The Dialogues of Plato (427B.C. – 347B.C.)

Ion (A commentary on art)

* Socrates asserts that a poet is moved by a muse (‘divine dispensation’) and must in fact be ‘out of his mind’ or ‘possessed’ to produce such fine things. If it was by art that they knew their craft then they could learn another but it is manifest that they can’t. (Fine art comes from divine inspiration – not through knowledge) A poet is not a sculptor, and so on. We may imagine a connected set of rings running from muse – poet – recite – audience.
* The reciter doesn’t know (and can’t teach because you can’t learn) any practical rules from the poets. All arts have their own sphere of knowledge and Socrates criticises Ion for claiming to be a great general by virtue of his study of Homer.

Meno (A commentary on virtue and how we acquire it)

* In seeking the nature of virtue, Socrates first refutes that it is composed of many things (a collection of duties fitting status or class or gender, a collection of things like courage, wisdom, etc), he is looking for the common element in the things we think of as virtues that defines virtue. In the same way that red is *a* colour not colour, colour is something different from red which all other colours also possess or participate in.
* Nobody desires bad things, if they do then it is out of ignorance (knowledge is virtue).
* Regarding the notion that a man cannot either find what he knows or what he doesn’t, Socrates rejects this on the basis that the soul is immortal and experiences reincarnation. Therefore it already knows everything – all learning is recollection. To prove this he proceeds to extract information from a slave boy. So it is possible to find something we don’t know, because we have just forgotten it.
* Socrates theorises that virtue is helpful, useful, sensible knowledge; that is, wisdom. But virtue cannot be acquired by nature because if it was then there would be people who would recognise it in children, but that is not the case. Wisdom (the same as virtue we are supposing) cannot be acquired by teaching either because there are no teachers of wisdom, either among the sophists or among fine, wise gentlemen. Socrates then notices that wisdom is not the only thing that guides to right action; true opinion does as well. True opinion when fastened up with the reasoning of cause and effect is remembering; that is knowledge. It is through true opinion that virtue is bestowed on man and it is bestowed by god. In as much as it is opinion the divinely inspired don’t ‘know’ what or how they know, it is just received by divine allotment ‘without mind.’

Symposium (A party where the nature of love is discussed)

* Phaidros says that love is the oldest of the gods and the cause of the greatest good in men. It is only for love that people will willingly give up their lives.
* Pausanias says that there are two loves, one Heavenly, one Common. He holds that it is not actions which are beautiful or ugly but the manner in which those actions are done. Something done well and rightly is beautiful. In pursuit of the Heavenly kind of love a lover may subject himself to flattery and disgrace for the beloved in a way that would be seen as ugly in any other context. The beloved may in turn accept a willing slavery without disgrace if it is done for the pursuit of virtue.
* Eryximachos says that god is everywhere and in all things. He agrees with Pausanias that love has two aspects in everything; in his profession (medicine) love manifests as health and disease. In all things, the master is able to harmonise these two poles of love. Love as a whole has omnipotence but the love concerned with good things has more power.
* Aristophanes tells a tale about hermaphrodites and normal men and women being split down the middle by Zeus in a story startlingly close to the Tower of Babel. The resulting men were fond of women, the resulting women were fond of men, the resulting women from the original women were lesbians and the resulting men from the original men pursued other men. This last was the best. Love is therefore a desire to return to wholeness, completeness.
* Agathon says that Love is the youngest of the gods, abides in the softest and most tender of things and is possessed of great virtue neither wronging others nor being himself wronged. Violence does not touch Love. Love is also temperate, being master of all pleasures and desires. Love is also wise. (Plato’s four virtues – justice, temperance, courage and wisdom). Love makes all things; it is the ultimate creative force behind all acts of creation.
* Socrates starts out by saying that love must be a love for something (Agathon supplies beauty) and it must be a something that the lover lacks. Therefore love lacks beauty. He proceeds to relate what Diotima told him. There is a middle ground between two extremes; between wisdom and ignorance lies right opinion. So love is not beautiful but not ugly either. All the gods are happy and beautiful but since Love lacks these he is not a god… but not a mortal either. He is a spirit responsible for ferrying and interpreting messages between the gods and mortals and vice versa.

