen or not?

LS: Ya, but, you see, you must not forget, we discuss the question here not merely *secundum veritatem*, according to the truth, but also *secundum Platonem*, according to Plato. Now for Plato, virtue (as we know by now) is knowledge, and knowledge is the preserve of a very small group of people. From this point of view, it is impossible that anyone—I mean, responsibility in this sense, for crimes committed, and so on, that of

course is a crude concept of responsibility. That's necessary and possible. But a responsibility for virtue in the strict sense cannot be had, except by people who have the natural aptitude for it. That is, according to Plato, a small part of the human race. But there was some—Mr. Lyons?

Mr. Lyons: If there is an abstraction from philosophy, how could the distinction between art and virtue be maintained?

LS: Well, I see, that needs, then, a footnote. [The abstraction is] not from philosophy (it has been mentioned more than once, you know that) but from what, in Plato's view, is the core or the peak of philosophy. Philosophy is presented as something lower here than, say, in the *Republic*. We will find quite a bit of proof for that. So philosophy is lowered here, for certain reasons which we must gradually find. Yes?

Student: How can the statesman be responsible for the well-being or the well-ordering of the people's souls if the limits of speech have been shown to us by this dialogue? There's just so much rhetoric can do, and assuming you want a free city, how can you call one man responsible for the well-ordering of it?

LS: Well, perhaps I can refer to what I just said to Mr. Lyons. Since the full meaning of philosophy does not come out here, *the* solution as presented in the *Republic*, rule of philosophers, does not come out here⁹ [either]. Now you can, of course, say rightly that the solution of the *Republic* is not truly a solution, for reasons which I indicated on a former occasion. But we will be back to what I discussed with Mr. Glenn. It depends what you understand by virtue. If virtue means what Plato calls popular or vulgar virtue, this responsibility can be enjoyed by everyone [who is] not moronic. That's clear. But this is not for Plato true virtue, and the responsibility for true virtue can be enjoyed only by those who are capable of true virtue. Fine. Now let us go on where we left off, 504a7.

Mr. Reinken: *Call.:* "Let it be as you say." (504a)

LS: You see, "Let it be—"

[The tape here is interrupted for about 15 to 20 seconds.]

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "Then if regularity and order are found in a house, it will be a good one, and if irregularity, a bad one?"

Call.: "I agree."

Soc.: "And it will be just the same with a ship?"

Call.: "Yes."

Soc.: "And further, with our bodies also, can we say?"

Call.: "Certainly."

Soc.: "And what of the soul?—" (504a–b)

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment. Any thing or being becomes good by acquiring

regularity and order, as he translates—

[A very brief interruption in the tape]

—good for our purposes. Let us translate it this way: *taxis kai kosmos* in Greek, regularity and order. You see that the ship is again in the center, in case you enjoy this kind of thing. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “If it shows irregularity, will it be good, or if it has a certain regularity and order?”

Call.: “Our former statements oblige us to agree to this also.” (504b)

LS: You see, Callicles is now going along with Socrates because this agrees with his views, only he has a somewhat different notion of what is order and regularity. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then what name do we give to the effect of regularity and order in the body?”

Call.: “Health and strength, I suppose you mean.”

Soc.: “I do. And what, again, to the effect produced in the soul by regularity and order? Try to find the name here, and tell it me as before.”

Call.: “Why not name it yourself, Socrates?” (504b–c)

LS: You see, that is a controversial issue. Therefore he is caught.

[The tape is interrupted here; what follows is reproduced is from the original transcript.]

—by the application of laws, men become just. You see¹⁰ a host of difficulties immediately, because not all laws make men better, of course, and¹¹ this is the argument which Socrates uses here in order to arrive at this result: the good order of the body is health and strength, and the good order of the soul is justice and moderation. You must be a bit patient, because it takes some time, and the windings are not without interest. Socrates shifts from order and¹² [regularity] as the end to order as the means toward the end—in other words, from order as the good order of the soul to order in the sense of the law. Now, if, then, order proves to be only a means for the end, are there not perhaps also . . . themselves means for an end? But what could that end be for which justice and moderation are only means? Well, someone?

Student: Philosophy.

LS: Philosophy, yes. This is not made clear in the *Gorgias* because of the abstraction from philosophy proper, as I spoke [of] before. It will be made indirectly clear to some extent in the sequel. Yes, Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then it is this that our orator, the man of art and virtue, will have in view, when he applies to our souls the words that he speaks—” (504d)

LS: “the speeches,” “the speeches which he says.”

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “and also in all his actions—” (504d)

LS: “and all the action.” He does not say “all speeches,” but “all action” [and] “speeches.” Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “and in giving any gift he will give it, and in taking anything away he will take it, with this thought always before his mind—how justice may be engendered in the souls of his fellow-citizens, and how injustice may be removed; how temperance may be bred in them and licentiousness cut off; and how virtue as a whole may be produced and vice expelled. Do you agree with this or not?”

Call.: “I agree.” (504d–e)

LS: Yes.

[The tape resumes; the transcription henceforth relies upon the remastered tape.]

Socrates returns now to rhetoric indeed. So he does not drop this subject. Yes?

Student: When Callicles mentioned health and strength, I thought of medicine and gymnastics, and then, when Socrates talked of righteousness and moderation, I thought of justice and legislation. I saw the order being switched from a statement of a building up first to a statement of a restoration first.

LS: Ya, that is a very good point. And you will find similar things in the sequel. And how can they be understood? That justice comes first? I mean, what did justice mean in the Polus section? Never forget that.

Student: Punishment.

LS: Yes. Under what condition is punishment the primary thing?

Same student: Correction

LS: Ya, but what does mean? What does this imply, if correction, punishment, comes first? Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Their souls must be bad.

LS: Sure. I wanted to bring this up on a somewhat later occasion, but I can say it here. Machiavelli, *Discourses*, Book I, chapter 3: “All political writers and legislators have started from the premise that men are bad.” And therefore? By “all,” Machiavelli includes of course Plato; otherwise he wouldn’t say that. Yes. Therefore the primary thing is punitive. This would be an explanation.

So here Socrates returns to rhetoric, of course to rhetoric as an art, to the right kind of rhetoric. For we are still engaged in the quest for the true statesman, i.e., the true orator. But another implication, Mr. Dry: if it is rhetoric which makes men good, rhetoric takes the place of the legislative art and of that justice which is the art of the judge. In other words, we have here by implication a complete rehabilitation, and more than a rehabilitation, of rhetoric. You see now Socrates’ procedure. When he talked to the rhetoricians, he debunked rhetoric. When he speaks to the politician who is ultimately hostile to speech, he boosts rhetoric. And this goes very far. You will also have seen, in this section just read, the use of the future tense: what this good man will do—of course, because as far as we know there never was one. This whole thing belongs to the future. He says also of this man, the statesman or orator, that he will use all his actions for this purpose; he does not say all his speeches. For what might he use some of his speeches, if not for this purpose? Well, I think he might use some of the speeches for pleasing the citizen body. After all, not all pleasures have been thrown out, only pleasures dangerous to goodness. Yes. And now? 504a—[504]e, I’m sorry.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “For what advantage is there, Callicles, in giving to a sick and ill-conditioned body a quantity of even the most agreeable things to eat or drink, or anything else whatever, if it is not going to profit thereby any more, let us say, than the opposite treatment, on any fair reckoning, and may profit less? Is this so?” (504e)

LS: Ya, for the healthy soul, we learn here, pleasant food is all right; it doesn’t have to be merely good and very badly tasting. Plato is not an enemy of the human race. And even for a sick soul sometimes pleasant things are all right—of course subject to a wise physician’s decision. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “Be it so.”

Soc.: “Because, I imagine, it is no gain for a man to live in a depraved state of body, since in this case his life must be a depraved one also. Or is not that the case?”

Call.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “And so the satisfaction of one’s desires—if one is hungry, eating as much as one likes, or if thirsty, drinking—is generally allowed by doctors when one is in health; but they practically never allow one in sickness to take one’s fill of things that one desires: do you agree with me in this?”

Call.: “I do.” (505a)

LS: So the control of bodily desires belongs, as we see here, strictly speaking to the physician, to medicine, i.e., not to the legislator or judge or orator. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: When . . . section, you said that Socrates is in fact against treating a sick soul with the pleasant. You said

LS: But some pleasures can be helpful. I mean, why should a medicine be unnecessarily nauseating? I mean, only a very nasty man would say that should also be nauseating in addition. Perhaps in prison some kinds of things [of this sort] might be helpful, but not ordinarily.

Mr. Butterworth: The reason I am confused is because he seems to be talking about the body here—

LS: But even here too. Are there not bodily pleasures, and do we not call them bodily pleasures, those going with food and drink?

Mr. Butterworth: Yes—

LS: This analysis, whether there can be any pleasures strictly speaking of the body, this more subtle question is here not taken up at all—in other words, whether all pleasures are not pleasures of the soul. We leave it at the rough distinction that we say pleasures going with the study of mathematics are not pleasures of the body, but pleasures going with food and drink are bodily pleasures, because the senses are directly involved. Without a tongue, you cannot have these pleasures.

Mr. Butterworth: I thought that you said, when—

LS: No, but the fundamental difficulty, I believe, is this (let us always come back to the key point): from the distinction between the good and the pleasant, as it was originally made, one can easily derive the impression that pleasures are utterly irrelevant, and whether something is pleasant or painful doesn't make the slightest difference. But Socrates makes it clear that if the pleasures are harmless, why would not a sensible man prefer the pleasure to the corresponding pain? This is, I think, the point which I want to make. Now if this is true of other things, it is surely also true of speeches. Why should we not have pleasing speeches which, while they may not do anything good,¹³ also may not do any harm? After all, we need recreation, and pleasing speeches or pleasing sounds may contribute to recreation. What's wrong with that? You know, one must not misunderstand Socrates, although he does a lot to create this misunderstanding, as if he were a sworn enemy of pleasure in any manner, shape, and form. But that is not what he means. Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “And does not the same rule, my excellent friend, apply to the soul? So long as it is in a bad state—thoughtless, licentious, unjust and unholy—we must

restrain its desire and not permit it to do anything except what will help it to be better: do you grant this, or not?" (505b)

LS: Now he applies¹⁴ the result now explicitly to the soul. Since the analogon to the good statesman is the physician, not the gymnastic trainer, the emphasis shifts to what the statesmen do to the sick soul, i.e., to the statesman's punitive action. And this implies indeed, as Mr. Dry implied, that men, all men or most men, are primarily bad and therefore in need of punishment. You see here he mentions here four vices corresponding to four virtues. Do you notice any change here? Is there any virtue—? Yes?

Student: Courage is omitted, and piety is a virtue.

LS: Yes, yes. This is part of the education of the courageous, manly Callicles, that his favorite virtue is dropped and replaced by piety. And this has to do with a thing which we will see more and more, that the key virtue in this dialogue is moderation—or the term is frequently translated also by "temperance." In the *Republic*, the key virtue is obviously justice. That differs in Platonic dialogues and within the dialogues, but here we are brought up to the proposition that *the* overriding virtue is moderation or temperance. And surely courage must be discouraged in the case of Callicles, who has, or believes to have, too much of it. He is surely too much enamored of it. Yes, good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc: "For thus, I take it, the soul itself is better off?"

Call.: "To be sure."

Soc.: "And is restraining a person from what he desires correcting him?"

Call.: "Yes."

Soc.: "Then correction is better for the soul than uncorrected license, as you were thinking just now." (505b)

LS: Ya, Socrates here now explicitly vindicates punishment. Punishment means to restrain a man forcibly from satisfying his desires. In other words, punishment is not "tit for tat," but forcibly restraining from overindulging—therefore bread and water instead of wine and steaks. Yes? Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Call: "I have no notion what you are referring to, Socrates; do ask someone else."

Soc.: "Here is a fellow who cannot endure a kindness done him, or the experience in himself of what our talk is about—a correction!" (505c)

LS: Now, here Socrates is very clear. Callicles rebels again. Why? Socrates tells us: because he himself is forcibly restrained by Socrates from satisfying his desire—of course not the desire for food and drink, but political ambition. I.e., he undergoes the wise kind of punishment. And this people don't like. We must, however, say: Does Socrates truly restrain him forcibly, with a kind of force which is not bodily force? Words

can, and speeches can, be forcible. But does Socrates succeed? No. Socrates tries to restrain him, but he fails. And this implies the lesson which we know already: that rhetoric cannot take the place of coercion.¹⁵ Socrates is unable to prevent Callicles' going into politics. Something else has to be done. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Call: "Well, and not a jot do I care, either, for anything *you* say; I only gave you those answers to oblige Gorgias."

Soc.: "Very good. So now, what shall we do? Break off our argument midway?"

Call.: "You must decide that for yourself."

Soc.: "Why, they say one does wrong to leave off even stories in the middle—" (505c–505d)

LS: "Stories"—in Greek, "myths."ⁱⁱⁱ

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "one should set a head on the thing, that it may not go about headless. So proceed with the rest of your answers, that our argument may pick up a head."

Call.: "How overbearing you are, Socrates!" (505d)

LS: Ya, "violent" would be a more literal translation. "Violent," you see, that is Socrates' using of force against [Callicles]—indirectly, of course, with the help of Gorgias, you know? Without Gorgias, Callicles would have gone on a long time ago. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: "Take my advice, and let this argument drop or find someone else to argue with."

Soc.: "Then who else is willing? Surely we must not leave the argument there, unfinished?"

Call.: "Could you not get through it yourself, either by talking on by yourself or answering your own questions?" (505d)

LS: Let us consider this theme for one moment, what this might mean. The conversation is again in danger of being prematurely terminated, although Callicles does not dare to run away. After all, he is a free man. But he is kept here, we know already, by the authority of Gorgias, out of respect for Gorgias. Now no one is willing to take the place of Callicles. Those who do agree with him don't wish to suffer his fate, naturally: let the whipping be applied to Callicles alone. And those who do not agree with him do not wish to appear to agree with him, you know?¹⁶ But Socrates, at any rate, is anxious to complete the argument. Why? For the sake of Gorgias. Callicles proposes that Socrates complete the argument by himself—you know, complete the dialogue by himself, which is a very funny thing. But this is exactly what Socrates will do, as you will see from the immediate sequel. Yes?

ⁱⁱⁱ *muthous*.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “So that, in Epicharmus’s phrase, ‘what two men spake erewhile’ I may prove I can manage single-handed.” (505e)

LS: You see, Plato has seen the comical character: he quotes that comical poet whom he regarded as the greatest comical poet. We cannot know that, because only fragments of Epicharmus have survived. There is a comical . . . for that. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “I may prove I can manage single-handed. And indeed it looks as though it must of sheer necessity be so. Still, if we are to do this, for my part I think we ought all to vie with each other in attempting a knowledge of what is true and what false in the matter of our argument; for it is a benefit to all alike that it be revealed. Now I am going to pursue the argument as my view of it may suggest; but if any of you think the admissions I am making to myself are not the truth, you must seize upon them and refute me. For I assure you I myself do not say what I say as knowing it, but as joining in the search with you; so that if anyone who disputes my statements is found to be on the right track, I shall be the first to agree with him. This, however, I say on the assumption that you think the argument should be carried through to a conclusion; but if you would rather it were not, let us have done with it now and go our ways.” (505e–506a)

LS: So Socrates is again perfectly willing to finish it if the others don’t like it. I see here a note from our commentator regarding the quotation from the comic poet. “The device”—namely, a dialogic soliloquy—“may possibly have been suggested to him by something similar in Epicharmus. Ingenious and successful though it is, it reveals the underlying tension between Plato the Socratic ‘dramatist’ and Plato the philosopher.”^{iv} I suppose the mere reference to the comical character of this scene shows that Plato had succeeded in overcoming this tension. Socrates will have a soliloquy, if a dialogic soliloquy. Nevertheless, the enterprise should remain a common one. But Socrates will continue it only if the others are willing. Socrates is not only not able, but even not willing, to punish anyone who is not willing to undergo punishment. Now, the theme is the good statesman, but the good statesman must be able *and willing* to inflict punishment on people whether they like to undergo the punishment or not. Would this not mean that Socrates is not a good statesman? Socrates will later on claim that he is the only good statesman. But we must keep this in mind, whether it is not one of the important duties of the statesman to punish, and Socrates is not very good at that. Yes? So Socrates, in other words, says, “Well, if you don’t want to go on, let’s call it a day.” And again the authority must come in: Gorgias.

Mr. Reinken:

Gorg.: “Well, my opinion is, Socrates, that we ought not to go away yet, but that you should go through with the argument; and I fancy the rest of them think the same. For I myself, in fact, desire to hear you going through the remainder by yourself.” (506a–b)

^{iv} Dodds, 331.

LS: Ya. Gorgias decides the issue on grounds of both propriety and his desire. He speaks also for the others. We can render his thought as follows: “I vote against the termination of the discussions, and the others apparently also vote against it. But I also desire the continuation.” In the case of Gorgias, the wish to hear the continuation is the reason for the vote. In the case of the others, perhaps consideration or respect for Gorgias or for the proprieties. This is not quite unimportant. So Gorgias is, then, responsible, but Gorgias is now no longer the authority he was before. He can no longer compel Callicles to reply. These happy times have gone. A few hours more and Gorgias will have ceased to be an authority for Callicles altogether. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Why, to be sure, Gorgias, I myself should have liked to continue discussing with Callicles here until I had paid him an Amphion’s speech in return for his of Zethus. But since you, Callicles, are unwilling to join me in finishing off the argument, you must at any rate pull me up, as you listen, if it seems to you that my statements are wrong. And if you refute me, I shall not be vexed with you as you were with me; you will only be recorded in my mind as my greatest benefactor.” (506b–c)

LS: Now, what does he mean by this “Amphion’s reply” which Socrates is going to give? Amphion and his brother Zethus were the heroes in a lost Euripidean play, Zethus being the political military man, and Amphion the music man. And Socrates replies to the political warrior as a music man, defending music in the widest sense, which includes of course the highest Muse, philosophy. But it includes also the lower Muses. What Socrates will do now in his way, his defense of the Muses, is also a defense of Gorgias, because Gorgias, after all, is also a man of speech rather than of arms. This is the deeper reason why Gorgias would like to hear how¹⁷ Socrates [would] make this defense of the non–military, non–political life, the life of the Muses. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “Proceed, good sir, by yourself, and finish it off.”

Soc.: “Give ear, then; but first I will resume out argument from the beginning. Are the pleasant and the good the same thing? Not the same, as Callicles and I agreed. Is the pleasant thing to be done for the sake of the good, or the good for the sake of the pleasant? The pleasant for the sake of the good. And is that thing pleasant by whose advent we are pleased, and that thing good by whose presence we are good? Certainly. But further, both we and everything else that is good, are good by the advent of some virtue? In my view this must be so, Callicles.” (506c–d)

LS: No, wait a moment. You see, this is in a way terribly boring, because we have heard that *ad nauseam*. But that is very dangerous, to give in to these feelings of pleasure and pain and not keep one’s head, one’s reason. Now when he says here, “It seems to me to be necessary, Callicles,” then the preceding speech would seem to be *by Callicles*, the

preceding question. Now shortly before, in c6–7, Socrates says, “Not the same, as I and Callicles have agreed.” This was earlier. Socrates replies to someone other than Callicles who is nameless and invisible. That’s a complete change of the situation, very subtly done. And later this *x*, the invisible nameless being, proves to be Callicles. I do not wish to interpret it, I only want to state to you the problem and to show you the fundamental thing: that dull repetitions simply do not exist in Plato. Passages which *seem* to be dull repetitions—ininitely many, I mean, you know, you can read pages in which [they say], “yes,” “of course,” “necessarily,” “naturally,” and where you say, “Why did he not write a treatise instead of this absolutely silly thing? Everyone can transform a master’s thesis easily in a dialogue by doing that.” But if you read more carefully, you will see the answers are never simply “yes,” “yes,” “yes,” “yes.” There are variations, and these variations are very revealing, and especially if they are very powerful forms of agreement, for example, “with all around necessity” as a reply.¹⁸ [That] is obviously much more than to say, “Yes, of course.” But here, this is I think a nice little example. And there are also other things which are not merely repetitions. Now go on, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “But surely the virtue of each thing, whether of an implement or of a body, or again of a soul or any live creature, does not arrive most properly by accident, but by an order or rightness or art that is apportioned to each. Is that so? I certainly agree.” (506d–e)

LS: “I”: namely, Socrates, speaking to that nameless being, ya? Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then the virtue of each thing is a matter of regular and orderly arrangement? I at least should say so. Hence it is a certain order proper to each existent thing that by its advent in each makes it good? That is my view. So then a soul which has its own proper order is better than one which is unordered? Necessarily. But further, one that has order is orderly? Of course it will be. And the orderly one is temperate? Most necessarily.” (506e–507a)

LS: Ya, as I said before, the “orderly”—what is translated as “orderly”—and “temperate” were in a way the same. Decent [and] well behaved go into each other very easily. It’s almost as simple as that. But this is, of course, not a proof but a shrewd exploitation of the language in question. Yes. This doesn’t mean that Socrates does not mean that moderation [or temperance] is a virtue.¹⁹ Of course he means that. But this is not the way to establish it. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “So the temperate soul is good. For my part, I can find nothing to say in objection to this, my dear Callicles; but if you can, do instruct me.”
Call.: “Proceed, good sir.” (507a)

LS: In other words, Callicles: “No comment.” Now let us again remind ourselves of the

context: Socrates' dialogue with himself, which is then in 507c8 followed by a soliloquy, up to 508c. And then he turns to Callicles' critique of Socrates' way of life. And at that point, the genuine dialogue with Callicles starts again. Now, this here, what we read just now and what we will read in the immediate sequel, is Socrates' soliloquy, but a dialogic soliloquy. Socrates begins again from the beginning. And now it is important also as to what they had agreed, Socrates and Callicles: they had agreed only regarding the difference between the good and the pleasant. There was a genuine agreement as to that. Yes. Now the virtue of a thing is brought about, he said later, in the best way, in the finest way, by order and correctitude and art, in d7. In the fairest and most beautiful way—which implies it can also be brought about in another way. In which other way can the virtue of a thing be brought about, different from these means? What is the alternative?

Student:

LS: Accident, chance. Or as Plato sometimes says, by divine allotment can a man be good. Good. Then Socrates replaces what we translated by “order,” “good order,” by “correctitude and art,” and here there is no reference to law. And this would seem to suggest, as Mr. Glenn said in a somewhat different context, that only the man possessing an art can acquire virtue in the true sense. But then he restores again the old stereotype “regulation and order.” For art only produces virtue, whereas order and regulation both *produce* virtue and *are* virtue. Art which produces virtue is not itself a virtue. But the regulation and order is both productive of virtue and itself a virtue. Then he drops regulation, and then we have “the soul which has order is orderly.” And this means the same as moderate, or, in common Greek usage, moderate or temperate. The conclusion? Virtue is moderation. But the question arises, of course, with a view to the difficulty in d7: Is moderation or temperance also an art or knowledge?

Let me explain this question a bit. That virtue is identical with moderation is established by a pun. Virtue is order of the soul, and then the good soul is the orderly soul and so on. But in this sense both order and decency may, of course, only mean *external* decency, proper external behavior. Later on in this dialogue, in 523e6, *cosmos*, order, is used in this sense: the mere external bedecking of the soul which is not genuine. There is a passage in Plato's *Laws* which is very helpful for understanding this passage in the *Gorgias* and much more in the *Gorgias* and elsewhere. In *Laws* 710a we find the following remark. Socrates speaks of the qualities which a tyrant must have who is willing to be a servant or minister to the true legislator. And one of these virtues singled out is temperance or moderation, *sōphrosynē*. That is said by an interlocutor. Thereupon, the chief speaker, here called the Athenian Stranger, says, “Yes, Kleinias, moderation, but of the vulgar kind, not the kind men mean when they force reasonableness, prudence, upon moderation”—i.e., when they do what Plato sometimes does by giving moderation this meaning, that it is all virtues—“but that kind which by nature springs up a birth in children and beasts so that some are²⁰ incontinent, others continent, in respect of pleasures.” In other words, in the ordinary and simplest sense of the word, in Plato's time at any rate, moderation means something like continence, something which even children and beasts can have, and therefore not something which can be truly the full virtue. But if we take this ambiguity into consideration, moderation is the virtue of all souls, and I

think that is implied here—of all souls—in what we have read. And then of course every man can be virtuous, every man can possess the full virtue, contrary to the assertion that true virtue is only a preserve of those who think.

Moderation is here in the Callicles section the key virtue, just as in the *Republic* justice is the key virtue. Now what is the relation between these two virtues on the face of that, without going into any deeper thinking? Justice is clearly the social virtue. Moderation or temperance is as such a private virtue. Justice is, as was indicated earlier in this dialogue, in the highest form, the virtue of distribution, of distributing, which is clearly a political or social action. Why does he put this emphasis on moderation? Which will go on: He will develop in the sequel the thesis that moderation is not only the all-comprehensive virtue, but also the sufficient condition of bliss—being moderate and being blissful is the same²¹ [thing]. Now there is a great variety of levels of the word moderation, and if you take the cruder commonsensical view, according to which it means self-control regarding food and drink, then it is of course impossible to understand why a man who is self-controlled in these matters lives a life of perfect bliss. Now why this emphasis? We have to consider the context. Socrates discusses matters with Callicles. And what was Callicles' assertion at the beginning of the conversation? The better men must rule. For the sake of what? And then he came to speak of, you know, all desires, the satisfaction of all desires, i.e., the life of incontinence. And then from this point of view, the simple answer is that the opposite of incontinence, continence, is the whole virtue and the whole bliss of men—an extraordinarily bold assertion which can only have a somewhat limited meaning.

Now I will briefly explain, lest you are merely bewildered by these movements, what I think is behind that. We have found a number of facts which I think are undeniable, but the connection between these facts is obscure. I'll mention a few of them. In the first place, of course, the insufficiency of the proofs, which are in the best case rhetorical proofs and not genuine demonstrations. Also, the fact that the argument in the Polus and Callicles sections is made for the sake of Gorgias is another strange feature not sufficiently accounted for hitherto. We saw that when Callicles came to speak of pleasure he abstracted from honor, from the pleasures deriving from honor. We have seen today the abstraction from the ideas in the Platonic sense, implying an abstraction from the core or heart of philosophy. I'll give you now a simple enumeration of some of the striking difficulties: the denial of the possibility of arts leading to a pleasure, or at least of arts leading also to pleasure. There were quite a few indications in which such arts were admitted, but this was only implied, it was never clearly stated. In the Polus section, the eulogy of punishment—man becomes just by being punished, which goes a bit far. We have also seen (partly by ourselves, partly with the help of our commentator) that Plato makes in the *Gorgias* unusually frequent borrowings from comedy. The boosting of moderation or continence, as we have seen now. Finally, the disregard of the legitimacy of defense against unjust accusation, i.e., the disregard of legitimate forensic rhetoric. Now, how can we understand that? I will now suggest what I believe to be the way toward the solution of these difficulties. In other words, I will try to say something about the unity keeping all these *disiecta membra* together.

The subject of this dialogue is rhetoric, and of course public rhetoric: speeches addressed to many. And this is fundamentally the same thing as the political life. This is spoken about in the dialogue, and, while it is forgotten apparently for long stretches, it's always the theme. Now this public rhetoric is opposed to the private rhetoric, never discussed, which Socrates practices, which every reader of the dialogue who is not so simple-minded as to believe that Plato did not know better than to present such demonstrations, must observe. This private rhetoric corresponds to the philosophic life, just as the public rhetoric corresponds to the political life. But where do we find the political life? Well, we have been given these four names, and we could add other great political names from other climates and nations. But where do we find the philosophic life? After all, is this a mere idea, or was the philosophic life, in Plato's view, lived by someone?

Student: Socrates.

LS: Socrates. So the theme therefore is, in a way, not only this general subject, the philosophic life, but also as it were the incarnation of that life, the Socratic life. This Socratic life culminated in the Socratic death. He was accused of having committed certain crimes, especially the crime of impiety, and of corrupting the young. Only the corruption problem is mentioned here, not the impiety problem. And when he was accused, he was legally obliged to defend himself, to make a forensic speech. This forensic speech has been written by Plato under the title *The Apology of Socrates*. It is, I think, one of the most popular and famous writings of Plato. This *Apology of Socrates* is the result of Socrates' deliberation about what he is going to say to his judges. In reading the *Apology*, we see only the result of the deliberation, not the deliberation. In the *Gorgias* we see, and we will see this very soon very clearly, the deliberation about Socrates' sole forensic speech is presented—namely, the problem of self-preservation, how to go about preserving yourself in the face of an unjust accusation. And Socrates makes here this statement—I must anticipate this: “Well, when I shall be accused, I am in the position of a physician accused by a pastry cook before a jury of children. I mean, I am the one who cuts and gives the bitter pills, and he gives these sweets. I am bound to be condemned.” Now, [he says] they are like children. When you read the *Apology*, you will not find the slightest suggestion that this was Socrates' judgment of his jury. You must admit it would have been wholly improper to call people whom he properly addressed [as] “*andres*,” “men of Athens”: “You are only children and you cannot possibly understand me, and therefore I'm not angry at you because you condemn me—you can't do differently.” That's what . . . says.

