

And what if he could retain nothing of what he learned, because he was full of forgetfulness? Could he fail to be empty of knowledge?

How could he?

Then don't you think that, if he's laboring in vain, he'd inevitably come to hate both himself and that activity in the end?

Of course.

Then let's never include a forgetful soul among those who are sufficiently philosophical for our purposes, but look for one with a good memory.

Absolutely.

Now, we'd certainly say that the unmusical and graceless element in a person's nature draws him to lack of due measure.

Of course.

And do you think that truth is akin to what lacks due measure or to what is measured?

To what is measured.

Then, in addition to those other things, let's look for someone whose thought is by nature measured and graceful and is easily led to the form of each thing that is.

Of course.

Well, then, don't you think the properties we've enumerated are compatible with one another and that each is necessary to a soul that is to have an adequate and complete grasp of that which is?

487 They're all completely necessary.

Is there any objection you can find, then, to a pursuit that no one can adequately follow unless he's by nature good at remembering, quick to learn, high-minded, graceful, and a friend and relative of truth, justice, courage, and moderation?

Not even Momus<sup>3</sup> could find one.

When such people have reached maturity in age and education, wouldn't you entrust the city to them and to them alone?

And Adeimantus replied: No one would be able to contradict the things you've said, Socrates, but on each occasion that you say them, your hearers are affected in some such way as this. They think that, because they're inexperienced in asking and answering questions, they're led astray a little bit by the argument at every question and that, when these little bits are added together at the end of the discussion, great is their fall, as the opposite of what they said at the outset comes to light. Just as inexperienced checkers players are trapped by the experts in the end and can't make a move, so they too are trapped in the end and have nothing to say in this different kind of checkers, which is played not with disks but with words. Yet the truth isn't affected by this outcome. I say this with a view to the present case, for someone might well say now that he's unable to oppose you as you ask each of your questions, yet he sees that of all those who take up philosophy—not those who merely dabble in it while still young

3. Momus is a personification of blame or censure.

in order to complete their upbringing and then drop it, but those who continue in it for a longer time—the greatest number become cranks, not to say completely vicious, while those who seem completely decent are rendered useless to the city because of the studies you recommend. d

When I'd heard him out, I said: Do you think that what these people say is false?

I don't know, but I'd be glad to hear what you think.

You'd hear that they seem to me to speak the truth.

How, then, can it be true to say that there will be no end to evils in our cities until philosophers—people we agree to be useless—rule in them? e

The question you ask needs to be answered by means of an image or simile.

And you, of course, aren't used to speaking in similes!

So! Are you making fun of me now that you've landed me with a claim that's so hard to establish? In any case, listen to my simile, and you'll appreciate all the more how greedy for images I am. What the most decent people experience in relation to their city is so hard to bear that there's no other single experience like it. Hence to find an image of it and a defense for them, I must construct it from many sources, just as painters paint goat-stags by combining the features of different things. Imagine, then, that something like the following happens on a ship or on many ships. The shipowner is bigger and stronger than everyone else on board, but he's hard of hearing, a bit short-sighted, and his knowledge of seafaring is equally deficient. The sailors are quarreling with one another about steering the ship, each of them thinking that he should be the captain, even though he's never learned the art of navigation, cannot point to anyone who taught it to him, or to a time when he learned it. Indeed, they claim that it isn't teachable and are ready to cut to pieces anyone who says that it is. They're always crowding around the shipowner, begging him and doing everything possible to get him to turn the rudder over to them. And sometimes, if they don't succeed in persuading him, they execute the ones who do succeed or throw them overboard, and then, having stupefied their noble shipowner with drugs, wine, or in some other way, they rule the ship, using up what's in it and sailing while drinking and feasting, in the way that people like that are prone to do. Moreover, they call the person who is clever at persuading or forcing the shipowner to let them rule a "navigator," a "captain," and "one who knows ships," and dismiss anyone else as useless. They don't understand that a true captain must pay attention to the seasons of the year, the sky, the stars, the winds, and all that pertains to his craft, if he's really to be the ruler of a ship. And they don't believe there is any craft that would enable him to determine how he should steer the ship, whether the others want him to or not, or any possibility of mastering this alleged craft or of practicing it at the same time as the craft of navigation. Don't you think that the true captain will be called a real stargazer, a babbler, and a good-for-nothing by those who sail in ships governed in that way, in which such things happen? 488 b c d e 489

I certainly do.

I don't think that you need to examine the simile in detail to see that the ships resemble cities and their attitude to the true philosophers, but you already understand what I mean.

Indeed, I do.

Then first tell this simile to anyone who wonders why philosophers aren't honored in the cities, and try to persuade him that there would be far more cause for wonder if they were honored.

I will tell him.

Next tell him that what he says is true, that the most decent among the philosophers are useless to the majority. Tell him not to blame those decent people for this but the ones who don't make use of them. It isn't natural for the captain to beg the sailors to be ruled by him nor for the wise to knock at the doors of the rich—the man who came up with that wisecrack made a mistake. The natural thing is for the sick person, rich or poor, to knock at the doctor's door, and for anyone who needs to be ruled to knock at the door of the one who can rule him. It isn't for the ruler, if he's truly any use, to beg the others to accept his rule. Tell him that he'll make no mistake in likening those who rule in our cities at present to the sailors we mentioned just now, and those who are called useless stargazers to the true captains.

That's absolutely right.

Therefore, it isn't easy for the best ways of life to be highly esteemed by people who, as in these circumstances, follow the opposite ways. By far the greatest and most serious slander on philosophy, however, results from those who profess to follow the philosophic way of life. I mean those of whom the prosecutor of philosophy declared that the greatest number are completely vicious and the most decent useless. And I admitted that what he said was true, didn't I?

