maximum pleasure, whereas vice offers the maximum pain, so that what we really *want is virtue (assuming, of course, that we all wish to maximize our pleasures); if we do wrong it must be because we cannot control ourselves or act in ignorance of the truth. The thesis the Athenian wishes to refute is the common one that 'Vice may be vice but I* enjoy *it'. The 'proof' depends on our agreeing (and of course Cleinias and Megillus are never given the chance not to) that vice involves extremes of emotion, and extremes are more painful than pleasurable. Clearly there is much here that one might wish to question.*

The whole section is written very discursively: the Athenian has a broad plan of procedure but deals with various side issues as they occur to him. This grand preface to the whole body of legislation depends for its effect not so much on the cogency of its arguments as on its serious and elevated tone; after all, the function of a preface is to persuade rather than to demonstrate. Whatever we may think of its theoretical underpinning (or lack of it), the actual advice given ('be honest', etc.) seems mostly admirable enough (doubtless Samuel Smiles would have thoroughly approved); on occasions it shows considerable wordly-wisdom (e.g. p. 193 on duties to friends).

INTRODUCTION

CLEINIAS: I think all this is very true. But let's not waste any more time delaying, sir. Let's get back to our theme and make a fresh start, if you are agreeable, on the subject you dealt with before, when you were not professing to compose in preamble form; let's go over the topic again ('second time lucky', as they say in games), on the understanding that we are not talking at random, as we did just now, but composing a preface; and we should begin by agreeing that this is what we are doing. We've heard enough said just now about the worship of the gods and the services to be rendered to our ancestors;[1] let's try to deal with the subsequent topics until you think the entire preface has been adequately put together. Then you will go on to work through the actual laws.

724 ATHENIAN: So our feeling at the moment is that we have

1. See pp. 174–7.

already produced an adequate preface about the gods and the powers below them, and about parents living and dead. Your instructions now, I think, are that I should, as it were, take the covers off the remainder of the preface.

CLEINIAS: Certainly.

ATHENIAN: Well now, the next thing is this: how far should a man concentrate or relax the efforts he devotes to looking after his soul, his body, and his property? This is a suitable topic, and it will be to the mutual advantage of both speaker and listeners to ponder it and so perfect their education as far as they can. So beyond a shadow of a doubt here's the next subject for explanation and the next topic to listen to.

CLEINIAS: You're quite right. BK V

ATHENIAN: Everyone who was listening to the address 726 just now about the gods and our dearly beloved ancestors, should now pay attention.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HONOURING THE SOUL

Of all the things a man can call his own, the holiest (though the gods are holier still) is his soul, his most intimate possession. There are two elements that make up the whole of every man. One is stronger and superior, and acts as master; the other, which is weaker and inferior, is a slave; and so a man must always respect the master in him in preference to the slave. Thus when I say that next after the gods – our masters – and their attendant spirits, a man must 727 honour his soul, my recommendation is correct. But hardly a man among us honours it in the right way: he only thinks he does. You see, nothing that is evil can confer honour, because to honour something is to confer marvellous benefits upon it; and anyone who reckons he is magnifying his soul by flattery or gifts or indulgence, so that he fails to make it better than it was before, may *think* he is honouring it, but in fact that is not what he is doing at all. For instance, a person has only to reach adolescence to imagine he is capable of deciding everything; he thinks he is honouring his soul if he praises it, and he is only too keen to tell it to

