'And we agreed that justice was excellence of soul, and that injustice was vice or defect of soul.\textsuperscript{36}

'We did.'

'In which case the just soul and the just man will have a good life, and the unjust man a bad one.'

'It looks like it,' he said, 'according to your argument.'

'But the person who has a good life is blessed and happy, while the person who doesn't is the opposite.'

'Of course.'

'So the just man is happy, and the unjust man is miserable.'

'They may as well be,' he said.

'But being miserable is not profitable, whereas being happy is.'

'Of course.'

'So injustice, my excellent Thrasymanus, is never more profitable than justice.'

'Go ahead, Socrates,' he said. 'It's Bendis' Day. Make a real feast of it.'

'Thanks to you, Thrasymanus,' I said, 'now that you've turned friendly, and stopped being angry. And even then I haven't had a proper treat, though that's my fault, not yours. I think I've been like one of those gluttons who grab at everything that's carried past them, and taste it without ever properly enjoying what went before. Without waiting to find the first thing we were looking for — what justice actually is — I've dropped that, and gone charging off into asking questions about it — whether it's wickedness and ignorance, or wisdom and goodness. And then a little later, when the claim arose that injustice was more profitable than justice, I couldn't resist going on from the earlier question to that one. So the result of our discussion is that I'm none the wiser. After all, if I don't know what justice is, I'm hardly going to know whether or not it is in fact some kind of excellence or virtue, or whether the person who possesses it is unhappy or happy.'

\textsuperscript{36} At 350c–d.

\textbf{Book 2}

With these words I thought I had finished what I had to say. But I was wrong. Apparently it was only an introduction. Glaucon is an extremely determined character in everything he does, and on this occasion he refused to accept Thrasymanus' surrender. 'Socrates,' he said, 'do you really want to convince us that it is in every way better to be just than unjust, or is it enough merely to seem to have convinced us?'

'I would prefer,' I said, 'really to convince you, if I had a choice.'

'In that case,' he said, 'you are not achieving your aim. Tell me this. Do you think there is a good of the kind we would choose to have because we value it for its own sake, and not from any desire for its results? Enjoyment, for example, and pleasures which are harmless and produce no consequences for the future beyond enjoyment for the person who possesses them.'

'Yes,' I said, 'I do think there is a good of this kind.'

'What about the sort we value both for itself and for its consequences? Things like thinking, seeing, being healthy. We value goods of this sort, I imagine, for both reasons.'

'Yes,' I said.

'And can you distinguish a third class or category of good,' he asked, 'a class which contains physical exercise, undergoing medical treatment when we are ill, practising medicine, and earning a living in general? These we would describe as unpleasant but beneficial. We would not choose to have them for their own sakes, but only for the payment or other benefits which result from them.'

'Yes,' I said, 'there is this third class as well. What of it?'

'In which of these classes,' he asked, 'do you put justice?'
'In my opinion,' I replied, 'it is in the finest class, which is to be valued by anyone who wants to be happy, both for itself and for its consequences.'

'That's not what most people think,' he said. 'Most people would put it in the unpleasant class, which we should cultivate in return for payment and reputation, on account of public opinion, but which purely for itself is to be avoided like the plague.'

'I know that's what they think,' I said. 'Thrasydamus criticised it — and praised injustice — on those grounds some while back. But I'm a slow learner, apparently.'

'Well,' he said, 'listen to me as well, and see if you agree with what I suggest. I think Thrasydamus too readily allowed himself to be bewitched by you, like a snake being charmed by a snake-charmer. As far as I'm concerned, the proof is not yet convincing, either for justice or injustice. I want to be told what each of them is, and what effect it has, just by itself, when it is present in the soul. I want to forget about the rewards and results it brings. So here's what I am going to do, if you have no objection. I'm going to revive Thrasydamus' argument. First I shall say what kind of thing people reckon justice is, and how they think it arises. Secondly I shall claim that all those who practise it do so as something unavoidable, against their will, and not because they regard it as a good. Thirdly I shall say that this is a rational way for them to behave, since the unjust man, in their view, has a much better life than the just man. These are not my own opinions, Socrates. But I am dismayed by the unending sound in my ears of Thrasydamus and thousands like him, whereas I have never yet heard from anyone, in the form I would like to hear it, the argument for justice, the argument that it is something better than injustice. I want to hear it praised simply for itself, and I have high hopes that you, if anyone, can do this for me. So I am going to make the most powerful speech I can in defence of the unjust life, and in my speech I shall show you how I want to hear you, in your turn, criticising injustice and defending justice. There you are. See if you approve of my suggestion.'