Yes.

And haven't we explained why the decent ones are useless?

Yes, indeed.

Then, do you next want us to discuss why it's inevitable that the greater number are vicious and to try to show, if we can, that philosophy isn't responsible for this either?

Certainly.

Then, let's begin our dialogue by reminding ourselves of the point at which we began to discuss the nature that someone must have if he is to become a fine and good person. First of all, if you remember, he had to be guided by the truth and always pursue it in every way, or else he'd really be a boaster, with no share at all in true philosophy.

That's what was said.

And isn't this view completely contrary to the opinions currently held about him?

It certainly is.

Then, won't it be reasonable for us to plead in his defense that it is the nature of the real lover of learning to struggle toward what is, not to

remain with any of the many things that are believed to be, that, as he moves on, he neither loses nor lessens his erotic love until he grasps the being of each nature itself with the part of his soul that is fitted to grasp it, because of its kinship with it, and that, once getting near what really is and having intercourse with it and having begotten understanding and truth, he knows, truly lives, is nourished, and—at that point, but not before—is relieved from the pains of giving birth?

b

That is the most reasonable defense possible.

Well, then, will such a person have any part in the love of falsehood, or will he entirely hate it?

He'll hate it.

c

And if truth led the way, we'd never say, I suppose, that a chorus of evils could ever follow in its train.

How could it?

But rather a healthy and just character, with moderation following it.

That's right.

What need is there, then, to marshal all over again from the beginning the members of the philosophic nature's chorus in their inevitable array? Remember that courage, high-mindedness, ease in learning, and a good memory all belong to it. Then you objected, saying that anyone would be compelled to agree with what we said, but that, if he abandoned the argument and looked at the very people the argument is about, he'd say that some of them were useless, while the majority had every kind of vice. So we examined the reason for this slander and have now arrived at the point of explaining why the majority of them are bad. And it's for this reason that we've again taken up the nature of the true philosophers and defined what it necessarily has to be.

d

That's true.

e

We must now look at the ways in which this nature is corrupted, how it's destroyed in many people, while a small number (the ones that are called useless rather than bad) escape. After that, we must look in turn at the natures of the souls that imitate the philosophic nature and establish themselves in its pursuits, so as to see what the people are like who thereby arrive at pursuits they are unworthy of and that is beyond them and who, because they often strike false notes, bring upon philosophy the reputation that you said it has with everyone everywhere.

491

In what ways is this nature corrupted?

I'll try to enumerate them for you if I can. I suppose that everyone would agree that only a few natures possess all the qualities that we just now said were essential to becoming a complete philosopher and that seldom occur naturally among human beings. Or don't you think so?

b

I certainly do.

Consider, then, the many important ways in which these few can be corrupted.

What are they?

What will surprise you most, when you hear it, is that each of the things we praised in that nature tends to corrupt the soul that has it and to drag

it away from philosophy. I mean courage, moderation, and the other things we mentioned.

That does sound strange.

- c Furthermore, all the things that are said to be good also corrupt it and drag it away—beauty, wealth, physical strength, relatives who are powerful in the city, and all that goes with these. You understand what I have in mind?

I do, and I'd be glad to learn about it more precisely.

Correctly grasp the general point I'm after, and it will be clear to you, and what I've said before won't seem so strange.

What do you want me to do?

- d We know that the more vigorous any seed, developing plant, or animal is, the more it is deficient in the things that are appropriate for it to have when it is deprived of suitable food, season, or location. For the bad is more opposed to the good than it is to the merely not good.

Of course.

Then it's reasonable to say that the best nature fares worse, when unsuitably nurtured, than an ordinary one.

It is.

- e Then won't we say the same thing about souls too, Adeimantus, that those with the best natures become outstandingly bad when they receive a bad upbringing? Or do you think that great injustices and pure wickedness originate in an ordinary nature rather than in a vigorous one that has been corrupted by its upbringing? Or that a weak nature is ever the cause of either great good or great evil?

No, you're right.

- 492 Now, I think that the philosophic nature as we defined it will inevitably grow to possess every virtue if it happens to receive appropriate instruction, but if it is sown, planted, and grown in an inappropriate environment, it will develop in quite the opposite way, unless some god happens to come to its rescue. Or do you agree with the general opinion that certain young people are actually corrupted by sophists—that there are certain sophists with significant influence on the young who corrupt them through private teaching? Isn't it rather the very people who say this who are the greatest sophists of all, since they educate most completely, turning young and  
b old, men and women, into precisely the kind of people they want them to be?

When do they do that?

When many of them are sitting together in assemblies, courts, theaters, army camps, or in some other public gathering of the crowd, they object very loudly and excessively to some of the things that are said or done and approve others in the same way, shouting and clapping, so that the  
c very rocks and surroundings echo the din of their praise or blame and double it. In circumstances like that, what is the effect, as they say, on a young person's heart? What private training can hold out and not be swept away by that kind of praise or blame and be carried by the flood wherever

it goes, so that he'll say that the same things are beautiful or ugly as the crowd does, follow the same pursuits as they do, and be the same sort of person as they are?

He will be under great compulsion to do so, Socrates.

d

And yet we haven't mentioned the greatest compulsion of all.

What's that?

It's what these educators and sophists impose by their actions if their words fail to persuade. Or don't you know that they punish anyone who isn't persuaded, with disenfranchisement, fines, or death?

They most certainly do.

What other sophist, then, or what private conversations do you think will prevail in opposition to these?