So here we get the deliberation of Socrates, a deliberation of Socrates about his *Apology*. And this is presented, this deliberation is presented to Callicles primarily, but of course to everyone present. But what about the competence of Callicles? Is he not also a child? Perhaps a somewhat cleverer child than the most stupid members of the jury, but still, from Socrates' point of view, he's also a child. Therefore, even here we have to do some translation of Socrates' deliberation about his forensic rhetoric, forensic speech, into these reflections which Socrates would express to mature people. This would require on our part a certain transformation from the children we all primarily are into mature people, and that is by no means an easy thing, but it is surely a worthwhile thing. Good.

And now let us²² [take] one more step, and then I am through. What was the original accusation of Socrates, prior to the one which led to his death? Yes?

Student:

LS: No, no, the original. I mean, who accused Socrates prior to Meletus and Anytus and so on?

Student: Aristophanes.

LS: Aristophanes. Very good. The *Clouds* can be said to be the first accusation of Socrates. We have read in Vico that this was *the* thing: the wicked Aristophanes who ruined the most good Socrates by the *Clouds*. The *Clouds*²³ [is a] comedy. How is Socrates presented in the *Clouds*? I mean, forgetting about all sophistication, a very simple thing: Socrates is there presented as a natural philosopher, a cosmologist, especially concerned with the mathematical treatment there. For example, he measures how many flea's feet a flea jumps. This is mathematical physics in its most elementary form [laughter] and he does that. (And this subject of mathematical physics will come up very soon in our dialogue.) And the other great activity which Socrates engages in, apart from natural science, is rhetoric. Socrates in the *Clouds* is a teacher of rhetoric. And then he has another quality which is very striking. The crude view which you find in many textbooks is [that] Aristophanes presents Socrates as a sophist, and sophist means of course an absolutely despicable man who does all these dirty things for the sake of money. But the Socrates of the *Clouds* doesn't have the slightest interest in money. I mean, he is not a hundred percent honest man: he steals on one occasion because they have no supper, and then he has to get some food for him[self] and his companions, and so this is indeed a blameworthy action. But he is not in any way concerned with money. And why is he not concerned with it? Because of his extreme self-control, his extreme continence. He hardly needs any food, he doesn't need clothing, he doesn't wash. He is so continent that he cannot understand why one of his pupils is prevented from thinking and answering a question because he has to sit somewhere, on a sofa let us say, full of bugs and fleas. And Socrates cannot see why you cannot think in the most concentrated manner if you are exposed to millions of fleas, so continent is Socrates.

So these three striking characteristics of Socrates in the *Clouds*—a radical cosmology, rhetoric, and extreme continence—are in a way here rewritten by Plato in a decent manner: not this kind of mathematical physics which Aristophanes makes him [practice], but something reminding of Pythagorean philosophy, let us say; not that kind of rhetoric which he teaches there—how to swindle one's debtors out of one's debts—but the noble rhetoric; and not this kind of ridiculous continence with regard to fleas, but the continence befitting a gentleman. So in other words, the comedy is there, because a reply to a comedy done in this manner is not free from the comical itself, of course. But I think in this way we will gradually find the unity. But you wanted to say something?

Student: . . . What about the statement with regard to the fact that if he brought his wife and children, that would be an emotional demonstration

LS: In other words, this statement [of Socrates] must be understood²⁴ judiciously. In other words, literally speaking, the Athenian judges are of course not children. I mean, they are not 10, 12 years old. They are men between, say, 30 and 70. Literally, they are not children. There are certain rules of propriety. I mean, as you know, a self-respecting man would not wish to be acquitted on improper grounds, namely, because he melted the heart of the judges. That is what he means by that. The *Apology* is a very moving piece, as I'm sure you know, but it is still something—Socrates could not possibly state his position there. And make a simple experiment: Did Socrates say in the *Apology* what he says about the greatest Athenian statesmen in the *Gorgias*? I mean, both the men of the left, if I may use present day terms, they would have been shocked by what he says about Themistocles and Pericles, and those of the right, [they] would have been shocked by what he says about Miltiades and Cimon. He couldn't say that.

But, as I put it before, the *Gorgias* presents Socrates' deliberation about his accusation—not in the whole *Gorgias*, in this part of the Callicles section—but this becomes an ingredient of the whole work, and the whole work must have been devised from the very beginning so as to allow for this specification. From the very beginning, the plan was clear: Rhetoric; two kinds of rhetoric; two ways of life; this question, which life to choose, which always means which of these two ways of life (there are no others); which of these two ways to choose, the political and the philosophic; and therefore since *the* philosophic life is the life of Socrates, the whole problem of Socrates' own life, with its partly accidental features come[s] in. But that is one of the basic premises of the Platonic dialogues, that nothing—and this is of course in the strict sense a noble lie—that there is nothing accidental in Socrates. A noble lie now in this simple sense, you know, what they call now artistic. Of course there was [something accidental]. I mean, why should a philosopher have a snub nose like Socrates, and protruding eyes, and have this particular wife, Xanthippe? These are all accidental things, but this is Plato's art, that all these things become meaningful. Socrates has an ugly appearance; philosophers do not have to be ugly. Have you ever seen a picture of John Locke, who was a very handsome man? So but—

[The tape is interrupted here for roughly thirty seconds.]

—namely, the most difficult. And Socrates says, “Well, I knew I had to live with human beings, and just as a future horseman will not limit his practice of horsemanship by taking the gentlest and oldest mare, but will take the most ferocious and wild horse, because if he can handle that horse, he can handle any horse”—that is why he married Xanthippe!^v Now the comedy is of course not only in this comical explanation, but the fact that he not only failed in handling Xanthippe but he failed in handling practically all other people as well, as is shown by his own end. So Xanthippe is, in other words, a kind of foreshadowing of his fate with the city of Athens. And so, to repeat, Plato makes all these accidental features of Socrates meaningful. And this requires in some cases penetration, but he never says “Socrates had this mother”—how do you call that, a woman helping other women in giving birth to children?

^v Xenophon *Symposium* 2.10.

Student: Midwife.

LS: Midwife, thank you. And his father was a statuary—this also is given meaning by Plato. In other words, *the* classic philosopher could not but be this man, this Athenian, with these features, with this social standing, and so on and so on. This is a part of it.

Yes, now, this is of course only a first attempt to explain what the underlying unity of the dialogue is, and you see also that considerations which are apparently entirely non-philosophical, and now called “artistic,” play a very great role in the buildup of the dialogue. But this doesn’t mean that the philosophic teaching is not there. It is only not immediately visible on the surface. By understanding and considering these artistic features, we will understand the philosophic teaching, and I think one can say books which have this double reward, that they are not only good but also pleasant,²⁵ [are] perhaps preferable to books which are only good—surely better than books which are merely pleasant. And so you see that this great problem of the *Gorgias* especially, is solved very easily if one reflects for one moment on this dialogue: there cannot be a simple opposition between the good and the pleasant.

[end of tape]

ENDNOTES TO SESSION TWELVE

¹ Deleted “This.”

² Deleted “came.”

³ Deleted “he.”

⁴ Deleted “he.”

⁵ Deleted “that.”

⁶ Deleted “it.”

⁷ Deleted “and then.”

⁸ Deleted “would that.”

⁹ Deleted “too.”

¹⁰ Deleted “a crowd.”

¹¹ Deleted “here.”

¹² Deleted “regulation.”

¹³ Deleted “but which.”

¹⁴ Deleted “this now.”

¹⁵ Deleted “something else.”

¹⁶ Deleted “they have this.”

¹⁷ Moved “would.”

¹⁸ Deleted “it.”

¹⁹ Moved “or temperance.”

²⁰ Deleted “not.”

²¹ Deleted “time.”

²² Deleted “look.”

²³ Deleted “are.”

²⁴ Moved “of Socrates.”

²⁵ Deleted “is.”

Session 13: no date

Leo Strauss: I hope that today's meeting will contribute something to taking away some of the great obscurities from which we all must have been suffering. Now let us remind ourselves again of the overall context. The problem concerns rhetoric. Rhetoric is vulnerable because of its ambiguous relation to justice. That was the beginning of the dialogue. In the Polus section, the issue came into the open because Polus openly defended injustice and tyranny. Therewith the emphasis shifted from rhetoric to justice. Polus had a certain respect for what people say, as distinguished from the principles on which they act—naturally, being a rhetorician, he must have some concern with what people say. And therefore he got into troubles, and he could not defend his position. Then enter Callicles: the clear opposition of justice and injustice, in such a way that rhetoric comes on the side of injustice and justice goes together with non-rhetoric. The highest principle to which this opposition is traced is that of the opposition of the pleasant and the good. So justice, non-rhetoric, the good; on the other side, injustice, rhetoric, and the pleasant. This leads to the further conclusion that on the side of the good, we have rhetoric as used for self-accusation. You will remember that from the Polus section, the end of the Polus section. On the side of the pleasant, however, we have rhetoric as used for self-defense. This very extraordinary complication will, I think, be cleared up today.

Now in this whole discussion, it was never made clear what precisely justice is, although the subject was all the time justice. There was some elucidation of justice, namely, in the Callicles section: justice is equality. But this is the democratic view of justice unqualified, a view which cannot be presumed to be Socrates' view. And yet Socrates proves in a way, or at least takes for granted, that justice is good. But we do not know what justice is. Justice is good because it is an excellence of the soul. Now, this reminds us of the First Book of Plato's *Republic*. There, Socrates proves against the rhetorician Thrasymachus that justice is good. The proofs are very questionable and have shocked many people and delighted many enemies of Plato. But the delight was premature, because at the end of the First Book Socrates says, "Now I have proved that justice is good without ever having raised the question what justice is," i.e., "I have proved that x is good."ⁱ In other words, Socrates admits quite frankly that these were not solid proofs. Now in the *Republic*, from Book 2 on, the question is of course what justice is, and the question is answered. This question is never raised in the *Gorgias* and therefore also never answered. Again, that proves what I mentioned last time: the peak is missing in the *Gorgias*. Therefore this is an extremely incomplete picture of the truth. Now this lack of clarity regarding justice makes it possible that in the Callicles section, a region in which we are now, the place of honor is assigned to moderation, or temperance, as distinguished from justice. Moderation is a private virtue; justice is a political virtue. Now we can see what such a substitution of moderation for justice means, or indicates, or signifies: a certain downgrading of political life, of the *polis*, and surely of Athenian politics. We have heard Socrates' judgment on the four greatest Athenian statesmen.

ⁱ See *Republic* 354a–c.

The immediate justification for the extolling of moderation is this: Callicles proved to be concerned especially with the satisfaction of the bodily desires. But the virtue regulating the bodily desires is precisely moderation or temperance. We have observed that Callicles disregarded the higher pleasures, especially that going with honor, to say nothing of the pleasures going with philosophy. Again,¹ even regarding pleasures, the peak is missing. Now what is the meaning of all this, and of many other difficulties which we have come across before? The meaning will not become completely clear, but a certain part of the thing will become clear, in what we shall read today. Let us then turn immediately to where we left off last time, 507a5. You remember the context still. Socrates has his kind of dialogical soliloquy, or² [monological] dialogue, and Callicles, only hearing. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “I say, then, that if the temperate soul is good, one that is in the opposite state to this sensible one is bad; and that was the senseless and dissolute one. Certainly. And further, the sensible man will do what is fitting as regards both gods and men; for he could not be sensible if he did what was unfitting. That must needs be so. And again, when he does what is fitting as regards men, his actions will be just, and as regards the gods, pious; and he who does what is just and pious must needs be a just and pious man. That is so—” (507a–b)

LS: Now let us wait here one moment. Here there is something else which cannot be brought out in English because the Greek word which we translate by moderation or maybe by temperance can also have the larger meaning of being sensible, being practically wise. And then of course quite a few consequences follow then, when you go over from one meaning of the term to the other. In other words, why a man who is temperate regarding his desires should be just is not obvious. I can imagine that some members of *La Cosa Nostra* are temperate regarding food and drink and not just or pious. Easily imaginable, and vice versa. But this is one of these punnings of Plato. Now the last point which he makes is this: that if a man does the just things or the pious things, he is just and pious. That is of course an extremely questionable inference. A man may do the pious things—say, sacrifice and praying—and may do them only for the wrong reason in the wrong spirit. Doing the just things and the pious things and being just and pious are obviously very different, then, yes? What he is driving at, lest you are bewildered, is to make moderation or temperance *the* queen of the virtues and by itself sufficient for being in a state of bliss. But we must follow the argument as he goes on. Read on, please.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “And surely he must be brave also: for you know a sound or temperate mind—” (507b)

LS: Ya, you see what he does now, trying his best, the translator: “a sound or temperate man.” It is in Greek, of course, a single word: *sōphrōn*. You know, but you should always translate by “temperate” and then³ see how extraordinary the steps are which Socrates takes here. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “is shown, not by pursuing and shunning what one ought not, but by shunning and pursuing what one ought, whether they be things or people or pleasures or pain, and by steadfastly persevering in one’s duty; so that it follows of strict necessity, Callicles, that the temperate man, as shown in our exposition, being just and brave and pious, is the perfection of a good man—” (507b–c)

LS: Ya, “a perfectly, a completely, good man.” The temperate man. Yes?

Student: You said in one of your earlier lectures that Plato used the dialogue form so that he wouldn’t fall into the danger of moralization. And reading these last speeches and reading toward the end, I can’t help but feel that sometimes he sounds like an awfully moral prig.

LS: A moron?

Same student: He sounds like a very pompous man at times. He sounds like a prig. I find it annoying. Perhaps I am immoderate, but—

LS: No, no, I didn’t hear the noun after—

Same student: P–r–i–g.

LS: Oh, yes. Well, sure, but I think a certain amount of priggishness, and in certain contexts, is very necessary. [Laughter] Use your imagination: whether you cannot imagine a situation, company, in which you yourself would act what you would now call priggishly because that’s the only way to act in such a situation.

Same student: Well, I don’t think it’s just because he’s speaking to Callicles and Polus.

LS: Ya, especially to Callicles, surely.

Same student: He sounds like a Sunday school teacher.

LS: Well, perhaps Sunday school teachers are not as bad as you think. [Laughter] Perhaps. I mean, maybe we have gone too far the other way, in the other direction, by seeing that preaching can be a very doubtful thing because sometimes the people preach one thing and do another thing, which has contributed to bringing preaching into some disrepute. But this doesn’t do away with the fact that, first of all, even a man who does not do what he preaches does not make untrue what he preaches. Is this not possible? But apart from that it is even possible that there may be some people who do what they preach. And therefore we should be a bit open–minded. In other words, we must be critical of our criticism, too. I mean—do you understand what I mean? Good.

Now let us here see this. So we have heard that the temperate or moderate man is completely good, possesses all virtues. And especially the new item which was introduced here is courage, or manliness. We have now four virtues here which are

mentioned, but wisdom, practical wisdom, is not among them. A partial justification is the ambiguity of *sōphrosyne*, moderation, which can also mean something like being sensible. But still, externally, there are only four virtues mentioned, and wisdom is replaced by piety. This is a consequence of the supremacy of moderation, as I can here only assert. Those who want to have a proof of that would have to read Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, Book IV, chapters 3–4. Here, in [507]b6, he says of the brave man that he doesn't flee things and human beings and pleasures and pains. What does he mean here by things, or affairs? What does he mean by that? Why does he speak of that? In the previous mentioning of human beings, they were distinguished from gods. What is the implication then? Mr. Umbanhowar, you seem to see something.

Mr. Umbanhowar: Gods are things.

LS: No, no, I do not believe that. There is no manliness or bravery against the gods—only against human beings and things, not against gods. This is, I think, the implication. The implication here of course is also that there are naturally pleasures which one may pursue and pains which one may try to avoid. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “and that the good man does well and fairly whatever he does; and that he who does well is blessed and happy, while the wicked man or evil-doer is wretched. And this must be the man who is in an opposite case to the temperate,—the licentious man who you were commending.” (507c)

LS: Yes. Now Plato uses again a pun. “Acting well” means in Greek also “doing well”ⁱⁱ in the sense of being prosperous, being happy. Since the moderate man, as has been proven, is acting well in all respects, having all the virtues, he is by this very fact doing well because the expression, acting well, in Greek, means also doing well. You see, that would also need a long proof by itself. The key point, the mere assertion: moderation is not only complete virtue, but is *the* sufficient condition of bliss. Now the serious meaning underlying that is a very well known Platonic and Aristotelian assertion, that the virtues are not separable from one another: you cannot be brave without being moderate, without being practically wise, and so on. But this is here, of course, not proved in any way, for the very simple reason⁴ [that] we do not know what these individual virtues are. How can we know whether they demand each other or do not? And, above all, this inseparability of the virtues is true only on the highest level. A man who possesses courage in the full sense of the word possesses also the other virtues in the full sense of the word. But he who possesses courage in the popular, crude sense of the term of course does not have, by this very fact, justice or moderation and so on. All these tremendous problems are not handled here at all, and therefore the argument is radically faulty. You see also⁵ that Socrates is here now the questioner and Callicles the answerer, as you will see especially from c1. We have discussed this feature last time. I suggest that Mr. Reinken goes on where we left off. Thank you very much.

Mr. Reinken:

ⁱⁱ *eu prattein*.

Soc.: “So there is my account of the matter, and I say that this is the truth; and that, if this is true, anyone, as it seems, who desires to be happy must ensue and practice temperance, and flee from licentiousness, each of us as fast as his feet will carry him, and must contrive, if possible, to need no correction; but if he have need of it, either himself or anyone belonging to him, either an individual or a city, then right must be applied and they must be corrected, if they are to be happy. This, in my opinion, is the mark on which a man should fix his eyes throughout life; he should concentrate all his own and his city’s efforts on this one business of providing a man who would be blessed with the needful justice and temperance; not letting one’s desires go unrestrained and in one’s attempts to satisfy them—an interminable trouble—leading the life of a robber—” (507c–e)

LS: Here he speaks again only of moderation first. Only after having mentioned punishment, in Greek *dikē*, does he speak of justice, *dikaïosynē*, thus bringing out a specific meaning of justice, namely, the punitive meaning. You see here that he mentions here in passing that this punishing has to be applied perhaps to the city too. Let us keep this in mind. This will prove to be very important in the sequel. Yes? Go on where you left [off].

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “For neither to any of his fellow–men can such a one be dear, nor to God; since he cannot commune with any, and where there is no communion, there can be no friendship.” (507e)

LS: Socrates gives here something like a definition of piety, which was mentioned before and which is not identical with the popular view: piety meaning being befriended to the god. The popular view is the emphasis on sacrifice and prayers. This is not necessarily implied in this. And now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “And wise men tell us, Callicles, that heaven and earth and gods and men are held together by communion and friendship, by orderliness, temperance, and justice; and that is the reason, my friend, why they call the whole of this world—” (507e–508a)

LS: No, “this whole.” Let us be literal: “this whole.”

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.*: “this whole by the name of order—” (508a)

LS: *Cosmos*. Ya?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “not of disorder or dissoluteness. Now you, as it seems to me, do not give proper attention to this, for all your cleverness, but have failed to observe the great power of geometrical equality amongst both gods and men: you hold that self–advantage is what one ought to practice, because you neglect geometry.—”

(508a)

LS: More literally than “self–advantage,” “having more”: *pleonexia*, greed, having more, as distinguished from having what you should have. Ya, this is a key passage. Here Socrates brings in again, after some silence, the virtue of wisdom, of practical wisdom. But courage is here left out again. When he mentions here five virtues, or quasi–virtues—community, friendship, orderliness, moderation, and justice—orderliness is in the center, for this simple reason: because the Greek word *cosmiotēs* is derivative from *cosmos*, order, and this key implication comes out here. The whole is held together by geometric equality, what we call proportionate equality, i.e., not by arithmetic equality, by simple equality. And here is the implicit criticism of democracy: one man, one vote, all get equal shares, are supposed to get equal shares. But if the shares are to be changed according to merit, then you have proportionate or geometric equality. And the root of the whole thing is, then, geometry. In 503d, Socrates had mentioned the form, the idea, toward which the craftsman must look, but he did not strictly speaking say he must look towards the idea. He said he must look towards something⁶ in order to impress the form on the matter on which he works. Now he tells us what that is toward which the craftsman, at least the highest craftsman, the statesman, must look: this is the whole, the *cosmos*. [He must look] with a view to the *cosmos*, to the visible *cosmos*—this *cosmos*, not with a view to the ideas.

This has many implications. One of them is this: According to this passage, the highest knowledge is now no longer legislative art, as it seemed in the Polus section, nor of course rhetoric, or any other form of politics, but cosmology, a mathematical cosmology, as is clearly implied. This mathematical cosmology is the basis of true rhetoric, of the noble rhetoric or politics, which Socrates admits somehow. Now this mathematical cosmology is the genuine thing of which sophistry is the perversion. Now I think this passage in the Polus section has now become clear. You remember the proportion? [LS writes on the blackboard.] We had here (what was it?) gymnastics to medicine equal to—what was that?—legislative art to punitive justice. Good. And here we had cosmetics to pastry cooking [equal] to sophistry to rhetoric. We understand now why sophistry is a perversion of the highest knowledge. That would not make sense if the highest knowledge were the legislative art as such. But if the highest form of knowledge is the true understanding of the whole, what is now here indicated by the suggestion of a mathematical cosmology, then it becomes intelligible that its perversion should be sophistry, that⁷ [which] the sophists are concerned with.

I explained to you last time that there is a certain connection between these things here, mathematical cosmology and rhetoric, and the Socrates of Aristophanes in the *Clouds*, who also has a kind of mathematical cosmology and is a teacher of rhetoric. And in the *Clouds*, Socrates is presented as a man of outstanding temperance or moderation. These three features, which are presented obviously comically in the *Clouds*, are presented here in a not–comical manner as peculiarities of Socrates and what he stands for. The *Gorgias* is a reply to the *Clouds*, to Aristophanes’ accusation of Socrates, among other things. It implies also that only this cosmologist can be the true statesman, because he alone knows the model to which he must look in order to build up men. The whole history of the West,

the whole question of what political philosophy is and its relation to either metaphysics or natural science, which bothers us up to the present day, is implied in this simple proposition: that only the cosmologist can be a true statesman. In a rather perverted and crudified manner, it is the basis of course of positivistic social science up to the present day. And in the higher forms, it is still also from time to time asserted. The whole argument, then: In order to be good, a being or thing must possess order, *cosmos*, through ordering, *cosmēsis*; and hence to be good means to be orderly, *cosmios*, which has the crude, ordinary meaning of decent. To be good means to be decent, well behaved. But this “well behaved” shifts easily into “temperate” or “moderate.” And this whole requires knowledge of the *cosmos*, of the *order par excellence*, namely, what we since that time call the “cosmos,” [the] universe.

We take it for granted that people at all times had a notion of *the* world. That is an error. To understand what surrounds us as being, in a sense, one was a very great step. What we see and what all men see at all times is many, not unity. In the Old Testament, which is the only non-Greek text I know a bit, there is strictly speaking no word for world. “In the beginning God created heaven and earth.” “Heaven and earth and what is between them”—that is what the Old Testament calls what we now call the world. And *cosmos* is a relatively late word in Greek, introduced by the philosophers, by certain philosophers. “The whole,” that’s a different story. That occurs both in the Bible and very early thought, Greek thought. But to call it “the world,” this is one of the greatest steps ever taken.⁸ [Socrates] calls it here, in [508]a3, “this whole”: *to holon touto*.

Plato wrote himself a mathematical cosmology in the dialogue called *Timaeus*, in which Socrates, however, is not the speaker. I’m not interested in the fact that according to the now accepted view, the *Timaeus* was written much later than the *Gorgias*. That is really of no interest because, as I said often enough, no one can know what⁹ [was] in Plato’s mind when he began his literary career, i.e., when he wrote his earliest dialogue. Therefore these speculations are absolutely empty. But in the *Timaeus* he speaks of “this whole here.”ⁱⁱⁱ Now when you speak of “this whole here,” you imply “another whole *there*”; you imply the doctrine of ideas. The phrase used here indicates that there is no reference to the ideas here, which doesn’t mean that this is not a very important Platonic teaching. It means that it is deliberately absent from the *Gorgias* for the reason given before: the peak is missing. When he speaks here of these five virtues, as you will see in a1–2, he does not mention piety. Of course not: gods are not pious. Nor does he mention courage. Of course not: gods are not¹⁰ [courageous]. But he also does not mention wisdom, *phronēsis*, because the sages to whom he refers here were surely not Anaxagoras, the first sage who regarded intellect as the cosmic principle. It is one thing to say there is order, rationality, in the whole, and another to say reason and reason governs the whole. Yes. Now how does Socrates go on? This we should keep in mind for further reference: no doctrine of ideas in the *Gorgias*, but instead an allusion to a mathematical cosmology, and that means from Plato’s point of view that the peak is absent. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: I don’t understand from the context of this passage how this

ⁱⁱⁱ See *Timaeus* 35b1–3.

mathematical cosmology is claimed to be the highest.

LS: Ya, what can be higher than that which binds everything together? I mean, not only men and beasts and plants, but the gods, too. It's all-comprehensive.

Mr. Butterworth: But if it's not knowable—

LS: But who said that it's not knowable?

Mr. Butterworth: It's not clear in the passage that it's knowable.

LS: No, well let us keep this question in mind. Surely you are quite right. Socrates does not in any way prove here that he possesses such a mathematical cosmology or even that it's possible. That's true. But this is, so to say, the highest assertion as to the highest subject he makes. Yes?

Student: You say that the theory of ideas isn't in this, and yet in the speech about Pericles, one of the four statesmen whom he attacks for not having improved their citizens, I had the feeling that he is holding them up to some idea, unlike Aristotle might have.¹¹ [Aristotle] probably would have judged them in terms of the prudential art instead—

LS: Ya, but even—

Same student: Plato judges them on a more ideal basis.

LS: Ya, but you must see better that you use now the word "ideal" in a modern sense. You know, what is an ideal? We speak of ideals all the time. Oh, no, no, now most people speak of values. But from time to time, they speak also of ideals. But what is an ideal in the modern sense of the term? It has nothing to do, or almost nothing to do, with the Platonic idea.

Same student: No, I was using it, I was trying to use it, in a different sense, meaning that he had some idea of what the best statesman was.

LS: Ya, but Aristotle too has an idea of the best *polis*. He couldn't have written the *Ethics* without having had very clear notions of what courage and moderation and justice are. You see this is a very special form of this general notion that these virtues spoken of by everybody, including Aristotle, are ideas, self-subsisting beings—that is what Plato means by an idea. And when we speak today of [an] ideal, we mean probably a human project, a respectable human project,¹² which is not a self-subsisting being. Plato, for reasons which are very difficult to fathom, asserts that the ideas—of justice, for example—are self-subsisting beings. That is the peculiarity. That Aristotle denies. But Aristotle would of course say there are virtues, but the virtues are indeed only characters of human beings, of the souls of human beings, but nevertheless in such a way that you can speak about the virtues without reference to other things while you speak about them.

In other words, you can explain the meaning of justice without referring particularly to the soul when speaking of it. That you can do. But still, that justice exists only in the souls, derivatively also in laws and institutions, is as clear for Aristotle as it is for Plato. No, Plato in a way denies it. Plato says [that] justice pure and simple exists in no soul but is self-subsisting—to begin with, a wholly unintelligible assertion. But if we try to understand Plato, we must at least give him the benefit of the doubt that he meant something by that, although it may be very hard to ferret that out.

Same student: Well, do you think Aristotle would have been this hard on Pericles?

LS: No. He says in the *Ethics* explicitly that he takes Pericles as the example of a man of practical wisdom, in contradistinction to I do not know whom he mentions—Anaxagoras or Thales—as a man not of practical but of theoretical wisdom. No, no. But we have to see what will be the fate of Pericles later on. This way—you.

Student: I wanted to ask you: Does he mean then by “geometrical equality binds the whole universe,” that if you are a farmer and you look out in your field and see the corn growing or the rain falling, somehow there is a geometrical equality in that too? Or you look at the heavens, and there’s a geometrical equality in the heavens?