Wisdom is beautiful and since Love is a love for the beautiful, it must be a philosopher, somewhere between wisdom and ignorance. The mistake people make is in thinking Love to be the beloved instead of the lover.

We love the good to get the good, and in doing so we become happy and that is the final end. Love is love of having the good for oneself, forever. Because of this word, ‘forever’ implying permanence and immortality, Love is not for the beautiful but for the begetting and birth of the beautiful.

Plato questions identity here as well by saying that we consider ourselves to be the same thing for our whole lives even though everything in us changes; the body, soul, pleasures, dislikes, fears, pains, manners, opinions, even knowledge. In this way, mortality partakes of immortality, not like the gods who are wholly the same always, but because what grows old and changes leaves behind something new like its past self.

Begetting can take place in the form of physical children but it can also happen in the soul with the begetting of wisdom and virtue. All creative arts and creative artists fall into this category. There is a process to the revealing the mysteries of love which goes like this; from one to two and from two to all beautiful bodies, from beautiful bodies to beautiful pursuits and practices, from practices to beautiful learnings, so that from learnings he may at last come to that perfect learning which is the learning solely of beauty itself. Then we may know the perfection of beauty. This is life worth living, resting in the contemplation of Beauty itself. From here anything he creates will be not in likeness of virtue but because he is touching the real, it will be real virtue, thus granting him true immortality. To this end Love directs and guides us.

* Alcibiades finally praises Socrates as being just such a person, while on the outside appearing infatuated by beautiful bodies and wealth, in truth he is completely unconcerned with any of these things.

The Republic

*Book 1*

* Sophocles says that growing old is good because when the desires wane it is a feeling of freedom. He says that for decent people old age is no great burden but for indecent folk even youth is a trial.
* Polemarchos claims that it is just to benefit friends (or the just) and injure enemies (or the unjust). Socrates observes that it is not the work of the just man to injure anyone, friend or foe because neither will be made just by unjust treatment.
* Thrasymachos claims that justice is nothing but the advantage of the stronger. A democracy lays down democratic laws, a despotism despotic ones, but the same is true in all cases; just is what the strong dictate. Socrates argues that a doctor is primarily concerned only with his subjects and the making of money is another kind of concern (to do with moneymaking not doctoring). Pay is demanded because the worker realises that without it there is no benefit to himself, only the client. By analogy, a ruler seeks only the benefit of the people, not himself.
* Socrates observes that good men do not wish to rule for either money or fame; they must be constrained to rule by a penalty. The penalty being that if they don’t rule they will be subject to the rule of a lesser man. In a state wholly comprised of great men, this would be a problem; no one would want to rule because they would all prefer to receive benefit from another great man rather than provide the benefit.
* Thrasymachos also claimed that those who scorn injustice do so because they are afraid of suffering injustice, not doing it. Injustice is always better, more virtuous than justice. He claims (at Socrates’ prompting) that the just man does not try to get the better of the just, only the unjust while the unjust will try to get the better of both. Socrates shows that one who does not know (i.e. is ignorant and therefore bad) would try to get the better of both while the one who does know (i.e. is wise and good) will try to get the better of only the unjust. Therefore the just man is wise and good while the unjust man is ignorant and bad.
* Socrates then sets out to show that the just is stronger than the unjust and have a better life than the unjust. An easy task since the just has been shown to be wise and good. He does the first by showing that a city (or by extension, an individual), if it is filled with injustice will result in factions and mistrust and an inability to act, while a city (or individual) filled with justice will promote harmony and will therefore be strong and united in what it endeavours. Since the gods are just then the just man is a friend of them and the unjust an enemy. Unjust men require some measure of justice to accomplish anything together or individually. The second he accomplishes by considering the work (purpose) of each thing. He says that there is a virtue in each thing which has a work appointed for it. E.g. the eyes can only do their work (see) with their own virtue (sight). Life is a work of the soul and so soul has a virtue as well. The soul’s virtue is justice so without that virtue it wouldn’t be able to do its work, i.e. live well. Therefore the just man is happy.