I don't suppose that any will.

e

No, indeed, it would be very foolish even to try to oppose them, for there isn't now, hasn't been in the past, nor ever will be in the future anyone with a character so unusual that he has been educated to virtue in spite of the contrary education he received from the mob—I mean, a human character; the divine, as the saying goes, is an exception to the rule. You should realize that if anyone is saved and becomes what he ought to be under our present constitutions, he has been saved—you might rightly say—by a divine dispensation.

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I agree.

Well, then, you should also agree to this.

What?

Not one of those paid private teachers, whom the people call sophists and consider to be their rivals in craft, teaches anything other than the convictions that the majority express when they are gathered together. Indeed, these are precisely what the sophists call wisdom. It's as if someone were learning the moods and appetites of a huge, strong beast that he's rearing—how to approach and handle it, when it is most difficult to deal with or most gentle and what makes it so, what sounds it utters in either condition, and what sounds soothe or anger it. Having learned all this through tending the beast over a period of time, he calls this knack wisdom, gathers his information together as if it were a craft, and starts to teach it. In truth, he knows nothing about which of these convictions is fine or shameful, good or bad, just or unjust, but he applies all these names in accordance with how the beast reacts—calling what it enjoys good and what angers it bad. He has no other account to give of these terms. And he calls what he is compelled to do just and fine, for he hasn't seen and cannot show anyone else how much compulsion and goodness really differ. Don't you think, by god, that someone like that is a strange educator?

b

c

I do indeed.

Then does this person seem any different from the one who believes that it is wisdom to understand the moods and pleasures of a majority gathered from all quarters, whether they concern painting, music, or, for that matter, politics? If anyone approaches the majority to exhibit his poetry

d

or some other piece of craftsmanship or his service to the city and gives them mastery over him to any degree beyond what's unavoidable, he'll be under Diomedean compulsion, as it's called, to do the sort of thing of which they approve. But have you ever heard anyone presenting an argument that such things are truly good and beautiful that wasn't absolutely ridiculous?

e No, and I don't expect ever to hear one.

Keeping all this in mind, recall the following question: Can the majority in any way tolerate or accept the reality of the beautiful itself, as opposed to the many beautiful things, or the reality of each thing itself, as opposed  
494 to the corresponding many?

Not in any way.

Then the majority cannot be philosophic.

They cannot.

Hence they inevitably disapprove of those who practice philosophy?

Inevitably.

And so do all those private individuals who associate with the majority and try to please them.

Clearly.

Then, because of all that, do you see any salvation for someone who is by nature a philosopher, to insure that he'll practice philosophy correctly to the end? Think about what we've said before. We agreed that ease in  
b learning, a good memory, courage, and high-mindedness belong to the philosophic nature.

Yes.

And won't someone with a nature like that be first among the children in everything, especially if his body has a nature that matches that of his soul?

How could he not be?

Then I suppose that, as he gets older, his family and fellow citizens will want to make use of him in connection with their own affairs.

Of course.

c Therefore they'll pay court to him with their requests and honors, trying by their flattery to secure for themselves ahead of time the power that is going to be his.

That's what usually happens, at any rate.

d What do you think someone like that will do in such circumstances, especially if he happens to be from a great city, in which he's rich, well-born, good-looking, and tall? Won't he be filled with impractical expectations and think himself capable of managing the affairs, not only of the Greeks, but of the barbarians as well? And as a result, won't he exalt himself to great heights and be brimming with pretension and pride that is empty and lacks understanding?

He certainly will.

And if someone approaches a young man in that condition and gently tells him the truth, namely, that that there's no understanding in him, that

he needs it, and that it can't be acquired unless he works like a slave to attain it, do you think that it will be easy for him to listen when he's in the midst of so many evils?

Far from it.

And even if a young man of that sort somehow sees the point and is guided and drawn to philosophy because of his noble nature and his kinship with reason, what do you think those people will do, if they believe that they're losing their use of him and his companionship? Is there anything they won't do or say to him to prevent him from being persuaded? Or anything they won't do or say about his persuader—whether plotting against him in private or publicly bringing him into court—to prevent him from such persuasion?

e

There certainly isn't.

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Then, is there any chance that such a person will practice philosophy?

None at all.

Do you see, then, that we weren't wrong to say that, when someone with a philosophic nature is badly brought up, the very components of his nature—together with the other so-called goods, such as wealth and other similar advantages—are themselves in a way the cause of his falling away from philosophic pursuits?

I do, and what we said was right.

These, then, are the many ways in which the best nature—which is already rare enough, as we said—is destroyed and corrupted, so that it cannot follow the best pursuits. And it is among these men that we find the ones who do the greatest evils to cities and individuals and also—if they happen to be swept that way by the current—the greatest good, for a petty nature will never do anything great, either to an individual or a city.

b

That's very true.

When these men, for whom philosophy is most appropriate, fall away from her, they leave her desolate and unwed, and they themselves lead lives that are inappropriate and untrue. Then others, who are unworthy of her, come to her as to an orphan deprived of the protection of kinsmen and disgrace her. These are the ones who are responsible for the reproaches that you say are cast upon philosophy by those who revile her, namely, that some of those who consort with her are useless, while the majority deserve to suffer many bad things.

c

Yes, that is indeed what is said.

And it's a reasonable thing to say, for other little men—the ones who are most sophisticated at their own little crafts—seeing that this position, which is full of fine names and adornments, is vacated, leap gladly from those little crafts to philosophy, like prisoners escaping from jail who take refuge in a temple. Despite her present poor state, philosophy is still more high-minded than these other crafts, so that many people with defective natures desire to possess her, even though their souls are cramped and spoiled by the mechanical nature of their work, in just the way that their bodies are mutilated by their crafts and labors. Isn't that inevitable?

d

e



It certainly is.