do what it likes. But our present doctrine is that in doing this he is not honouring but harming it; whereas we are arguing that he should honour it next after the gods. Similarly when a man thinks that the responsibility for his every fault lies not in himself but in others, whom he blames for his most frequent and serious misfortunes, while exonerating himself, he doubtless supposes he is honouring his soul. But far from doing that, he is injuring it. Again, when he indulges his pleasures and disobeys the recommendations and advice of the legislator, he is not honouring his soul at all, but dishonouring it, by filling it with misery and repentance. Or, to take the opposite case, he may not brace himself to endure the recommended toils and fears and troubles and pains, and simply give up; but his surrender confers no honour on his soul, because all such conduct brings disgrace upon it. Nor does he do it any honour if he thinks that life is a good thing no matter what the cost. This too dishonours his soul, because he surrenders to its fancy that everything in the next world is an evil, whereas he should resist the thought and enlighten his soul by demonstrating that he does not really know whether our encounter with the gods in the next world may not be in fact the best thing that ever happens to us. And when a man values beauty above virtue, the disrespect he shows his soul is total and fundamental, because he would argue that the body is more to be honoured than the soul – falsely, because nothing born of earth is to be honoured more than what comes from heaven; and anyone who holds a different view of the soul does not realize how wonderful is this possession which he scorns. Again, a man who is seized by lust to obtain money by improper means and feels no disgust
728 in the acquisition, will find that in the event he does his soul no honour by such gifts – far from it: he sells all that gives the soul its beauty and value for a few paltry pieces of gold; but all the gold upon the earth and all the gold beneath it does not compensate for lack of virtue.

To sum up, the legislator will list and classify certain things as disgraceful and wicked, and others as fine and

good; everyone who is not prepared to make all efforts to refrain from the one kind of action and practise the other to the limits of his power must be unaware that in all such conduct he is treating his soul, the most holy possession he has, in the most disrespectful and abominable manner. You see, practically no one takes into account the greatest 'judgement', as it is called, on wrongdoing. This is to grow to resemble men who are evil, and as the resemblance increases to shun good men and their wholesome conversation and to cut oneself off from them, while seeking to attach oneself to the other kind and keep their company. The inevitable result of consorting with such people is hat what you do and have done to you is exactly what *they* naturally do and say to each other. Consequently, this condition is not really a 'judgement' at all, because justice and judgement are fine things: it is mere punishment, suffering that follows a wrongdoing. Now whether a man is made to suffer or not, he is equally wretched. In the former case he is not cured, in the latter he will ultimately be killed to ensure the safety of many others.[2]

To put it in a nutshell, 'honour' is to cleave to what is superior, and, where practicable, to make as perfect as possible what is deficient. Nothing that nature gives a man is better adapted than his soul to enable him to avoid evil, keep on the track of the highest good, and when he has captured his quarry to live in intimacy with it for the rest of his life.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

For those reasons the soul has been allotted the second rank of honour;[3] third – as everyone will realize – comes the

2. That is, absence of punishment (suffering) will mean you are not deterred from crime and will go from bad to worse until you have to be executed as incorrigible (cf. p. 358), and as an example to deter others from inviting the same fate. But if you *are* made to suffer, you will become resentful and turn to crime again. 'Judgement' is a scientifically designed measure to *cure* vice; retributive 'punishment' is only the infliction of suffering.

3. The first rank being given to the gods (p. 189).

honour naturally due to the body. Here again it is necessary to examine the various reasons for honouring it, and see which are genuine and which are false; this is the job of a legislator, and I imagine he will list them as follows. The body that deserves to be honoured is not the handsome one or the strong or the swift -- nor yet the healthy (though a good many people would think it was); and it is certainly not the one with the opposite qualities to all these. He will say that the body which achieves a mean between all these extreme conditions is by far the soundest and best-balanced, because the one extreme makes the soul bold and boastful, while the other makes it abject and grovelling.

WEALTH

The same is true of the possession of money and goods: its value is measured by the same yardstick. Both, in excess,
729 produce enmity and feuds in private and public life, while a deficiency almost invariably leads to slavery.

THE CORRECT TREATMENT OF CHILDREN

No one should be keen on making money for the sake of leaving his children as rich as possible, because it will not do them any good, or the state either. A child's fortune will be most in harmony with his circumstances, and superior to all other fortunes, if it is modest enough not to attract flatterers, but sufficient to supply all his needs; to our ears such a fortune strikes exactly the right note, and it frees our life from anxiety. Extreme modesty, not gold, is the legacy we should leave our children. We imagine that the way to bequeath them modesty is to rebuke them when they are immodest, but that is not the result produced in the young when people admonish them nowadays and tell them that youth must show respect to everyone. The sensible legislator will prefer to instruct the older men to show respect to their juniors, and to take especial care not to let any young man see or hear them doing or saying anything

disgraceful: where the old are shameless the young too will inevitably be disrespectful to a degree. The best way to educate the younger generation (as well as yourself) is not to rebuke them but patently to practise all your life what you preach to others.