*Book 2*

* Glaucon distinguishes between three kinds of goods; those we have for their own sake, those we have for their own sake and for what comes from them and finally those we only desire for the things that come from them. Socrates suggests that justice belongs in the second (and best) category.
* Glaucon provides another argument saying that justice is in the middle between the best, to do wrong and get away with it, and the worst, to have wrong done to you and be unable to get vengeance. He recounts the story of a shepherd and a ring to illustrate that everyone would do wrong if they could. There is more personal profit from being unjust. In order to determine if there can be any good owing to doing justice (for its sake alone and not for the reputation of being just) then we must consider the best unjust man (who is unjust but is thought to be just) and the just man (who is just but thought to be unjust).
* Adeimantos also adds support for his brother and says that licentiousness and injustice are pleasant and easy to get and only appear ugly in opinion. We need not even fear the gods for they can be appeased by certain rites and sacrifices.
* Socrates suggests that we may better understand by considering the macrocosm (society) and then applying it to the microcosm (individual). He proceeds to list the workers needed for a city keeping to one fundamental rule; an individual must specialise for that is the most efficient use of resources. He says that in expanding to support the growing population the city will encroach on other’s land and vice versa – this is the cause of all wars – that is, from greed. In response to this, the city will need an army which he terms the guardians. They must be clear in body and spirited in temper while also being gentle towards their own people and rough towards their enemies. In this capacity he is a lover of wisdom since the only thing he needs to know to differentiate between an enemy and a friend is whether he has knowledge of them. As such, he values knowledge above all else.
* Socrates then turns to how the guardians should be educated. He first considers fables because he thinks education begins in the nursery. The rest of book 2 recounts how fables are to be censored and controlled; fable-makers must accurately reflect the gods, that is, always good, never fighting amongst themselves; God is only the cause of good things, never lies and does not change into different forms.

*Book 3*

* Socrates continues with the following censorships for poetry; no poets must be allowed to speak in such a way that will make people fear death (for death is nothing to be feared) and no one will lament for those who die, people must not be too fond of laughter because it can bring about a violent upset of feeling, truth must be highly valued – the only people allowed to deceive and lie are the rulers or guardians themselves for the benefit of the city, the city members should be temperate which means obeying the rulers and the rulers should rule the pleasures of drinking, eating and love-making, with respect to the aforementioned deeds of endurance should be recited and praised, bribes and greed must not be allowed. Tales told about men must speak of their happiness and sense of justice. Concerning the manner of their craft poets may use narrative or imitation (but they may only imitate the good) but only according to the fundamental rule that each poet must specialise for no man can be good at everything.
* In music; the words should hold follow the rules already mentioned, the scales or modes used should be the Dorian (violent) and Phrygian (free-will) and the rhythms used should be simple, manly and orderly. The only instruments used should be the lyre and the harp although they may use Pan’s-pipes in the countryside.
* All other craftsman must be watched to ensure they obey Plato’s rules but music and the fine arts are especially important. He even says excessive pleasure should be forbidden, a man may kiss his beloved and ensure that his activities with others are no more intimate.
* Gymnastic comes next. Drunkenness must be eschewed and the guardians health must be steady. A simple, reasonable gymnastic related to war should be followed. They must eat roast (easy to prepare) and have no sauces and sweets. Sex should be restricted as well.
* In Socrates’ city there will be little need for lawyers (for prosecuting and being prosecuted is a waste of time) and doctoring (he expects his citizens to be healthy enough to receive only simple cures and if they don’t work then he is too sick and should be prepared to die since he can no longer work for the State). Doctors should encounter much sickness from an early age (even being prone to sickness themselves to better know their craft) because they cure the body by soul but jurists should have nothing to do with badness, they must be innocent in youth, only learning what injustice is late in life and not through experience.
* Music refines the soul, gymnastic the body. However, both are needed together, an excess of music produces a soul too soft while an excess of gymnastic produces a soul too hard and disagreeable.
* Socrates then decides to choose from the guardians those exceptionally wise people to be the rulers. They must be old men he says and have the concerns of the city as their paramount interest. They must not lose this opinion either intentionally or unintentionally (robbed, bewitched or compelled). They should be tested from childhood and only those who pass each test will succeed.
* Socrates then engenders a “necessary lie,” a fable about gold, silver, bronze and iron, which he wishes to make the population believe. He believes that it should be told to the first generation who would believe it as a useful notion while their children would learn it as the truth.
* The guardians and rulers must live like soldiers in simple barracks, own no property, have no lodgings which are not open to all comers, receive as wages just the right amount of food from the citizens, live in common like soldiers and above all have nothing to do with money.