Don't you think that a man of this sort looks exactly like a little bald-headed tinker who has come into some money and, having been just released from jail, has taken a bath, put on a new cloak, got himself up as a bridegroom, and is about to marry the boss's daughter because she is poor and abandoned?

496 They're exactly the same.

And what kind of children will that marriage produce? Won't they be illegitimate and inferior?

They have to be.

What about when men who are unworthy of education approach philosophy and consort with her unworthily? What kinds of thoughts and opinions are we to say they beget? Won't they truly be what are properly called sophisms, things that have nothing genuine about them or worthy of being called true wisdom?

That's absolutely right.

Then there remains, Adeimantus, only a very small group who consort with philosophy in a way that's worthy of her: A noble and well brought-up character, for example, kept down by exile, who remains with philosophy according to his nature because there is no one to corrupt him, or a great soul living in a small city, who disdains the city's affairs and looks beyond them. A very few might be drawn to philosophy from other crafts that they rightly despise because they have good natures. And some might be held back by the bridle that restrains our friend Theages<sup>4</sup>—for he's in every way qualified to be tempted away from philosophy, but his physical illness restrains him by keeping him out of politics. Finally, my own case is hardly worth mentioning—my daemonic sign<sup>5</sup>—because it has happened to no one before me, or to only a very few. Now, the members of this small group have tasted how sweet and blessed a possession philosophy is, and at the same time they've also seen the madness of the majority and realized, in a word, that hardly anyone acts sanely in public affairs and that there is no ally with whom they might go to the aid of justice and survive, that instead they'd perish before they could profit either their city or their friends and be useless both to themselves and to others, just like a man who has fallen among wild animals and is neither willing to join them in doing injustice nor sufficiently strong to oppose the general savagery alone. Taking all this into account, they lead a quiet life and do their own work. Thus, like someone who takes refuge under a little wall from a storm of dust or hail driven by the wind, the philosopher—seeing others filled with lawlessness—is satisfied if he can somehow lead his present life free from injustice and impious acts and depart from it with good hope, blameless and content.

4. See the *Theages*.

5. See Plato, *Apology* 31c–32a, where Socrates explains that his *daimonion* has kept him out of politics.

Well, that's no small thing for him to have accomplished before departing. 497

But it isn't the greatest either, since he didn't chance upon a constitution that suits him. Under a suitable one, his own growth will be fuller, and he'll save the community as well as himself. It seems to me that we've now sensibly discussed the reasons why philosophy is slandered and why the slanderer is unjust—unless, of course, you have something to add.

I have nothing to add on that point. But which of our present constitutions do you think is suitable for philosophers?

None of them. That's exactly my complaint: None of our present constitutions is worthy of the philosophic nature, and, as a result, this nature is b  
perverted and altered, for, just as a foreign seed, sown in alien ground, is likely to be overcome by the native species and to fade away among them, so the philosophic nature fails to develop its full power and declines into a different character. But if it were to find the best constitution, as it is c  
itself the best, it would be clear that it is really divine and that other natures and ways of life are merely human. Obviously you're going to ask next what the best constitution is.

You're wrong there; I wasn't going to ask that, but whether it was the constitution we described when we were founding our city or some other one.

In the other respects, it is that one. But we said even then<sup>6</sup> that there must always be some people in the city who have a theory of the constitution, the same one that guided you, the lawgiver, when you made the laws. d

We did say that.

Yes, but we didn't emphasize it sufficiently, for fear of what your objections have made plain, namely, that its proof would be long and difficult. And indeed what remains is by no means easy to go through.

What's that?

How a city can engage in philosophy without being destroyed, for all great things are prone to fall, and, as the saying goes, fine things are really hard to achieve.

Nevertheless, to complete our discussion, we'll have to get clear e  
about this.

If anything prevents us from doing it, it won't be lack of willingness but lack of ability. At least you'll see how willing *I* am, for notice again how enthusiastically and recklessly I say that the manner in which a city ought to take up the philosophic way of life is the opposite of what it does at present.

How?

At present, those who study philosophy do so as young men who have just left childhood behind and have yet to take up household management and money-making. But just when they reach the hardest part—I mean 498  
the part that has to do with giving a rational account—they abandon it

6. See 412a–b.

and are regarded as fully trained in philosophy. In later life, they think they're doing well if they are willing to be in an invited audience when others are doing philosophy, for they think they should do this only as a sideline. And, with a few exceptions, by the time they reach old age, their eagerness for philosophy is quenched more thoroughly than the sun of

b Heraclitus, which is never rekindled.<sup>7</sup>

What should they do?

Entirely the opposite. As youths and children, they should put their minds to youthful education and philosophy and take care of their bodies at a time when they are growing into manhood, so as to acquire a helper for philosophy. As they grow older and their souls begin to reach maturity, they should increase their mental exercises. Then, when their strength begins to fail and they have retired from politics and military service, they should graze freely in the pastures of philosophy and do nothing else—I

c mean the ones who are to live happily and, in death, add a fitting destiny in that other place to the life they have lived.

You seem to be speaking with true enthusiasm, Socrates. But I'm sure that most of your hearers, beginning with Thrasymachus, will oppose you with even greater enthusiasm and not be at all convinced.

d Don't slander Thrasymachus and me just as we've become friends—not that we were enemies before. We won't relax our efforts until we either convince him and the others or, at any rate, do something that may benefit them in a later incarnation, when, reborn, they happen upon these arguments again.

