systems and all their modifications and exhibits equal variety and change in the actual states as well.

CLEINIAS: What type is this?

ATHENIAN: The one which Homer too listed as the successor of the second. This is how he describes the origin of the third:[5] 'He founded Dardania' – I think this is how it goes – 'when holy Ilium,

> A town upon the plain for mortal men, had not been built:
> For still they lived upon the lower slopes of many-fountained Ida.'

682 He composed these lines, as well as those about the Cyclopes, under some sort of inspiration from God. And how true to life they are! This is because poets as a class are divinely gifted and are inspired when they sing, so that with the help of Graces and Muses they frequently hit on how things really happen.

CLEINIAS: They do indeed.

ATHENIAN: Let's carry on with the story we are telling: it may suggest something to our purpose. I take it this is what we ought to do?

CLEINIAS: Of course.

ATHENIAN: Ilium was founded, according to us, when men had descended from the hills to a wide and beautiful plain. They built their city on a hill of moderate height near several rivers which poured down from Ida above.

CLEINIAS: So the story goes.

ATHENIAN: I suppose we may assume that this descent of theirs took place many ages after the flood?

CLEINIAS: Yes, naturally, many ages later.

ATHENIAN: I mean that apparently the disaster we've just described must have been forgotten to a quite remarkable degree if they founded their city on the lower reaches of several rivers flowing down from the mountains, and put their trust in hills that were none too high.

CLEINIAS: Yes, a clear proof that they were far removed in time from any such experience.

ATHENIAN: With the increase in the human population

5. *Iliad* XX, 216 ff. 'He' is Dardanus; Ilium is Troy.

many other cities, one supposes, were already being founded.

CLEINIAS: Naturally.

ATHENIAN: These cities also mounted an expedition against Ilium, probably by sea as well, because by then all mankind had overcome its fear and had taken to ships.

CLEINIAS: So it seems.

ATHENIAN: And after a siege of about ten years the Achaeans sacked Troy.

CLEINIAS: Indeed they did.

ATHENIAN: They besieged Ilium for ten years, and during this period the domestic affairs of the individual attackers took a turn for the worse. The younger generation revolted, and the ugly and criminal reception they gave the troops when they returned to their own cities and homes led to murder, massacre and expulsion on a large scale. When the exiles came back again they adopted a new name, and were now known as Dorians instead of Achaeans, in honour of Dorieus, who had rallied them while they were in exile. A full and exhaustive account of subsequent events can be found in your traditional Spartan stories.

MEGILLUS: Of course.

THE DORIAN LEAGUE

ATHENIAN: When we were starting to discuss legislation, the question of the arts and drinking cropped up, and we made a digression.[6] But now we really do have a chance to come to grips with our subject. As if God himself were guiding us, we've come back to the very point from which we digressed: the actual foundation of Sparta. You maintained 683
that Sparta was established on the right lines,[7] and you said the same of Crete, because it has laws that bear a family resemblance to Sparta's. We have had a rather random discussion about various foundations and political systems, but we have achieved at least this much: we have watched the first, second and third type of state being founded in succession over a vast period of time, and now we discover this fourth

6. See pp. 63 ff. 7. See p. 64.

state (or 'nation', if you like) whose historical foundation and development we are tracing down to its maturity today.[8] After all this, perhaps we can get some idea of what was right and wrong in the way these foundations were established. Can we see what kind of laws are responsible for continued preservation of the features that survive and the ruin of those that collapse? What detailed alterations will produce happiness in a state? If we can understand all this, Cleinias and Megillus, we shall have to discuss the whole business all over again: it will be like making a fresh start.[9] However, we may be able to find some fault in our account so far.

MEGILLUS: Well, sir, if some god were to give us his word that if we do make a second attempt to look at the problem of legislation, we shall hear an account of at least the quality and length of the one we have just had, I for one would willingly extend our journey, and the present day would seem not a moment too long – though it is in fact pretty well the longest day of summer.

ATHENIAN: So it looks as if we must press on with the investigation.

MEGILLUS: Certainly.

ATHENIAN: Let's imagine that we are living at the time when the territory of Sparta, Argos and Messene, and the districts nearby, had in effect come under the control of your ancestors, Megillus. Their next decision, or so the story goes, was to split their forces into three and establish three states – Argos, Messene and Sparta.