*Book 4*

* Adeimantos points out that the guardians won’t be very happy. Socrates replies that his goal was never to make individual groups of people happy but rather produce the greatest happiness for the society as a whole.
* Socrates continues by saying that the guardians must guard against poverty and wealth from entering the city because the former leads to meanness and bad work, while the latter creates luxury and idleness. He says the city should grow as large as it can while still being a unified whole. The established methods of training and education must not be altered or amended. Customs such as silence of the youth in the presence of elders, honouring parents, manner of dress, etc cannot be legislated but must be observed nonetheless.
* Socrates analyses his city in terms of the wise, brave, temperate, and just. Wisdom is located in the ruling class. Courage is a preservation of the belief about what is dangerous and what is not through action and is located in the guardians. Temperance is good order and a mastery of pleasures and desires manifested throughout the whole city as an agreement about who should rule the city and what impulses should rule the individual. Justice, it turns out is everyone doing that which they are best suited for. This makes it possible for the other three virtues to exist. The meddling and interchanging of duties in the city would cause the greatest harm, that is to say, injustice.
* Socrates next compares the three parts of the city to the three parts of the individual and identifies the ruling part as reason, the guardians as the spirited part and the producers as the desiring part. The fact that a person is good is attributable to justice which is the simple fact of all three parts managing their own sectors properly without spilling over into other areas. Justice is therefore focused inwards.

*Book 5*

* Socrates then addresses women. They should have just as much opportunity as men and be allotted their roles according to their individual talents, just like men; although due to their weakness they will receive a lesser share of the burden. Also, women are to be common to all men, children are common to the city and no one shall know their parents. This lets the rulers tell one of those lies and arrange festival days where people are paired up for procreating (say, by seemingly random and fair lots) but the rulers arrange things so that the best men are paired with the best women for the best offspring. He rulers will also take all children immediately after birth and cull the inferior from the bunch. Preventing children from knowing their parents means that the community as a whole is closer for all adults will be treated as parents and all children as offspring. The community effectively becomes one great family. Pleasures and pains are all shared in common. There will be no ‘mine’ or ‘not mine.’ This will also avoid lawsuits and infighting. He says that children will never treat an older incorrectly thanks to fear and shame.
* If a soldier is captured by an enemy, Socrates talks about the man as if he was weak to have been able to be captured so they will present him as a gift to the enemy. Hellenes shall possess no Hellenic slaves and even when quarrelling they will quarrel as if they expect to make up one day. Hellenes fighting barbarians are engaged in war while Hellenes fighting other Hellenes are to be thought of as factions.
* Socrates says that it matters not whether his state is possible or not in the same way that a painter may be able to paint the ideally perfect man even though such a man does not exist. Although if it is possible it could never happen until a philosopher became king or a king was engaged in philosophical pursuits.
* The philosopher pursues wisdom as a whole, not in parts. He finally says that true philosophy is not concerned with the changing physical (beauty) but with the unchanging ideal (Beauty). A man who can distinguish those things which really partake in true beauty is awake while the opposite who has no concept of true beauty is asleep. That which is, is wholly knowable (Aristotle) while that which in no way is, is wholly unknowable. Knowledge belongs to the former, ignorance to the latter. Socrates says there is a midpoint too, a thing neither knowable nor unknowable; opinion. This is the typical state of the multitudes. The people who see many beautiful things but cannot see the Beautiful, merely opine these things but know nothing of what they opine. He calls these people philodoxers (lovers of opinion). Of course, the above holds for all other virtues as well, like justice.