DUTIES TO RELATIVES, FRIENDS AND STATE

If a man honours and respects his relatives, who all share the worship of the family gods and have the same blood in their veins, he can reasonably expect to have the gods of birth look with benevolence on the procreation of his own children. And as for friends and companions, you will find them easier to get on with in day-to-day contact if you make more of their services to you and esteem them more highly than they do, and put a smaller value on your own good turns to your friends and companions than they do themselves. In dealings with the state and one's fellow-citizens, the best man by far is the one who, rather than win a prize at Olympia or in any of the other contests in war and peace, would prefer to beat everyone by his reputation for serving the laws of his country -- a reputation for having devoted a lifetime of service to them with more distinction than anyone else.

DUTIES TO FOREIGNERS

As to foreigners, one should regard agreements made with them as particularly sacrosanct. Practically all offences committed as between or against foreigners are quicker to attract the vengeance of God than offences as between fellow-citizens. The foreigner is not surrounded by friends and companions, and stirs the compassion of gods and men that much more, so that anyone who has the power to avenge him comes to his aid more readily; and that power is possessed pre-eminently by the guardian spirit or god, companion of Zeus the God of Strangers, who is concerned 730
in each case. Anyone who takes the smallest thought for

the future will therefore take great care to reach the end of his days without having committed during his life any crime involving foreigners. The most serious of offences against foreigners or natives is always that affecting suppliants; the god the victim supplicated and invoked when he won his promise becomes a devoted protector of his suppliant, who can consequently rely on the promise he received never to suffer without vengeance being taken for the wrongs done to him.

We've now dealt fairly thoroughly with a man's treatment of his parents, himself and his own possessions, and his contacts with the state, his friends, his relatives, foreigners and countrymen. The next question for consideration is the sort of person he must be himself, if he is to acquit himself with distinction in his journey through life; it's not the influence of law that we're concerned with now, but the educational effect of praise and blame, which makes the individual easier to handle and better disposed towards the laws that are to be established.

PERSONAL MORALITY

Truth heads the list of all things good, for gods and men alike. Let anyone who intends to be happy and blessed be its partner from the start, so that he may live as much of his life as possible a man of truth. You can trust a man like that, but not the man who is fond of telling deliberate lies (and anyone who is happy to go on producing falsehoods in *ignorance* of the truth is an idiot). Neither state is anything to envy: no one has any friends if he is a fool or cannot be trusted. As the years go by he is recognized for what he is, and in the difficulties of old age as life draws to its close he isolates himself completely; he has just about as much contact with his surviving friends and children as with those who are already dead.

A man who commits no crime is to be honoured; yet the man who will not even allow the wicked to do wrong deserves more than twice as much respect. The former has the value of a single individual, but the latter, who reveals

the wickedness of another to the authorities, is worth a legion. Anyone who makes every effort to assist the authorities in checking crime should be declared to be the great and perfect citizen of his state, winner of the prize for virtue.

The same praise should also be given to self-control and good judgement, and to all the other virtues which the possessor can communicate to others as well as displaying in his own person. If a man does so communicate them, he should be honoured as in the top rank; if he is prepared to communicate them but lacks the ability, he must be left in second place; but if he is a jealous fellow and churlishly wants to monopolize his virtues, then we should certainly censure him, but without holding the virtue itself in less 731
esteem because of its possessor – on the contrary, we should do our best to acquire it. We want everyone to compete in the struggle for virtue in a generous spirit, because this is the way a man will be a credit to his state – by competing on his own account but refraining from fouling the chances of others by slander. The jealous man, who thinks he has to get the better of others by being rude about them, makes less effort himself to attain true virtue and discourages his competitors by unfair criticism. In this way he hinders the whole state's struggle to achieve virtue and diminishes its reputation, in so far as it depends on him.