LS: Ya, how far this goes, you can get a very rough notion by just rushing through the *Timaeus*.¹³ There are fundamental proportions, proportions of the various ingredients which make a thing a complete thing. Here it’s a mere assertion and we, as Mr. Butterworth pointed out, will have to explore that much more fully. But we cannot explore it on the basis of the *Gorgias*. And one can rightly say poor Callicles is supposed to swallow that without being given any evidence. Sure. Good. That means again, to repeat the simple formula: the peak is missing. It may be indicated by a formula, but this is of course not a true presence of the peak. Yes. Now let us go on in 508a8.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Very well: either we must refute this statement, that it is by the possession of justice and temperance that the happy are happy and by that of vice that the wretched are wretched; or if this is true, we must investigate its consequences. Those former results, Callicles, must all follow, on which you asked me if I was speaking in earnest when I said that a man must accuse himself or his son or his comrade if he do any wrong, and that this is what rhetoric must be used for; and what you supposed Polus to be conceding from shame is after all true—that to do wrong is worse, in the same degree as it is fouler, than to suffer it, and that whoever means to be the right sort of rhetorician must really be just and well-informed of the ways of justice, which again Polus said that Gorgias was only shamed into admitting.” (508a–c)

LS: So, now Socrates takes now the whole dialogue in a way together, to the extent to which it can be taken together at this point. *If* the foregoing is correct, with this mathematical cosmology and so on, but also *if* moderation as understood hitherto is *the* virtue—or, which is the same thing, geometrical equality is very powerful among gods

and men—*it follows* that Socrates was right in what he said to Polus and to Gorgias. This implies that the discussions with Polus and Gorgias were wholly inadequate. Well, we know that. They rested on a basis which is now coming to the fore in a very qualified manner. These discussions with Polus and Gorgias were based on premises which are not established even now, except through a mere assertion or narrative of what the wise man, or some wise men, say. You see now, when he repeats the statement toward Gorgias in [508]b5–6, he drops now the demand that one should accuse one's father or one's fatherland. And this of course is entirely in the spirit of the moderation controlling this part of the dialogue. Moderation in this wider sense implies above all piety, and it is incompatible with piety to accuse one's father. If you do not believe me [about] that, read the *Euthyphro*, where this is developed. The right kind of orator—this is also an implication here—is just, i.e., he does nothing but just things. He has never any reason for accusing himself. Therefore the right kind of orator needs rhetoric only for the accusation of others, which is a new thing which was not clear in the Polus section. He also doesn't say now, as he said at the end of the Polus section, that rhetoric is rather useless for the just man. He is now somewhat more friendly to rhetoric, even on the surface, because he does no longer speak to a rhetorician but to a hidden enemy of speeches, to Callicles. We see also from the end of this passage that not everyone who wishes to be just must be a knower of the just things. There is a kind of justice possible which is not based on knowledge: the justice of the ordinary man.

Now let me try to give a summary up to this point. The true statesman must be able to accuse others, for he must be able and willing to punish even those who do not wish to be punished—whereas Socrates, as we know, can punish only those who wish to undergo punishment. He, the true statesman, the cosmologist, must be able to control the *demos*. And *demos* means here, in the strict sense, everyone who is not a cosmologist. How can he control it? Is he not distrusted by the *demos* since he insists on geometric equality as distinguished from arithmetic equality? Hence, does he not need rhetoric in the first place for his defense, for his self-preservation? Socrates turns now immediately to the question of self-preservation. And here there is a big break between what preceded and what follows immediately. Shall we go on? In c4.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “If this is the case, let us consider what weight, if any, there is in the reproaches you cast upon me: is it fairly alleged or not that I am unable to stand up for myself or any of my friends and relations, or to deliver them from the sorest perils, but am exposed like an outcast to the whim of anyone who chooses to give me—the dashing phrase of yours—a box on the ear; or strip me of my substance or expel me from the city; or, worst of all, put me to death; and that to be in such a case is the lowest depth of shame, as your account has it? But mine—though it has been frequently stated already, there can be no objection to my stating it once again—is this: I deny, Callicles, that to be wrongfully boxed on the ear is the deepest disgrace, or to have either my person cut or my purse; I hold that to strike or cut me or mine wrongfully is yet more of a disgrace and an evil, and likewise stealing and kidnapping and housebreaking, and in short any wrong whatsoever done to me or mine, are both worse and more shameful to the

wrongdoer than to me the wronged.” (508c–e)

LS: Ya, well, I don’t have to stress the point so frequently stressed that to some extent Socrates approaches here the language of the Sermon on the Mount. But it is not quite the same, although the kinship is amazing. Socrates admits that he cannot protect himself, his life, etc. But this much is much less important than to be just, i.e., abstaining from attacking others. To be just is derivative from to be moderate, and to be moderate means to be in a state of bliss. The unjustly persecuted man—robbed, tortured, killed—is in a state of bliss, if this argument is correct. The famous Stoic paradoxes, that the persecuted and tortured sage is in a state of perfect bliss, are clearly implied by Socrates here. That is surely a paradox. But it is also important to see that Callicles’ thesis, the opposite thesis, is also paradoxical. Callicles says, very commonsensically: no happiness possible without reasonable security against attack by others. Sure. But what do you need in order to have reasonable security? And here good old Hobbes comes in, who tells us that you need really to be practically omnipotent in order to have this security against attack. You must have power—strive for “power after power”—in order to have this security. We cannot avoid these paradoxes. We can avoid them by a certain blindness and a certain rolling along with what is sufficient for most practical purposes, but not for all practical purposes. You see here when he mentions these kinds of damage which men can do in [508]d and e, he does not mention killing among the unjust things—of course not, because one may kill justly, just as one may beat a man or box his ear justly. Stealing and the other things mentioned later, they of course are simply bad because the very terms imply that they are unjust. A remark to this effect is found in Aristotle’s *Ethics*, that you cannot raise the question how to steal, and to what extent to steal, and from whom to steal and so on, as you can very well raise the question whom to kill, on what occasion, and so on and so on, because killing—as distinguished from murdering—is in this sense neutral.

There is no reference here in this passage, and in the whole sequel where self-preservation is discussed, to the question of pleasure and pain. The problem of pleasure, in the foreground in the whole Callicles section hitherto, is now replaced by the problem of self-preservation, which is something different from pleasure. And this is confirmed by later developments. When you read Cicero’s *De finibus*, for example, you find there the Epicurean doctrine, *the* moral principle is pleasure–pain; the Stoic principle, *the* moral principle is self-preservation and not pleasure–pain. This point is already implied here. And the strange thing which happened in the seventeenth century, when self-preservation became *the* key formula for men like Hobbes and Locke and so on, [was] that¹⁴ [these men], in contradistinction to the Stoics, from whom they had this in a way first,¹⁵ were at the same time hedonists, whereas the Stoics were anti-hedonists and the [earlier] hedonists didn’t speak about self-preservation. But¹⁶ this new synthesis effected by Hobbes means that *the* fundamental principle [may be] called self-preservation on a hedonistic basis. That is, in a nutshell, the problem of the first stratum of modern political philosophy. Mr. Glenn?

Mr. Glenn: There is a problem here, in my mind, as to the cosmologist being the true statesman, because it seems to me as though the cosmologist has the same limitation that Socrates has, that prevents Socrates from being the true statesman, that is, the power of

the cosmologist, like the power of Socrates, is simply wisdom, and it is not force.

LS: He cannot as such coerce, you mean?

Mr. Glenn: That's correct.

LS: Yes. Well, then, if this were true—if the true statesman must be the cosmologist, and, more precisely, if being a mathematical cosmologist is a sufficient condition for being a true statesman—this will lead to absurd consequences. Sure, sure. In other words, then you have to make the better statement made in the *Republic*: The philosophers must become kings, philosophy and political power must coincide—i.e., given the one, you do not yet have the other. Sure.¹⁷ [Socrates] will, however, claim later on that he is the only true statesman in Athens—in this dialogue. We'll come to that.

Mr. Glenn:

LS: But still, it could still be true that mathematical cosmology is the core of statesmanship. It may still require power and may not be able, by itself, to supply the power. But it may be the eye, as it were, of politics, by virtue of which the statesman sees what he should do.

Mr. Glenn: But the implication of my question was: Would it be possible that speaking of the cosmologist as the true statesman might be an allusion to an idea? That was what I was trying to—

LS: No. Well, I would say the mere reference to form in this earlier passage we read is a sufficient allusion to that. But what is equally important, I think, for us—in a way more important—is the silence of the *Gorgias* about the ideas. And I hope in a fairly short time, at the end of this class, to bring some of these threads together in a clear way. But we must have more data. Good. Now let us go on in 508e6.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “All this, which has been made evident on the lines I have stated some way back in our foregoing—” (508e–509a)

LS: No, he says “above.” That's very funny¹⁸ in an oral communication—as if, for example, a lecturer would say, “I have said above,” instead of saying “before.” Now this may mean simply a deliberate destruction of the dramatic delusion, [indicating] that this is not a speech but a writing—something which Aristophanes likes to do in his comedies, and which in itself, of course, [is] something comical. Destroying the tragic delusion is fatal to the tragedy; destroying the comical delusion is an enhancement of the comedy. But it may also¹⁹ [have] the meaning “above” in the sense that we have descended from there to where we are. But let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “above in our foregoing discussion, is held firm and fastened—if I may put

it rather bluntly—with reasons of steel and adamant (so it would seem, at least, on the face of it) which you or somebody more gallant than yourself must undo, or else find you cannot make a right statement in terms other than I now use. For my story is ever the same, that I cannot tell how the matter stands, and yet of all whom I have encountered, before as now, no one has been able to state it otherwise without making himself ridiculous.” (508e–509a)

LS: Yes. Socrates knows nothing. We have heard that before, in 506a, for example. Socrates knows nothing, but philosophy does. But there is a certain difficulty in these statements because philosophy is somehow *in* Socrates. Yet Socrates does not simply assert that philosophy vouches for what he has said before—naturally, he cannot do that because of the defective character of his arguments. The fact that no one could ever maintain the opposite view against Socrates proves by itself, not the truth of what Socrates asserted, but only that Socrates was a better dialectician. And therefore we really do not know. Remember the statement in 459 about the orator, or rhetorician: “an ignorant man persuading ignoramus.” And to some extent that can also be true even of Socrates. When he speaks here of speeches of iron and steel, nothing seems to be stronger. But are they really the best bonds? If you read *Laws* 645a, you will see that the best bonds are the golden bonds of reason. These are not the golden bonds of reason; these are of baser metal. Yes. 509a7.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Well now, once more I assume it to be so; but if it is so, and injustice is the greatest of evils to the wrongdoer, and still greater than this greatest, if such can be, when the wrongdoer pays no penalty, what rescue is it that a man must be able to effect for himself if he is not to be ridiculous in very truth? Is it not one which will avert from us the greatest harm? Nay, rescue must needs be at its shamefullest, if one is unable to rescue either oneself or one’s own friends and relations, and second to it is inability in face of the second sort of evil, and third in face of the third, and so one with the rest; according to the gravity attaching to each evil is either the glory of being able to effect a rescue from each sort, or the shame of being unable. Is it so or otherwise, Callicles?”

Call.: “Not otherwise.” (509a–c)

LS: So in other words, Callicles admits in theory this formal statement. There is an order, a descending order, of evils, and a corresponding order of the nobility or beauty of repelling the evils in question. [On] that they agree. But what is the order of rank, i.e., whether the greatest injustice is doing injustice or suffering injustice, that of course remains still the issue. Now how do we go on?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then of these two, doing and suffering wrong, we declare doing wrong to be the greater evil, and suffering it the less. Now with what should a man provide himself in order to come to his own rescue, and so have both of the benefits that arise from doing no wrong on the one hand, and suffering none on the other? Is it power or will? What I mean is, will a man avoid being wronged by merely

wishing not to be wronged, or will he avoid it by providing himself with power to avert it?"

Call: "The answer to that is obvious: by means of power." (509c–d)

LS: Well, I think no one would disagree with Callicles or Socrates at this point. If you wish not to suffer harm, that's not enough. Good. Now the more interesting question.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc: "But what about doing wrong? Will the mere not wishing to do it suffice—since, in that case, he will not do it—or does it require that he also provide himself with some power or art—" (509d–e)

LS: "and art."

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "and art, since unless he has got such learning or training he will do wrong? I really must have your answer on this particular point, Callicles—whether you think that Polus and I were correct or not in finding ourselves forced to admit, as we did in the preceding argument, that no one does wrong of his own wish, but that all who do wrong do it against their will."

Call.: "Let it be as you would have it, Socrates, in order that you may come to a conclusion of your argument." (509e–510a)

LS: You remember there is still the pressure of Gorgias' authority that the argument be finished, and Callicles has to go on whether he likes it or not. That's his punishment. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc: "Then for this purpose also, of not doing wrong, it seems we must provide ourselves with a certain power and art."

Call.: "To be sure." (510a)

LS: Let us stop here. So assuming that doing injustice is worse than suffering injustice, one must still admit that suffering injustice is bad. One must try to avoid *both* doing injustice and suffering injustice. Hence we will need two kinds of helps with a view to these two kinds of good things—not suffering injustice, not doing injustice. You see, he does no longer speak here of pleasure and pain, but of different good things. In order to avoid suffering injustice, the wish or will does not suffice, for one must also have power and an art. In order to avoid doing injustice, the wish or will (Kant's good will) are not sufficient. For—and that is indeed a very unKantian reason—no one wishes to act unjustly. People act unjustly only because they do not know better, and therefore knowledge is needed, but apparently, in addition to knowledge, some power too. Of course, no one also wishes to suffer injustice. To that extent, both seem now to be strictly parallel. [That] no one wishes to suffer injustice can be granted without difficulty; [that] no one wishes to do injustice is somewhat paradoxical. At any rate, we need a power and art also for avoiding doing injustice. This is a very grave step. In an earlier passage, it

was suggested, for example, that practicing moderation is sufficient. Practicing is not enough: you must learn and practice, as it is said here. This implies, of course, that only the man who possesses knowledge, only the *technikos*, the knower, can be just. But Socrates does not say any longer that the art, or knowledge, is sufficient for being just, as he said in the *Gorgias* section, you know when we found this atrocious argument in 460b. But if no man, not even Socrates, should possess that knowledge, all men necessarily act unjustly, lacking the knowledge, while no one is unjust strictly speaking, because no one wishes to act unjustly. This is an interesting thought in—you remember, we had to make the distinction between the man acting justly or unjustly and the unjust man when we read the *Polus* section in 472d and other places, where Mr. Glenn wanted from me a proof that this Aristotelian distinction between the unjust man and the unjustly acting man is already Platonic. Yes?

Student:

LS: Ya, well, that is an absolutely commonsensical assertion which was admitted by everyone, so to speak, except Socrates. But we see here also that Socrates knew this, that this commonsensical observation is perfectly sound. I mean, if what we read about Mr. Giancana^{iv} is correct, in the newspapers, then of course he knows very well what is justice. He employs a mouthpiece, as they call him, for informing him about the just things, so that he will do them with impunity. So surely it is possible. I mean, what Socrates means must belong to such a high stage of sublime reflection, which we have not yet reached, and we can therefore disregard it for the time being—especially since Socrates admits it here as a matter of fact. But let me finish this point of the argument. Even if there is that art or knowledge of the just things, most men surely do not have it. Most men, under all conditions, will act unjustly while they are not unjust men. What is the practical meaning of this assertion? We must not become indignant about them. They act unjustly, but they do not know better. That’s also something which occurs in the New Testament, as you know. And in Plato this is stated very clearly in the Second Book of the *Republic*, a statement of Adeimantus toward the end of his speech which implies no indignation.^v But we can also draw the other conclusion, which is very important . . . granting that most men act unjustly, and we don’t wish to suffer injustice, the greatest necessity for us is surely an art or power for avoiding suffering injustice. Because this is the primary theme here, the art for avoiding suffering injustice, as distinguished from an art for avoiding doing injustice. To this we turn now. Yes? 510a6.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Now what can be the art of providing so that we suffer no wrong, or as little as possible? Consider if you take the same view of it as I do. For in my view it is this: one must either be a ruler, or even a tyrant, in one’s city, or else an associate of the existing government.” (510a)

LS: Ya, a “comrade” here [would be] a bit closer. “Comrade” was a quasi–political term for “party man.” Yes?

^{iv} LS is referring to Chicago Mafia boss Sam Giancana.

^v *Republic* 366c–d.

Mr. Reinken:

Call: “Do you note, Socrates, how ready I am to praise, when you say a good thing? This seems to me excellently spoken.” (510b)

LS: Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then see if this next statement of mine strikes you as a good one too. It seems to me that the closest possible friendship between man and man is that mentioned by the sages of old time as ‘like to like.’ Do you not agree?”

Call.: “I do.”

Soc.: “So where you have a savage, uneducated ruler as tyrant, if there were some one in the city far better than he, I suppose the tyrant would be afraid of him and could never become a friend to him with all his heart?”

Call.: “That is so.”

Soc.: “Nor a friend to anyone who was much inferior to him either; for the tyrant would despise him and never show him the attention due to a friend.”

Call.: “That is true also.”

Soc.: “Then the only friend of any account that remains for such a person is a man of his own temper, who blames and praises the same things, and is thus willing to be governed by him and to be subject to his rule. He is a man who will have great power in that state; him none will wrong with impunity. Is it not so?”

Call.: “Yes.” (510b–d)

LS: I suppose any consideration of municipal government in Chicago and other places, or even in smaller units, will prove the eternal truth of these statements. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Hence if one of the young men in that city should reflect: In what way can I have great power, and no one may do me wrong?—this, it would seem, is the path he must take, to accustom himself from his earliest youth to be delighted and annoyed by the same things as his master, and contrive to be as like the other as possible—” (510d)

LS: “Master” means, of course, that he will be a slave. The correlative of the master is a slave. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Is it not so?”

Call.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “And so this man will have attained to a condition of suffering no

wrong and having great power—as your party maintain—in the city.”

Call.: “Certainly.”

Soc.: “And of doing no wrong likewise? Or is it quite the contrary, if he is to be like his unjust ruler, and have great influence with him? Well, for my part, I think his efforts will be all the opposite way, that is, towards enabling himself to do as much wrong as possible and to pay no penalty for the wrong he does; will they not?”

Call.: “Apparently.”

Soc.: “And thus he will find himself possessed of the greatest evil, that of having his soul depraved and maimed as a result of his imitation of his master and the power he has got.” (510d–511a)

LS: Ya. Now let us stop here for one moment. So we are concerned with the art for not suffering injustice—an art, surely, in which everyone, even Callicles, is of course interested. It consists either in ruling in the city, even tyrannically, or²⁰ [in being] on friendly terms with the established regime. But friendship with the established regime means, of course, assimilation to it, and this may mean assimilation to something very bad. Now let us consider the argument a bit more closely. The first possibility: If a savage, an uneducated tyrant, rules, a man much better than the tyrant will be feared by that tyrant, and cannot be a whole-hearted friend of the tyrant. This is clear. A man much worse than the tyrant will not be accepted by the tyrant as a friend; but he will of course, precisely because he is despised,²¹ be safe. One way of safety is, of course, to be a very low fellow, a worm. Third, only a man more or less similar to the tyrant and yet willing to be the subject of the tyrant, self-effacing, will be safe under the tyrant’s rule. But this requires that he must be willing to act unjustly, i. e., to ruin his soul.

Now Socrates does not discuss all eventualities. Which does he not discuss? First, that the philosopher may rule himself. Second, that the tyrant might be gentle and educated; he doesn’t have to speak of a savage and uneducated tyrant if there are no tyrants of a different description. Third, that the regime be decent, or at least tolerably decent, and then it should also not be too difficult to assimilate oneself to it. Socrates does not prove, of course, that political life as such must be shunned. He proves it only, at the most, in certain extreme cases. The argument also implies, when he speaks of the central possibility, the man who is even inferior to the savage and uneducated tyrant, that there are depths below depths. There are people who are even inferior to the savage and uneducated tyrant. And I think that is possible, because [there are] some qualities [that] any tyrant must have: some ability to command, and command loyalty, and so on, yes? I think that is all we need. You see here of course that Callicles is here very much interested, because up to a certain point Socrates just talks common sense, which everyone—I mean, every non-moronic man, however unscrupulous—must admit to be true. Yes?

Student: Can’t a tyrant have plenty of good men

LS: What would be the Socratic analysis of this phenomenon? They assimilated

themselves to the exterior of Cyrus. Now the exterior of Cyrus was very respectable and nice. In other words, their innocence saved them and made them excellent tools of the ruler. This is a phenomenon not limited to the Persia of the sixth century. Ya? Good. Now you see, the rudiments of the political things are all in [here], naturally. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “You have a strange way of twisting your arguments, at each point, this way or that, Socrates! Surely you know that this imitator will put to death anyone who does not imitate his master, if he pleases, and will strip him of his property.” (511a)

LS: The funny thing, of course, is that Socrates’ property was not worth taking away by any tyrant, you know. This particular argument cannot have been very powerful towards Socrates. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “I know that, my good Callicles, if I am not deaf, as I have heard it so often of late from you and Polus and from almost everyone else in the town; but you in return must hear what I say—that he will put a man to death if he pleases, but it will be a villain slaying a good man and true.” (511b)

LS: Ya, “a perfect gentleman,” one could translate. So we see again here that Callicles is genuinely interested. He says quite rightly that the one who assimilates himself to the established regime will kill the one who does not assimilate himself to the regime. Socrates admits this as a matter of course, making the other also commonsensical and true remark that the assimilator to the bad regime is morally inferior to the man whom he kills, which Callicles also does not deny, but he is not pleased with that. We can understand that. The next utterance of Callicles is very important.

Mr. Reinken: *Call.:* “And is not this the very thing that makes one indignant?” (511b)

LS: *Yes, yes.* Callicles is morally indignant about the power of the wicked. You know, Callicles is a very complicated character, as we have seen. This is one part, and perhaps this is the noblest and the deepest part of Callicles: the indignation about the power of the wicked. I suppose [this is] the [same] thing which many of you must feel when²² [you] read about the power of the Syndicate in this city and the police and the law enforcing agencies are fettered by all kinds of [laws] designed for the protection of the innocent and ruthlessly and shamelessly exploited by the guilty, and you can’t do anything about it. One can understand if someone has the desire—yet this is a very decent motive, and yet a very dangerous, morally dangerous, motive, because it leads eventually to an acceptance of the methods of the wicked. And where do we stop? Yes?

Student: Is that why Socrates said above, not too long before this, that even if we are treated unjustly, we should not become indignant, because there is a danger inherent—

LS: That is implied, ya. I cannot trust my memory sufficiently, but I have the dim

recollection that in Dante's *Inferno* there is a discussion of this, a very fine subtle discussion of this question. The point where—is it in the ninth Canto? I do not know—Dante becomes for the first time indignant.^{vi} And it is of course a nasty tyrant who approaches him there in the inferno, and then he gets angry at him and hits him. And that is very intelligible but very dangerous. It is perhaps the noblest sin, if one can say so. But it is still a grave matter, yes? But I repeat also this point: Callicles is extremely complicated. You know, he was the same man who spoke in favor of ruling with an iron hand so as to have the maximum of fun, satisfying the desires. That's the same man. And I think what Plato means [is] that, if you accept this principle, this principle of moral indignation and acting on it, you arrive eventually at this tyrannic life of self-indulgence. I wouldn't be surprised if this is what he meant, because you adopt the methods of the wicked, and you become wickeder and wickeder. Good. Now let us go on, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Not if one is a man of sense, as our argument indicates. Or do you suppose that the object of a man's efforts should be to live as long a time as possible, and to cultivate those arts which preserve us from every danger; such as that which you bid me cultivate—rhetoric, the art that preserves us in the law courts?” (511b–c)

LS: Socrates says here “concerned with self-preservation.” He doesn't speak here about the indignation question. He leaves this open because the primary question is self-preservation, which requires forensic rhetoric, obviously: You can be unjustly accused; you can save yourself only by the use of forensic rhetoric. Self-preservation is here identified with living as long as possible, and this is not respectable. The conclusion: forensic rhetoric, being in the service of that end, cannot be respectable. But one can rightly raise the question: Is concern with self-preservation identical with concern with getting [to] one hundred years old? After all, if a man of thirty tries to preserve himself, you cannot rightly impute to him such an irrational desire. Is lack of concern with self-preservation not identical with in fact committing suicide? Very necessary questions. But however this may be, the more simple and obvious point: the theme is no longer pleasure or pain but self-preservation. Now let us see the answer of Callicles.

Mr. Reinken: *Call.:* “Yes, by Zeus, I do, and sound advice it is that I give you.” (511c)

LS: You know, Callicles is here absolutely honest, and honestly certain that what he says is what every sensible man must admit. You see here his oath, and in making his next speech two lines later also an oath. Here²³ we have the best and most solid part of Callicles, where almost all men—I would even say all men, *including Socrates*—must agree with him. But this takes some time until we can see whether Socrates in fact agrees with him. Let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “But now, my excellent friend, do you think there is anything grand

^{vi} LS may be thinking of Dante's encounter with Filippo Argenti on the River Styx in the Canto VII.

in the accomplishment of swimming?”

Call.: “No, by Zeus, not I.”

Soc.: “Yet, you know, that too saves men from death, when they have got into a plight of the kind in which that accomplishment is needed.” (511c)

LS: Ya, “into something of that kind”—well, namely into water. He doesn’t mention water here, for some subtle reasons perhaps. Water reminds of the sea, and the sea reminds of the Athenian naval empire, which also has its root in self-preservation. This is clearly developed by Thucydides, by the way, this Hobbean thought: You are concerned with self-preservation, you have to do many more things, you have to expand, you have to build up an empire. So the just motive, only self-defense, leads to unjust expansion. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “But if this seems to you too small a thing, I will tell you of a more important one, the art of piloting, which saves not only our lives but also our bodies and our goods from extreme perils, as rhetoric does.” (511c–d)

LS: By the way, what can he mean [by] “our lives and also our bodies”? Can the pilot save our lives without saving our bodies at the same time? Literally translated of course: “souls.” But that piloting would save souls in the strict sense would of course not make sense. What can he mean by that? My suggestion is this: bodies may of course also mean dead bodies—the Greek word. And did dead bodies sometimes play a great role in Greek political life?

Student: Well, after Greek battles took place the question of whether or not the remains could be saved—

LS: The battle of Arginusae, where the victorious generals were killed because they had not saved the corpses. I think that he means that. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “And at the same time it is plain fashioned and orderly, not giving itself grand airs in a pretense of performing some transcendent feat; but in return for performing the same as the forensic art—bringing one safely over, it may be, from Aegina—it charges a fee, I believe, of two obels; or if it be from Egypt or the Pontus, at the very most—for this great service of bringing safe home, as I said just now, oneself and children and goods and womenfolk—on landing us in harbor it charges a couple of drachmae; and the actual possessor of the art, after performing all this, goes ashore and strolls on the quay by his vessel’s side, with an unobtrusive demeanor.—” (511d–e)

LS: Ya, you see, so if forensic rhetoric is respectable because of its life-saving character, every life-serving knowledge is respectable, obviously. Not Socrates, but Callicles is like a shoemaker—shoemaker also protecting our feet, contributing to lifesaving. The

sequence here is quite amusing: him and his children or sons (“sons,” I would translate here) and possessions and women. Women come last, after the possessions. A very old fashioned morality, because women are replaceable and may bring him a new dowry, whereas . . . for example, horses are irreplaceable. That was a time when there was not yet insurance against such things. You see how the values are affected by social institutions. Yes? Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “For he knows, I expect, how to estimate the uncertainty as to which of his passengers he has benefited by not letting them be lost at sea, and which he has injured, being aware that he has put them ashore not a whit better than when they came aboard, either in body or in soul. And so he reckons out how wrong it is that, whereas a victim of severe and incurable diseases of the body who has escaped drowning is miserable in not having died, and has got no benefit at his hands, yet, if a man has many incurable diseases in that part of him so much more precious than the body, his soul, such a person is to live, and he will be doing him the service of saving him either from the sea or from a law–court or from any other peril whatsoever: no, he knows it cannot be better for a man who is vicious to live, since he must needs live ill.” (511e–512b)

LS: Ya, this modestly–walking pilot without any pretense of being a big man is based on a very solid reasoning: he knows that life is not unqualifiedly good because to live badly is worse than to be dead. Yes. And now, therefore? Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “This is why it is not the custom for the pilot to give himself grand airs, though he does save our lives—” (512b)

LS: Ya, the “custom”—the Greek word is *nomos*. Socrates shows how sensible that *nomos* is—that custom, that convention—that the pilot should not give himself great airs. The *nomos* is in this case, not in all cases, based on a sound reasoning, and the reasoning [is] here ascribed to that sensible pilot. Therefore it is a sound *nomos*, to be respected. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “nor for the engineer either, my admirable friend, who sometimes has the power of saving lives in no less degree than a general—to say nothing of a pilot—or anyone else: for at times he saves whole cities. Can you regard him as comparable with the lawyer? And yet, if he chose to speak as you people do, Callicles, magnifying his business, he would bury you in a heap of words, pleading and urging the duty of becoming engineers, as the only thing; for he would find reasons in plenty. But you none the less despise him and his special art, and you would call him ‘engineer’ in a taunting sense, and would refuse to bestow your daughter on his son or let your own son marry his daughter.—” (512b–c)

LS: Yes. You see, from the point of view of life saving, the maker of machines is respectable. He means of course here war machines, like the famous ones built later on by Archimedes by which he saved Syracuse. This machinist is sometimes superior to generals, who after all may lose cities. But the implication: even the generals are supposed to save cities. They are also life savers in their way, and therefore the implication is that the art of the general is not more respectable than that of the swimmer, the pilot, and the machinist. The word *mēchanai*, machines, means literally contrivances, devices, wiles. And of course the orator and the general, naturally,²⁴ also [use] wiles and contrivances. This is another indication for the closeness of these professions, the one highly respected, the general, and the others looked down on by the gentlemen. Yet Callicles despises these lowly men, as distinguished from the generals. He, the despiser of *nomos*, follows *nomos*, an unreasonable *nomos* according to this argument here. Life saving is something low; this is the point. It is not a worthy goal for cities either. For a city, too, it is true that it is better to become extinct than to live badly, or merely to vegetate. Yes. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “And yet after the praises you sing of your own pursuits what fair grounds have you for despising the engineer and the others whom I was mentioning just now?” (512c–d)

LS: I mean, you must not think of the present–day engineer who has studied at a university of course—who has a very high social standing, as we know—for what he means here by an engineer. A “mechanic” would perhaps be a better translation, in the sense in which the word is used in the Shakespearean plays and other older literature. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “I know you would claim to be a better man and of better birth. But if ‘better’ has not the meaning I give it, but virtue means just saving oneself and one’s belongings, whatever one’s character may be, you are merely ridiculous in cavilling at the engineer and the doctor and every other art that has been produced for our safety.” (512d)

LS: The physician too, is a life saver, don’t forget that; although the physicians were looked up to rather than despised in the society of that time. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “No, my gifted friend, you may find that the noble and the good are something different from saving and being saved. For as to living any particular length of time, this is surely a thing that any true man should ignore, and not set his heart on mere life; but having resigned all this to Heaven and believing what the women say—that not one of us can escape his destiny—he should then proceed to consider in what way he will best live out his allotted span of life; whether in assimilating himself to the constitution of the state in which he may be dwelling—and so therefore now, whether it is your duty to make yourself as like

as possible to the Athenian people, if you intend to win its affection and have great influence in the city—” (512d–513a)

LS: “Great power in the city.” Stop here. So Callicles has no right whatever to his contempt of these lowly people because of his high regard for life saving. Contempt for the common craftsman and for the forensic rhetorician are legitimate only from Socrates’ point of view. Socrates can afford to look down on the craftsmen of protection and life saving. Socrates’ point of view is to some extent identical with that of the reasonable pilot, as we have seen—a humble man, what he thinks. But Socrates, of course, in contradistinction to that reasonable pilot, refuses to assimilate himself to the *demos* of Athens, whereas that reasonable pilot is of course a man of the *demos*. The physician, as we have seen, is mentioned here. But if medicine is also a life-saving art, this is good for forensic rhetoric. Then forensic rhetoric after all can be an art, if the others are also life saving, but indeed a low art; that is not denied. And when he speaks here of women—of “the women even admit that”—the point of view is no longer that of moderation here but that of manliness or courage. Manliness implies a certain kind of piety, a kind of piety to be found even among women—not praying for a longer life, but taking what heaven sends. And he contrasts this shortly after—can you read the next few lines?