That's a short time you're talking about!

It's nothing compared to the whole of time. All the same, it's no wonder that the majority of people aren't convinced by our arguments, for they've never seen a *man* that fits our *plan* (and the rhymes of this sort they have heard are usually intended and not, like this one, the product of mere

e chance). That is to say, they've never seen a man or a number of men who themselves rhymed with virtue, were assimilated to it as far as possible, and ruled in a city of the same type. Or do you think they have?

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I don't think so at all.

Nor have they listened sufficiently to fine and free arguments that search out the truth in every way for the sake of knowledge but that keep away from the sophistications and eristic quibbles that, both in public trials and in private gatherings, aim at nothing except reputation and disputation.

No, they haven't.

It was because of this, because we foresaw these difficulties, that we were afraid. Nonetheless, we were compelled by the truth to say that no

b city, constitution, or individual man will ever become perfect until either some chance event compels those few philosophers who aren't vicious

7. Aristotle (*Meteorologica* 355a14) reports Heraclitus as believing that "the sun is new every day": the sun not only sets at night, it ceases to exist, being replaced by a totally new sun the next morning.

(the ones who are now called useless) to take charge of a city, whether they want to or not, and compels the city to obey them, or until a god inspires the present rulers and kings or their offspring with a true erotic love for true philosophy. Now, it cannot be reasonably maintained, in my view, that either of these things is impossible, but if it could, we'd be justly ridiculed for indulging in wishful thinking. Isn't that so? c

It is.

Then, if in the limitless past, those who were foremost in philosophy were forced to take charge of a city or if this is happening now in some foreign place far beyond our ken or if it will happen in the future, we are prepared to maintain our argument that, at whatever time the muse of philosophy controls a city, the constitution we've described will also exist at that time, whether it is past, present, or future. Since it is not impossible for this to happen, we are not speaking of impossibilities. That it is *difficult* for it to happen, however, we agree ourselves. d

That's my opinion, anyway.

But the majority don't share your opinion—is that what you are going to say?

They probably don't.

You should not make such wholesale charges against the majority, for they'll no doubt come to a different opinion, if instead of indulging your love of victory at their expense, you soothe them and try to remove their slanderous prejudice against the love of learning, by pointing out what you mean by a philosopher and by defining the philosophic nature and way of life, as we did just now, so that they'll realize that you don't mean the same people as they do. And if they once see it your way, even you will say that they'll have a different opinion from the one you just attributed to them and will answer differently. Or do you think that anyone who is gentle and without malice is harsh with someone who is neither irritable nor malicious? I'll anticipate your answer and say that a few people may have such a harsh character, but not the majority. e 500

And, of course, I agree.

Then don't you also agree that the harshness the majority exhibit towards philosophy is caused by those outsiders who don't belong and who've burst in like a band of revellers, always abusing one another, indulging their love of quarrels, and arguing about human beings in a way that is wholly inappropriate to philosophy? b

I do indeed.

No one whose thoughts are truly directed towards the things that are, Adeimantus, has the leisure to look down at human affairs or to be filled with envy and hatred by competing with people. Instead, as he looks at and studies things that are organized and always the same, that neither do injustice to one another nor suffer it, being all in a rational order, he imitates them and tries to become as like them as he can. Or do you think that someone can consort with things he admires without imitating them? c

I do not. It's impossible.

d Then the philosopher, by consorting with what is ordered and divine and despite all the slanders around that say otherwise, himself becomes as divine and ordered as a human being can.

That's absolutely true.

And if he should come to be compelled to put what he sees there into people's characters, whether into a single person or into a populace, instead of shaping only his own, do you think that he will be a poor craftsman of moderation, justice, and the whole of popular virtue?

He least of all.

e And when the majority realize that what we are saying about the philosopher is true, will they be harsh with him or mistrust us when we say that the city will never find happiness until its outline is sketched by painters who use the divine model?

501 They won't be harsh, if indeed they realize this. But what sort of sketch do you mean?

They'd take the city and the characters of human beings as their sketching slate, but first they'd wipe it clean—which isn't at all an easy thing to do. And you should know that this is the plain difference between them and others, namely, that they refuse to take either an individual or a city in hand or to write laws, unless they receive a clean slate or are allowed to clean it themselves.

And they'd be right to refuse.

Then don't you think they'd next sketch the outline of the constitution?

Of course.

b And I suppose that, as they work, they'd look often in each direction, towards the natures of justice, beauty, moderation, and the like, on the one hand, and towards those they're trying to put into human beings, on the other. And in this way they'd mix and blend the various ways of life in the city until they produced a human image based on what Homer too called "the divine form and image" when it occurred among human beings.<sup>8</sup>

That's right.

c They'd erase one thing, I suppose, and draw in another until they'd made characters for human beings that the gods would love as much as possible.

At any rate, that would certainly result in the finest sketch.

Then is this at all persuasive to those you said were straining to attack us—that the person we were praising is really a painter of constitutions? They were angry because we entrusted the city to him: Are they any calmer, now that they've heard what we had to say?

They'll be much calmer, if they have any moderation.

d Indeed, how could they possibly dispute it? Will they deny that philosophers are lovers of what is or of the truth?

That would be absurd.

8. See, for example, *Iliad* i.131.

Or that their nature as we've described it is close to the best?

They can't deny that either.

Or that such a nature, if it follows its own way of life, isn't as completely good and philosophic as any other? Or that the people we excluded are more so?

Certainly not.

Then will they still be angry when we say that, until philosophers take control of a city, there'll be no respite from evil for either city or citizens, and the constitution we've been describing in theory will never be completed in practice?