*Book 6*

* Socrates continues describing philosophers. They love wisdom and therefore truth and hate falsehoods. They are concerned with the soul and do not desire bodily pleasures. They are temperate and since their minds overlook all of reality they do not consider human life to be any great thing and therefore death is no terror for them. They are teachable and have good memories.
* Adeimantos then says that most people consider philosophers either shams or useless. Socrates confronts this with his analogy about a navigator on a ship. The crew have effectively mutinied and so the real navigator is disregarded. The philosophers are useless to the multitude but it is their fault for not using them. He says that most philosophers are corrupted because their positive virtues make them vulnerable to going wildly astray through poor instruction. A philosopher growing up will be valued for all of his positive qualities and this makes him susceptible to being manipulated or slipping off the virtuous path. Also, philosophy has a strong reputation and so attracts a number of people who are not actually capable at all. Socrates says that philosophy is a lifelong pursuit and should not get serious until the youth has matured and is too old to do other things.
* Socrates turns now to the good. Some people think pleasure is the good but he dismisses this because there are also evil pleasures and it is not possible for pleasure to be both evil and good. He says that many people would accept things that only seem just or beautiful but with the good, seeming is not enough, it must be real. Here he introduces his theory of ideas. Beautiful things are beautiful by virtue of their participation in the idea of beauty. He says that sight is special among the senses because it needs an additional element in order to be useful. Light. Light makes sight possible. In the same way, but not for the eyes, for the soul instead, the good makes knowledge possible. It is the cause of understanding and truth. He says that light and sight are sunlike but are not actually the sun. And so, knowledge and truth are goodlike but not actually the good. Good has a higher value. He then explains the famous divided line:

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| THE SUN | THE GOOD |
| The Light and Power of the Sun. The world of sight and of things seen. | The Offspring or Influence of the Good. The world of Mind and of things thought. |
| Images (shadows and reflections, etc) | Objects (animals, trees and manufactured things, etc) | Thought-Images-Ideas (ideal squares and cubes, etc) | Ideas or Ideals (Perfect Beauty, Justice, Goodness, etc) |
| The changing world of the senses | Mathematical thought | Dialectical thought |
| Conjecture | Belief | Understanding | Exercise of Reason |
| Opinion | Knowledge |

*Book 7*

* Socrates relates the analogy of the cave.
* He mentions that most people think understanding is put into people as they learn but he claims the opposite, this power is in each soul already and when it is turned towards the world of being (away from the world of becoming) it will become refined and pure.
* He reminds us that the best among us who have reached those heights must not be allowed to remain there. They must descend back down to the citizens and lead them.
* He now turns to the type of study that could lift a soul from the world of becoming to the world of being. Those things which will do this are things which stimulate thought and which bring their opposites with them as a whole package. First comes algebra (the study of numbers), second would be geometry (the study of planes), third, dimension (the study of solids), fourth, astronomy (as far as it concerns the principles of the motions of solids) and finally harmonics (the study of sound). The dialectic method (critical analysis – similar to Descartes’ method of doubt) is then how the five subjects are analysed.
* Socrates next goes into more detail about who should be given these studies. They must be young for old people are no good for such studies. Obviously, they must be the bravest, steadiest, have the best memories, be virtuous, etc. He stresses that no one should be compelled to study for then nothing will be retained. Children must learn through games. Teenagers should take compulsory gymnastics for two or three years, then from the best of the twenty year olds who will proceed to ‘synoptic’ studies (connecting all of the disparate studies they learnt as children). In their thirties, the best will again be selected for further ‘dialectic’ (logical reasoning) education. At this point, we must be careful because dialectic can easily lead to lawlessness as the learner realises that much of what he sees and knows is nothing more than opinion and not true knowledge. For five years they must study dialectics (ascend from the cave) and then for fifteen years they will serve the citizens as leaders and politicians and so on (returning to the cave), being constantly tested along the way. When they reach fifty years of age, the successful will become revered rulers. Socrates also reminds us that women are entitled for this position as well.
* He also offers a method of achieving his perfect state. We could send out into the country everyone over ten years of age and proceed to rule the remaining children according to his laws and rules.