Mr. Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “see if this is to your advantage and mine, so that we may not suffer, my distinguished friend, the fate that they say befalls the creatures who would draw down the moon—the hags of Thessaly; that our choice of this power in the city may not cost us all that we hold most dear—” (513a)

LS: Ya, now, these sensible women referred to first are opposed to the witches of Thessaly. Thessaly was notorious for witches. They tried to bring down the moon, bring about an eclipse; they tried to control the gods or to tell the gods what they should do, praying that the gods should give them a long life, whereas the poor humans cannot possibly know whether a long life will not be long misery. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “But if you suppose that anyone in the world can transmit to you such an art as will cause you to have great power in this state without conforming to its government either for better or for worse, in my opinion you are ill-advised, Callicles; for you must be no mere imitator, but essentially like them, if you mean to achieve any genuine sort of friendship with Demos the Athenian people, ay, and I dare swear, with Demos son of Pylilampes as well—” (513a–b)

LS: You know, the *demos* of Athens and Demos the individual, the son of Pylilampes. You remember that from the beginning. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “So whoever can render you most like them is the person to make you a statesman in the way that you desire to be a statesman, and a rhetorician—” (513b)

LS: No, no, no, that is not right: “in the way you will wish to be a politician, a politician and rhetorician.” That’s a different Yes ?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “for everybody is delighted with words that are designed for his special temper, but is annoyed by what is spoken to suit aliens—unless you have some other view, dear creature. Have we any objection to this, Callicles?” (513b–c)

LS: How did he translate the last word of endearment? “Beloved head,”^{vii} literally, occurs in the beginning of the *Antigone*. I do not know what it means precisely here, but it is a beautiful expression, reminding us of the fact that if we love a human being, we love above all his or her head, which is elementary but not always considered. So nothing short of this assimilation will do for the politician and orator. Now in a way, Callicles has already completed this assimilation, as is shown by his concern with life saving, a concern which underlies the most respected arts and the *polis* itself. Yes.

Now I will try now to summarize as briefly as I can what we have learned today in connection with what we have learned before. Forensic rhetoric is nothing grand, but, like swimming, piloting, and making of machines, something lowly. Callicles groundlessly asserts that it is something grand. His notion is based on mere convention, nothing but convention. His fundamental contradiction consists in this: he praises manliness above everything else and yet his overriding concern is with life saving. Not he, but Socrates, is the man, the courageous one. Yet, in spite of their lowliness, the three arts mentioned are arts, not forms of flattery. Remember the mention of medicine, which after all is also a life saving art, if we disregard these nasty people who say medicine is the most killing art in the world—you know, Moliere and other people. Protection [is the end], even in the case of shoemaking: after all, that [protects] a part of your body. Even farming: without farming, no food—life—protection. Even generals are supposed to save the cities. What is wrong with trying to preserve oneself? In *The Apology of Socrates*, Socrates asks himself the question: Why did he not go into politics?^{viii} And he refers to this *daimonic* thing which he had in himself, which prevented him from going into politics. Whenever he tried to do something political, this *daimonic* thing warned him against doing that. But this *daimonic* thing had a reason, which Socrates brings out. It prevented him from going into politics in order to prevent Socrates’ premature death. In plain English, it acted for the preservation of his life. I cannot now go into the question what that *daimonic* thing is. I believe, if we understand it properly, it would become very simply clear that this is a thought not only limited to the *Apology* but [belonging] to Socrates’ thought as a whole. Life is surely not the highest good, which can very simply be proven. We admire many people—for example, Plato—who are dead, and we despise many people who are alive. This would be impossible if life were simply the highest good. But nevertheless, life is a good.

From this it follows that forensic rhetoric is or can be an honest art. It belongs to the

^{vii} *philē kephalē*.

^{viii} See *Apology of Socrates* 31d ff.

company of the arts of swimming, piloting, medicine, and generalship, as distinguished from cosmetics and pastry cooking. So we have arrived at a great vindication, an important vindication, of forensic rhetoric. Already in the *Gorgias* section, it had become clear that the rhetorician needs forensic rhetoric for his self-defense, because of his lack of omnipotence. Now what is true of the rhetorician is of course at least equally true of the philosopher: that he needs forensic rhetoric for his self-defense. Why does Socrates deny, or disregard, this obvious necessity? He denies or does not grant that rhetoric is to be used for self-defense. He does grant that rhetoric is to be used for self-accusation. But (508b) since the philosopher is by definition just, he does not use rhetoric for *self*-accusation, but only for the accusation of others. But this is a legitimate use granted and emphasized by Socrates.

Now whom will he accuse? You remember the end of the *Polus* section? Those with whom he is most concerned, his nearest and dearest, among them his city. The self-defense of the philosopher is possible only as the accusation of his city. And therefore a self-defense which is not that accusation is to be dismissed. Why is that so? The self-defense of the philosopher implies as such that he recognizes the *polis* as the judge of him as a philosopher, as the judge of philosophy, as the tribunal which rightfully can call philosophy before itself, as an authority to which philosophy is subject. But this is, in the language of the old philosophers, against nature that the higher should owe a justification to the lower. The only just thing is to question this claim of the *polis*, to call the *polis* before the tribunal of philosophy, to accuse the city which does not recognize philosophy, to use accusatory rhetoric. And that is what Socrates does in the *Gorgias*. And the whole shocking statements about Pericles, Themistocles, and so on—this is all accusatory rhetoric. But can the *polis*, or the *demos* (which is the same), understand the charge made by philosophy? Can it understand what philosophy is? Only if the peak of philosophy, which is the core of philosophy, is disregarded. By the way, this simple phrase—“peak” or “core”—is, I think, a simple formulation of what teleology means: the peak is the core, and, though the peak²⁵ seems to be the extreme, [it] is the core,²⁶ that around which everything else has to be understood. In *The Apology of Socrates*, as well as in the *Crito*, Socrates recognizes the authority of the *polis* and its laws. He has to. In the *Gorgias*, he questions that, without making fully clear the character of the claim of philosophy. Only in the *Republic* does he make fully clear the claim of philosophy, and therefore he asserts in the *Republic*, but not in the *Gorgias*, that the philosophers must be rulers.

Now this has also another side. The *polis* calls philosophy before its bar. Philosophy, in its turn, calls the *polis* before its bar. This implies that if philosophy is called before the bar of the *polis*, philosophy will be found guilty. The philosopher's speech of self-defense will be in fact an act of self-accusation. *The Apology of Socrates*, reasonably read, is an act of self-accusation. Socrates does not refute the charge—that means he accuses himself. He is guilty as charged. Whether this charge is sensible is the question, which is of course not answered there.

I would like to add one more point. The peak is missing, I said. The peak of philosophy is missing. Philosophy as shown in the *Republic* is in itself the best and most pleasant thing. The *Gorgias* argument is based on the divorce of the good and the pleasant, so that there

cannot be this natural coincidence of the best and the pleasant: and thereby hangs the whole tale of the *Gorgias*. But I will explain this next time. This much only to show²⁷ this simple thing which occurred to me only now, although I have read the *Gorgias* *n* times, from my childhood on, I can say—honestly, literally. Someone said to me today that the *Gorgias*—oh, you—that the *Gorgias* is the most beautiful Platonic dialogue. I felt that once very strongly; I think I cannot maintain it anymore. It's surely a very attractive dialogue. But, at any rate, this simple thing: the rhetoric as self-defense, rejected; as self-accusation, praised. Once one sees that, one arrives at some overall unity, which without it one would not see. So. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: This is a question which you ignored in the summary, but which came up during . . . you referred to the passage of the pilot taking souls and bodies and riches across the water. And in order to explain the meaning of it, you told us to go to Thucydides and you stated what seems to be a Greek idea. Now, at the beginning of the course, we made a convention—

LS: Absolutely. I fully agree with you, and if I am—still, I can of course say this. Plato did not write for human beings who had radically different notions in important respects from those which people had in his time, and therefore we need some preparation for that which we do not necessarily get from Plato. And in that preparation, Thucydides is particularly helpful. I would say, ideally, I'm in favor of as pedantic a procedure as possible. It is perfectly possible that I wouldn't need Thucydides for the purpose and only my insufficient knowledge of Plato compels me to refer here to the very well known passages in Thucydides. Now what was the precise point where I referred to that? The Athenian Empire—

Mr. Butterworth: No, it was regarding the two generals who were killed because they had—

LS: Oh, that is indicated in the *Apology*, how Socrates behaved when he was in charge of the assembly on that day—[his tribe held] the prytany on that day—of the trial of the generals. But indeed it is true that I—by the way, this is not in Thucydides, of course, this is in Xenophon, the story of the generals.

Mr. Butterworth: There is also a story in Thucydides, though, isn't there?

LS: But not the Arginusae. That's later, that comes in Xenophon, and from Xenophon it becomes very clear that the issue was not [the] saving of the live sailors but of the corpses. On ritual grounds, they had to be buried.

Mr. Butterworth:

LS: You are quite right, but still I would put it this way. Let us not be super strict—I mean, since fortunately Thucydides' work, for example, is preserved, [as are] some comedies of Aristophanes—that would be a much graver charge, that I use Aristophanes, whom I use much more regularly than I use Thucydides. I mean, let me put it this way

(and I meant it all the time this way, by the way): if an author refers to another author, it is our duty to read that other author if we can, i.e., if his writings have not been lost. For example, who will dare to speak about Locke without having read the judicious Hooker, to whom Locke defers all the time or very frequently? You must admit that. In other words, my true rule—I may have stated it incompletely at the beginning, but one must state rules incompletely also for making them sink in for the first time; the footnotes can easily be added later—what I meant is [that] the references, the explicit references made by an author to other authors are authentic signposts which the conscientious interpreter has to consider. I mean, the foolish attempt to be wiser than the wise consists in trying to figure out from I don't know what obscure writers, or inscriptions, or whatever it may be, information thought to revolutionize the whole understanding. That is nonsense. But the writers whom Plato refers to—I mean, Homer he refers to, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, of course, too—one should, if one can, know them. And it is not beyond human power to familiarize oneself more or less with them. To understand them properly is also long. So I think, come to think of it, Mr. Butterworth, you are wrong with your criticism. [Laughter]

Mr. Butterworth: The reason I made an issue of it, and the reason I did at the beginning, is because last year when we read Rousseau, I noticed how much you had depended on his knowledge of certain historical facts to explain allusions that he made to historical figures, and somehow these, to my knowledge, are not explained by Rousseau in the text. You have to have this from an outside source. And in any case, they shed a great deal of light on the text.

LS: Yes, but, I mean, I have not a very profound knowledge of political history, so it must have been rather well known facts known from the well known historians and even from excerpts and . . . made from these historians. In other words, what every schoolboy knew in the eighteenth century was surely known by Rousseau. But I suppose, if one wants to be pedantic, one would simply go to Rousseau in other places or to Montesquieu—

[gap in the tape at this point]

—historical merely, but eyes and ears, for example. I mean, it may presuppose these things, this knowledge. And yet, too, that we have two ears but only one nose, or, you know, this kind of thing—

[gap in the tape at this point]

—one must neglect this simple rule. Well, and I'm one of the worst culprits, too. It took me ten, fifteen years that I had been studying [Machiavelli] with interruptions²⁸ until the simple idea occurred to me that one of the two or three authors of his own time—in a way, the only author of his own time—whom Machiavelli ever mentions in his books is Savonarola. He refers explicitly to Savonarola's writings, not only to his actions. And I never had taken the trouble to study Savonarola, which I find in retrospect disgraceful. I tried to make good, so to speak, in the last minute. But no, it is one of these rules which

are obvious—

[gap in the tape at this point]

—neglect. I believe that if they were hammered in,²⁹ [at] an early stage, when one is studying, hammered in like simple rules of arithmetic and so on, this would be done as a matter of course. And simple, trivial rules can become important only and necessarily if they are habitually neglected—only for this reason.

Mr. Butterworth: But the thing is, it seems that you are stating this in such an extreme form because of the fact that there are things that Plato took for granted about the facts of his day [that] we can't take for granted today, and somehow we have to go to an outside source.

LS: Ya, sure. I'll tell you, it occurred to me to state these things for the first time about fifteen years ago when I had to discuss Spinoza. I remember that distinctly. And when I looked through much of the Spinoza literature, which I did at that time, it was quite amazing what outlandish and fanciful things were suggested as the key to Spinoza, which had no basis whatever in Spinoza's own signposts. For example, to mention the most outlandish, in my opinion, which I have heard: Spinoza is "the philosopher of the Baroque." But Spinoza didn't even know that there was such a thing as "Baroque," although he lived more or less at that time. But there is no proof of any interest of him in these kinds of things. And there are much more massive things to which he refers. You can make some clever remarks (how do you call it? fireworks?) by speaking of the connection between Spinoza, or Leibnitz for that matter, and the music of Bach and with the sculpture and architecture of the Baroque. It's fun to read these things on a Sunday afternoon [laughter], but they don't enlighten. Now is there anyone else? So we will conclude.

[end of session]

ENDOTES TO SESSION THIRTEEN

¹ Deleted "the peak."

² Deleted "monologous."

³ Deleted "to."

⁴ Deleted "because."

⁵ Deleted "thank you very much." LS seems to be responding to someone in the room who has done him a favour.

⁶ Deleted "and."

⁷ Deleted "what."

⁸ Deleted "he."

⁹ Deleted "has been."

¹⁰ Deleted "pious."

¹¹ Deleted "he."

¹² Deleted "and."

¹³ Deleted "to get a notion."

¹⁴ Deleted "they were."

- 15 Moved “these men.”
- 16 Deleted “in.”
- 17 Deleted “but he.”
- 18 Deleted “that.”
- 19 Deleted “mean that.”
- 20 Deleted “to be.”
- 21 Deleted “he will.”
- 22 Deleted “they.”
- 23 Deleted “he.”
- 24 Moved “use.”
- 25 Deleted “which.”
- 26 Deleted “from.”
- 27 Deleted “that.”
- 28 Moved “Machiavelli.”
- 29 Deleted “in.”

Session 14: no date

[In progress] **Leo Strauss:** —the central paradox of the dialogue: rhetoric is good for self-accusation; rhetoric is bad if used for self-defense. The first statement is made in the name of moderation or temperance, understood here as *the* virtue and as identical with bliss. The second statement, that rhetoric is bad if used for self-defense, is made in the name of courage or manliness. We observed the shift from moderation to manliness, and in addition we have seen a variety in the lists of virtues or vices. In some lists, these and these virtues [are] mentioned or these and these vices; [and] in others, others. These things are usually neglected because people assume that Plato uses a hard and fast doctrine of the unity of virtue: that virtue as such is identical with knowledge. But this doctrine of the unity of virtue and that virtue is knowledge is an indication or an enigma rather than a hard and fast theory. There is also another Platonic doctrine relating to the same subject. For example, in Plato's *Statesman* the task of the statesman is described as mating the courageous or manly with the moderate or temperate. This wouldn't make sense if there were not a distinction between the two types and therefore between the two virtues. And this is presented in the *Statesman* and in the other dialogue, its sister dialogue, the *Sophist*, in the following manner: The one interlocutor, Theaetetus, is characterized by temperance or moderation, and the other interlocutor, the young Socrates, is manly. In the *Republic* you find the same division: Glaucon, the manly; Adeimantus, the temperate. Even in the *Laches* you can recognize that: Laches, the manly, and Nicias, the temperate. So in other words,¹ that there is a variety of distinct virtues, each with a character of its own, [is as much a Platonic doctrine] as the unity of virtue. And therefore we have to watch these little things.

Now to understand the central paradox which I mentioned—rhetoric is well used for self-accusation, and it is badly used for self-defense—we must consider the use of rhetoric by the philosopher, by Socrates. His self-defense against the unjust accusation for his philosophizing implies the recognition of the authority of the *polis* over philosophy, which recognition he cannot admit. On the other hand, Socrates cannot accuse himself for the additional reason that he is just, i.e., a man who does not commit unjust acts, and he surely does not commit an unjust act by philosophizing. So self-defense is out. Self-accusation is out. What remains? Only accusation of others, i.e., of his nearest and dearest, because to accuse one's enemies, that is not a particularly impressive moral action—his nearest, his dearest, his very family, his fatherland, his *polis*. The self-defense of the philosopher takes on the form of accusation of his city. And that means calling the *polis* before the bar of philosophy. And this is done in the *Gorgias*. But the *polis* cannot understand the charge in its fullness, because the *polis* cannot understand philosophy. Philosophy can only be understood by people who philosophize. In the self-defense of the philosopher, which is identical with the accusation of the *polis*, the peak or core of philosophy must be missing because the addressee wouldn't understand it. Hence we have seen the silence² [about the] ideas in the *Gorgias*. But most importantly, the *Gorgias* is silent about the fact that philosophy is in itself both the best and the most pleasant, as³ comes out clearly in the *Republic*. The *Gorgias*, on the contrary, asserts the

divorce of the good and the pleasant. This divorce is indicated in the Callicles section in the following manner. There are sections dealing with pleasure or pain, and then there is a section, entirely different, dealing with self-preservation, i.e., with something good, in contradistinction to the pleasant. But the foundation for this whole thing is laid in the Polus section: the good is distinguished from the pleasant in such a way that they have nothing to do with each other. And this distinction between the good and the pleasant is of course underlying the distinction between art and flattery, and [is] therefore basic for the whole dialogue. Pleasure is downgraded. The possibility that there are arts which, while aiming at the good, may at the same time aim also at the specific pleasure going with that good, this possibility is tacitly excluded. And also—what belongs to the same context—the higher forms of pleasure are completely disregarded: the pleasures deriving from honor and, above all, the pleasures deriving from philosophy. The discussion concentrates on the lower pleasures, the pleasures of the body, because in this case the divorce of the pleasant from the good is most easily achieved. We are supposed to eat in order to live, to preserve ourselves, but we can divorce the pleasure of eating without any regard to its natural function, as you know. And it may go with impunity even for some time, but surely the divorce is possible. The same, of course, applies to drink and sex, too.

The central formulation in the Polus section is this: the noble is the good plus pleasant. Good plus pleasant. This understanding of the noble you would also find in the chapter on the noble or fair in the First Book of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, as one meaning of "noble."ⁱ But this means in itself the good and the pleasant belong together. Yet Socrates succeeds in imposing on Polus the view that the good by itself *or* the pleasant by itself constitutes the noble. And this leads to Polus' downfall and all the complications. But the most interesting result of course is the absurd consequence, that punishment and undergoing punishment is noble. That can be proven only on the basis of this separation of the good and the pleasant, in contradistinction to their belonging together. We can say the paradox of the Polus section, due to this obscurity regarding the relation of the good and the pleasant, is that punishment takes the place of instruction. And Socrates thus prepares the nobility of self-accusation as the most important thing.

Now one last remark on this subject. The divorce of the good and the pleasant, in contradistinction to their belonging together: there is one virtue in which the divorce of the good and the pleasant is most visible. Some of you will remember the famous Horatian verse, "*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*," "It is sweet and decorous to die for the fatherland." The sweetness—that is the very great paradox of that poet who has written a poem in defense of throwing away one's shield,ⁱⁱ which was the supreme act of cowardice, according to classical notions. In the case of courage as distinguished from all other virtues, *the* key act is not pleasant, but decorous, but noble. [In] Aristotle's *Ethics*, the analysis of courage is of crucial importance; and in my opinion Aristotle begins his analysis of the virtues with courage because he regards courage as the lowest virtue, and it is the lowest virtue because this fully satisfying character of the full act, which you have in the case of all other virtues, you cannot have in the case of courage. Which

ⁱ *Rhetoric* 1366a33–35.

ⁱⁱ Horace, *Odes* 2.7.10.

doesn't mean that courage is not noble and not necessary. Of course it is. But it is not the highest virtue. In brief, this divorce of the good and the pleasant is most intelligible from the point of view of courage or manliness. And it is from this point of view of manliness that it is shown that self-defense is bad. The dialogue is in a particular way the manliest dialogue, the dialogue in which harsh duty without its natural compensation, the pleasure accompanying it,⁴ [is] emphasized. This much in summary of what we have said before.

Now we have to turn to our text. It is unfortunately impossible for me to make up for the session which I lost, so we will not be able in all probability to read the myth at the end, and I won't be able to go beyond an introduction to the myth. But we will try to read up to that point in the usual manner. Mr. Reinken, will you begin where we left off? 513c4–6.

Mr. Reinken:

Call: “It seems to me, I cannot tell how, that your statement is right, Socrates, but I share the common feeling; I do not quite believe you.” (513c)

LS: Callicles is impressed by Socrates' statement that salvation, self-preservation, requires assimilation to the *demos*. He is also somehow aware that he has already effected that assimilation, that he belongs to the many. Socrates replies to that in the next sentence.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Because the love of Demus, Callicles, is there in your soul to resist me: but if haply we come to examine these same questions more than once, and better, you will believe.” (513d)

LS: Ya, Socrates says that, “You do not belong to the many, Callicles, but you long for them.” *Eros*, love, means longing. “Therefore, since you do not belong to them, you might be persuaded if we were to repeat our discussion on our subject frequently and, above all, better, on a higher level.” That we have not had a discussion on the highest level we have seen more than once. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “But now, remember that we said there were two treatments that might be used in the tendance of any particular thing, whether body or soul: one, making pleasure the aim in our dealings with it; the other, working for what is best, not indulging it but striving with it as hard as we can. Was not this the distinction we were making at that point? (513d)

LS: Socrates returns now to the issue [of the] good and pleasant, i.e., the distinction, if not opposition, of the two, a distinction which he had disregarded in the discussion of self-preservation—i.e., Socrates returns now from the tacit admission that forensic rhetoric is an art, if a lowly one, to the assertion that it is not an art but a flattery. But he speaks here only of the constitutive pursuit—of gymnastic, not of the restorative pursuit, of medicine. And the gymnastic is, as we have seen, cognitively low. You need a much

higher training for being a physician than for being a gymnastic trainer. Yes. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “Certainly.”

Soc.: “Then the one, aiming at pleasure, is ignoble and really nothing but flattery, is it not?”

Call.: “Be it so, if you like.”

Soc.: “And the aim of the other is to make that which we are tending, whether it be body or soul, as good as may be.”

Call.: “To be sure.”

Soc.: “Then ought we not to make it our endeavor, in tending our city and its citizens, to make those citizens as good as possible? For without this, you see, as we found in our former argument, there is no use in offering any other service, unless the intentions of those who are going to acquire either great wealth or special authority or any other sort of power be fair and honorable. Are we to grant that?”

Call.: “Certainly, if you so prefer.” (513d–514a)

LS: Ya, let us see. So the consequence of the distinction between the good and pleasant for politics: to make the citizens themselves good is the condition for any other benefit one may bestow upon them being a genuine benefit. In other words, if you make them rich, this would not be a benefit to them if they are not able to use their wealth decently and properly. It’s a very topical subject, as I do not have to point out. But this implies, of course, also that the concern for self–preservation, for example, is conditionally good—namely, if you preserve the lives of people who will make a good use of their lives, then it is good, not otherwise. Yes. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then if you and I, Callicles, in setting about some piece of public business for the state, were to invite one another to see to the building part of it, say the most important erections either of walls or arsenals or temples, would it be our duty to consider and examine ourselves, first as to whether we understood the art of building or not, and from whom we had learnt it? Would we have to do this, or not?”

Call.: “Certainly.” (514a–b)

LS: Here Callicles does not make any qualification, because what Socrates says is necessary from his point of view, too. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “And so again, in the second place, whether we had ever erected any building privately for one of our friends or for ourselves, and whether such building was handsome or ugly? And if we found on consideration that we had been under good and reputable masters, and that there were many handsome buildings that had been erected by us with our masters’ guidance, and many also by ourselves alone, after we had dispensed with our masters, it might, in those

circumstances, be open to men of sense to enter upon public works: but if we had neither a master of ourselves to point to, nor any buildings at all, or only a number of worthless ones, in that case surely it would be senseless to attempt public works or invite one another to take them in hand. Shall we agree to the correctness of this statement or not?"

Call.: "Yes, to be sure." (514b–d)

LS: Now if we wish to engage in politics, our first task must be to find out whether we possess the art of making the citizens good, because this building is obviously only an example for what we are driving at. The example is building, erecting public buildings, a constructive art—literally, an *edifying* art. The New Testament word for edification is the same as the Greek word used here.ⁱⁱⁱ One cannot translate Plato's term by edifying, yet it is not an accident that this meaning of edification came out of it. Edification means this, you know, "building up." Yes. But the full meaning of this will appear only from the sequel. The next speech, please.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "And so too with all the rest: suppose, for instance, we had undertaken the duties of state—physicians, and were to invite one another to the work as qualified doctors, we should, I presume, have first inquired of each other, I of you and you of me: Let us see now, in Heaven's name; how does Socrates himself stand as regards his body's health? Or has anyone else, slave or free, ever had Socrates to thank for ridding him of a disease? And I also, I fancy, should make the same sort of inquiry about you; and then, if we found we had never been the cause of an improvement in the bodily condition of anyone, stranger or citizen, man or woman,—by Heaven, Callicles, would it not in truth be ridiculous that men should descend to such folly as that, before having plenty of private practice, sometimes with indifferent results, sometimes with success, and so getting adequate training in the art, they should, as the saying is, try to learn pottery by starting on the wine-jar, and start public practice themselves and invite others of their like to do so? Do you not think it would be mere folly to act thus?"

Call.: "I do." (514d–e)

LS: First he had spoken of a constructive art; now he turns to medicine, a restorative art. But here he raises an additional question which was not raised in the case of the builder: Are we ourselves healthy? And the application is clear: Are we ourselves healthy in mind, if we are to try to help others to be healthy in mind? You see also a concern with slaves is mentioned. Whether a man is a good physician can be seen also in what he did to slaves—that doesn't make any difference. And the application to matters of the mind is also clear: if someone is a good physician of the soul, it can be shown by his treatment of slaves as well as of free men. In both cases, building and medicine, successful private practice must precede the attempt to engage in the public activity. The risk is smaller, in a way, if they do it privately. Only a few people are hurt if they do it wrong. But if they would be in charge of the whole, the calamity would be much greater. Socrates makes himself here the example, not Callicles—in other words, out of politeness, of course.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Greek word is *oikodomeō*.