MEGILLUS: That's quite right.

ATHENIAN: Temenos became king of Argos, Cresphontes of Messene, and Procles and Eurysthenes of Sparta.

MEGILLUS: True.

8. The four are: (1) single families under autocratic rule, (2) collections of families under aristocratic rule, (3) the cities of the plains (e.g. Troy) with various constitutions, (4) a league of such cities, now to be discussed.

9. The Athenian expresses himself vaguely. He seems to mean that the historical review has suggested certain lessons about the origins and effects of law, and that the Spartan and Cretan constitutions must now be reconsidered from this point of view. That will be more illuminating than the superficial and somewhat partisan judgements on them in §§1–3.

ATHENIAN: And all their contemporaries swore to them that they would go to their help if anybody tried to subvert their thrones.

MEGILLUS: Precisely.

ATHENIAN: Now when a monarchy is overthrown (and indeed when any other type of authority has been destroyed at any time) surely no one but the rulers themselves are to blame? That was the line we took when the subject cropped up a little time ago[10] – or have we forgotten by now?

MEGILLUS: No, of course not.

ATHENIAN: So now we can put our thesis on a firmer footing, because it looks as if our study of history has led us to the same conclusion as before. This means we shall carry on our investigation on the basis of the actual facts rather 684
than conjecture. The facts are, of course, as follows: each of the three royal families, and each of the three royal states they ruled, exchanged oaths in accordance with mutually binding laws which they had adopted to regulate the exercise of authority and obedience to it. The kings swore never to stiffen their rule as the nation continued down the years; the others undertook, provided the rulers kept to their side of the bargain, never themselves to overthrow the kingships nor tolerate an attempt to do so by others. The kings would help the kings and peoples if they were wronged, and the peoples would help the peoples and the kings likewise. That's right, isn't it?

MEGILLUS: Certainly.

ATHENIAN: Now whether it was the kings or someone else who laid down laws for this political system thus established in the three states, the crucial provision, surely, was this –

MEGILLUS: What?

ATHENIAN: Whenever a given state broke the established laws, an alliance of the other two would always be there to take the field against it.

MEGILLUS: Obviously.

10. The reference is not clear: p. 48 may be meant, or possibly p. 128.

ATHENIAN: Of course, most people only ask their legislators to enact the kind of laws that the population in general will accept without objection. But just imagine asking your trainer or doctor to give you pleasure when he trains or cures your body!

MEGILLUS: Exactly.

ATHENIAN: In fact, you often have to be satisfied if you can restore your body to health and vigour without undue pain.

MEGILLUS: True.

ATHENIAN: In another respect too the people of that time were particularly well placed to make legislation a painless process.

MEGILLUS: What respect?

ATHENIAN: Their legislators' efforts to establish a certain equality of property among them were not open to one particularly damaging accusation which is frequently made in other states. Suppose a legal code is being framed and someone adopts the policy of a change in the ownership of land and a cancellation of debts, because he sees that this is the only way in which equality can be satisfactorily achieved. 'Hands off fundamentals' is the slogan everybody uses to attack a legislator who tries to bring in that kind of reform, and his policy of land-redistribution and remission of debts earns him only curses. It's enough to make any man despair. So here is another tremendous advantage the Dorians enjoyed: the absence of resentment. No one could object to the way the land was parcelled out, and large long-standing debts did not exist.

MEGILLUS: True.

ATHENIAN: Then why on earth, my friends, did this foundation and its legislation turn out such a dismal failure?

685 MEGILLUS: What do you mean by that? What's your objection?

ATHENIAN: Three states were founded but in two of them the political system and the legal code were quickly corrupted. Only the third settlement survived – that of your state, Sparta.

MEGILLUS: A pretty difficult problem you're posing!

ATHENIAN: Nevertheless, it demands our attention. So now let's look into it, and while away the journey, as we said when we set out, by amusing ourselves with laws – it's a dignified game and it suits our time of life.

MEGILLUS: Of course. We must do as you say.

ATHENIAN: No laws could form a better subject for our investigation than those by which these states have been administered. Or are there any bigger or more famous states whose foundation we might examine?