They'll probably be less angry.

Then if it's all right with you, let's not say that they'll simply be less angry but that they'll become altogether gentle and persuaded, so that they'll be shamed into agreeing with us, if nothing else.

It's all right with me.

Let's assume, therefore, that they've been convinced on this point. Will anyone dispute our view that the offspring of kings or rulers could be born with philosophic natures?

No one would do that.

Could anyone claim that, if such offspring are born, they'll inevitably be corrupted? We agree ourselves that it's hard for them to be saved from corruption, but could anyone claim that in the whole of time not one of them could be saved?

How could he?

But surely one such individual would be sufficient to bring to completion all the things that now seem so incredible, provided that his city obeys him.

One would be sufficient.

If a ruler established the laws and ways of life we've described, it is surely not impossible that the citizens would be willing to carry them out.

Not at all.

And would it be either astonishing or impossible that others should think as we do?

I don't suppose it would.

But I think our earlier discussion was sufficient to show that these arrangements are best, if only they are possible.

Indeed it was.

Then we can now conclude that this legislation is best, if only it is possible, and that, while it is hard for it to come about, it is not impossible.

We can.

Now that this difficulty has been disposed of, we must deal with what remains, namely, how the saviors of our constitution will come to be in the city, what subjects and ways of life will cause them to come into being, and at what ages they'll take each of them up.

Indeed we must.

It wasn't very clever of me to omit from our earlier discussion the troublesome topics of acquiring wives, begetting children, and appointing

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rulers, just because I knew that the whole truth would provoke resentment and would be hard to bring about in practice, for as it turned out, I had to go through these matters anyway. The subject of women and children  
 e has been adequately dealt with, but that of the rulers has to be taken up again from the beginning. We said, if you remember, that they must show themselves to be lovers of their city when tested by pleasure and pain and  
 503 that they must hold on to their resolve through labors, fears, and all other adversities. Anyone who was incapable of doing so was to be rejected, while anyone who came through unchanged—like gold tested in a fire—was to be made ruler and receive prizes both while he lived and after his death. These were the sort of things we were saying while our argument, afraid of stirring up the very problems that now confront us, veiled its  
 b face and slipped by.

That's very true; I do remember it.

We hesitated to say the things we've now dared to say anyway. So let's now also dare to say that those who are to be made our guardians in the most exact sense of the term must be philosophers.

Let's do it.

Then you should understand that there will probably be only a few of them, for they have to have the nature we described, and its parts mostly grow in separation and are rarely found in the same person.

c What do you mean?

You know that ease of learning, good memory, quick wits, smartness, youthful passion, high-mindedness, and all the other things that go along with these are rarely willing to grow together in a mind that will choose an orderly life that is quiet and completely stable, for the people who possess the former traits are carried by their quick wits wherever chance leads them and have no stability at all.

That's true.

On the other hand, people with stable characters, who don't change easily, who aren't easily frightened in battle, and whom one would employ  
 d because of their greater reliability, exhibit similar traits when it comes to learning: They are as hard to move and teach as people whose brains have become numb, and they are filled with sleep and yawning whenever they have to learn anything.

That's so.

Yet we say that someone must have a fine and goodly share of both characters, or he won't receive the truest education, honors, or rule.

That's right.

Then, don't you think that such people will be rare?

Of course.

e Therefore they must be tested in the labors, fears, and pleasures we mentioned previously. But they must also be exercised in many other subjects—which we didn't mention but are adding now—to see whether they can tolerate the most important subjects or will shrink from them  
 504 like the cowards who shrink from other tests.

It's appropriate to examine them like that. But what do you mean by the most important subjects?

Do you remember when we distinguished three parts in the soul, in order to help bring out what justice, moderation, courage, and wisdom each is?

If I didn't remember that, it wouldn't be just for me to hear the rest.

What about what preceded it?

What was that?

We said, I believe, that, in order to get the finest possible view of these matters, we would need to take a longer road that would make them plain to anyone who took it but that it was possible to give demonstrations of what they are that would be up to the standard of the previous argument.<sup>9</sup> And you said that that would be satisfactory. So it seems to me that our discussion at that time fell short of exactness, but whether or not it satisfied you is for you to say.

I thought you gave us good measure and so, apparently, did the others.

Any measure of such things that falls short in any way of that which is is not good measure, for nothing incomplete is the measure of anything, although people are sometimes of the opinion that an incomplete treatment is nonetheless adequate and makes further investigation unnecessary.

Indeed, laziness causes many people to think that.

It is a thought that a guardian of a city and its laws can well do without. Probably so.

Well, then, he must take the longer road and put as much effort into learning as into physical training, for otherwise, as we were just saying, he will never reach the goal of the most important subject and the most appropriate one for him to learn.

Aren't these virtues, then, the most important things? he asked. Is there anything even more important than justice and the other virtues we discussed?

There is something more important. However, even for the virtues themselves, it isn't enough to look at a mere sketch, as we did before, while neglecting the most complete account. It's ridiculous, isn't it, to strain every nerve to attain the utmost exactness and clarity about other things of little value and not to consider the most important things worthy of the greatest exactness?

It certainly is. But do you think that anyone is going to let you off without asking you what this most important subject is and what it concerns?

No, indeed, and you can ask me too. You've certainly heard the answer often enough, but now either you aren't thinking or you intend to make trouble for me again by interrupting. And I suspect the latter, for you've often heard it said that the form of the good is the most important thing to learn about and that it's by their relation to it that just things and the others become useful and beneficial. You know very well now that I am

9. See 435d.

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going to say this, and, besides, that we have no adequate knowledge of it. And you also know that, if we don't know it, even the fullest possible knowledge of other things is of no benefit to us, any more than if we acquire any possession without the good of it. Or do you think that it is any advantage to have every kind of possession without the good of it?