Another implication: Medicine is an art, as all admit; and medicine is meant also, among other things, to save lives. Then of course the saving of life, self-preservation, is a legitimate end.

Student: Why does Socrates use such strong language in this speech?

LS: Why do you find it particularly strong?

Same student: Well, I think he doesn't say "I swear to God" usually

LS: I see, and he hadn't used that in the case of the building? Ya? The builders? No, I think he didn't. I have a remark about that. Will you permit me to finish these things?

Same student: I'm sorry.

LS: No, no, you shouldn't be sorry. Now if medicine is an art, self-preservation is a legitimate end. Now if this is so we have this conclusion: No one should claim that he can save the city (say, as the general) if he has not proven that he can save himself, i.e., that he has been a success in his private life. Well, in the case of a treasurer, I believe it is rather obvious that you wouldn't choose as a treasurer a man who is notoriously bad in husbanding his own finances. But that can be enlarged. Here we have two oaths,⁵ just as in the parallel case in 511c, which you might consult. The first oath, which we can translate "by the gods," is ascribed to the elector, to the voter. The second, "by Zeus," is ascribed to Socrates. Now why are the oaths here? Health is more important than houses, I would say. The natural health of body or soul is not the product of human art, and therefore it can be traced to the gods. Ya? This I would say. Here he is silent on teachers of medicine, whereas he had spoken of teachers of the art of building. Now this prepares the silence on the teachers of the political art, because there are none—in the strict sense of "political art" as Socrates understands it. You see, Socrates is possibly a physician of slaves. Does this ring any bell? Do we know Socrates as a kind of physician of slaves, or something like that, from anywhere? Well, the *Meno*, which is the sequel to the *Gorgias*: Socrates conversing with a slave—although not for the slave's sake, but we can easily see him doing the same for a slave. Socrates is less a physician of women, as we know from his own special case. Good. Now let us go on. Now, is your question satisfactorily [answered]? Good. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "And now, most excellent sir, since you are yourself just entering upon a public career, and are inviting me—" (515a)

LS: No, wait: "since you are just entering the public arena." Callicles is not yet, or barely, an actual politician. I have said this before but I think it can stand being repeated. There are very rare cases in the Platonic dialogues where Socrates talks with actual politicians—very rare. One would expect⁶ [such conversations] from what he says in the *Apology*, about his walking around in the marketplace all the day and buttonholing everyone: "Did you take care of your virtue today?" It sounds a bit like that. One would

expect [that] Socrates talks all the time to grown up men [who are] politically active. But the evidence of the Platonic dialogues is against that—very rare. Here there is not a single normal political man with whom he talks. There are some. The *Laches* is the clearest case of a dialogue with grown up full politicians. There are some others, but very few. And this is not sufficiently stressed in the literature. Therefore I emphasize it. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “and are inviting me to do the same, and reproaching me for not doing it, shall we not inquire of one another: Let us see, has Callicles ever made any of the citizens better? Is there one who was previously wicked, unjust, licentious, and senseless, and has to thank Callicles for making him an upright, honourable man, whether stranger or citizen, bond or free? Tell me, if anyone examines you in these terms, Callicles, what will you say? What human being will you claim to have made better by your intercourse? Do you shrink from answering, if there really is some work of yours in private life that can serve as a step to your public practice?” (515a–b)

LS: Now, Socrates applies the general procedure now to Callicles the politician. Socrates does not ask him whether he has had any teachers in the political art because obviously there were none. After we have seen that the four great statesmen were no statesmen, who could it be? Now there are three questions which he addresses to Callicles, as you see. And the central one is very interesting, namely: “Is there any man who was the lowest of the low in every respect and has become through you a top gentleman?” One can safely say that this is an unusually unfair demand. Socrates seems to be extremely unfair. But he shows his fairness by his last question, including the improvement of women, or wives, which in Greek is the same word. In other words, Socrates’ own weak spot. Callicles replies. What does he say?

Mr. Reinken: *Call.:* “You are contentious, Socrates!” (515b)

LS: Ya, I think here⁷ we can sympathize with Callicles because the demands were somewhat unfair. Yes. Socrates will broadly be redeemed. I would like to mention: when he speaks here of virtues, or vices rather, he does not have piety nor courage—I mean, if you translate the vices into the opposite virtues, as anyone can easily do. Now, may I mention here another rule of reading in authors like Plato? I saw this rule first and most clearly in Xenophon, who is in this respect more obvious than Plato is. Xenophon has the habit of never saying anything bad about anyone—extreme gentleness, you can say. For example, he praises a man for these and these virtues. But in order to understand that praise, you have to have in front of you a list of all the virtues, and then you see which virtues are missing, and you can be sure that the individual in question lacks these particular virtues; and the superficial impression of sweetness and gentleness is produced by this very simple device. Now in the case of Plato in such matters, surely you have to do the same thing. When he mentions some virtues, [the question of] which virtues are mentioned and which are disregarded has to be raised. And if we had the time and the proper training, we would have to answer in each case: Why the silence on these particular virtues or vices here? But at any rate, this complete list of the virtues must be

present to one's mind. Now in the case of Plato, it's relatively simple because Plato has reduced these virtues to the four cardinal virtues, which everyone can easily know by heart and see which is missing in a particular case. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "No, it is not from contentiousness that I ask you this, but from a real wish to know in what manner you can imagine you ought to conduct yourself as one of our public men. Or can it be, then, that you will let us see you concerning yourself with anything else in your management of the city's affairs than making us, the citizens, as good as possible? Have we not more than once already admitted that this is what the statesman ought to do? Have we admitted it or not? Answer. We have: I will answer for you. Then if this is what the good man ought to accomplish for his country to accomplish for his country—" (515b-c)

LS: "His city." But "country" is a tolerable translation because country is a modern equivalent to city, but it is not the same. *Polis* is not necessarily translated by "country." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "recall now those men whom you mentioned a little while ago, and tell me if you consider that they showed themselves good citizens—Pericles and Cimon and Miltiades and Themistocles."

Call.: "Yes, I do." (515c-d)

LS: Now, wait. We have seen [that] Callicles does not pass the test for having ever transformed the lowest of the low into a paragon of virtue. But one can rightly say: Who will pass that test? Surely not the four great Athenian statesmen. But this is of course not the full story. Now this subject, the four names, we know already from [the] earlier discussion I mentioned. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "Then if they were good, clearly each of them was changing from worse to better. Was this so, or not?"

Call.: "Yes."

Soc.: "So when Pericles began to speak before the people, the Athenians were worse than when he made his last speeches?"

Call.: "Perhaps."

Soc.: "Not 'perhaps,' as you say, excellent sir; it follows of necessity from what we have admitted, on the assumption that he was a good citizen."

Call.: "Well, what then?"

Soc.: "Nothing: but tell me one thing in addition,—whether the Athenians are said to have become better because of Pericles, or quite the contrary, to have been corrupted by him. What I, for my part, hear is that Pericles has made the Athenians idle, cowardly, talkative, and avaricious, by starting the system of public fees."

Call.: “You hear that talk from the folk with battered ears, Socrates.”
(515d–e)

LS: I.e., the John Birchers,^{iv} [laughter] the right–wing people, the Laconists, the imitators of Sparta. Pericles is said to have made the Athenians worse, not better. But this is said by Pericles’ political enemies, not by Socrates. Callicles obviously belongs to the Periclean, let us say, democratic, party. We noted this before. Now, we will see from the sequel that Socrates does not agree with these right–wing people, but he is nevertheless very critical of Pericles. His criticism is, however, different. Let us read the next speech of Socrates.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Ah, but what is no longer a matter of hearsay, but rather of certain knowledge—” (515e)

LS: “But what I know”—“I and you know evidently, clearly.” Not rumor, but now we come to knowledge. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “for you as well as for me, is that Pericles was popular at first, and the Athenians passed no degrading sentence upon him as long as they were ‘worse’; but as soon as they had been made upright and honourable by him, at the end of our Pericles’ life they convicted him of embezzlement, and all but condemned him to death, clearly because they thought him a rogue.”

Call.: “What then? Was Pericles a bad man on that account?”

Soc.: “Well, at any rate a herdsman in charge of asses or horses or oxen would be considered a bad one for being like that—if he took over animals that did not kick him or butt or bite, and in the result they were found to be doing all these things out of sheer wildness. Or do you not consider any keeper of any animal whatever a bad one, if he turns out the creature he received tame so much wilder than he found it? Do you, or do you not?”

Call.: “Certainly I do, to oblige you.”

Soc.: “Then oblige me still further by answering this: is man also one of the animals, or not?”

Call.: “Of course he is.”

Soc.: “And Pericles had charge of men?”

Call.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “Well now, ought they not, as we admitted this moment, to have been made by him more just instead of more unjust, if he was a good statesman while he had charge of them?”

Call.: “Certainly.”

Soc.: “And the just are gentle, as Homer said. But what say you? Is it not so?”

^{iv} LS is referring to the John Birch Society, founded in 1958.

Call.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “But, however, he turned them out wilder than when he took them in hand, and that against himself, the last person he would have wished them to attack.”

Call.: “You wish me to agree with you?”

Soc.: “Yes, if you consider I am speaking the truth.”

Call.: “Then be it so.”

Soc.: “And if wilder, more unjust and worse.”

Call.: “Be it so.”

Soc.: “Then Pericles was not a good statesman, by this argument.”

Call.: “You at least say not.”

Soc.: “And you too, I declare, by what you admitted. And now about Cimon once more—” (515e–516d)

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment. Now what is Socrates’ criticism of Pericles? If Pericles had made the Athenians better, they would not have persecuted him at the end of his life. This is a clear proof that he was a bad herdsman of human beings. Now in the sequel, we will see that Socrates claims to be the only true statesman in Athens. But his fate was even worse than that of Pericles. He was executed, and not merely accused. Hence Socrates himself was not a true statesman, if this argument is valid. I have here a reference to a note by Dodds, in reply to this criticism: “People asked whether Socrates had made Alcibiades and Critias better men”—his acquaintances—“whether Plato had made Dionysius II a better man, and whether the Athenians’ treatment of Socrates did not disprove his claim to be a statesman. To the last point the answer no doubt is that Socrates was not a statesman and did not pretend to know how to teach virtue; if Plato makes him claim to be a true statesman, it is only in the sense of claiming to know the general principles on which the statesman should act.”^v This is a kind of whitewashing and disposing of the problem which has no basis in the facts. When Socrates speaks of the true statesman, he means of course one who has the power, the ability, of the statesman, and what is good of Pericles in his criticism of Pericles is of course good as criticism of Socrates, too.

Now, how could one explain that the Athenians acted in this nasty manner to their benefactor, Pericles? Could it not be true that the Athenians opposed Pericles because of the great demands he made on them, on their patriotism, etc.? And would this not also explain why they killed Socrates, because he made too great demands on them? Which is, of course, the only sensible interpretation. The examples of horses and cows here, and asses—ya, sure, but I suppose that men are somewhat more complicated beasts than horses, cows, and asses, and above all—[that] point will come later. Here, for the action, we only know that Callicles is unable to defend Pericles, i.e., to hold his own against Socrates. This is surely important. We found here in 516c2: “It is the work of the good citizen to make his fellow citizens better,” which means in plain English every citizen is supposed to be a statesman, because that’s the duty of the statesman. Now this is a formulation of democracy, where every citizen is in a way supposed to be a statesman. From Socrates’ point of view, however, it means that every citizen is supposed to be a

^v Dodds, 355.

philosopher, if philosopher and statesman are not separable. Philosophizing is a moral duty. That specific natures are required for philosophizing is disregarded. Or you can also turn it around: if every citizen is supposed to be a statesman, then those citizens who cannot be statesmen should not be citizens, i.e., the radically anti-democratic solution would follow as well. Ya, I think, let us go on here where we left [off].

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* “And now about Cimon once more—” (516d)

LS: Oh, ya. Here in this passage, this transition, Callicles denies that the conclusion follows from the premises which he had granted. Socrates affirms that they follow by an oath, “by Zeus.” Now the oath would not be necessary if the conclusion did follow. We have seen this frequently: no place for oaths in Euclid. Pericles is a model for Callicles. Callicles is unable to defend his model. He is therefore unable to help himself. If he cannot defend his ideal, he cannot defend himself. He is unable to help himself over against Socrates, just as Pericles was unable to help himself over against the *demos*. If Pericles was helpless against the *demos*, Callicles, too, is likely to be helpless against the *demos*. Socrates, too, is helpless against the *demos*. But there is this difference between Callicles and Socrates: Callicles is helpless over against Socrates *and* over against the *demos*; Socrates is helpless only over against the *demos* and not against these individuals. In other words, Callicles is unfit for both philosophy and politics. Socrates is unfit only for politics. Yes. Now let us go on. 516d5.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “tell me, did not the people whom he tended ostracize him in order that they might not hear his voice for ten years? And Themistocles, did they not treat him in just the same way, and add the punishment of exile? And Miltiades, the hero of Marathon, they sentenced to be flung into the pit, and had it not been for the president, in he would have gone. And yet these men, had they been good in the way that you describe them, would never have met with such a fate. Good drivers, at any rate, do not keep their seat in the chariot at their first race to be thrown out later on, when they have trained their teams and acquired more skill in driving! This never occurs either in charioteering or in any other business; or do you think it does?”

Call.: “No, I do not.” (516d–e)

LS: Ya, let us stop there. Now, Socrates discusses now the three other great Athenian statesmen in the correct order, ascending in time from Cimon to Themistocles, who was earlier, to Miltiades, who was still earlier, and ascending in the severity of the persecution, as you can see from the example. Now what does this mean? The Athenians of old were as savage as the Athenians of Pericles’ time; they were as savage persecutors. And therefore we see now the false premise of the critique of Pericles in 516a–b. Pericles did not take over tame Athenians and they became wild afterward. This was the conservative, reactionary—however you call it—theory: “the good old times.” Socrates does not agree with that. Such a change as maintained by the opponents of Pericles has not taken place. All statesmen are confronted with an untamable and untamed *demos*. The *demos* is by its nature recalcitrant to *logos*. “*Demos*” does not have here anymore the

class meaning: the poor. It means all non-philosophers. Now when he speaks here in the example of Miltiades of a president, or in Greek *prytanis*, does this ring a bell? Yes?

Mr. Reinken: Socrates himself, so to speak, saved Miltiades in his own time. He argued—

LS: He did not save him.

Mr. Reinken: He tried.

LS: He tried. Ya, but where this *prytanis* in Miltiades' time succeeded, Socrates failed. Socrates failed. Yes. Callicles asserts that the good statesman will be safe. That is the implication. But this notion of the statesman is as utopian as Socrates' notion. Callicles takes the low road—"I want to preserve myself; in order to preserve myself I have to have good connections; I have to belong to the ruling party, and so on"—whereas Socrates says "no." He refuses to do anything of this kind. But Callicles' hope to get safety by political activity is as utopian as Socrates' manifestly utopian notion. Here he changes the simile: not the taming of the beast, but rather increased competence in controlling it can be expected. In proportion as the demands of philosophy are lowered, those on the political art are heightened. Socrates is driving at the identification, at the simple identification, of philosophy with the political art. Already in the Polus section, we saw that the highest art was called the legislative art, a political art.

Now let me now make a summary. The four men possessed neither true rhetoric—⁸I'm sorry, we should read the next speech.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "So what we said before, it seems, was true, that we know of nobody who has shown himself a good statesman in this city of ours. You admitted there was nobody among those of the present day, but thought there were some amongst those of former times, and you gave these men the preference. But these we have found to be on a par with our of the present day; and so, if they were orators, they employed neither the genuine art of rhetoric—else they would not have been thrown out—nor the flattering form of it." (516e–517a)

LS: So the four men possessed neither true rhetoric nor the flattering one. No reason is given here why they lacked the flattering rhetoric. The reason why they lacked the true rhetoric is given. True rhetoric guarantees against failure or persecution. Yes?

Student: If they pleased the people

LS: We have here only this fact. Socrates asserts they didn't have the flattering rhetoric, but he didn't give any reason why they lacked that. He does give a reason why they lacked the true rhetoric, and that has been the whole preceding argument. We must try to understand that, and I will try now to give an explanation of that. Or, what is your difficulty?

Same student: It just seemed obvious that they lacked it, because if they pleased the people, then they wouldn't

LS: I see. Perhaps one can say it. But I believe there is somewhat more. Let me try to explain that. To repeat the facts: they lack the true rhetoric because they failed, and they lack the flattering rhetoric. True rhetoric guarantees against its failure or persecution. But in what would the success of flattering rhetoric consist? That is your question, but I believe I made it a bit more incisive. In what would it consist? In the same: saving, no successful persecution. And this we must try to understand. Self-preservation, which is the end of the flattering rhetoric, is also the accidental result of the true rhetoric. The end of the rhetoric is to make them better, but the accidental result is salvation for the politician. Ya? So to repeat, the self-preservation which is the end of flattering rhetoric is also the accidental result of the true rhetoric, but flattering rhetoric is said to aim at the pleasant. Answer: one cannot pursue the best without pursuing incidentally the pleasant. Hitherto it looked this way: There is a lowly art of forensic rhetoric which, as an art, aims at a good, if at a lowly good; and there is a high art of noble rhetoric, which makes the citizens better, i.e., gentler, i.e., tamer, in the same way in which the horseman's art makes the horses gentler. The highest art then too has to use the carrot, you know, if the carrot is one of the things which the horseman uses. The highest art too must gratify the citizens to some extent. There is a partial coincidence then of high rhetoric, low rhetoric, and flattery.

Let me restate the difficulty. The true art of rhetoric leads to virtue and is opposed to flattery which is concerned with pleasure. The true noble rhetoric is also distinguished from the lowly forensic rhetoric which aims at self-preservation, which however is a good, not as such pleasant. The conclusion is: the strict separation of the three cannot be maintained. The fundamental difficulty is this: What is that virtue at which the noble rhetoric aims? The most frequent answer was justice. But what is justice? This question is never raised in the whole dialogue, let alone answered. Therefore, all kinds of confusions are inevitable given the lack of clarity about these subject matters. The argument further implies that success is a sufficient criterion for competence in rhetoric in all its forms. But is this true? Are physicians always successful? Physicians are less successful as a rule than shoemakers. You know the many jokes about the physicians the proof of whose competence [is]⁹ buried in cemeteries, and therefore—there are many jokes in many languages about that. So physicians are less successful than shoemakers. Let us generalize. The higher the art, the less normal is the success, and therefore success cannot be the answer. At least as good a reason for the failure of the rhetoricians is the fact that rhetoric is not omnipotent. Therefore, just as we have seen before, there is a certain community of the situation between Socrates and Gorgias. There is also such an agreement of the situation between Socrates and Pericles. [In] both cases, speeches are not powerful enough to get what they want. Socrates and Pericles are both unjustly persecuted. That the persecution was successful in both cases merely proves that rhetoric is not omnipotent and doesn't prove lack of success in the decisive respect. The tacit premise of the critique of the four statesmen is then, indeed, the omnipotence of speech.

We can also state it as follows. It sounds horrid to say that the true rhetoric is not possible without some borrowings from flattery. But if we remember another key doctrine of the ancients, the assertion will lose its shocking character. According to the strict logic, the only title to rule which is unqualifiedly sound is that of wisdom. But this leads to the gravest practical difficulties as everyone can easily see. And therefore the view of all sound men throughout the ages has been [that] there must be another principle of legitimacy apart from wisdom. And this is called consent. The simplest statement of that, and [the] clearest, you would find in Plato's *Laws*, page 757: wisdom and consent. The wise man, in other words, must not merely try to get what is wise, but only to the extent to which his wise proposals are acceptable to the community. He must adapt himself. He must listen to the community; he must adapt himself to it—but that means here *not* because he will learn something wise. No. He only will learn *how wise he can be in the circumstances*. He will adapt himself. He will gratify the non-wise. He will flatter them. And from this point of view, it is even trivial to say that flattery is an essential part of politics. It is of course not a nice word, and Socrates has used this shocking word in order to make clear to us a difficulty, that there is in one sense something shocking in the idea. If I remember well, it is more shocking to young people than to old ones that some manifestly sound things simply cannot be done because, as one says, the community is not yet ripe for it. That means, however, strictly stated, it is a concession to folly, a gratification of folly, a flattery of folly. But that is the best we can have. And therefore the radical statement of the *Gorgias*: high rhetoric, low rhetoric, flattery, strictly distinct; yet without a fusion of the three, no politics is of course possible. And even this, the most perfect fusion of the three, would not be in any way a guarantee of success. Obviously. There is no omnipotence of *logos*—*logos* now understood even as that of the prudent political speech. There is no guarantee whatever. Yes, I think we can leave it at that. Now let us go on here, Mr. Reinken, 517a. .

[change of tape]

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “But still there can be no suggestion, Socrates, that any of the present-day men has ever achieved anything like the deeds of anyone you may choose amongst those others.”

Soc.: “My admirable friend, neither do I blame the latter, at least as servants of the state; indeed, I consider they have shown themselves more serviceable than those of our time, and more able to procure for the city the things she desired. But in diverting her desires another way instead of complying with them—in persuading or compelling her people to what would help them to be better—they were scarcely, if at all, superior to their successors; and that is the only business of a good citizen. But in providing ships and walls and arsenals, and various other things of the sort, I do grant you that they were cleverer than our leaders.” (517a–c)

LS: Now Callicles says [that] however defective these four men may have been, they were by far superior to those now. Socrates grants this gladly. It does not affect at all

what he is concerned with. Yes. The next speech.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Thus you and I are doing an absurd thing in this discussion: for during all the time that we have been debating we have never ceased circling round to the same point and misunderstanding each other.” (517c)

LS: More literally, not “absurd,” but “ridiculous.”^{vi} Now, the comical character of the *Gorgias* has been mentioned a few times. Naturally, the comedy which takes place here is not what we can call a theatrical comedy, a comedy fit for the theater. It is a comedy which becomes visible only when we think about each step. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “I at all events believe you have more than once admitted and decided that this management of either body or soul is a twofold affair, and that on one side it is a menial service, whereby it is possible to provide meat for our bodies when they are hungry, drink when thirsty, and when they are cold, clothing, bedding, shoes, or anything else that bodies are apt to desire: I purposely give the the same illustrations, in order that you may the more easily comprehend. For as to being able to supply these things, either as a tradesman or a merchant or a manufacturer of any such actual things—baker or cook or weaver or shoemaker or tanner—it is not wonder that a man in such capacity should appear to himself and his neighbors to be a minister of the body; to every one, in fact, who is not aware that there is besides all these an art of gymnastics and medicine which really is, of course, ministrations to the body, and which actually has a proper claim to rule over all those arts and to make use of their works, because it knows what is wholesome or harmful in meat and drink to bodily existence, whereas all those other know it not; and hence it is that, while those other arts are slavish and menial and illiberal in dealing with the body, gymnastics and medicine can fairly claim to be their mistresses.” (517c–518a)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. Now when you look at this enumeration in d5, you know, a kind of traders, small or large business men, and then he speaks of the producers. And then we have the producer of grain, the producer of pastry, the weaver, the shoemaker, and the tanner. Since these are all subdivisions of the producer, we count seven: small trader, large trader, maker of grain, and so on. And we find the maker of pastry in the middle. What does this strange thing mean here? Yes?

Student: He makes the parallel to the baker when he speaks before Athens—

LS: No, we are not yet this far. Let us [stay] here in the immediate context. What is the making of pastries, according to this statement?

Student: An art.

^{vi} *geloion*.

LS: An art! That's terrific. In other words, what I said in general terms, [that] the distinction between art and flattery is weakened [and] is no longer so important, is now made quite explicit because, as it were, the worst of all these flatteries—the pastry cook's activity, the simile for rhetoric—is now described as an art. It is, of course, a ministerial art. It should be controlled by medicine or gymnastics. [It is] a lowly art, just as forensic rhetoric, but it is not in itself a flattery. He implicitly retracts here his whole thesis on rhetoric as stated in the Polus section. No, gymnastics as well as medicine are the mistresses of all these arts mentioned. You can also say the other way around: these arts are the maidservants, the ancillae, of gymnastics and medicine.

For the benefit of you, I would like to say that this rehabilitation of the art of pastry cooking includes of course also a rehabilitation of poetry. Is this clear? Good. So in other words, poetry too is necessary and good. But it must be ultimately in the service of the highest—otherwise, no. It cannot be autonomous. No art for art's sake, yes; I think that is absolutely crucial here. Here is a complete retraction of the central thesis of the Polus section, which has fulfilled its function because without the distinction, we do not see the problem, and the distinction was exaggerated into a simple opposition.¹⁰ Yes. I mean, if these subordinate arts are emancipated, they become flatteries. One might make this concession. But if they are not emancipated, they are necessary. How to avoid their emancipation is a long question. Should there be a physician standing all the time at the side of every shoemaker, or every pastry cook, to watch him? That is hardly feasible. So the problem is not by any means solved by that. But the extremism of the Polus section is now long forgotten. And I believe the Polus section, and the statement about rhetoric and pastry cooking there, is infinitely better known also among the learned than this simple passage which we have read here. Our friend Dodds is completely silent about this collapse of whole edifice which has taken place here. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: I counted . . . twice . . . clothing, bedding, shoes, and the five producers—baker, cook, weaver, shoemaker, tanner Do you want to comment on that?

LS: If you take the artisans by themselves, the weaver is in the middle. The weaver was in the middle on another occasion already at the beginning. Did we not discuss it at that time?

Mr. Reinken: Yes, we did. It seemed to me that clothing and weaving came up in the middle twice.

LS: I mean, what strikes me first is that weaving is at least as much a feminine art. That was the point you meant, yes? Ya, sure. From the point of view of tasting, the alleged superiority of the male sex becomes a problem. And that is the basis of the *Republic*, the equality of the sexes. Yes?

Student: This last message that we just got, that you just gave us, comes out actually in two sentences. We've done most of the dialogue now, and two sentences, two little phrases, and the whole message of the dialogue comes out? Is that what you mean to tell

us?

LS: Well, in the first place, what would be wrong with that? I mean, when you think of our learning process in general, does it not take sometimes a very, very long preparation, and then in a lucky minute things fall into shape? Have you not seen that?

Same student: Yes, I have, but—

LS: This second would never have come but for the tedious and boring preparation—at least as far as we know.

Same student: But this assumes a very, very intelligent readership.

LS: What is wrong with that? [Laughter] Have we not heard a lot in the last years from this Admiral Rickover^{vii} and other men that the goals of American education in the last generation were wrong, and that we should pursue¹¹ excellence [rather] than infinite spreading thinner and thinner? Do you see what I mean? In other words, we should demand from ourselves very much. In this sense, we should really be ascetic people. You know ascetic means literally “a man of training,” a man who is in training, ya? I mean, what is wrong with that? Should we be spoon-fed all the time?

Same student: It means that, first of all, you have to know how to read Plato, which is something that might be lost over many years. It means that only very few people can understand Plato and therefore his message is—

LS: I believe there have been quite a few people throughout the ages who have understood Plato and not only a few in each generation. But what I stand for can indeed be said as follows: that in the last hundred fifty years the notion of what it means to read, say, Plato, has been lost. And the crudest reason, of course, has to do with history. When you would read [Dodds’]¹² commentary, or any other commentary, you would see the concern is much more, “Where did he get it from?” There is a myth: “Is this Orphic, is this Pythagorean, is it . . . ?” As if this were of the slightest interest. The only thing of interest is: What does this myth convey? And what does Plato put it in for? Obviously. Very rarely, such extraneous information can be of some help. But to make it the main point is strictly absurd. Or we want to read Plato not in order to become better human beings, wiser human beings, but in order to know something about Greek culture, ya? Well, who cares for Greek culture? [Laughter] I mean, who [cares], who knows that he is a mortal being and has only a short life? It will not be [something he will] care for. I must really use this simple language. He will care for the salvation of his soul and not for extraneous things. There may be an accidental connection between that [and] knowing something about the Greeks. You know, for example, if it is necessary to study Plato, I believe it is necessary that some men, at least, should study Greek grammar and this kind of thing. That’s obvious. But you know that must never become emancipated. That is an absolutely ministerial art, ya? ¹³But your simple and straightforward question, I liked

^{vii} Admiral Hyman G. Rickover (1900–1986), who was in charge of the Navy’s nuclear submarine program, and who had a lifelong interest in raising educational standards in America.

very much. I think we must make clear this thing. But the scandal, I believe, is this: that, not you, but this learned commentator doesn't even reflect for one moment on the fact. I haven't looked at the older commentators. A friend of mine who has written a book on the *Meno*—some of you know him, Mr. Klein at St. John's—has read the whole commentary literature on the *Meno* of the last century. And he came to the conclusion that, say, around 1890, a complete change in level—down, going down—has taken place. So I have not looked up the older commentators, say, in the early nineteenth century or perhaps still older, whether they say something about that. That I could not say. But there is no question that such a decline has taken place. Surely.