*Book 8*

* Socrates proceeds to explain the five types of constitutions and the corresponding characters. The first he has already dealt with; the aristocracy (rule of the best) and the best man. He wisely notes that nothing lasts forever and so even a fabric like the perfect city will ultimately come to an end.
* The aristocratic degenerates into the timocracy (rule of honour) when the rulers make a mistake in controlling the births. Then two factions will arise amongst the guardians (those pure silver and gold and those iron and brass). After their violent struggle they will come to a compromise being a mix of both. The negative points include a covetous nature, honouring gymnastics more than music and the elevation of honour as a thing to be prized above all else and are all reflected in the timocratic man.
* The timocratic degenerates into the oligarchy (rule of few) when those in government are decided by property and wealth. They value money more than they value virtue. The problems are that since money, not merit is the determining factor for power people incapable of being in control might find themselves with control. It is naturally divisive separating the city into the rich and the poor. The people meddle in many businesses with no one specialising anymore. The soul of the oligarchic man is greedy and unwilling to spend money concerned only with the former.
* The oligarchic degenerates into democracy (rule of the many) when the poor revolt and displace the rich distributing everything equally amongst the masses. The city is full of freedom and liberty of speech but because of this liberty all manner of constitutions exist. There is no necessity to do or be anything. He complains that someone can garner power for himself just by declaring that he is loyal to the people. He also doesn’t like the fact that everything is distributed equally to the equal and unequal alike. This also leads to the emancipation of unprofitable and unnecessary desires and pleasures. No longer does anyone listen to someone who claims that some desires are better than other. All desires are equal. Socrates also expresses dismay at the notion that man and women are considered equal. The democratic man reflects this mixture of constitutions and manners.
* Finally, the democratic degenerates into the tyrannic (rule of the one) when a small segment of the population come to possess more than the others who decry it as unfair. He common people then nominate a protector who becomes magnified into a powerful figure and accumulates a number of bodyguards. The tyrant finds himself always stirring up wars and constantly getting rid of useful and powerful people (who are the greatest threats) so that in the end he finds himself surrounded by useless people.

*Book 9*

* Socrates finds a great amount of terrible desires in all people (which surface during sleep) but especially the tyrant who is like someone drunk, lustful and insane. He has so many desires and has become under the tyranny of his passions. He declares that the tyrant is the most miserable type of person in reflection of the tyrannical state which is the most miserable type of state.
* He then returns to the threefold partition of the human soul saying that a man learns through the first, is angry and spirited through another and desiring through the last. That is they are wisdom-loving, victory-loving and gain-loving. Since there is a debate about which is better (each class would claim its pleasure is the best) the truth can only be judged properly experience, intelligence and reason. In all three areas the first class is the most capable of deciding properly.
* He also points out that there is a mid-point between gladness and sorrow; a quietude of sorts. Sick people will tell that there is no greater pleasure than to be well and so with people suffering pain who claim that there is no greater pleasure than for the pain to stop. But this relief they are talking about is nothing more than the quietude between pleasure and pain. Not just this, but also people who experience pleasure will say that the loss of that pleasure is the greatest pain. So, the quietude (mid-point) is supposed to be both pleasure and pain at different times. This is a contradiction which Socrates unravels by saying that the sensation of pain or pleasure is not really so, but only seems to be so. Someone going up from the bottom to reach the mid-point will think he is on top but he actually isn’t. They believe that the quietude is pleasure but it is in fact the absence of both pain and pleasure.
* He also likens pleasure to hunger and eating. In the latter, food is taken in to fill the emptiness. In the former, wisdom is taken in to fill the emptiness. The truer filling, the one that has a claim to being more real, is of course the wisdom. Things concerning the body mean less than things concerning the soul. The result is that people concerned with the physical find themselves restricted to the low and mid-points only, never reaching the heights offered by wisdom.
* He applies the same reasoning to the high spirited part in man’s soul.
* Through some suspicious mathematics, Plato then goes on to calculate that the King is 729 times happier than the tyrant. (At best this only suggests a rapid degradation when one falls from an aristocracy).
* He then addresses the man who claims that it pays a man to be unjust. Considering the three parts of the soul, any form of injustice requires that either the lion or the desiring part rule over the other plus the reasoning part. In doing this, he is enslaving the best part of himself to the worst and this can never be good for the man. The soul is worth so much more than the body that any benefits that accrue to the physical will pale in significance to those which accrue to the soul.
* He concludes by saying that even if this doesn’t exist anywhere on Earth, it has at least been patterned in heaven.