HOW TO HANDLE CRIMINALS

Every man should combine in his character high spirit with the utmost gentleness, because there is only one way to get out of the reach of crimes committed by other people and which are dangerous or even impossible to cure: you have to overcome them by fighting in self-defence and rigidly punishing them, and no soul can do this without righteous indignation. On the other hand there are some criminals whose crimes are curable, and the first thing to realize here is that every unjust man is unjust against his will. No man on earth would ever deliberately embrace any of the supreme evils, least of all in the most precious parts of

himself – and as we said, the truth is that the most precious part of every man is his soul. So no one will ever voluntarily accept the supreme evil into the most valuable part of himself and live with it throughout his life. No: in general, the unjust man deserves just as much pity as any other sufferer. And you may pity the criminal whose disease is curable, and restrain and abate your anger, instead of persisting in it with the spitefulness of a shrew; but when you have to deal with complete and unmanageably vicious corruption, you must let your anger off its leash. That is why we say that it must be the good man's duty to be high-spirited or gentle as circumstances require.

SELFISHNESS

The most serious vice innate in most men's souls is one for which everybody forgives himself and so never tries to find a way of escaping. You can get some idea of this vice from the saying that a man is in the nature of the case 'his own best friend', and that it is perfectly proper for him to have to play this role. It is truer to say that the cause of each and every crime we commit is precisely this excessive love of ourselves, a love which blinds us to the faults of the beloved and makes us bad judges of goodness and beauty and
732 justice, because we believe we should honour our own ego rather than the truth. Anyone with aspirations to greatness must admire not himself and his own possessions, but acts of justice, not only when they are his own, but especially when they happen to be done by someone else. It's because of this same vice of selfishness that stupid people are always convinced of their own shrewdness, which is why we think we know everything when we are almost totally ignorant, so that thanks to not leaving to others what we don't know how to handle, we inevitably come to grief when we try to tackle it ourselves. For these reasons, then, every man must steer clear of extreme love of himself, and be loyal to his superior instead; and he mustn't be put off by shame at the thought of abandoning that 'best friend'.

EXTREMES OF EMOTION TO BE AVOIDED

There is a certain amount of more detailed but no less useful advice which one hears often enough, and one should go through it to oneself by way of reminder. (Where waters ebb, there is always a corresponding flow, and the act of remembering is the 'flow' of thought that has drained away.[4])

So then: excessive laughter and tears must be avoided, and this is the advice every man must give to every other; one should try to behave decently by suppressing all extremes of joy and grief, both when one's guardian angel brings continued prosperity and when in times of trouble our guardians face difficulties as insurmountable as a high, sheer cliff. We should always have the hope that the blessings God sends will decrease the troubles that assail us, change our present circumstances for the better, and make us lucky enough to see our good fortune always increase. These are the hopes that every man should live by; he must remember all this advice and never spare any effort to recall it vividly to his own mind and that of others, at work and in leisure time alike.

Now then, from the point of view of religion, we've expounded pretty thoroughly what sort of activities we should pursue and what sort of person the individual ought to be; but we have not yet come down to the purely secular level. But we must, because we are addressing men, not gods.

VIRTUE AND HAPPINESS

Human nature involves, above all, pleasures, pains, and desires, and no mortal animal can help being hung up dangling in the air (so to speak) in total dependence on these powerful influences. That is why we should praise the noblest life – not only because it enjoys a fine and glorious reputation, but because (provided one is prepared to try it 733

4. This curious parenthesis may be a note Plato intended to elaborate later.

out instead of recoiling from it as a youth) it excels in providing what we all seek: a predominance of pleasure over pain throughout our lives. That this result is guaranteed, if it is tried out in the correct manner, will be perfectly obvious in an instant. But what is 'correctness' here? One should consider this point in the light of the following thesis. We have to ask if one condition suits our nature while another does not, and weigh the pleasant life against the painful with that question in mind. We want to have pleasure; we neither choose nor want pain; we prefer the neutral state if we are thereby relieved of pain, but not if it involves the loss of pleasure. We want less pain and more pleasure, we do not want less pleasure and more pain; but we should be hard put to it to be clear about our wishes when faced with a choice of two situations bringing pleasure and pain in the same proportions. These considerations of number or size or intensity or equality (or their opposites) which determine our wishes all influence or fail to influence us whenever we make a choice. This being inevitably the way of things, we want a life in which pleasures and pains come frequently and with great intensity, but with pleasure predominating; if pains predominate, we reject that life. Similarly when pleasures and pains are few and small and feeble: if pain outweighs pleasure, we do not want that life, but we do when pleasure outweighs pain. As for the 'average' life, which experiences only moderate pleasures or pains, we should observe the same point as before: we desire it when it offers us a preponderance of pleasure (which we enjoy), but not when it offers us a preponderance of pain (which we abhor). In that sense, then, we should think of all human lives as bound up in these two feelings, and we must think to what kind of life our natural wishes incline. But if we assert that we want anything outside this range, we are talking out of ignorance and inexperience of life as it is really lived.