'I'd like nothing better,' I replied. 'What else would anyone with any sense prefer to make a habit of talking about or hearing about?'

'That's good,' he said. 'Now, listen to the first thing I said I was going to talk about — what sort of thing justice is, and how it arises. Doing wrong, men say, is by its nature a good — and being wronged an evil — but...

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1 The passage is an early appearance of the concept of a social contract imposed on a state of nature, which was to have great importance in the classic political and moral theories of the enlightenment. It is unclear whether Plato has any particular contemporary version of this concept in mind.
e windows in it. Peeping through them, he saw inside what appeared to be a corpse, larger than human, wearing nothing but a golden ring on its hand. They say he removed the ring, and came out.

   'The shepherds were having one of their regular meetings, so that they could give the king their monthly report on the flocks. And the man turned up as well, wearing the ring. As he sat with the rest of them, he happened to twist the setting of the ring towards him, into the palm of his hand. When he did this, he became invisible to those who were sitting with him, and they started talking about him as if he had gone. He was amazed, and twisted the ring again, turning the setting to the outside. As soon as he did so, he became visible. When he realised this, he started experimenting with the ring, to see if it did have this power. And he found that that was how it was. When he turned the setting to the inside, he became invisible; when he turned it to the outside, he became visible.

b Once he had established this, he lost no time arranging to be one of those making the report to the king. When he got there, he seduced the king's wife, plotted with her against the king, killed him and seized power.

   'Imagine there were two rings like that, and that the just man wore one, while the unjust man wore the other. People think that no one would be sufficiently iron-willed to remain within the bounds of justice. No one could bring himself to keep his hands off other people's possessions, and steer clear of them, if he was free to take whatever he liked without a second thought, in the market-place, or go into people's houses and sleep with anyone he liked; or if he could kill or release from prison anyone he chose, and in general go round acting like a god among men. If he behaved like this, the just man would be acting no differently from the unjust. Both would be following the same course.

   'This is a strong argument, you might say, for the claim that no one is just voluntarily, but only under compulsion. Justice is not thought to be a good thing for individuals, since wherever anyone thinks he can do wrong, he does do wrong. Every man believes injustice to be much more profitable for the individual than justice. And he will be right to think this, according to the person putting forward this view. Anyone who came into possession of the kind of freedom I have described, and then refused ever to do anything wrong, and did not lay a finger on other people's possessions, would be regarded by observers as the most pathetic and brainless of creatures - though of course in public they would praise him, lying to one another because of their fear of being wronged.

c 'That's all I have to say about that claim. As for the choice between the lives of the people in question, the only way we can make it properly is by contrasting the completely just man with the completely unjust man. How shall we contrast them? Like this. We will subtract nothing either from the injustice of the unjust man or from the justice of the just man. We will assume that each is a perfect example of his particular way of behaving. So for a start let's make the unjust man's behaviour like that of a skilled practitioner of a profession. A really good ship's captain or doctor, for example, can distinguish in the exercise of his skill between what is not feasible and what is feasible. He attempts what is feasible, and avoids what is not feasible. What is more, if he makes a false move somewhere, he is capable of correcting it. That's how it can be with our unjust man. Let's assume, if he is going to be really unjust, that he goes about his wrongdoings in the right way, and gets away with it. The one who gets caught is to be regarded as incompetent, since perfect injustice consists in appearing to be just when you are not. We must credit the completely unjust man, then, with the most complete injustice. To the person who commits the greatest wrongs we must not deny - in fact, we must grant - the enjoyment of the greatest reputation for justice. If he makes a false move, we must allow him the ability to put it right. He must be capable of using persuasion - so that if any evidence of his wrongdoing is brought against him, he can talk his way out of it - but capable also of using force where force is needed, relying on his courage and strength, and the possession of friends and wealth.

   'That is our model of the unjust man. Beside him let us put our imaginary just man, a simple and honourable man who wants, in Aeschylus' words, not to appear to be good, but to be good.\(^2\) We must deprive him of the appearance, since if he appears to be just, the appearance of justice will bring him recognition and rewards, and then it will not be clear whether his motive for being just was a desire for justice or a desire for the rewards and the recognition. So we must strip him of everything but justice; we must put him in a situation which is the opposite of our previous example. Despite doing nothing wrong, he must have the worst possible reputation for injustice. Then, if it is unaffected by disgrace and its consequences, the purity of his justice will have been tested in the fire. Let him live out his life like this, without any change, until the day of his death, appearing to be unjust though actually being just. That way they

\(^2\) Part of the description (Seven against Thebes 512) of the wise and god-fearing seer Amphiarías, explaining why he chooses to put no blazon on his shield.