But you see also how important it is to build up this provisional edifice which Socrates erects in the Polus section: ¹⁴Arts, flatteries; and then later on, higher arts, lower arts, again distinguished from the flatteries; and then [he] shows this strange connection so that we understand better. If we do not go through the process where we see that the principle of consent can be viewed as the principle of flattery, we are politically *poorer*—I mean, in our political understanding *poorer*—than if we had gone through that. I think this alone, if it really sinks in, is worth reading a Platonic dialogue instead of simply freezing the so-called categories available now, which are the result of a long process, and of a process which has in no way of course been properly understood. We are only the heirs, the products, of that process, and we do not truly understand it if we do not make an effort. Yes. I'm very glad for your remark. Now, Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Sort of different. You were mentioning the fact that this is a complete retraction of what was said in the Polus section. You seem to draw the consequences that it therefore means a rehabilitation not only of pastry [cooking], but also of poetry, and I don't see the consequences of that.

LS: Ya, but I think that is simple, old-fashioned logic.

Mr. Butterworth: Well, the reason I don't see it is because, especially for poetry, that was cast out in the Callicles section, not in the Polus section.

LS: Sure, sure.

Mr. Butterworth: So how could . . . what was brought up in the Polus section?

LS: Because it doesn't depend so much where it took place, but on what grounds, it took place. Now if the ground, namely, the simple distinction between art and flattery, breaks down, then the consequences break down. I mean, I do not think that the surface—by "surface," I mean what strikes every reader even of the meanest capacity, at any level of drowsiness—that these things are unimportant. I mean, the mere surface—it is very important. Plato has considered that very well. And if Plato has created by his own work the impression that he has a slightly higher regard for rhetoric than for poetry, as he did for reasons which I indicated on another occasion, I believe he felt this is necessary. The infinite charm of poetry needs a very powerful counter-charm to be broken, and only then can we be fair. I have no doubt that Plato had a much higher regard for Homer than

for any of the great orators. But Homer was much more dangerous; at least Homer as ordinarily understood was much more dangerous than the famous orators. And therefore the counter-action was necessary, not out of petty competition or such nonsense but because a charm can be fought primarily only by another charm, before reason can come into play Yes?

Mr. Butterworth: The other question that I have now is that you still said that we must understand poetry as being a servant to philosophy, as ministering to something greater. Now, that isn't in this dialogue, that he said that.

LS: No, no, of course not. I mean, the point is this: you cannot understand Plato without thinking, obviously. And then to some extent the results of your thinking are confirmed by what you find in Plato elsewhere. But there are also certain results which are not confirmed by Plato anywhere, and yet without that what Plato does doesn't make sense. And therefore what I said, that poetry must be ministerial in order to be good, this is, as far as I know at this moment, not directly proven from Plato—not *directly* proven. But it follows when one thinks about what Plato explicitly says. But the main point, however, especially for pedagogic reasons in the widest sense of the term, is [that] one must take the text of Plato as seriously as possible. And I would rather abandon some, in my opinion, very important or refined conclusions than ever abandon the text. My chief objection to the traditional—not traditional, but [for a]¹⁵ hundred years traditional—way of reading is that it does not take the text seriously enough, because it digresses into irrelevancies. I mean, I have many notes to Dodds's commentary that I didn't wish to devote too much time to, but this concern with what one cannot but call irrelevancies—"Where did he get this from?" or, "When did he write that?"—I think that is absolutely absurd and leads away from—instead of thinking about the polis and about philosophy and these grave subject matters, they think about things which are a) irrelevant and b) unknowable. Because, to repeat, we can never—even if we had divine revelation that the text of the *Gorgias* was written prior to the *Republic*, which we do not have—¹⁶have any knowledge whether Plato, in writing the *Gorgias*, did not have the firm intention of writing the *Republic* substantially along the lines on which we have it. This is beyond human knowledge. And one cannot start from these so-called results of modern scholarship as a basis of interpretation. That's absolutely impossible. Yes?

Student: Is there anything that's been told us in this dialogue that a decent man of experience of about 40 years of life wouldn't intuitively feel? [He] may not be so articulate about [it], but [he would] know that, for instance, you can't get everything you want, even if you're wise, and that a lot of people

LS: Exactly. Were you quoting someone when you said that? No? Well, because one pupil of Socrates called Marcus Aurelius, the Roman Emperor, said somewhere (well, pupil in the widest sense), said that there is nothing of any importance to know which in any situation a man who has lived for about 40 years with eyes open wouldn't know. Sure. And Socrates is famous for his common sense, his sanity. But the strange thing is that this sanity goes together with such atrocious acts of insanity, as we have seen quite a few here. What is more insane than to say that the philosophers should be kings, for

example, or that virtue is knowledge, and this kind of thing? You know Socrates is very sane, or very commonsensical, but the consequences of the commonsensical character of his thought are very uncommon things. But what you say is very important for one reason. In no case must one believe, even if Socrates says one of these atrocious things, that he did not know the simple, commonsensical difficulties which he causes. In other words, [he was not], as it were, a slave of a system which he had elaborated and which make him completely oblivious of any homely wisdom he surely also possessed.

Same student: Is there anything practical we learn from this, that a man of 40 wouldn't [know]. In other words, we might learn that philosophers should be kings, but we also know that this is impractical. So if we were, say, evaluating President Kennedy and his policies, is there anything we learn from Plato that we wouldn't have learned by reading the *New York Times* for 40 years?

LS: Well, the *New York Times* surely, but perhaps there are some other journals which would make it superfluous to read Plato for that purpose. But may I postpone an answer to that question? Not only because I don't know how to answer you effectively at the moment, but especially because I think you must find that answer for yourself. You should find the answer. Now let us go on. 518a5. Where were we?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "Now, that the very same is the case as regards the soul you appear to me at one time to understand to be my meaning, and you admit it as though you knew what I meant; but a little later you come and tell me that men have shown themselves upright and honorable citizens in our city, and when I ask you who, you seem to me to be putting forward men of exactly the same sort in public affairs; as if, on my asking you who in gymnastics have ever been or now are good trainers of the body, you were to tell me, in all seriousness, 'Thearion, the baker, Mithaecuse, the author of the book on Sicilian cookery, Sarambus, the vintner—these have shown themselves wonderful ministers of the body; the first providing admirable loaves, the second tasty dishes, and the third wine.'" (518a-c)

LS: Now you see here the example of the pastry cooking and the art of pastry cooking is again in the center. And a Sicilian writer on pastry cooking is of course particularly appropriate, because pastry cooking is compared to rhetoric, and Sicilian rhetoric and Sicilian¹⁷ [cuisine] were equally famous: Gorgias. Yes. Socrates, however, does not make clear still what the true art regarding the soul is, the art corresponding to gymnastics and medicine regarding the body. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: *Soc.:* "Now perhaps you would be indignant should I then say to you: 'Sir—'" (518c)

LS: No, that is of course impossible: *anthrōpe*, which means, literally translated, "human being," but which you use [when speaking] to a low grade human being, to a slave and so on. You know?

Student:

LS: Well, you mean “sir” is also frequently used in this country in this [way]? Well, I see. Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: ““you know nothing about gymnastics; servants you tell me of, and caterers to appetites, fellows who have no proper and respectable knowledge of them, and who peradventure will first stuff and fatten men’s bodies to the tune of their praises, and then cause them to lose even the flesh they had to start with; and these in their turn will be too ignorant to cast the blame of their maladies and of their loss of original weight upon their regalers, but any people who chance to be by at the time and offer them some advice—just when the previous stuffing has brought, after the lapse of some time, its train of disease, since it was done without regard to what is wholesome—these are the people they will accuse and chide and harm as far as they can, while they will sing the praises of that former crew who caused the mischief. And you now, Callicles, are doing something very similar to this: you belaud men who have regaled the citizens with all the good cheer they desired. People do say they have made the city great; but that it is with the swelling of an imposthume, due to those men of the former time—” (518c–e)

LS: Ya, to “those old ones” or “ancient ones”—“this they do not perceive.”

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “For with no regard for temperance and justice they have stuffed the city with harbours and arsenals and walls and tribute and suchlike trash; and so whenever that access of debility comes they will lay the blame on the advisors who are with them at the time, and belaud Themistocles and Cimon and Pericles, who caused all the trouble; and belike they will lay hold of you, if you are not on your guard, and my good friend Alcibiades, when they are losing what they had originally as well as what they have acquired, though you are not the authors, except perhaps part–authors, of the mischief.” (519a–b)

LS: “You,” meaning both Callicles and Alcibiades. Now here Socrates replies to Callicles’ accusation as restated in 518a–b. The allegedly great statesmen were responsible for the Athenians’ badness. And these four men are now called “the ancient ones.” The solution does not lie in return to the ancient. You know, there was this division: the gentlemen were looking back to the old times, to the pre–democratic times, to the so–called ancestral constitution, which was roughly the Solonic constitution—pre–democratic, or considerably qualified democracy. The solution doesn’t lie there. And if any proof were needed that this was Plato’s view, we have it clearly in the *Republic*, because the remedy for Athens’ ills prescribed in the *Republic* is not a return to the ancestral constitution, but something radically revolutionary. Now here he is silent on Miltiades, as you must have seen. He does not belong to the one kind of bunglers, namely, in the democratic age, but to another kind of bunglers, to the pre–democratic

ones. But at the same time, these three statesmen get posthumous honor, *posthumous* honor. They were not simply flatterers, because flatterers are not honored after they are dead. Socrates advises Callicles at the end here to be cautious, i.e., to think of his self-preservation. So self-preservation is not something altogether negligible. We are reminded of Socrates' own refraining from political action, also due to caution, as stated in *The Apology of Socrates*. Alcibiades, however, is past warning. He is a greater man than Callicles, and perhaps greater than the four. This is at least my impression, [which] I got from Thucydides, that as far as sheer gift is concerned Alcibiades was the greatest. But nothing can be done about him; he is past warning. One can also see that Callicles and Alcibiades are, in their way, physicians who try to cure that body, but of course it is too late. Yes. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “And indeed there is a senseless thing which I see happening now, and hear of, in connection with the men of former times. For I observe—” (519b)

LS: “The old,” “the age-old ones.”^{viii} It is always of some importance, given the value-laden character of this word in former times: “old,” “ancient.” Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “For I observe that whenever the state proceeds against one of her statesmen as a wrongdoer, they are indignant and protest loudly against such monstrous treatment: after all their long and valuable services to the state they are unjustly ruined at her hands, so they protest. But the whole thing is a lie; since there is not a single case in which a ruler of a city could ever be unjustly ruined by the very city that he rules.” (519b–c)

LS: Now let us consider this again, this strange assertion. The politicians have no right to complain about suffering injustice from the city, for if they had done their duty, they would have made the Athenians better, i.e., tamer, and would not have been persecuted by the Athenians. This argument is now enlarged. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “For it is very much the same with pretenders to statesmanship as with professors of sophistry. The sophists, in fact, with all their other accomplishments, act absurdly in one point: claiming to be teachers of virtue, they often accuse their pupils of doing them an injury by cheating them of their fees and otherwise showing no recognition of the good they have done them. Now what can be more unreasonable than this plea? That men, after they have been made good and just, after all their injustice has been rooted out by their teacher and replaced by justice, should be unjust through something that they have not! Does not this seem to you absurd, my dear friend?” (519c–d)

LS: Let us stop here. Now the politicians, i.e., the orators, are in the same boat as the sophists. This argument against the sophists was very popular at the time. The sophists

^{viii} *tōn palaiōn*.

demanded money, payment, for teaching virtue, and then if the students didn't pay, he was in this obvious dilemma. If he was such a good teacher of virtue, it could never happen to him. But the politicians, or rhetoricians, do not claim, of course, to be educators. Socrates demands it from them, but they do not claim it ordinarily. Socrates downgrades the politician by saying that they are no better than the sophists, because they regard themselves as much superior to the sophists. But at the same time he upgrades the politicians by demanding from them more than what they claim to give. He thus prepares his statement that he himself is the only true politician or statesman. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "In truth you have forced me to make quite a harangue, Callicles, by refusing to answer."

Call.: "And you are the man who could not speak unless somebody answered you?"

Soc.: "Apparently I can. Just now, at any rate, I am rather extending my speeches, since you will not answer me." (519d–e)

LS: Let us consider this for one moment. You know, we have had many of these little observations which one so easily regards as mere fillings. Socrates himself is a public speaker, but only under compulsion. Callicles has compelled him to be so. But what kind of an orator and public speaker is he, as far as success or failure is concerned?

Student:

LS: Pardon?

Same student: A failure.

LS: Surely in the case of Callicles. Ya, he surely fails. [He] does not succeed in making the citizens better. Now what then shall we do? Socrates claims to be the only true politician, the only true statesman, and he himself fails before our eyes. I mean, we do not have to look at [the] results of digging up of inscriptions or what not. We see it here. Socrates fails. What conclusion would we draw?

Mr. Butterworth: There are two conclusions. We've already drawn one, that he isn't a good statesman. We could draw another one, that somehow speech isn't necessary to being a good statesman, and that Socrates is really a good statesman.

LS: And what do you say, Mr.

Student: Well, I think that he would be the good statesman, but only in a just city.

LS: Ya,¹⁸ that might be. But is there not a simpler conclusion, a more direct conclusion?

Mr. Reinken: The best isn't

LS: No. Could it not be this, that¹⁹ the true political art as defined here is impossible? What would be the conclusion from that? I mean, let us at least discuss it. What would happen if the true political art, the art enabling a man to make the citizens better—and all citizens, I mean, if to different degrees—[were impossible], what would follow? Yes?

Student: All cities are bad.

LS: Ya sure. But still, can we do without them? Can we do without cities? And if cities, then administration of cities, i.e., politics? Yes?

Student: Cities

LS: But this—yes? Mr. Umbanhowar?

Mr. Umbanhowar:

LS: Ya, but the trouble is we have seen that Socrates is not only not able, but even not willing, to punish. So, I mean, not only would he not take the rod, but he would not even hand over people to executioners for applying the rod, if not the iron, to them. Yes?

Student: The citizens would be unimprovable.

LS: Ya, in a way, yes. But I think the more simple [point is this]. I would say, if we stick to the argument, the true political art as here presupposed is not possible. And then what must we [conclude]? We cannot dispense with society; we cannot dispense therefore with politics. That goes without saying. But what would be *the* highest art, as far as the *polis* or society is concerned?

Student: Rhetoric.

LS: No.

Student: The legislative art.

LS: [The] legislative art, as was said in the *Polus* section. But the legislative art, in its turn, would presuppose philosophy. That is also true. But there is no hundred-percent dependence of the legislative art on philosophy. Something of this kind would be the practical conclusion. And I think that is what Socrates means. And so, in other words, a rather rough solution, a crude solution, but the best we can have. But we will not have this best practical solution in the right manner if we do not see its essential defects. And therefore we must consider what would seem to be that solution which would be altogether satisfactory, a utopian solution. Without a utopian solution we will never understand the limitations of the *polis*. And to understand the limitation of the *polis* means to understand what is in principle politically possible—the basis of sensible politics. Yes sir?

Student: Is that not, then, simply another way of stating the problem of the *Republic*

LS: Yes, surely, only in the *Republic* this side of the thing is much more fully developed, because Plato gives us, or Socrates gives us, a long proof of the possibility. You remember? And it is developed in quite a few details, which is not done here. Here it comes up only as something which you could have—. One could say the paradox of the *Gorgias* consists in the application of the absolute standards to the actual Athenian politicians, i.e., to a city which is in no way built up in order to make possible the highest in men. That's the point. It [is]²⁰ here much more paradoxical, then. In the *Republic* he doesn't speak of Athens, whereas here the key point is the criticism of Athens. Yes. A bit more.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “But in the name of friendship, my good fellow, tell me if you do not think it unreasonable for a man, while professing to have made another good, to blame him for being wicked in spite of having been made good by him and still being so?”

Call.: “Yes, I do.”

Soc.: “Well, and you hear such things said by those who profess to give men education in virtue?”

Call.: “I do; but what is one to say of such worthless people?” (519e–520a)

LS: In other words, he has utter contempt for—if I may use a present day expression—the intellectuals. Yes. Good.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “And what is one to say of those who, professing to govern the state and take every care that she be as good as possible, turn upon her and accuse her, any time it suits them, of being utterly wicked? Do you see any difference between these men and the others? Sophist and orator, my estimable friend, are the same thing, or very much of a piece, as I was telling Polus; but you in your ignorance think the one thing, rhetoric, a very fine affair, and despise the other. Yet in reality sophistic is a finer thing than rhetoric by so much as legislation is finer than judicature, and gymnastic than medicine.” (520a–b)

LS: Now, what do you say about this proof of the superiority of sophistry to rhetoric? Yes?

Student: I believe medicine is superior to gymnastic.

LS: No, gymnastic was said to be superior. I mean, a man who never needs a physician in his life is of course in a better position than the one who needs it. Now something like a gymnastic trainer everyone needs. I mean, everyone's body has to be built up, probably. This is not the point. Yes?

Mr. Butterworth: If this is true—because of the other arts he states here—sophistry must establish something, just as gymnastic establishes health, and rhetoric—

LS: No, no. What would you say if someone would say, “Since tyranny is a perversion of kingship, and oligarchy is a perversion of aristocracy, tyranny is nobler than oligarchy”? *Corruptio optimi pessima*. When the best is corrupted, its corruption is the worst. So that is an absolutely nonsensical argument. And why does Socrates do that, as it were, slip it in?

Mr. Butterworth: This is in accordance with the table that he set forth in the Polus section.

LS: No. That doesn’t follow at all. It doesn’t follow at all that this is nobler. On the contrary, it’s baser. The corruption of the legislative art is baser than the corruption of the judging [art]. If the laws are altogether bad, if the laws are badly made from the beginning, that’s of course worse than if an illiberal municipal judge maladministers a given case. But what does he mean by that? What is the true reason why the sophist can be said to be higher than the orators, or politicians, which is now used synonymously? Because the sophists raise the claim to make their pupils just, or good, whereas the politicians correct. In other words, in this perversion, the claim gives them a kind of nobility. And of course it is also immediately meant to give another—it shows again how much Callicles, this free mind, simply follows the prejudices of the Athenian gentlemen. I mean, sophists may be bad people, but not on these grounds, on the conventional grounds, because they take money, or because they . . . or whatever the reasons may be. Now let us read the next part.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “in fact, for my own part, I always regarded public speakers and sophists as the only people who have no call to complain of the thing that they themselves educate, for its wickedness towards them; as otherwise they must in the same words be also charging themselves with having been of no use to those whom they say they benefit. Is it not so?” (520b)

LS: In the case of the orators and sophists, their accusing the city is their self–accusation, for they claim that they are able to make the city better. Implication: Socrates can accuse the city because he does not claim to be able to make the city better. Ya, but still, what then does it mean, as he will say later on, that he is the true statesman? We must take this up next time. Yes?

Student: You said that . . . is a form of flattery

LS: Well, I see. Let me try again. I mean if someone talks to a child, and the child insists on getting something, and you know it is not good for the child, but the matter is somehow not important enough to fight it out—you know, fight it out by simple prohibition—and yet you say, “all right,” you make this concession, you gratify the child

against your better knowledge, you flatter. That is the meaning.

Same student:

LS: In other words, by gratifying you say implicitly “your demand is right,” and that is flattering the child. Or replace the child by grown-up men, individuals or groups. The flattery, in the strict sense in which we understand the word flattery, is of course implicit, because by conceding you say implicitly “your demand is wise.” And since you know that isn’t true, you flatter.

Student: My question . . . said the old legitimacy was, more or less—it was just there. It was something that was—

LS: What was the old?

Same student: When you were talking, you said that the governments had usually been founded on some kind of legitimate principle, and then you implied that consent was a form of flattery.

LS: Oh, no. But what I said is this: according to Plato’s and Socrates’ and Aristotle’s teaching, the only title to rule which is unqualifiedly sound is that of clearly superior wisdom. And if you want to hear this rather from the mouth of a poet, read Shakespeare’s *Tempest*. I mean, no one can for one moment doubt that Prospero has the right to control to some extent Miranda and²¹ [Ferdinand], to say nothing of Caliban. Whereas whether the Lancasters were in the right or the Yorks were in the right, even whether Caesar was right or Brutus and Cassius, and all the other interesting questions, is very difficult to say. But here the case of Prospero is beyond a shadow of a doubt. Good. But obviously there are many reasons, which I think escape no one in this class, why this is not something on which you can count. It would be too rare, too rare.

And also the other point, for ruling is a two-way affair. I mean, the wise man may issue commands and he won’t get any takers, and a wise man as such cannot compel: one against many. So we must have something else, and this is called consent. And one can generally say that in classical political thought, the articulation of the political problem starts from the angle of wisdom, whereas in modern political thought the articulation starts from the angle of consent. Ya? I mean, we too admitted in modern times that wisdom is necessary, but we start from consent as the primary requirement and then see: let’s hope for the best, that wisdom will come in some way or another. The classical view started from the other end. Now if we think straight, I mean, and without flattery, without flattery, look at what consent means from the point of view of wisdom, then we come to the conclusion that the admission of consent is of course, on the one hand, a clear and obvious necessity, but it is also at the same time—*qua* acceptance of the qualifications of wisdom, of the limitations of wisdom, required because you have to depend on consent—²²an adaptation to unwise opinion, an assimilation to unwise opinion, a tacit declaration that this unwise opinion is wise: flattery. And so the key point for the argument of the dialogue as a whole is this: That these beautiful antitheses, which are so clean and pure—

high rhetoric, merely life-saving rhetoric, flattery—these cannot be maintained in this purity. Yes. And this has of course great consequences for the whole political art as Socrates defines it. Yes?

Mr. Butterworth: When we first came to class you talked of Pericles and his not being able to save himself from the Athenians. You asked the question: How would you explain the actions of the Athenians against Pericles? And then you suggested that perhaps he managed to . . . them. Now it seems that you've elaborated the possibilities of this problem, but you never really answered that question about the similarities between Pericles and Socrates.

LS: But I think the mere fact that there is something in common between Socrates and Pericles, in spite of the enormous difference, is important enough. Therefore I insisted on this point. In other words, the Socratic explanation—and Callicles is completely helpless against this masterful rhetorical attack—that since Pericles was meant to make the Athenians tame, and at the end of his life he was accused—in the Greek passage where this “toward the end of the life” occurs,^{ix} this “end of the life” sounds a bit redundant, and there have been nineteenth-century editors who deleted it, whereas it has, I think, a perfectly clear necessity: it reminds us of the end of the life of Socrates. The argument, you know, is absolutely impossible, because the fact that someone who was politically active for a few decades fell into disfavor at the end does not prove at all that he was a poor statesman. Did not Churchill also fall into disfavor after the Second World War? And is this necessarily a proof of the wisdom of the British electorate, and so on? And there are other cases of this type. But in the case of Pericles, one can safely say Pericles demanded too much, or what the Athenians regarded at that time, after the plague, as too much, you know? Continue the war; don't make peace with Sparta.

Mr. Butterworth: I thought that you were going to make a different deduction from that, namely, that this was a statement of one of the perennial problems of politics: How can you improve your citizen body as a statesman, and keep your life or your goods secure?

LS: Ya, well, I believe we took this up. I think²³ the Platonic and Aristotelian²⁴ thought about this is that not very much can be done. *Tuchē*, chance, plays a very great role in these matters. There are periods of greater mildness, lesser savagery. We have seen that. And there was a hope with which every decent human being must sympathize, that a decrease of beastliness would take place. That was what the belief in progress amounted to. But we who have lived through the first half of the twentieth century will have to say that the overall beastliness committed in the twentieth century is no less than that in any earlier century, even if you take the Dark Ages. Where is the empirical proof of progress overall? In certain parts of the world, surely, but²⁵ [what] guarantee is there that this will remain so, even in those parts of the world where it still exists? One doesn't know.

Mr. Butterworth: Am I wrong in thinking, though, that if you admit that this is a problem, that somehow something new has to be given to induce men to engage in the political acts, if it's so openly dangerous? This is something that Socrates somehow

^{ix} 516a1.

doesn't seem to bring forth here.

LS: Not here, but in the *Republic*. What is the reason why, according to Socrates, a man—I mean, a sane man—would go into politics?^x

Student: To prevent somebody else worse taking over.

LS: Sure. To prevent that the gangsters take over; and that is still a valid reason. But to believe that this is in any way fun—fun to be the boss—is a great error. And if there have been some people running for the presidency in this country because of such hopes, they have surely been disappointed very soon. That is a very ungrateful task. And the honors and badges and newspaper splashes are probably not a sufficient compensation, because there are also other newspaper remarks not so flattering. Yes?

Student: If not much can be done by a statesman, then as long as you have a statesman . . . simple survival. The statesman who keeps the country's integrity alive in times of great crisis is a great statesman; but in times of peace and security, a great statesman can't arise. Is that what you were after?

LS: That could be. I didn't mean that, but that could be. And I would say he could exist, but his greatness would never become visible.

Same student: But greatness can only be measured by survival. In other words, the challenge, right . . .

LS: I would say not survival, but by the challenge. I mean, surely, if every thing is working very smoothly, that every dog-catcher could fill the position of the President, surely the greatness of this individual would not show, naturally. But this is a whole different question. But, at any rate, this is the answer given in the *Republic* when Socrates is asked: Why will a sensible man go into politics? Surely not for money and honors. And the clearest and most massive reason is to prevent—

[end of tape]

ENDNOTES TO SESSION FOURTEEN

¹ Deleted "it," and moved "is as much a Platonic doctrine."

² Deleted "on."

³ Deleted "it."

⁴ Deleted "being."

⁵ Deleted "in c3, no."

⁶ Deleted "that."

⁷ Deleted "well."

⁸ Deleted "no, this is a bit."

⁹ Deleted "are."

¹⁰ Deleted "one might perhaps say."

^x *Republic* 347a—d.

- 11 Moved “rather.”
- 12 Deleted “this.”
- 13 Deleted “you know.”
- 14 Deleted “you know.”
- 15 Deleted “since.”
- 16 Deleted “we cannot.”
- 17 Deleted “kitchen.”
- 18 Deleted “but could one not, still.”
- 19 Deleted “the true statesman—no, success is necessary according to this point.”
- 20 Deleted “was.”
- 21 Deleted “Fernando.”
- 22 Deleted “it is.”
- 23 Deleted “what.”
- 24 Deleted “or Platonic.”
- 25 Deleted “which.”

Session 15: no date

Leo Strauss: Now we will try to finish today the *Gorgias* to the extent to which we can finish it, i.e., with the exception of the myth, which we cannot read. The time is not long enough for that. I remind you of the context. We have seen, first, the rejection of rhetoric as flattery, based on the fundamental distinction between the pleasant and the good. Then we have seen the rejection of forensic rhetoric, although it is admittedly an art and therefore directed toward the good as distinguished from the pleasant. But it is rejected because it is a lowly thing, the concern with self-preservation. And then we saw the true rhetoric, which is devoted to making the citizens better and juster. And this true rhetoric would be identical with the true political art. The most famous Athenian statesmen are criticized from the point of view of this political art. The fact that they were persecuted by the Athenian people proves that they were not good politicians or orators. But Socrates, too, was persecuted by the people of Athens, and this makes one wonder whether the true political art, or the true rhetoric, is possible at all. And we have also seen that the clear-cut distinction between the true, or noble rhetoric, the lowly rhetoric, and the flattering rhetoric collapsed. This is what we studied last time. I believe we should now turn immediately to the text, 520c2.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “And they alone, I presume, could most likely afford to give away their services without fee, if their words were true. For when a man has received any other service, for example, if he has acquired a fast pace from a trainer’s lessons, he might possibly cheat him of his due if the trainer freely offered himself and did not stipulate for a fee to be paid down by the other as nearly as possible at the moment when he imparted to him the fast pace he required; for it is not through a slow pace, I conceive, that men act unjustly, but through injustice; is it not?”

Call.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “And so whoever removes this particular thing, injustice, need never have fear of being unjustly treated; this benefit alone may be freely bestowed without risk, granted that one really had the power of making people good.” (520c–d)

LS: Ya, “if” would be a simple translation. This is a big “if”: “*if* one can indeed make men good.” Now a teacher of boxing can be cheated of his reward or payment without any reflection on his quality as a good boxer, because there is obviously no relation between them, but not a teacher of justice.¹ Justice is the only safe benefit you can convey [by teaching] because the taught man will become necessarily just. But of course the question: Can justice be taught? [That question is] indicated by the last clause. Yes. Let us go on here.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “I agree.”