*Book 10*

* Socrates continues his disapproval of poetry in its imitative form and the art of painting. He justifies this by claiming that there are three main things involved in things; the form or idea (the real), the thing made by the craftsman (which is appearance) and then the painting or imitative poetry (which is just an appearance of an appearance). The maker himself doesn’t possess knowledge of the thing he makes, only the user does. The maker makes the product according to the desires and requests of the users. With that the imitators (painters and poets) are even further removed from the truth. Also, truth works with the highest part of the human soul, namely reason therefore imitation (in being opposite to truth) must work with the lowest.
* A second reason he dislikes imitative poetry is that it automatically must imitate only the lower parts of human nature. The wise and calm man handles everything in a composed, calm manner but the imbalanced man reacts strongly with much wailing and drama. The latter makes for the better entertainment and so it is this type of man that is presented and endorsed in all the poetry.
* Poetry should only be allowed in the city in the form of hymns and encomiums of the good.
* Socrates then talks of the soul. It is immortal because there is nothing which could destroy it. All things have a natural vice or evil which destroys them; disease for the body, rot for wood, etc. The evils for the soul are injustice, intemperance, cowardice and ignorance but those vices don’t actually destroy the soul, they merely corrupt it. Because of this there cannot be fewer souls or more because either of those (birth or death) are only attributable to the mortal.
* Finally, Socrates concludes that justice is good for the soul and injustice bad, irrespective of what physical benefits accrue to either man. In addition, the gods know who is just and who unjust and therefore favour the former. The just man eventually receives his just desserts from the gods as does the unjust man. And from man, the just and unjust are invariably discovered and treated accordingly. I.e. the unjust man who lives like a king and everyone thinks just is an illusion. Even more than these though is the idea that the ultimate rewards or punishments are realised after death. At this point Plato goes on to relay the story of Er, who dies and returns to Earth to relay what he saw.

The Apology (The Defence of Socrates)

* Socrates’ accusers accuse him of wilfully corrupting the young and not believing in any gods. In his defence he claims that no one would knowingly make his associates bad because then he risks getting some evil from them. He also says that Anaxagoras’ doctrines are more anti-religious than his own and affirms that he believes in spirits which are the children of god. How could he believe in the children but not the parents?
* He says that no one should consider life and death when he acts, only what is right and what is wrong.
* He says that death is an unknown and therefore no one should be afraid of it. It is either a complete end or a change and migration to another place (Hades). Either will be fine with him for as a philosopher if there is a migration he believes he will be going to a better place.
* He compares himself to a gadfly put on the horse of the state by god to wake it up. He also speaks of a voice or inner spirit which has often guided him in the past.
* He refuses to weep and beg forgiveness as so many people do because he finds that unbecoming.
* An unexamined life is not worth living.
* The thing is not to escape death but to escape wickedness.

Crito

* Criton tries to persuade Socrates to flee. Socrates argues that life is not worth living when one has no justice and virtue. He says that to do wrong is evil and ugly for the doer in every way. Not even when being wronged should we wrong others. He imagines the laws of the state manifest and argue with him claiming that the agreement was that he follows their judgements. The state was like a parent or master to him and he has no place claiming equal rights against them. By staying in the state he implicitly agreed to abide by their judgements.
* If he was to flee, he would bring harm to those who helped him flee and he would appear to other states as a lawbreaker.