- b Or to know everything except the good, thereby knowing nothing fine or good?

No, by god, I don't.

Furthermore, you certainly know that the majority believe that pleasure is the good, while the more sophisticated believe that it is knowledge.

Indeed I do.

And you know that those who believe this can't tell us what sort of knowledge it is, however, but in the end are forced to say that it is knowledge of the good.

And that's ridiculous.

- c Of course it is. They blame us for not knowing the good and then turn around and talk to us as if we did know it. They say that it is knowledge of the good—as if we understood what they're speaking about when they utter the word "good."

That's completely true.

What about those who define the good as pleasure? Are they any less full of confusion than the others? Aren't even they forced to admit that there are bad pleasures?

Most definitely.

So, I think, they have to agree that the same things are both good and bad. Isn't that true?

- d Of course.

It's clear, then, isn't it, why there are many large controversies about this? How could it be otherwise?

And isn't this also clear? In the case of just and beautiful things, many people are content with what are believed to be so, even if they aren't really so, and they act, acquire, and form their own beliefs on that basis. Nobody is satisfied to acquire things that are merely believed to be good, however, but everyone wants the things that really *are* good and disdains mere belief here.

That's right.

- e Every soul pursues the good and does its utmost for its sake. It divines that the good is something but it is perplexed and cannot adequately grasp what it is or acquire the sort of stable beliefs it has about other things, and so it misses the benefit, if any, that even those other things may give. Will we allow the best people in the city, to whom we entrust everything,  
506 to be so in the dark about something of this kind and of this importance?

That's the last thing we'd do.

I don't suppose, at least, that just and fine things will have acquired much of a guardian in someone who doesn't even know in what way they

are good. And I divine that no one will have adequate knowledge of them until he knows this.

You've divined well.

But won't our constitution be perfectly ordered, if a guardian who knows these things is in charge of it?

b

Necessarily. But, Socrates, you must also tell us whether you consider the good to be knowledge or pleasure or something else altogether.

What a man! It's been clear for some time that other people's opinions about these matters wouldn't satisfy you.

Well, Socrates, it doesn't seem right to me for you to be willing to state other people's convictions but not your own, especially when you've spent so much time occupied with these matters.

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What? Do you think it's right to talk about things one doesn't know as if one does know them?

Not as if one knows them, he said, but one ought to be willing to state one's opinions as such.

What? Haven't you noticed that opinions without knowledge are shameful and ugly things? The best of them are blind—or do you think that those who express a true opinion without understanding are any different from blind people who happen to travel the right road?

They're no different.

Do you want to look at shameful, blind, and crooked things, then, when you might hear illuminating and fine ones from other people?

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By god, Socrates, Glaucon said, don't desert us with the end almost in sight. We'll be satisfied if you discuss the good as you discussed justice, moderation, and the rest.

That, my friend, I said, would satisfy me too, but I'm afraid that I won't be up to it and that I'll disgrace myself and look ridiculous by trying. So let's abandon the quest for what the good itself is for the time being, for even to arrive at my own view about it is too big a topic for the discussion we are now started on. But I am willing to tell you about what is apparently an offspring of the good and most like it. Is that agreeable to you, or would you rather we let the whole matter drop?

e

It is. The story about the father remains a debt you'll pay another time.

I wish that I could pay the debt in full, and you receive it instead of just the interest. So here, then, is this child and offspring of the good. But be careful that I don't somehow deceive you unintentionally by giving you an illegitimate account of the child.<sup>10</sup>

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We'll be as careful as possible, so speak on.

I will when we've come to an agreement and recalled some things that we've already said both here and many other times.

Which ones?

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10. Throughout, Socrates is punning on the word *tokos*, which means either a child or the interest on capital.

We say that there are many beautiful things and many good things, and so on for each kind, and in this way we distinguish them in words.

We do.

And beauty itself and good itself and all the things that we thereby set down as many, reversing ourselves, we set down according to a single form of each, believing that there is but one, and call it “the being” of each.

That’s true.

And we say that the many beautiful things and the rest are visible but not intelligible, while the forms are intelligible but not visible.

That’s completely true.

c With what part of ourselves do we see visible things?

With our sight.

And so audible things are heard by hearing, and with our other senses we perceive all the other perceptible things.

That’s right.

Have you considered how lavish the maker of our senses was in making the power to see and be seen?

I can’t say I have.

d Well, consider it this way. Do hearing and sound need another kind of thing in order for the former to hear and the latter to be heard, a third thing in whose absence the one won’t hear or the other be heard?

No, they need nothing else.

And if there are any others that need such a thing, there can’t be many of them. Can you think of one?

I can’t.

You don’t realize that sight and the visible have such a need?

How so?

e Sight may be present in the eyes, and the one who has it may try to use it, and colors may be present in things, but unless a third kind of thing is present, which is naturally adapted for this very purpose, you know that sight will see nothing, and the colors will remain unseen.

What kind of thing do you mean?

I mean what you call light.

You’re right.

508 Then it isn’t an insignificant kind of link that connects the sense of sight and the power to be seen—it is a more valuable link than any other linked things have got, if indeed light is something valuable.

And, of course, it’s very valuable.

Which of the gods in heaven would you name as the cause and controller of this, the one whose light causes our sight to see in the best way and the visible things to be seen?

The same one you and others would name. Obviously, the answer to your question is the sun.