Soc.: “Then this, it seems, is the reason why there is no disgrace in taking money for giving every other kind of advice, as about building or the rest of the arts.”

Call.: “It does seem so.”

Soc.: “But about this business of finding the way to be as good as possible, and of managing one’s own household or city for the best, it is recognized to be a disgrace for one to decline to give advice except for a payment in cash, is it not?”

Call.: “Yes.”

Soc.: “The reason evidently being that this is the only sort of service that makes the person so served desire that to do one in return; and hence it is felt to be a good sign when this service that one has done is repaid to one in kind; but when this is not so, the contrary is felt. Is the case as I say?”

Call.: “It is.” (520d–521a)

LS: Now giving advice regarding actions proper for money is base, low; for advice in this respect is by itself useful to the adviser: you make him a better man, you make him a better companion for everyone, including yourself. Hence taking money for such advice would be usurious and bad. Now the conclusion of all of it is that the contempt for the sophists and orators, who demand other rewards, monetary rewards, is justified. These men are bent on usury, in the primary sense, on having more than they should have. They are unjust men, because they take money for making people better, or juster. They are therefore justly suspected of injustice. Otherwise, they wouldn’t take money. Socrates is also suspected of injustice, but unjustly. For he does not take money, in the first place, and, which is perhaps more important, he does not complain in case of ingratitude. He does not act unjustly by complaining. He does not complain because he knows that his persecution is inevitable. The proof of this inevitability is given in the sequel. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then please specify to which of these two ministrations to the state you are inviting me—that of struggling hard, like a doctor, with the Athenians to make them as good as possible, or that of seeking to serve their wants and humour them at every turn? Tell me the truth, Callicles; for it is only right that, as you began by speaking to me frankly, you should continue to tell me what you think. So now speak out like a good, generous man.”

Call.: “I say, then, the way of seeking to serve them.”

Soc.: “So it is to a flatterer’s work—” (521a–b)

LS: No, let us stop here. In this speech of Socrates, as would appear only from the Greek, there are at least four cases of verbs with the² [prefix] *dia*: *diorison*, *diamachesthai*, *diakonein*, *diatelein*—and even *dikaïos*, the word for “just,” can be construed as a composite of *dia*. I mention it for those of you who know a bit of Greek and see this is a minor problem here. I cannot go into that. Now, the discussion of the general issue is now

completed. Socrates returns to the main question as a question concerning *him*, his way of life, his tending of the city. And that means, in still more practical terms, the question of *his* forensic speech, the forensic speech he delivered when he was accused. Callicles' position is of course unchanged, as you see, as appears from his answer. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "So it is to a flatterer's work, most noble sir, that you invite me?"

Call.: "Work for a mean Mysian, if you prefer the name, Socrates—"

(521b)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. The implication here: the four statesmen, the famous men, were not only ministerial, but even flatterers. And Callicles says, "Why don't you call them Mysians?"—which is still lower than a flatterer, the lowest of the low, the lowest slaves existing in Athens. There is here an implicit reference to Aristophanes' comedy *The Acharnians*, which I mention only in passing. Yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: "if you prefer the name, Socrates; for unless you do as I say—"

Soc.: "Do not tell me, what you have so often repeated, that—" (521b)

LS: No, wait. Socrates cuts Callicles short here, as you see. Why does he do it? We must speculate, because it's by no means certain that Callicles would have said what Socrates says now he will say. We have to consider alternatives. Callicles might have gone on to say that such serving along the lines of prudent, moderate policy, without any expectation of gratitude and without any certainty of success, merely in order to avoid being ruled by the worst man (you remember?) is, after all, as decent as being a good pilot, a good swimmer, a good physician. You remember that? This he could obviously have said. Socrates cuts this out, because this will not be discussed here, the possibility of what decent politics might be. To come back to my simple formula, the peak is missing, not only regarding philosophy but regarding politics as well. And now Socrates states here another objection, which he is interested in tackling here. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "that anyone who pleases will put me to death, lest I on my side should have to tell you that it will be a villain killing a good man; nor that anyone may strip me of whatever I have, lest I should have to say in my turn: Well, but when he has stripped me, he will not know what use to make of his spoil, but as he stripped me unjustly so will he use his spoil unjustly, and if unjustly, foully, and if foully, ill." (521b–c)

LS: Now this is a repetition of what we have seen in 511a–b, but Socrates puts now a much stronger emphasis on the possible loss of his fortune, as distinguished from his life. Now this is of course a minor danger for a man without a fortune. The man who confiscates Socrates' property will derive no benefit from this unjust act for this reason too, because there is not much to get. You must not overlook here this irony. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “It quite strikes me, Socrates, that you believe not one of these troubles could befall you, as though you dwelt out of the way, and could never be dragged into a law court by some perhaps utterly paltry rascal.” (521c)

LS: Now Callicles is led by this remark of Socrates to think that Socrates lives in a fool’s paradise, that he preaches suffering injustice and not doing injustice, as if it could never happen to him. And here of course the man in the fool’s paradise proves to be Callicles, not Socrates, as appears from Socrates’ answer. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Then I am a fool, Callicles, in truth, if I do not suppose that in this city anyone, whoever he was, might find himself, as luck should have it, in any sort of plight. Of one thing, however, I am sure—that if ever I am brought before the court and stand in any such danger as you mention, it will be some villain who brings me there, for no honest man would prosecute a person who had done no wrong; and it would be no marvel if I were put to death. Would you like me tell you my reason for expecting this?”

Call.: “Do, by all means.” (521c–d)

LS: Now, contrary to Callicles’ notion, Socrates has his eyes wide open. He knows that he can be accused, and that he must defend himself before the *demos*. He must recognize the authority of the *demos*; he must flatter. He knows that. But how will he actually proceed? In Aristophanes’ play *The Acharnians*, the hero is called Dikaiopolis, the “just citizen,” or the “just city,” and there the hero puts on the rags of a Mysian—we have seen “Mysian”—in order to appear as a perfect beggar, in order to save himself. Socrates speaks in *The Apology of Socrates* of his ten–thousand–fold poverty. Superficially, Socrates’ flattery will not be visible at all, as will appear from the immediate sequel, for he will not appear as a philosopher. Now let us see the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “I think I am one of few, not to say the only one, in Athens who attempts the true art of statesmanship, and the only man of the present time who manages affairs of state who manages affairs of state—” (521d)

LS: Now let us stop here. Socrates states here his claim. He is the only living Athenian concerned with the political art, with the true rhetoric, i.e., with making the Athenians better. He alone is doing the political things. There is an ambiguity here: What are the political things? The political things are the common things—common, not private. But what is truly common, absolutely common, and not relatively common? The cosmos, not the affairs of this or that city. To that extent, Socrates can be said [to be] the true statesman, but this is of course not quite what one ordinarily understood [by] it. Now, how does he develop that in the following?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “hence, as the speeches that I make from time to time are not aimed

at gratification, but at what is best instead of what is most pleasant, and as I do not care to deal in ‘these pretty toys’ that you recommend, I shall have not a word to say at the bar. The same case that I made out to Polus will apply to me; for I shall be like a doctor tried by a bench of children on a charge brought by a pastry cook. Just consider what defence a person like that would make at such a pass, if the prosecutor should speak against him thus: ‘Children, this fellow has done you all a great deal of personal mischief, and he destroys even the youngest of you by cutting and burning, and starves and chokes you to distraction, giving you nasty bitter draughts and forcing you to fast and thirst; not like me, who used to gorge you with abundance of nice things of every sort.’ What do you suppose a doctor brought to this sad pass could say for himself? Or if he spoke the truth—‘All this I did, my boys, for your health’—how great, think you, would be the outcry from such a bench as that? A loud one, would it not?”

Call.: “I daresay: one must suppose so.”

Soc.: “Then you suppose he would be utterly at a loss what to say?”

Call.: “Quite so.”

Soc.: “Such, however, I am sure would be my own fate if I were brought before the court. For not only shall I have no pleasures to plead as having been provided by me—which they regard as services and benefits, whereas I envy neither those who provide them nor those to whom they are provided—but if anyone alleges that I either corrupt the younger men by reducing them to perplexity, or revile the older with bitter expressions whether in private or in public, I shall be unable either to tell the truth and say—‘It is on just grounds that I say all this, and it is your interest that I serve thereby, gentlemen of the jury’—or to say anything else; and so I daresay any sort of thing, as luck may have it, will befall me.” (521d–522c)

LS: Ya, now, Socrates tells here prophetically about his fate, but the prophecy is of course, in one way, after the event. Plato wrote this years after Socrates’ execution. But his fate will be that of a physician accused to children by a pastry cook, and he will be accused of corruption. Corruption is, as you know, one part of the charge against Socrates, the charge being [this]: “Socrates commits an unjust act by not holding the gods held by the city of Athens; he also commits an unjust act by corrupting the young.”ⁱ Only the corruption charge is explicitly mentioned here in this work. Now what will happen to these children when the pastry cook brings Socrates before them? They will be wholly unable to understand the truth, i.e., they will be wholly unable to understand Socrates’ business, what³ he [is] doing, [his] *pragma*, as it is called in the *Apology*.ⁱⁱ They are

ⁱ Compare Diogenes Laertius, II.5.40; Plato *Apology of Socrates* 24b–c; Xenophon *Memorabilia* I.1.1. LS omits the clause, found in all three of these presentations, about introducing novel gods. See, however, Strauss, *Xenophon’s Socrates* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 3–4.

ⁱⁱ *Apology of Socrates* 20c.

unable to see that the benefits which he brings to them are in fact benefits. He will not be able to say anything. This is, of course, Socrates' deliberation about his forensic speech, but the deliberation as presented here is incomplete, as you see immediately. Why? Why is this not the whole deliberation?

Student: . . . but the full effect on the children

LS: Strange, that is one of the cases where a student suffers from too great sophistication, not seeing the most obvious. Socrates tells us here “for these and these reasons I cannot say anything.”

Student: But he does say something.

LS: Ya, exactly. So he doesn't give us that deliberation which explains what he does say. He gives us only the negative, why he cannot say what the true thing is. And, of course, in order to find out this part of the deliberation, the simplest way is to look at the result, to study the *Apology of Socrates* and see what he does say. In the *Gorgias*, he calls the *polis* before the bar of philosophy. This cannot be done before a law court, of course not.⁴ You cannot possibly go before a law court, and even if you take the course of highest appeal and question its authority—I mean, that finishes it. But even in the *Gorgias* the full meaning of philosophy is not disclosed, although Callicles is a relatively competent non-philosopher, as is indicated in the overstatements at the beginning of the Callicles section that Callicles is wise, benevolent, and frank—you remember that. But I mean, even in the limited sense in which this is true of Callicles, it is of course not true of every Athenian. The *demos* does not even have that degree of competence which Callicles possesses. In the *Apology* Socrates cannot even describe philosophy, as he does here in this brief passage, as what I called “mathematical cosmology.” He describes it there as knowledge of ignorance. He explains his business to the *demos* as obedience to an oracle, an oracle elicited by Chaerephon, whom we find here too. And Chaerephon, as we know, was a comrade of the *demos*—so the link to the *demos*. And that oracle allegedly commanded him. If you read the oracle, you will see it didn't command him anything, but this is Socrates' interpretation. And the oracle commanded him to examine all Athenians, i.e., to prove that all Athenians, *including Socrates*, are ignorant. And do you recognize here a thought alluded to in the *Gorgias* in this statement of universal ignorance?

Student:

LS: Ya. No, that is a difference. The first definition of rhetoric, so to speak, given here: an ignorant man speaking among ignoramuses. Now there is a slight refinement. The ignorant man who talks to ignoramuses might *know* that he is an ignorant man. That is the way in which Socrates presents himself in the *Apology*. And to that extent we can, with the help of the *Apology* itself, restore the deliberation underlying Socrates' defense.

Yes. He refers here first, in 521e, to what he said to Polus. But to Polus he had not said exactly the same thing. To Polus he had said that if the physician has to compete with a

pastry cook, the physician will die from hunger, if the public of the physician and the pastry cook are only children. Yet Socrates obviously competed successfully with the pastry cooks; he was 70 years old when he was accused. Not all Athenians were children. And his success leads to the accusation by the pastry cook. You see, the pastry cook of the Polis section wouldn't have had any reason to accuse Socrates. Is this not clear? I mean, because the children would laugh at him and have nothing to do with him. But Socrates was quite successful, relatively speaking. Yes. Now, go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “Then do you think, Socrates, that a man in such a case and with no power of standing up for himself makes a fine figure in a city?”

Soc.: “Yes—” (522c)

LS: That is his penultimate utterance, in a way his final utterance. And this is a sensible statement, I would say. Politics is not a senseless activity. Socrates' solution, in other words, is not altogether satisfactory, even if you are most willing to comply with this demand. What does Socrates reply to that?

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “if he had that one resource, Callicles, which you have repeatedly admitted; if he he stood up for himself by avoiding any unjust word or deed in regard either to men to gods. For this has been repeatedly admitted by us to be the most valuable kind of self-protection.—” (522c–d)

LS: Socrates replies up to this point: his solution is satisfactory, provided what counts is not doing injustice. And this is defined here more specifically: not doing or saying anything unjust regarding gods and men. But is this a sufficient distinction here? “Doing and saying” is not a complete distinction; there is also *thinking*. What about thinking forbidden things about the gods worshipped by the city of Athens? And that was really Socrates' crime. But this is here of course not pursued. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Now if I were convicted of inability to extend this sort of protection to either myself or another, I should be ashamed, whether my conviction took place before many or few, or as between man and man; and if that inability should bring about my death, I should be sorely vexed: but if I came to my end through a lack of flattering rhetoric, I am quite sure you would see me take my death easily.” (522d–e)

LS: So Socrates is able to prevent his own acting unjustly in the sense defined—not saying⁵ [or] doing anything [unjust]—and to prevent others, not all others, from acting unjustly in the sense defined. This is his political art, his true rhetoric, which means Socrates can refute every charge made by the *polis*. He does not need flattering rhetoric; it's below him. But the simple question: Do juries always go by the evidence? Do they not wish to be treated with respect? Do they not wish to be won over, wooed, flattered? A man perfectly innocent of a crime with which he is charged may prejudice the jury

against himself by arrogant behavior, or by what the jury regards as arrogant behavior. You know that from the same source probably from which I know it, that defense lawyers advise defendants how they should conduct themselves. If it is a particularly attractive woman, she should look like a rather homely housewife in order not to have the female part of the jury against her for her sex. This concession to the jury Socrates absolutely refuses to make. He is willing to [do] what, from his extreme point of view, will be flattering the *polis* for its laws *en bloc*, for he thus gives the citizens a good example. But by flattering *the jury*, he would give a bad example because the jury is supposed by law not to be swayed by this kind of thing. That is to say, he is a man who obeys the laws in letter and in spirit when it counts, when he has to pay with his own life for it. He is just. Hence he will be condemned, not for his impiety or whatever else they might say, but for his justice. And this is of course the theme of the *Apology*, and to some extent of the *Crito*. Now the next speech, the end of the speech.

Mr. Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “For no man fears the mere act of dying, except he be utterly irrational and unmanly; doing wrong is what one fears: for to arrive in the nether world having one’s soul full fraught with a heap of misdeeds is the uttermost of all evils. And now, if you do not mind, I would like to tell you a tale to show you that the case is so.” (522e)

LS: Ya. Now, a man who is not completely unreasonable and unmanly does not fear death but acting unjustly, for—and this “for” applies to both—he believes in life after death *and* in punishment for injustice after death. Now Callicles’ reply.

Mr. Reinken:

Call.: “Well, as you have completed the rest of the business, go on and complete this also.” (522e)

LS: Now Callicles is aware that this following account will be the capstone of Socrates’ speech. He is willing to bear this end, just as he has borne what went before. Now why is punishment after death necessary, on the basis of the preceding argument? Suffering injustice is better than doing injustice. But this means that the just men will be at the mercy of the unjust, and of the unjust acting corporately: the *demos*. He will be condemned to death by unjust and incompetent judges. They are unjust because they are incompetent. Socrates turns, indeed, the tables. He calls the *polis* before the bar of philosophy, identified with justice. *He* is the competent judge, but he is unable and unwilling to inflict punishment proper—killing, exiling, fining, jailing, whipping—and in this way to make the unjust just by inflicting punishment on them. He will be called before the bar of the city and will be condemned to death because he refuses to use vulgar rhetoric, which is devised for swaying incompetent, ignorant judges. The solution: Both the philosophers and their enemies will be judged after death by competent judges who are willing to inflict punishment proper, and that is shown in the substance of the story. The presentation of this solution is the capstone of Socrates’ exhibition of his noble or true rhetoric, of rhetoric which is in the service of justice. This assertion implies that the account which follows is not meant to be true, and this presupposition is indeed in need

of an argument. The account which follows is known as a myth. Myths were mentioned already in 493a–d. What is a myth? Now, as appears from the text here—read the beginning only, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: “Give ear then, as they say, to a right fine story, which you will regard as a fable, I fancy, but I as an actual account; for what I am about to tell you I mean to offer as the truth.” (523a)

LS: Let us stop here. The Greek words are “myth”—what he translated by “fable”—and the other, the alternative, is *logos: mythos* and *logos*. Originally the two words had the same meaning: some account, some story. But before Plato the two words had acquired different meanings, so that myth is an untrue story, and *logos* a true account. Socrates denies here explicitly that the account is a myth, although he is sure that Callicles will regard it as a myth. Now, what is a myth? We must make the question somewhat more precise. What is a *Platonic* myth? What is its place in the economy of the Platonic dialogue? Plato never gives a sufficient definition of myth, and therefore we have to proceed inductively: read all the myths and see what we can learn from them. We must, however, be aware of one caution. Only the accounts *called* myths, but also *all* accounts called myths, can be made the basis of that induction. Surely this would exclude this story here, because Socrates says explicitly it is not a myth. But for now, at the end of this course, I will not be so strict or pedantic, and [will] take the more ordinary view, in which everyone speaks of “the myth at the end of the *Gorgias*.” Even the old commentators, the ancient commentators, did that.

Now let us then say that a myth is an account which lacks evidence, and which claims to make clear, to make manifest, what is. In the First Book of the *Laws*, myths are used in contradistinction to laws. Laws do not mean to give an account of what is, but prescribe what people should do. Myths, we will tentatively say, will deal with things regarding which knowledge is impossible, or at least very difficult to get—for example, the very old things of which no records, no reliable records, remain. Therefore, when Plato gives the brief history of Sparta in the Third Book of the *Laws*, he calls this a myth. And this is very largely historical, with some fancy implied, but in the main an historical account. But not sufficiently evident. So what today would be called an imaginative account, largely hypothetical, is from Plato’s point of view surely a myth. But also other subjects—if we look at other myths: heaven, too far away, the interior of the earth, of which we know very little,⁶ [are] also theme[s] of myths in the Platonic sense. Accordingly, we find cosmology as an ingredient of myths, for example, in the *Phaedo* and in the Tenth Book of the *Republic*. Plato’s book on natural philosophy, the *Timaeus*, is as a whole called a myth,⁷ a likely myth, a plausible myth, but still a myth. Especially important, of course, is the soul and its fate prior to birth and after death, which is the theme in the myth at the end of the *Apology*, here, the *Republic*, and in the *Phaedo*. The core of the soul as Plato understands it is *eros*; therefore there are also myths about *eros* in the *Symposium* and in the *Phaedrus*.

Now, why are myths necessary? Obviously because the alternative, the *logoi*, the

speeches, are not sufficient. But this is an ambiguous answer. *Logoi*, rational accounts, may not be sufficient, first, because the truth cannot be *known*, and, secondly, because the truth cannot be *said*: can be known but not be said. Let us take an extreme case of a myth, and that is the myth we find in the *Protagoras*, told by the sophist Protagoras.ⁱⁱⁱ And this myth is followed by a *logos*. Here the terms are explicitly used. The myth gives the reason for the *logos*, but the myth can be completely translated, and easily translated, into a *logos*. It is as mysterious as Voltaire's *Candide*, which means it is not mysterious at all. But this is the special case of Protagoras, a unique case. It is told by Protagoras, and it is a pure invention of Protagoras. A parallel in Xenophon, by the way, not called a myth, is the tale of Prodicus about Heracles at the crossroads (*Memorabilia* II.1), which is also a pure invention of the sophist Prodicus, and could be used as an example. Now let's cast a glance at the other myths. Here in this dialogue, when you go on, at the beginning where we were, "for."

Mr. Reinken:

Soc.: "for what I am about to tell you I mean to offer as the truth. By Homer's account, Zeus, Poseidon, and Pluto divided the sovereignty amongst themselves when they took it over from their father—" (523a)

LS: That's enough. Here this myth is based on Homer. Socrates has heard an account and, on the basis of what he has heard, he reasons. I refer you to 524a8–b1. So it is a *logos* to the extent to which Socrates reasons; it is not simply based on Homer. But the basic data are supplied by Homer. In *The Apology of Socrates*, the myth is told on the basis of what people say; the term occurs in passing.^{iv} The same is true of the myth of the *Phaedo*.^v In the case of the myth in the *Statesman*, there it's particularly interesting. There the myth is told not by Socrates but by the Eleatic Stranger.^{vi} Yet this myth starts from things which have been said of old, and what the Eleatic Stranger does here is only that he gives the hitherto never said reason why these extraordinary events, vouched for by old tradition, have happened. The myth at the end of the *Republic* is told by Socrates, but ascribed by Socrates to someone else: to Er, the Armenian.^{vii} The myth in the *Banquet* is ascribed by Socrates to Diotima.^{viii} The myth in the *Critias* is ascribed to an old Egyptian priest.^{ix} And the myth in the *Phaedrus* is ascribed to a poet, Stesichorus.^x We can say surely Socrates never tells a myth as his invention or in his own name. It is always either ascribed to someone else or it is based on what other people have said. A myth is an account which one tells to children, which only children will accept as literally

ⁱⁱⁱ *Protagoras* 320c–323a.

^{iv} *diamuthologēsai* at 39e5.

^v See *Phaedo* 107c–114c.

^{vi} *Statesman* 270b–274e.

^{vii} *Republic* 614b–621d.

^{viii} *Symposium* 203b–204a.

^{ix} See *Critias* 108d. Aside from the opening exchange, which runs from 106a to 108d, Critias' myth occupies the entire dialogue. On the transmission of the myth from the Egyptian priest to Solon, and eventually to Critias himself, see *Timaeus* 20d–23d.

^x *Phaedrus* 244a.

true. But this account is not a hypothesis, which as a hypothesis could be an invention and would be an invention, but a story which has already been heard, which has come down from a named or unnamed source, from the old ones, or from some particular old one, or some other reliable human being. For example, Diotima [is] reliable as a priestess in the *Banquet*. It is, then, an account which taken literally is untrue, supported by a tradition which is questionable. No one will ever believe that Socrates repeats what Diotima said, but everyone takes it for granted that Socrates makes that up, or rather Plato makes it up for Socrates.⁸ But still it presents itself in that way. So the support of the myth—like here, the story of Homer—is questionable. What, then, is the true support of the myth?

To find the answer, let us consider another kind of untrue account occurring in Plato. I mean the description of democracy in the Eighth Book of the *Republic*. There we find an extremist attack on democracy, an attack never rivaled by any damned reactionary of any other time—and in addition, an attack which contradicts facts well known to Plato and to Socrates. On the basis of this account it would be absolutely impossible that Socrates could have been condemned, because the picture he gives is, well, in a democracy there is such a wonderful laxity, and men who are jailed, without any system of bondsmen,⁹ simply leave jail—you know, the door is not really locked and nothing happens in any case. And Plato and Socrates knew very well that democracy, and especially their democracy, could be very tough and bloody. So now this description is an untruth. But what is its support? What is behind it? The answer given there, in 563d, is that it corresponds to Adeimantus' dream of democracy. Adeimantus is the man to whom the account of democracy is given. And Socrates states Adeimantus' dream. Let me say, then, on the basis of this very insufficient¹⁰ but not negligible [parallel], that we may understand the Platonic myths as dreams in which a soul is mirrored. They reveal the innermost longing of the soul in question, the *daimonion* of that soul. Socrates, or whoever the speaker is, reveals to his addressees, the innermost longings of that addressee, or perhaps of Socrates himself. This would be in each case the question. I am inclined to believe that that myth which corresponds most to the dream of Socrates, as distinguished from any addressee, is the myth in the *Phaedrus*. His longing for an absolutely beautiful world, free from all ugly or bad things. Only in the *Phaedrus* myth does Plato speak of a super-heavenly place. All other myths deal with the universe, with heaven and earth, but not with the super-heavenly, and especially the super-heavenly beauty and splendor. For example, in the *Phaedo*, the dialogue on Socrates' day of death, the content of the myth is a true earth, a most beautiful earth, infinitely more beautiful than the earth as we have it now. As I say, nowhere else do we find such a beauty as in the *Phaedrus*, and of course it can be meant as a mirror of Phaedrus' soul, the beautiful young Phaedrus' dream. But there are some other reasons which would speak against that.

Now, to come back to the myth of the *Gorgias*: Is the myth of the *Gorgias* meant to hold a mirror to Calicles, or to be a mirror of Socrates' soul? Is the myth of the *Gorgias* meant to cure Calicles, or to mirror Socrates' soul? This myth has two close parallels, and they are at the end of the *Phaedo* and at the end of the *Republic*. But there is this difference. All these three myths deal with the judgment on the dead, but in the *Republic*

and the *Phaedo* the account of the judgment on the dead is interwoven with cosmology, with a fanciful cosmology through which one can, however, recognize true cosmological questions. Here there is nothing of that. The mathematical cosmology briefly alluded to in the *Gorgias* has no connection with the myth here; they are strictly separated. And this mathematical cosmology, as you remember, is a very brief passage—say, seven lines—and the myth is quite a few pages long. This, of course, is in accordance with Callicles' neglect of philosophy: very little is given to him of that cosmology, and very much of the myth.

But if what I said previously has any basis, we have to raise this more incisive question: Why does Callicles long for what is presented in this myth here? Callicles is *the* opponent of Socrates in *the* fighting dialogue, in the dialogue which presents the difference between *the* two ways of life, the just and the unjust one, the life of equality or the life of having more, especially more of sensual pleasures. But justice proves to be philosophy and injustice proves to be politics, i.e., all politics that ever was. Yet why is politics injustice? Callicles does not simply stand for the tyrannical life of self-indulgence, although he stands also for that. His deepest motivation, as we have seen, is just: indignation about the prosperity of the unjust, of the tyrants. Therefore he demands that the just must be able to hold their own against the unjust, that the just must be able to defend themselves, that they must be able to fight back. This self-defense is no question. But there is a dialectics of self-defense to which he succumbs. Self-defense leads to aggression. The argument of Hobbes: you need power, and you cannot say how much power you may need in order to defend yourself in all circumstances. And therefore what takes place, then, is a visible assimilation of the just to the unjust. They will use, not only the same sticks or guns, but also some other methods. The political solution of the human problem is, then, necessarily unjust.

This is brought out perhaps most clearly in the noble lie of the *Republic*, where, in the first part of that account, the earth is replaced by the land—"land" meaning this particular piece of territory belonging to this particular city. The meaning is this. [There is a] fraternity of all men: we all are sons of the earth, same mother and earth. But the political society demands the limitation of that fraternity to the fellow citizens, i.e., only the sons of this particular territory are brothers, not the others. This is the fundamental injustice by which political society goes. The political solution is opposed to the philosophic solution: concern with the whole, the true solution, the whole which is by nature, i.e., independently of man's concerning himself with it, whereas the political solution deals with the *polis*, which is a partial or particular whole, which owes its being to men's concerning themselves with it, and ultimately to man's concern with his self-preservation. The philosophic solution implies the acceptance of the prosperity of the unjust and [the] awareness that no one wishes to be unjust, although all or most men cannot help committing unjust acts: no moral indignation. I refer again to a remark of Adeimantus in the Second Book of the *Republic* toward the end of his long speech.^x Callicles cannot accept the philosophic solution; his passion is much too powerful. And he is confused regarding the political solution. What is his motive? Is it noble indignation about the power of the unjust or enthusiasm for tyrannical self-indulgence? *He* doesn't

^x *Republic* 366c-d.

know. And this is not merely a casual defect of Callicles, but from Plato's point of view there is some connection—we can call that the dialectics of self-defense. The only solution which can possibly satisfy him is the eschatological solution, as we can say: longing for infinite, unending punishment of the unjust by the gods. This is stated here. But this means, of course, an invisible assimilation to the unjust, the desire for revenge, an invisible¹¹ [assimilation]—and invisible also because it doesn't take place within our sights.