Phaedo (The Death of Socrates)

* Socrates wonders at pleasure and pain. They are said to be opposites and yet one will not come to man without the other close by.
* He says suicide is not lawful because men are in a sort of custody of the gods. As a possession of the gods it is not up to us to release ourselves or run away.
* He says the philosophy is practicing death. Death is the separation of the body from the soul and that is the philosopher’s goal, to separate himself from physical pleasures. He says the body is an obstacle to the getting of wisdom because it always offers false truths and distractions. He claims that justice or the good or beautiful are the highest qualities and yet they are incapable of being perceived by the bodily senses. We can only find them when we free ourselves from the body. This act of practicing death is also called purification, separating oneself as far as possible from the body.
* Next he argues that fear (of being cowardly) makes the brave act bravely and intemperance makes the temperate act temperately. These kinds of bravery and temperance are fake. Only philosophers possess true virtues because they hold them along with wisdom. The virtues and wisdom are the means of purification.
* In trying to prove that souls are immortal, Socrates brings up Anaximander’s belief that things come from their opposites. Becoming is the name given to the process of change between two opposites. Life therefore comes from death and death from life. If opposites did not continually change into each other then all things would eventually cease and there would be no more becoming.
* Learning is recollection as a proof of the immortality of the soul. When one sees equal things he recognises that they are equal but they are not the same as equality itself (for the same things may seem unequal to another), so where did the man get the idea of the equal from? The equal things fall short of equality itself and yet we recognise them as inferior to something which we have not actually experienced. The knowledge of this is something we therefore recall from a time before our birth. We don’t know how we got this knowledge because we can’t explain it, therefore we are recalling it.
* Next, Socrates tries to prove that life will continue beyond our deaths. Only the composite can change and dissolve and breakdown. Something un-compounded would likely not be susceptible to such a change or dissolution. Anything visible is likely of the former while anything invisible is likely to belong to the latter. The soul is invisible and therefore un-compounded. Also the body is like a servant to the soul; the soul is therefore divine-like. Such a thing should likely be immortal.
* He believes that souls that die still heavy and infatuated with the physical are held here and wander as ghosts. These souls will eventually find their way into bodies again. The indulgent into things like donkeys, the lawbreakers into things like wolves, while the good will pass into things like ants or wasps or even humans. Lovers of learning are permitted into the family of gods. The lover of wisdom must therefore abstain from pleasures and desires and griefs and fears. The greatest of all evils is when a person compelled to feel great pleasure or pain also feels that the pleasure or pain is real and true, when it is not.
* Here, Simmias disputes Socrates by arguing that some people say the soul is like a harmony and the harp is like the body. If the harp perishes then necessarily so must the harmony. Socrates points out that Simmias accepts the notion of the soul existing before birth (learning as recollection) but how could a harmony exist before the harp? Also, one soul is not more or less a soul than another. A harmony is a harmony. But people who say soul is a harmony would also claim that virtue is another kind of harmony and vice, a disharmony. But this is a contradiction. If there is harmony it must be fully harmonious which means that all souls are equally good if they are equally and actually souls. Finally, Socrates says that the soul leads the body, yet a harmony never leads the harp.
* Cebes also argues that the soul could be long-lasting but not eternal and that maybe despite the fact that it has lived through several lifetimes this could be its last. Socrates talks about Anaxagoras who held that the causes of things depend on how it is best or perfect for the thing to exist (see Aristotle’s conception of cause from the Nicomachean Ethics). Socrates finds fault with this because it confuses cause with prerequisites for the cause. An example is bones as a cause of my walking. It is true that without bones I wouldn’t be able to walk but they are not the cause of my walking. Socrates then resolved to take refuge in reasoning and only accept that which harmonised with reason. Therefore something is beautiful because it partakes of beauty not because it has a certain shape or colour. So, if someone said that someone is greater than someone else by a head, we would find that a ridiculous thing to say; they are greater than the other by virtue of participation in greatness. Now, if A is bigger than B but smaller than C, A has the title of both great and small. Logically, A cannot be both at the same time, so in relation to B, A accepts bigness but when related to C, the bigness departs and smallness dominates. Opposites never receive each other. This, as a general rule holds for things not opposites as well, e.g. twin and triplet. For a body to be living it must possess a soul. Soul is always a ‘bringing to life’ and as such can never receive its opposite, death.