MEGILLUS: No, it's not easy to think of alternatives.

ATHENIAN: Well then, it's pretty obvious that they intended the arrangements they made to protect adequately not only the Peloponnese but the Greeks in general against any possible attack by non-Greeks – as for example occurred when those who then lived in the territory of Ilium trusted to the power of the Assyrian empire, which Ninos had founded, and provoked the war against Troy by their arrogance. You see, a good deal of the splendour of the Assyrian empire still remained, and the dread of its united organization was the counterpart in that age of our fear of the Great King of Persia today. The Assyrians had a tremendous grudge against the Greeks: Troy, which was part of the Assyrian empire, had been captured for a second time.[11] To meet such dangers the Dorian army formed a single unified body, although at that period it was distributed among the three states under the command of the kings (who were brothers, being sons of Hercules). It seemed to be excellently conceived and equipped – better even than the army which sailed against Troy. For a start, people thought the sons of Hercules were, as commanders, a cut above the grandsons of Pelops;[12] secondly, they rated the prowess of the army itself higher than that of the expedition which went to Troy. After all, they calculated, *that* had consisted of Achaeans, the very people the Dorians had defeated. So may we take it that this was the nature and purpose of the arrangements they made?

MEGILLUS: Certainly.

11. For the first capture, see Homer, *Iliad* V, 640.
12. Agamemnon and Menelaus, who led the expedition against Troy.

ATHENIAN: And for various reasons they probably ex-
686 pected these arrangements would be permanent and last a long time. They had been comrades in a great many toils and dangers in the past, and now they had been brought under the control of a single family (the kings being brothers); and they had also consulted a large number of prophets, notably Apollo's at Delphi.

MEGILLUS: Yes, that's probable enough, of course.

WHY DID THE LEAGUE FAIL?

ATHENIAN: But apparently these large expectations evaporated pretty quickly, except, as we said a minute ago, in the case of just one small part of the alliance – your state, Sparta. And right up to the present day Sparta has never stopped fighting the other two members. But if they had done as they intended and had agreed on a common policy, their power would have been irresistible, militarily speaking.

MEGILLUS: It certainly would.

ATHENIAN: So just how did their plans misfire? This is surely a problem we ought to look into: why was such a vast and tremendous organization unlucky enough to be destroyed?

MEGILLUS: True: this is the right direction to look. Neglect these, and you'll never find any other laws or political systems preserving (or eliminating) such remarkable and important features.

ATHENIAN: What a stroke of luck! It looks as if we've somehow got on to a crucial point.

MEGILLUS: No doubt about it.

ATHENIAN: Well now, my fine fellow, what hackneyed thoughts we've been having, without realizing it! When people see some tremendous achievement, they always think to themselves, 'What terrific results it would have led to, if someone had known how to set about putting it to proper use!' Here and now, perhaps our ideas on the topic we are discussing are just as wrong and unrealistic as anybody else's who looks at anything in that sort of way.

MEGILLUS: Well really, what *do* you mean? What are we supposed to think you're driving at when you say that?

ATHENIAN: I was poking fun at no one but myself, my friend. I was thinking about the army we are discussing and it occurred to me how splendid it was and what a marvellous tool (as I said) had been put into the hands of the Greeks – if only someone had put it to the proper use at the time!

MEGILLUS: And you were quite right and sensible in everything you said, and we heartily agreed with you – equally rightly and sensibly.

ATHENIAN: Maybe so. Still, my view is that everyone who sets eyes on something big and strong and powerful immediately gets the feeling that if the owner knew how to take advantage of its size and scale he would get tremendous results and be a happy man.

MEGILLUS: And this again is surely right and proper. Or 687
do you see it differently?

ATHENIAN: Well now, just consider what criteria a man ought to employ if he is going to be 'right' to give such praise in an individual case. What about the one we are discussing, for a start? Suppose those who undertook the organization of the army in that age had known their job: somehow, they would have succeeded in it – but the question is *how*. They ought, of course, to have consolidated their army and kept it on a permanent footing; this would have ensured them their own freedom while they ruled over anybody else they liked, and in general it would have enabled them to do whatever they or their children wanted all over the world, among Greeks and non-Greeks indifferently. This is what men would praise them for, isn't it?