But this is not the whole story. Philosophy is not the same as the philosopher. The philosopher is a human being who, like any other human being, needs food, etc., i.e., he must preserve himself. Let us not fool ourselves about the fact that every act of eating is an act of self-preservation. The philosopher must then, too, succumb to some extent to the dialectics of self-defense. And this is indicated in the *Gorgias* by the eventual breakdown of the clear-cut distinction between a noble rhetoric, lowly rhetoric, and flattery, which we discussed last time. The final conclusion of this argument is this: the philosopher too, is then concerned with self-preservation, and in a way his philosophizing is the highest form of his self-preservation. There was one vice which the Greeks called love of gain—but we would probably say avarice—¹²and that was blamed. But Plato presents in a dialogue now regarded as spurious, the *Hipparchus*, this view, and there are allusions to it in other dialogues: that this love of gain is unjustly blamed because we should desire more and more of what is true gain. I mean, a large bank account is not as such pure gain, apart from all tax problems. So the philosopher, in other words, can be presented as the cleverest man concerned with gain.

One last step. Plato sometimes presents Socrates as Odysseus. You know, Odysseus was the Greek hero who represented cleverness regarding one's own benefit. The identification of philosophy with justice, as we see in the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*, is then only a part of the truth. And that is shown simply by the fact that Socrates is the friend of Alcibiades. "Alcibiades," that is something else; whatever that may mean, that is not justice. And Socrates is a friend of Alcibiades. What Plato has in mind is this: all fundamental human needs, not only the longing for justice, find their consistent and possible fulfillment only in philosophy, but necessarily in philosophy. Or, to state it more simply, the philosopher alone is a complete human being. Now the famous Stoic praises of the philosopher, of the wise man—you know, that he's the only king, and the only, I do not know what—these are simply relics of what Plato has in mind. It is almost below your and my dignity if I say a philosopher in the Platonic sense is not the same as a professor of philosophy, or for that matter of political philosophy. I hope this goes without saying. So the philosopher alone is a complete human being. Now let me read to you another statement: "This much is certain: the poet alone is the true human being, and the best philosopher is only a caricature compared with him." This is said by Schiller in a letter to Goethe, of January 7, 1795^{xii}.

[change of tape]

^{xii} *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe*, hrsg. Emil Staiger (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1966), 81.

—[an] unbelievably wise man would never have made that statement. But Schiller, less wise, much younger, under the impact of Goethe, comparing Goethe with the great men of . . . like Kant and Hegel, whom he knew and of whom he knew, came to the conclusion that they are lower in an overall reckoning than Goethe. But nevertheless, whatever the special situation was in which Schiller wrote this letter, this is the opposite point of Plato. Because Plato could have said, and as a matter of fact in the *Republic* he says almost in so many words, that the philosopher is the only true man, and the best poet is only a caricature compared with him—imitation of imitation. Plato is even worse than Schiller. This, incidentally, shows again what we have discussed on a former occasion, that the ultimate issue is not philosophy and politics, although that is the primary issue up to the present day, but philosophy and poetry. As Plato puts it at the beginning of the tenth book of the *Republic*, there is a feud going on from time immemorial between philosophy and poetry. And this is still so.

Well, there are quite a few other points which one could make. Oh, we have plenty of time. I think that we should have some discussion toward the end of this course. There are a few other remarks which I jotted down for the end of this meeting, trying to summarize, but in this summary many things, and quite a few things of importance, are not¹³ [included]—and not owing to any cleverness on my part but to the opposite, because it is very, very hard to find a simple formula¹⁴ which is fertile in the sense that, by developing each point, you get in the whole variety of considerations. But we would have to try to get that. And when one studies these Platonic dialogues, one sees how important that inconspicuous, seemingly inconspicuous, human faculty of memory is. I mean, I decided for myself a long time ago that what is called genius is perhaps nothing but the ability to think of a great variety of subjects at the same time with equal clarity. We have to use pieces of paper, and jot it down in notes, and then the notes are lost or illegible or whatever it may be. And that is very hard. I will only give a survey of what seems to me the clear context.

The fighting dialogue, and the theme is rhetoric. And there is a direct connection between the two, because accusing and defending are forms of fighting. The dialogue is based on the distinction between art and flattery, which is in its turn based on the distinction between the good and the pleasant: And then there follows on the side of the good, justice; on the side of the pleasant, injustice—and on the side of justice, philosophy; and on the side of injustice, politics. This schema, this simple schema, is possible because of a peculiar abstraction made in the dialogue, an abstraction from the highest, from the peak. The peak is missing, as I've said. That philosophy is both the best and the most pleasant, that there can be arts which, while pursuing the good, necessarily pursue the pleasant belonging to that, this is abstracted from, as we have seen. Owing to this ultimate coincidence of the good and the pleasant, the abstraction from it, philosophy comes to sight as mere duty. The ascetic character of the dialogue follows from that. Philosophy is demanded from everyone, like moral virtue. And then of course this leads to a very negative judgment about the human race: all, or almost all, are very bad. Only because philosophy is demanded from everyone can it be maintained, if only for some time, that rhetoric is simply bad, because rhetoric¹⁵ [is] a kind of speech which is necessary among people who do not possess knowledge. Since the peak is missing, the

dialogue considers only the charge of corruption against Socrates, not the charge of impiety. But the charge of impiety is present, of course, and it is alluded to in a subtle way by the use of oaths in this dialogue. It seems that Socrates' oaths are more frequent in this dialogue than in the others. I do not have a statistic, but I speak of an impression. And surely one thing is clear: the only dialogue in which his favorite oath, "by the Dog," is explained to any degree is the *Gorgias*.

It is absolutely necessary in studying the *Gorgias* to consider the *Republic*, as we have said time and again. And I remind you of that simple schema regarding the personnel. [LS writes on the blackboard.] We have Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles. In the *Republic*, we have also an old man at the beginning, Cephalus, [and then] Polemarchus—no, I'm sorry; that is true, but it is an unnecessary complication here. Father and son, Cephalus/Polemarchus, Thrasymachus, and the two brothers, Glaucon and Adeimantus. I take the *Republic* as a whole. It is also possible and necessary to consider the relation of the *Gorgias* to the First Book of the *Republic*, but this is now no longer possible or necessary in this course. Callicles corresponds to Glaucon–Adeimantus. There is a certain kinship between Callicles and Glaucon. Glaucon is a much better man than Callicles, that's clear, but he has something very important in common: manliness. Adeimantus, who is the model of moderation—there's no parallel to that, no equivalent to that, in the *Gorgias*. I indicate to you the kinship between Glaucon and Callicles in the following terms. When Socrates, conversing with Adeimantus, has described this simple city, this nice South Sea island called so nastily by Glaucon "the city of pigs," Adeimantus is perfectly satisfied because he is a moderate, temperate man, but Glaucon is disgusted.^{xiii} And the explicit reason which he gives is "no meat." You know, he is like a young hound who needs his meat. And of course this does a great injustice to Glaucon. He has a deeper reason: because there is no true virtue in this simple society, because there is no opportunity for the development of virtue, because everything is so simple. But this ambiguity—that he does not know and cannot know: Is it the desire for meat or is it the desire for excellence which prompts him?—finds its equivalent, of course, in Callicles, who doesn't know: Is he guided by the desire for the tyrant and his self-indulgence, or¹⁶ [by] the much more noble thing, the disgust that a man like Socrates, for example, should be at the mercy of all kinds of low and evil people. So the *Gorgias* is, then, written simply from the point of view of manliness, therefore a rejection of self-defense and [a] disregard of the fundamental needs; whereas in the *Republic* there is a balance of manliness and moderation, indicated by the cooperation of Glaucon and Adeimantus. And yet there is so much greater emphasis on moderation in the *Gorgias* than in the *Republic*. Moderation is presented as *the* virtue, whereas this is not done in the *Republic*. In order to understand that—and I'm sorry this what I say now is a bit complicated, but I can't make it more simple—we have to consider not only the relation of the *Gorgias* to the *Republic*, but to another dialogue. Now to do this in a simple and orderly manner, the relation between the *Republic* and the *Gorgias* is established by the fact that they both deal with justice. But we know that justice is not the only theme of the *Gorgias*. What is the other theme?

Student: Rhetoric.

^{xiii} *Republic* 371e–372e.

LS: Rhetoric. Which other Platonic dialogue deals with rhetoric?

Student: The *Phaedrus*.

LS: *Phaedrus*. Therefore we have to consider not only the relation of the *Gorgias* to the *Republic* but to the *Phaedrus* as well. Now in the *Phaedrus* (omitting infinitely many things) Socrates shows to Phaedrus what a good erotic speech is. In the *Gorgias*, we can say, Socrates shows to Gorgias what a good just speech is, a speech in defense of justice. The speech in the *Phaedrus* praising *eros* culminates in the praise of madness. Madness, insanity if you translate literally; that *mania* in Greek, which was the cause of the greatest blessings of Hellas, as is said there. But madness transcending all limits, which belongs to *eros*, is the opposite to sobriety, to moderation. The emphasis on moderation in the *Gorgias*, in the dialogue dealing with just rhetoric, corresponds to the praise of *mania* in the *Phaedrus*, the dialogue devoted to erotic speech.

Now, to link these two considerations together: the *Republic* and the *Gorgias* belong together, quite obviously. They, in different ways—the *Republic* more explicitly than the *Gorgias*—downgrade *eros*. The *Phaedrus*, belonging together with the *Banquet*, upgrade[s] it. The minimum we would have to understand in order to grasp Plato's thought on man would be¹⁷ these four dialogues and how they are related to each other. Yes, these are the points which I thought I should make. Now we could read on in the myth. We have somewhat more time than I thought. But first let us see whether there are no questions or objections.

Student: Could you clarify what you meant by the dialectics of self-defense? How is that connected with Polus' two motivations, one the motivation to punish the tyrant and the other one his enthusiasm for tyrannical self-indulgence? And then you went on to say that the philosophers had to engage in the dialectics of self-defense—

LS: Well, let us start from the simplest part of the question, the dialectics of self-defense. Self-defense is unobjectionable. And what follows? If you have the right to preserve yourself, you have, of course, also the right to the means of self-preservation. I mean, I give you now a summary of Hobbes' argument—[Hobbes], who isolated this part of the Platonic thing and¹⁸ owes to that his immortal fame, which is not nothing. I mean, he is of some help with that. But you have the right to the means. Who is to judge of the means? Of course, [you] yourself, because no one is as concerned with your self-preservation as you yourself can be. Now, anyone is the judge, and that has nothing to do with competence. Whether a man is a good or bad judge doesn't make any difference, because the fool has a much greater interest with his self-preservation than the wisest man can have. Ya? Good. That means [that], since by any man any thing can be regarded as a means of self-preservation—you know, the fool is also here—then the right of self-preservation leads to the right of everyone to everything: war of everybody¹⁹ [against] everybody. And so Hobbes's point is this: If I start from a man who is from the very beginning tyrannical, wishing to have more, or if I start from the most simple and honest man, the conclusion is the same. The practical solution, of course, for Hobbes was, as you

know, [to] have government and laws, and then the need for self-preservation, except in Chicago in the night, is very small, because there are people who take care of that. Ya? So self-preservation becomes aggression. It becomes aggression, because should you wait until the aggressor has pulled his gun? You know, there are subtle situations there. You know that from the Westerns—whether you must wait until the other makes his move. But if you are a poorer marksman, can you expect to do that? Great question. So therefore that leads away from self-defense to aggression.

Now let us assume the man bent on his self-preservation and of course²⁰ [on making] it as long lasting as possible, naturally. I mean, what's the use of preserving yourself now? You want to be safe tomorrow and the day after tomorrow as well. Then you must have power. Now, let us assume by great cleverness you have succeeded in making yourself so powerful that you can never be killed and are safe. What do you do with that? Well, you watch of course and see that the guards are always properly posted, but gradually that becomes a very simple thing, and you can delegate it easily to someone who knows that if you are killed he will be tortured by the enemies, and therefore is utterly reliable. You know these simple tricks. And then what will you do? He hasn't learned anything, because he was only concerned with self-preservation. He will indulge his sensual desires, the crudest desires which every human being has, because there is nothing else there. If he had taken a broader view from the very beginning, that there are other things than self-preservation, the result would not follow. But we are speaking here from this point of view. This was, I believe, a part of an answer to your question, [or] an answer to part of your question. Which part is most obviously missing?

Same student: I don't see a connection with Well, a concern with self-preservation leads to a kind of spiritedness—

LS: Ya, if there is not something higher, beyond self-defense, self-preservation, which limits it—which, for example, would include that self-preservation is not under all circumstances the overriding consideration. There were two others. I'm sorry I have to—yes?

Student: I had an interpretation of the myth as sort of trying to persuade Callicles by fear to be moderate. He couldn't use *logos* or reason, so he had to use fear

LS: Yes. I tried to show that in my remark about to what extent does the myth correspond to Callicles' longings. Here he gets what he wants, punishment of the unjust, and at the same time the noble element in him, namely, that only the unjust should be punished, is taken care of because the judges will be competent; they will be the sons of Zeus. I would only have to repeat what I said in my statement. Yes, Mr. Lyons?

Mr. Lyons: Callicles' longing

LS: Because, well, in the first place the element of revenge: that he wants [to] hit back, and now they get it forever and ever and ever and ever. That satisfies him. But perhaps also for this reason: Should there be a punishment which does not in any way redound to

the benefit of the punished individual? Must not all rational punishment serve ultimately the purpose to rehabilitate, to improve the man who is punished? And if the punishment is always everlasting, there is no such possibility because it is understood that he will act only as a paradigm for others and will never be improved. Yes?

Student: . . . this comes after death

LS: Yes, well, but as I say, this becomes intelligible if we look at Callicles and at the needs of his soul. He cannot stand the thought—I mean, the better part of him cannot stand the thought—that Archelaus as described by Polus (never forget that we have no evidence that the historical Archelaus actually killed this child, and that the child had [not] fallen into that pit when running after a goose; you know, that may very well be a rhetorical embellishment by Polus, for all we know)—but assuming he was such a terrible fellow, then if Archelaus is such (and there were tyrants of unbelievable bestiality, there’s no question; there are still some), then one can perfectly understand, as it were, a first move of the soul: “I would like to see him drawn and quartered and not finding ever an end in oblivion but going on and on and on.” One can understand that. Nevertheless, it makes *you* worse: you assimilate yourself to that unjust man in your longing for an unreasonable, useless punishment.

Of course, it is clear that when we speak of protection of society as a legitimate end of punishment,²¹ this is not quite the same as the improvement of individuals, you know? Locke makes it very simple. But Socrates is not quite satisfied with that. Locke says we kill such a fellow who committed murder, for example, like a beast. I forgot the terms, but you remember that a lion or tiger is used. You just shoot them down like mad dogs. That is perfectly intelligible as a feeling on the spur of the moment, but you know that the penal law of the western world is not based on this view. Therefore, if he is really mad, strictly speaking insane, he will not be punished. From the point of view of protection of society, sure, kill him, treat him like a mad dog. But we would think that this creates very great moral problems if people do that, you know? In other words, we demand guilt in addition to mere dangerousness. So to be a danger to society and to be guilty are two different considerations. And I have the feeling that a great confusion, not theoretical, but in the general public, about that is underlying the practice going on. People have such a bad conscience in inflicting punishments—juries too, you know. And other considerations adding to that lead to what appears to me a considerable laxity in law enforcement. We have no solution to that; the problem is absolutely with us.

But it is important to see that these are two radically different considerations: the improvement of the criminal and the protection of society. And there may not be an easy harmony between them. And, generally speaking, I believe that is the meaning of the analysis of justice given in the *Republic*. There are two notions of justice, which are both necessary and which are implied in all our judgment. In the first, we think of the common good; and in the second, we think of the good of each individual. Now, that the good of each individual and the concern with it, should coincide with the common good cannot be assumed.²² I mean, modern liberalism has found a simple solution. The laws are to be concerned only with the bare minimum of protection: protecting life, property, and so on;

and the concern with virtue and vice is no concern of the legislator, as Locke explicitly stated, and quite a few others after him. But then we come to the interesting borderline cases, you know, like obscenity. After all, no one's life and property is endangered if the public is flooded with obscenity, and yet we have the feeling that this is a matter of public political concern nevertheless. How to reconcile these things, that's the great question. And what Plato in the *Republic* suggests is [that] a clear, universally valid solution of this problem is impossible. That is the ultimate reason why an unqualifiedly just solution is not possible, because of the diversion of these two considerations. Yes, Mr. Flaumenhaft?

Mr. Flaumenhaft: . . . meant by saying that ultimately the issue is not between philosophy and politics, but ultimately the issue is between philosophy and poetry?

LS: Well, if all practical wisdom ultimately rests, be it only for its defense (Mr. Seltzer's question), on theoretical wisdom, on a non-practical wisdom, then the question is, for Plato: What is the highest form of this ultimate wisdom, philosophy or poetry?

Mr. Flaumenhaft: One can see what the claim of philosophy to be this highest wisdom would be, but what would be the claim of poetry to be higher than philosophy?

LS: Well, we have²³ someone sitting [here] who would answer you that question better than I.

Student: . . . Are you speaking to me?

LS: Yes. [Laughter] I thought you were of this opinion.

Student: What? That poetry could rule with power?

LS: No, no, no, that poetry—I quoted Schiller, after all, a man of great philosophic training and also of great poetic power, who said that. Do not most people, more people, turn for clarity about their life problems, their deeper problems, to poets rather than to philosophers?

Student: No.

LS: No?

Same student: Most people turn to religion.

LS: Ya, but from Plato's point of view—what does religion for Plato mean? The word "religion" is a Latin word; [it] doesn't exist in Plato's language. The word which he would use is *eusebeia*, which we translate by piety. But what is piety for Plato? Piety can mean simply doing the things demanded by the *nomos*. That is, from Plato's point of view, not particularly important. The true piety for Plato means *knowledge* of the divine—not worship, but knowledge—and therefore it coincides with philosophy. And from this point of view, he would say the poets give the bad [view]. By humanizing the

gods, you know, giving them these human characteristics (you know, as Homer does), [the poets] are bad educators. Yes?

Mr. Flaumenhaft: What, in your opinion, is the strongest statement of the claims of poetry in opposition to the claim of philosophy?

LS: That is a very good question. And it is this. I need two minutes or so to collect myself, but I will think [a]loud. Now the formula for poetry and this kind of thing in the olden times, as you know, was “imitation,” the imitative arts. And this is rejected today by practically everyone as an unusually philistine and low class view of poetry. And the word which is used against that is “creative.” Poets are creators. Therefore those who say the highest is not imitation, *reproduction*, *representing* what already is, but *creation*, are the defenders of poetry. Do you see that? Now this can be done, was done as a matter of fact on the grandest scale, as far as I can see, by Nietzsche. Namely, if the truth is not always self-subsisting but is man’s making, then the truth originates in human creativity; and then there is no reason why the poets should not be the true guides of men rather than the philosophers, especially if the philosophers—well, one way of putting it is this. The philosophers—Nietzsche made this point, by the way—²⁴when they speak about moral philosophy, what do they do? They interpret a morality established already, the morality of their civilization, their culture, their society. But who creates this morality? Who makes the breakthroughs to new vistas? The poets. That is what they would say.

One can state it perhaps more neatly as follows. Philosophy is concerned with understanding the whole. I mean, there is no question about that. But is the whole complete? The earlier thinkers said, “Yes, it is in principle complete and the incompletenesses are only²⁵ [aspects that] belong to the completeness.” In other words, that a mouse will die and there will be new mice afterward, this incompleteness is part of the completeness: the species mouse will exist. And in a more sophisticated and difficult way that applies to man as well. But let us assume that the most interesting in the whole is of course the highest. The highest of which we know empirically is man. Now if man has made himself what he is, and is still making himself what he is in a process which is in principle unfinishable, although it may be broken off by cosmic catastrophes, then the decisive things are the creative acts. And therefore there is no reason—and therefore if a man like Nietzsche appears so frequently as a philosopher–poet, there is some truth to that. Philosophy is in a way understood along the terms of poetry as Plato understood it. This is, I think, truly the alternative which in this form has developed only in the nineteenth century and, I think, today—well, today of course the situation is in one way very simple. If you want to find out about human affairs, the interesting affairs—I mean, not those which can be found out by more or less mechanical methods—if you want to understand the *meaning* of urbanization, anomie, alienation (you know these words), surely a first rate novel brings it home much more clearly, I think, than a big book about the big cities. Don’t you think so? Or at least, as we say, the social scientist who give[s] you this book about municipalities must have something in himself of the poet or novelist, as I say, which is another way of saying that poets see better. Now, this is of course a special case, because our social science from which we distinguish poetry or novelists is, you know, unnecessarily narrow and confined. But this is a special case.

But the criticism goes much deeper. It concerns truly the question of imitation, reproduction, contemplation, versus creativity. That, I think, is the issue. And how the poets of old would have defended themselves against Plato's or Socrates' onslaught is an entirely different question, because they would never have taken this line. And therefore, since the clearest discussion of this issue occurs not accidentally in a comical poet, in Aristophanes, I invest quite some time in trying to understand Aristophanes' criticism of Socrates. I believe that this will supply me with a better basis of judgment. But today, I think, this view is very general. And I suppose you all are aware of that and have gone through that, and sometimes said with Romeo, "Damn philosophy." What? You remember the quotation? "Philosophy can't give you a Juliet"? Surely not, and it cannot give you even satisfactions corresponding to Juliet. [Laughter] Yes?

Mr. Levy: You began the course with a lecture by you justifying our return to the originator of philosophy with the criticisms of behavioralism and historicism. I assume that after reading the *Gorgias*, we should have a better idea as to whether these criticisms are justified or answerable. In other words, the possibility of philosophy in the first place can be established, then, by reading the *Gorgias*, [having it] in our minds. I am helpless before this question; I wonder if you could—

LS: Ya, well, that is perfectly all right that you are helpless, because bewilderment is an important part of the learning process. I would put it this way. I do not know whether this would satisfy you. I think that the impossibility of behavioralism as an answer to what we as social scientists are to be concerned with is a fairly simple thing—which doesn't mean that I can convince many people of that; that's another matter. You know, many things which are impossible are very actual, and in a way prove their possibility, in one sense of the word, by their actuality. But the question is only this, and here I must simply appeal to you, and I don't know how good a teacher in this respect I can be. All kinds of questions came up. They were always linked directly or indirectly to the question of rhetoric, but they were not limited to that. Now, are these questions which came up relevant questions? Are they seen by social science as now established? That would be my answer. And I would say they are not seen by them. That there are quite a few serious and sensible men working in that field I do not doubt, but the horizon is too narrow; they are bound to exclude the most important things from their consideration.

Mr. Levy: Would this be in any way relevant to your criticisms of historicism?

LS: In one simple way, yes, insofar as I think we can recognize, in these Platonic questions, questions which are of immediate concern to us. And the fact that this happened so many centuries ago in the *polis*, and in this particular *polis*, there in Greece, does not detract from the topicality of the fundamental issue. The issue of philosophy and the *polis* is still there, although philosophy has become transformed into what is now called science (philosophy being only a kind of appendix to that), and the *polis* has been transformed into modern states and even imperial states, very large states, like the United States, for example. The issue is still there, and I think we come across it in many places, wherever we might turn. Think of the question of the competence of the electorate, the

competence of juries, the adequacy of education and the established education system—they're all there. And the Platonic statements are, as far as the core of the issue is concerned, still valid. To that extent, I believe, it is a refutation of historicism. Yes, Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: To go back to your question . . . poetry. Earlier in the course, you talked about the issue of creation, and you said that you would make the argument to a poet or an artist of our generation who speaks about creation that in effect he is really only representing—

LS: Ya, well, I couldn't do [it]. For example, I know nothing about abstract art, and I could not say whether it makes²⁶ sense [here] in any way to speak of imitation. I simply would be absolutely beyond my competence. You know, that is one of the few points where Khrushchev and Eisenhower are in entire agreement. [Laughter] You probably know that.

Mr. Butterworth: But isn't the issue of great importance, to find out whether or not there can be such a thing as creative art, because even though Nietzsche may be a good spokesman for the idea, the idea has to be put into practice, and we don't really have an example?

LS: Ya, well, Homer created Achilles, Odysseus, and so on. I think you can say that, even if there were stories about these men before, as there probably were. But what he made of them in these two poems is, as far as a reasonable suggestion, Homer's work. But what does this making mean? What does this making mean? Or what does the making of *Madame Bovary* by Flaubert mean? Surely there would be no novel *Madame Bovary* without Flaubert, there's no question. But, on the other hand, he wrote the book; he composed it; we know even a bit about certain stimuli which he received from various [sources]—that we can all know. But that doesn't go to the root of the matter. What is this whole thing about?

Mr. Butterworth: Wouldn't you have to say that . . . trying to represent or to give effect to either emotions or thoughts that they have?

LS: Sure, in the case of *Madame Bovary*, which I happen to know, I could even answer that question of what he imitates, what he presents—what he presents, and in this sense imitates, and in a very powerful way. This is not the way to go about it. I mean, I think it would show probably more simply and concretely if we would take an interpretation of a modern work of art made by one of the modern critics, and the way in which it would have to be done on the ancient basis. I know really nothing about it. I'm not in an English department or something of this kind. But I have been told once, in a review by an English Anglicist scholar, Thompson, that there is a thing called New Criticism.^{xiv} Ya? New Criticism, which is a modern position. And I believe I can show, in the cases which I have studied, that it would be of no help for getting the substance of the thing. That

^{xiv} Lawrance Thompson, review of *Persuasion and the Writing* by Leo Strauss, *Modern Philology* 51 (1954): 208–10.

would be the way to do it. You know, the general,²⁷ [methodological] discussions are arid and not convincing, not even for oneself of course, if they are not based on experience in the handling of these matters. And I have the feeling that a change is going on, even in these well established fields of criticism—in the understanding of Shakespeare, for example, and some other things—that people gradually seem to see that a kind of interpretation which, theoretically developed, would imply the notion of imitation is more illuminating, opening up, than the modern equivalents. There was in the nineteenth century such a thing called “art for art’s sake,” as you all know. And I think there is no one—although he didn’t coin the term—no one who would come to mind more than Flaubert, you know, because of the fanatical devotion to craftsmanship, and more than craftsmanship. And yet nothing would be easier than to show that Flaubert is not “art for art’s sake,” but that he’s a human being concerned with man’s humanity and sees it hopelessly endangered, and that he shows. I mean, “art for art” would not permit this kind of reflections about man. I do not know what it means, but it cannot mean that.

Mr. Butterworth: But wouldn’t there? Is it false to try and make this critique simply from the view itself, rather than by looking at people who might be poor representatives of creative art? Couldn’t the idea itself simply be examined and not

LS: Ya, sure one could do that. But forgive me if I don’t have a kind of aesthetics among my posthumous papers. [Laughter] I try to understand the basic problems of political philosophy to the extent to which I can achieve that, and that’s something very limited—I know that—but I believe also necessary, and apparently more congenial to me and to my preparation than that other work. But, by all means, some man or body of men should, by all means, engage in that. I’m all for that.

Mr. Butterworth: Well, I thought that in the last period you were giving us a shorter statement of what that would look like

LS: Ya but, you see, I cannot prevent myself from thinking about these matters when they come up, without being [capable], in all cases and especially in that case, of following them up properly. I think that the interpretation of a work of art—of, say, a novel or a poem, or for that matter of a painting—is not fundamentally different from that of the interpretation of such a book as the *Republic*. Regarding paintings, I didn’t know that at all until I read a marvelous analysis of a painting by Picasso, by Mr. von Blanckenhagen,^{xv} who was formerly at this university,²⁸ where I saw that it is possible to interpret a painting as exactly as a literary text. And I suppose that will be rare also among interpreters of paintings; Blanckenhagen is a rare man anyway. But still.

Well then, I suggest that we meet, or those of you that have registered for this course, meet again here for your not-everlasting punishment. [Laughter] It will take exactly one hour and thirty minutes.

^{xv} Peter Heinrich von Blackenhagen, “Picasso and Rilke: La famille des saltimbanques,” *Measure: a critical journal* 1 (1950): 165–85.

[end of session]

ENDNOTES TO SESSION FIFTEEN

- ¹ Deleted “teaching.”
- ² Deleted “preposition.”
- ³ Moved “is.”
- ⁴ Deleted “I mean.”
- ⁵ Deleted “and.”
- ⁶ Deleted “is.”
- ⁷ Deleted “but.”
- ⁸ Deleted “and so.”
- ⁹ Deleted “they.”
- ¹⁰ Moved “parallel.”
- ¹¹ Deleted “one.”
- ¹² Deleted “love of gain.”
- ¹³ Deleted “in.”
- ¹⁴ Deleted “but.”
- ¹⁵ Deleted “being.”
- ¹⁶ Deleted “for.”
- ¹⁷ Deleted “to understand.”
- ¹⁸ Deleted “he.”
- ¹⁹ Deleted “to.”
- ²⁰ Deleted “to have.”
- ²¹ Deleted “that.”
- ²² Deleted “you know.”
- ²³ Moved “here.”
- ²⁴ Deleted “the philosophers.”
- ²⁵ Deleted “they.”
- ²⁶ Moved “here.”
- ²⁷ Deleted “methodical.”
- ²⁸ Deleted “and.”