So when a man has decided his wishes and aversions, what he would willingly do and what not, and adopted that as a working rule to guide him in choosing what he finds

congenial and pleasant and supremely excellent, he will select a life that will enable him to live as happily as a man can. So what are these lives, and how many are there, from which he must make this choice? Let us list them: there is the life of self-control for one, the life of wisdom for another, and the life of courage too; and let us treat the healthy life as another. As opposed to these, we have another four lives – the licentious, the foolish, the cowardly and the diseased. Now anyone who knows what the life of self-control is like will describe it as gentle in all respects, with mild pleasures and pains, light appetites, and desires 734
without frenzy; the licentious life he will say is violent through and through, involving extreme pleasures and pains, intense and raging appetites and desires of extreme fury. He will say that in the life of self-control the pleasures outweigh the pains, and in the licentious life the pains exceed the pleasures, in point of size, number and frequency. That is why we inevitably and naturally find the former life more pleasant, the latter more painful, and anyone who means to live a pleasant life no longer has the option of living licentiously. On the contrary, it is already clear (if our present position is correct) that if a man is licentious it must be without intending to be. It is either because of ignorance or lack of self-control, or both, that the world at large lives immoderately. The healthy and unhealthy life should be regarded in the same way: they both offer pleasures and pains, but the pleasures outweigh the pains in the healthy life, vice versa in the unhealthy. But what we want when we choose between lives is not a predominance of pain: we have chosen as the pleasanter life the one where pain is the weaker element. And so we can say that the self-controlled, the wise and the courageous, experience pleasure and pain with less intensity and on a smaller and more restricted scale than the profligate, the fool and the coward. The first category beats the second on the score of pleasure, while the second beats the other when it comes to pain. The courageous man does better than the coward, the wise man than the fool; so that, life for life, the former

kind – the restrained, the courageous, the wise and the healthy – is pleasanter than the cowardly, the foolish, the licentious and the unhealthy.

To sum up, the life of physical fitness, and spiritual virtue too, is not only pleasanter than the life of depravity but superior in other ways as well: it makes for beauty, an upright posture, efficiency and a good reputation, so that if a man lives a life like that it will make his whole existence infinitely happier than his opposite number's.

§9. THE FOUNDATION OF THE NEW STATE

The Athenian now passes from preface to law. He deals with the choice of a site for the new state, the selection of the first citizens, the various divisions of land and people, and some of the basic economic rules that will be observed. He takes the opportunity at this early stage in the new state's history to make it quite clear that the legislator will have to modify his plans in the light of prevailing circumstances, and to illustrate the point he takes the institution of property. Complete communism is the ideal, but in the present case limited private property will have to be allowed, and perhaps in other circumstances it might be necessary to go even further. The essential point for us, however, is that this is utopian *political philosophy: the legislator is always to keep an ideal pattern in mind, to which men must conform as closely as they can be made to. The section is largely self-explanatory, but the reader should be warned that some of the details of the division of the land and people are rather difficult to understand: the Athenian's exposition is not as clear as we should like.*

The word 'colony' occurs frequently: it is of course used not in the modern sense of 'subject territory', but in the sense of 'new state formed by citizens who have left their home land' (though the mother city might still retain some degree of control).

The 'Preliminary Analysis' is something of a false start, because the distinction it makes is not in fact developed and utilized until the beginning of §10.

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE STATE

ATHENIAN: At this point we may stop expounding the preface to the laws, it being now complete. After the 'prelude' should come the 'tune',[1] or (more accurately) a sketch of a legal and political framework. Now it is impossible, when

1. A pun: the Greek *nomos* means both 'tune' and 'law'. Cf. p. 185.