MEGILLUS: It is indeed.

ATHENIAN: Again, anyone who notices a case of great wealth or exceptional family distinction or something like that takes precisely the same line. He assumes that just because a man enjoys these advantages his every wish will be granted – or at any rate most of them, and the most important ones.

MEGILLUS: Quite likely.

ATHENIAN: Now then, this shows that there is one

specific desire common to all mankind. Isn't this the upshot of our discussion?

MEGILLUS: What desire?

ATHENIAN: That events should obey whatever orders one feels like giving – invariably, if possible, but failing that, at least where human affairs are concerned.

MEGILLUS: Very true.

ATHENIAN: So seeing that this is the constant wish of us all, right from childhood to old age, isn't it inevitably what we are always *praying* for too?

MEGILLUS: Of course.

ATHENIAN: And I suppose our prayers on behalf of those whom we love will be for precisely what they themselves pray for on their own behalf?

MEGILLUS: Certainly.

ATHENIAN: A man who is a father loves the child who is his son?

MEGILLUS: Of course.

ATHENIAN: Yet there is a good deal in the son's prayers that the father will beg the gods never to grant.

MEGILLUS: You mean when the son who prays is still young and irresponsible?

ATHENIAN: Yes, and I'm thinking too of when the father is senile or even unduly impulsive because of second childhood, and has lost all sense of what is right and proper. He gets into the same state as Theseus when he dealt with Hippolytus, who died so wretchedly,[13] and his prayers become very vehement indeed. But if the son understands the situation, do you think he will join in his father's prayers, given those circumstances?

MEGILLUS: I know what you mean. Your point, I take it, is that you should demand your own way in your prayers only if your wishes are supported by your rational judgement –

13. Hippolytus' stepmother Phaedra falsely accused him of sexual misconduct towards herself; Theseus, her husband, prayed for the death of his son. The prayer was granted, but then Theseus discovered Hippolytus' innocence.

and this, a rational outlook, should be the object of the prayers and efforts of us all, states and individuals alike.

ATHENIAN: It should indeed, and in particular – let me 688
remind myself – it should always be the aim of a state's legislator when he frames the provisions of his laws. And I remind *you* again – to recollect the beginning of our discussion – of what you two recommended: you said that the good legislator should construct his entire legal code with a view to war; for my part, I maintained that this was to order him to establish his laws with an eye on only one virtue out of the four. I said he ought to keep virtue as a whole in mind but especially and pre-eminently the virtue that heads the list – judgement and wisdom, and a strength of mind such that desires and appetites are kept under control. Our discussion has come full circle, and being the speaker at the moment I make the same point as before. You can treat it as a joke if you like, but if you prefer, you can take it seriously: I maintain that, if you lack wisdom, praying is a risky business, because you get the opposite of what you want.[14] If you like to suppose that I am in earnest, do so: I'm confident that if you follow the line of argument we opened up a moment ago you'll soon discover that the cause of the ruin of the kings and the whole enterprise was not cowardice nor a lack of military expertise in the commanders or in those whose role it was to obey them. The disaster was caused by every other sort of vice, and in particular ignorance about mankind's most vital concerns. And if that was true then it is even more so today; and precisely the same will be true in the future. If you like, I'll try to press on with the next stages in the argument and develop the point. As you are my friends, I'll do my very best to make it clear.

CLEINIAS: To make a speech in your praise, sir, would be a tasteless thing to do. Our actions rather than our words will show our regard for you: we shall give you our closest attention. This is the best way to tell whether a gentleman approves or not.

14. That is, an unwise man may unwittingly ask for something which will harm him, and see his prayers answered.

MEGILLUS: Well said, Cleinias. Let's do as you say.

CLEINIAS: And so we shall, God willing. Now let's have your explanation.

ATHENIAN: Well then, to get back on to the track of the argument, we maintain that crass ignorance destroyed that great empire, and that it has a natural tendency to produce precisely the same results today. If this is so, it means that the legislator must try to inspire states with as much good sense as possible, and eradicate folly, as far as he can.

CLEINIAS: Obviously.

689 ATHENIAN: So what kind of ignorance would deserve the title 'crass'? See if you agree with my description. I suggest this kind.

CLEINIAS: What?

ATHENIAN: The kind involved when a man thinks something is fine and good, but loathes it instead of liking it, and conversely when he likes and welcomes what he believes is wicked and unjust. I maintain that this disaccord between his feelings of pleasure and pain and his rational judgement constitutes the very lowest depth of ignorance. It is also the most 'crass', in that it affects the most extensive element in the soul (the element that experiences pleasure and pain, which corresponds to the most extensive part of a state, the common people). So when the soul quarrels with knowledge or opinion or reason, its natural ruling principles, you have there what I call 'folly'. This applies both to the state in which people disobey their rulers and laws, and to the individual, when the fine principles in which he really believes prove not only ineffective but actually harmful. It's all these examples of ignorance that I should put down as the worst kind of discord in a state and individual, not the mere professional ignorance of a workman. I hope you see what I mean, gentlemen.

CLEINIAS: We do, my friend, and we agree with what you say.

ATHENIAN: So let's adopt this as an agreed statement of policy: no citizens who suffer from this kind of ignorance should be entrusted with any degree of power. They must

be reproved for their ignorance, even if their ability to reason is outstanding and they have worked hard at every nice accomplishment that makes a man quick-witted. It is those whose characters are at the other extreme who must be called 'wise', even if, as the saying is, 'they cannot read, they cannot swim'; and it is these sensible people who must be given the offices of state. You see, my friends, without concord,[15] how could you ever get even a glimmer of sound judgement? It's out of the question. But we should be entirely justified in styling the greatest and most splendid concord of all 'the greatest wisdom'. Anyone who lives a rational life shares in this wisdom, but the man who lacks it will invariably turn out to be a spendthrift and no saviour[16] to the city – quite the reverse, because he suffers from this particular kind of ignorance. So as we said just now, let's adopt this as the statement of our views.

CLEINIAS: Adopted it is.

SEVEN TITLES TO AUTHORITY

ATHENIAN: Now, I take it that states must contain some people who govern and others who are governed?

CLEINIAS: Naturally.

ATHENIAN: Good. Well then, what titles are there to 690 either rank? Can we count them? (I mean both in the state and in the family, in each case irrespective of size.) One claim, surely, could be made by father and mother; and in general the title of parents to exercise control over their children and descendants would be universally acknowledged, wouldn't it?

CLEINIAS: Of course.

ATHENIAN: Close behind comes the title of those of high birth to govern those of low birth. Next in order comes our third demand: that younger people should consent to be governed by their elders.

CLEINIAS: Certainly.

15. That is, the concord between reason and the emotions in the individual, and between rulers and ruled in the state.

16. This word perhaps anticipates p. 140.

ATHENIAN: The fourth is that slaves should be subject to the control of their masters.

CLEINIAS: No doubt about it.

ATHENIAN: And I suppose the fifth is that the stronger should rule and the weaker should obey.

CLEINIAS: A pretty compelling claim to obedience, that!

ATHENIAN: Yes, and one which prevails throughout the animal kingdom – by decree of nature, as Pindar of Thebes once remarked.[17] But it looks as if the most important claim will be the sixth, that the ignorant man should follow the leadership of the wise and obey his orders. In spite of you, my clever Pindar, what I'd call the 'decree of nature' is in fact this spontaneous and willing acceptance of the rule of law; I'm certainly not prepared to say it's *un*natural.

CLEINIAS: Quite right.

ATHENIAN: And we persuade a man to cast lots, by explaining that this, the seventh title to authority, enjoys the favour of the gods and is blessed by fortune. We tell him that the fairest arrangement is for him to exercise authority if he wins, but to be subject to it if he loses.

CLEINIAS: That's very true.

ATHENIAN: 'So you see, O legislator' (as we might jocularly address someone who sets about legislation with undue optimism), 'you see how many titles to authority there are, and how they naturally conflict with each other. Now here's a source of civil strife we've discovered for you, which you must put to rights. First, though, join us in trying to find out how the kings of Argos and Messene went astray and broke these rules, and so destroyed themselves and the power of Greece, for all its splendour at that time. Wasn't it because they didn't appreciate the truth of Hesiod's remark that the half is often greater than the whole.[18] He thought that when

17. The Athenian alludes to a few lines of a poem now largely lost: cf. pp. 173 and 417. The text and a translation may be found in J. E. Sandys, *The Odes of Pindar* (2nd edition, London and New York, 1919; Loeb edition, pp. 604–5); for a discussion of Plato's use of the quotation see E. R. Dodds, *Plato, Gorgias* (Oxford, 1959), pp. 270–72.

18. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 40.

it is harmful to get the whole, and the half is enough, then enough is *better* than a feast, and is the preferable alternative.'

CLEINIAS: True enough.

ATHENIAN: So where do we suppose this destructive process invariably starts? Among kings or people?

CLEINIAS: Most instances suggest that this is probably a 691
disease of kings whose life of luxury has made them arrogant.

ATHENIAN: So it is clear that it was the kings of that era who were first infected by the acquisitive spirit in defiance of the law of the land. The precise point to which they had given their seal of approval by their word and oath became the ground of their disagreement, and this lack of harmony (which is, in our view, the 'crassest' stupidity, though it looks like wisdom) put the whole arrangement jarringly off key and out of tune: hence its destruction.

CLEINIAS: Quite likely.

THE REASONS FOR SPARTA'S SUCCESS

ATHENIAN: Very well. Then what precautions ought a contemporary legislator to have taken in his code to nip this disease in the bud? God knows, the answer's not difficult nowadays, and the point is quite simple to understand – though if anyone had foreseen the problem then, assuming it was possible to do so, he'd have been wiser than we are.

MEGILLUS: What do you mean?

ATHENIAN: Hindsight, Megillus! In the perspective of today it's easy to understand what should have been done then, and once understood it's equally easy to explain.

MEGILLUS: You'd better be even clearer than that.

ATHENIAN: The clearest way of putting it would be this.

MEGILLUS: What?

ATHENIAN: If you neglect the rule of proportion and fit excessively large sails to small ships, or give too much food to a small body, or too high authority to a soul that doesn't measure up to it, the result is always disastrous. Body and soul become puffed up: disease breaks out in the one, and in the other arrogance quickly leads to injustice. Now, what are

we getting at? Simply this: the mortal soul simply does not exist, my friends, which by dint of its natural qualities will ever make a success of supreme authority among men while it is still young and responsible to no one. Full of folly, the worst of diseases, it inevitably has its judgement corrupted, and incurs the enmity of its closest friends; and once that happens, its total ruin and the loss of all its power soon follow. A first-class lawgiver's job is to have a sense of proportion and to guard against this danger. Nowadays it is a reasonable guess that this was in fact done at that time. However, it looks as if there was . . .

MEGILLUS: What?

ATHENIAN: . . . some god who was concerned on your behalf and saw what was going to happen. He took your single line of kings and split it into two,[19] so as to restrict its powers to more reasonable proportions. After that, a man[20] who combined human nature with some of the powers of a god observed that your leadership was still in a feverish state, so he blended the obstinacy and vigour of the Spartans with
692 the prudent influence of age by giving the twenty-eight elders the same authority in making important decisions as the kings. Your 'third saviour'[21] saw that your government was still fretting and fuming with restless energy, so he put a kind of bridle on it in the shape of the power of the ephors[22] – a power which came very close to being held by lot. This is the formula that turned your kingship into a mixture of the right elements, so that thanks to its own stability it ensured the stability of the rest of the state. If things had been left to the discretion

19. Procles and Eurysthenes, the first kings of Sparta (see p. 128), were the twin sons of Aristodemus.

20. Lycurgus, who created the Spartan Council of Elders.

21. The expression 'third saviour' is proverbial, and refers to the custom of offering Zeus the Saviour the third libation at banquets. Plato probably means Theopompus, a king of Sparta in the eighth century.

22. Five annually elected officials who in addition to wide executive and judicial powers exercised close control over the conduct of the kings. The origin and development of the ephorate are obscure: for a discussion, see W. G. Forrest, *A History of Sparta, 950–192* B.C. (London, 1968), especially pp. 76–7, 82–3.

of Temenus and Cresphontes and the legislators of that time, whoever in fact they were, not even Aristodemus' part[23] would have survived. You see, they were tiros in legislation: otherwise it would never have occurred to them to rely on oaths[24] to restrain the soul of a young man who had taken over power from which a tyranny could develop. But the fact is that God has demonstrated the sort of thing a position of authority ought to have been then and should be now, if it is to have any prospects of permanency. As I said before, we don't need any great wisdom to recognize all this now – after all, it's not difficult to see the point if you have a historical example to go by. But if anyone had seen all this then, and had been able to control the various offices and produce a single authority out of the three,[25] he would have saved all the splendid projects of that age from destruction, and neither the Persians nor anyone else would ever have sent a fleet to attack Greece, contemptuously supposing that we were people who counted for very little.

CLEINIAS: That's true.

ATHENIAN: After all, Cleinias, the way the Greeks repulsed them was a disgrace. In saying this, I don't mean that those who won the battles of that war by land and sea did not do so magnificently. By 'disgrace' I mean that, to start with, only one of those three states fought to defend Greece. The other two were rotten to the core. One of them[26] even hindered Sparta's attempts to help the defence, and fought her tooth and nail, while the other, Argos (which used to be paramount when the territory was first divided up), although called upon to repel the barbarian, ignored the request and failed to contribute to the defence. A detailed history of the course of that war would have some pretty ugly charges to make against Greece: indeed, there is no reason why it should report that Greece made any defence at all. If it hadn't been for the joint

23. I.e. Sparta: see page 140, note 19.

24. See p. 129.

25. *Either* kings, elders and ephors, *or* the authorities of the three cities: probably the latter, in view of the context.

26. Messene. Cf. pp. 150–51 and notes.

693 determination of the Athenians and the Spartans to resist the slavery that threatened them, we should have by now virtually a complete mixture of the races – Greek with Greek, Greek with barbarian, and barbarian with Greek. We can see a parallel in the nations whom the Persians lord it over today: they have been split up and then horribly jumbled together again into the scattered communities in which they now live. Well now, Cleinias and Megillus, why are we making these accusations against the so-called 'statesmen' and legislators of that day and this? Because if we find out *why* they went wrong we shall discover what different course of action they ought to have followed. That is what we were doing just now, when we said that legislation providing for powerful or extreme authority is a mistake. One should always remember that a state ought to be free and wise and enjoy internal harmony, and that this is what the lawgiver should concentrate on in his legislation. (It ought not to surprise us if several times before now we have decided on a number of other aims and said *they* were what a lawgiver should concentrate on, so that the aims proposed never seem to be the same from minute to minute. When we say that the legislator should keep self-control or good judgement or friendship in view, we must bear in mind that all these aims are the same, not different. Nor should we be disconcerted if we find a lot of other expressions of which the same is true.)

§5. THE LESSONS OF HISTORY (2): MONARCHY AND DEMOCRACY

The Athenian now suggests that the Persian monarchy, which represents one extreme of government, was destroyed because of the unbridled power and lust for pleasure of the monarch, and his unduly repressive régime; the other extreme, Athenian democracy, was corrupted by the opposite fault, an excess of liberty. If a state is to be happy, the authority of the rulers and the liberty of the subjects must be combined in judicious proportions. The faults of the Persian monarch sprang from a bad education, and those of the Athenian people from a lack of the 'fear' called 'respect': thus two prominent themes of §§1–3 take on a new significance in the context of political organization.

At the very end of the section Cleinias mentions that he has the task of framing laws for a new Cretan colony, and suggests they try to gauge the practical value of these theoretical considerations by applying them to actual legislation. His two companions agree, and the discussion of the new state gets under way.

TWO MOTHER-CONSTITUTIONS

CLEINIAS: Yes, when we think back over the argument we'll certainly try to remember that. But you wanted to explain what the legislator ought to aim at in the matter of friendship and good judgement and liberty. So tell us now what you were going to say.

ATHENIAN: Listen to me then. There are two mother-constitutions, so to speak, which you could fairly say have given birth to all the others. Monarchy is the proper name for the first, and democracy for the second. The former has been taken to extreme lengths by the Persians, the latter by my country; virtually all the others, as I said, are varieties of these two. It is absolutely vital for a political system to combine them, *if* (and this is of course the point of our advice, when we insist that no state formed without these two elements can