And isn’t sight by nature related to that god in this way?

Which way?

Sight isn't the sun, neither sight itself nor that in which it comes to be, namely, the eye.

b

No, it certainly isn't.

But I think that it is the most sunlike of the senses.

Very much so.

And it receives from the sun the power it has, just like an influx from an overflowing treasury.

Certainly.

The sun is not sight, but isn't it the cause of sight itself and seen by it?

That's right.

Let's say, then, that this is what I called the offspring of the good, which the good begot as its analogue. What the good itself is in the intelligible realm, in relation to understanding and intelligible things, the sun is in the visible realm, in relation to sight and visible things.

c

How? Explain a bit more.

You know that, when we turn our eyes to things whose colors are no longer illuminated by the light of day but by night lights, the eyes are dimmed and seem nearly blind, as if clear vision were no longer in them.

Of course.

Yet whenever one turns them on things illuminated by the sun, they see clearly, and vision appears in those very same eyes?

d

Indeed.

Well, understand the soul in the same way: When it focuses on something illuminated by truth and what is, it understands, knows, and apparently possesses understanding, but when it focuses on what is mixed with obscurity, on what comes to be and passes away, it opines and is dimmed, changes its opinions this way and that, and seems bereft of understanding.

It does seem that way.

So that what gives truth to the things known and the power to know to the knower is the form of the good. And though it is the cause of knowledge and truth, it is also an object of knowledge.<sup>11</sup> Both knowledge and truth are beautiful things, but the good is other and more beautiful than they. In the visible realm, light and sight are rightly considered sunlike, but it is wrong to think that they are the sun, so here it is right to think of knowledge and truth as goodlike but wrong to think that either of them is the good—for the good is yet more prized.

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This is an inconceivably beautiful thing you're talking about, if it provides both knowledge and truth and is superior to them in beauty. You surely don't think that a thing like that could be pleasure.

Hush! Let's examine its image in more detail as follows.

How?

b

You'll be willing to say, I think, that the sun not only provides visible things with the power to be seen but also with coming to be, growth, and nourishment, although it is not itself coming to be.

How could it be?

11. Accepting the emendation of *gignōskomenēs* to *gignōskomenēn*.

Therefore, you should also say that not only do the objects of knowledge owe their being known to the good, but their being is also due to it, although the good is not being, but superior to it in rank and power.

- c And Glaucon comically said: By Apollo, what a daemonic superiority! It's your own fault; you forced me to tell you my opinion about it.

And I don't want you to stop either. So continue to explain its similarity to the sun, if you've omitted anything.

I'm certainly omitting a lot.

Well, don't, not even the smallest thing.

I think I'll have to omit a fair bit, but, as far as is possible at the moment, I won't omit anything voluntarily.

Don't.

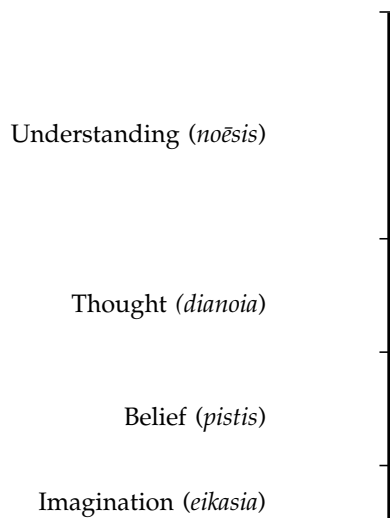
- d Understand, then, that, as we said, there are these two things, one sovereign of the intelligible kind and place, the other of the visible (I don't say "of heaven" so as not to seem to you to be playing the sophist with the name).<sup>12</sup> In any case, you have two kinds of thing, visible and intelligible.

Right.

It is like a line divided into two unequal sections.<sup>13</sup> Then divide each section—namely, that of the visible and that of the intelligible—in the same ratio as the line. In terms now of relative clarity and opacity, one subsection of the visible consists of images. And by images I mean, first,

12. The play may be on the similarity of sound between *ouranou* ("of heaven") and *horatou* ("of the visible"). More likely, Socrates is referring to the fact that *ouranou* seems to contain the word *nou*, the genitive case of *nous* ("understanding"), and relative of *noētou* ("of the intelligible"). If he said that the sun was sovereign of heaven, he might be taken to suggest in sophisticated fashion that it was sovereign of the intelligible and that there was no real difference between the good and the sun.

13. The line is illustrated below:



shadows, then reflections in water and in all close-packed, smooth, and shiny materials, and everything of that sort, if you understand. e  
510

I do.

In the other subsection of the visible, put the originals of these images, namely, the animals around us, all the plants, and the whole class of manufactured things.

Consider them put.

Would you be willing to say that, as regards truth and untruth, the division is in this proportion: As the opinable is to the knowable, so the likeness is to the thing that it is like?

Certainly. b

Consider now how the section of the intelligible is to be divided.

How?

As follows: In one subsection, the soul, using as images the things that were imitated before, is forced to investigate from hypotheses, proceeding not to a first principle but to a conclusion. In the other subsection, however, it makes its way to a first principle that is *not* a hypothesis, proceeding from a hypothesis but without the images used in the previous subsection, using forms themselves and making its investigation through them.

I don't yet fully understand what you mean.

Let's try again. You'll understand it more easily after the following preamble. I think you know that students of geometry, calculation, and the like hypothesize the odd and the even, the various figures, the three kinds of angles, and other things akin to these in each of their investigations, as if they knew them. They make these their hypotheses and don't think it necessary to give any account of them, either to themselves or to others, as if they were clear to everyone. And going from these first principles through the remaining steps, they arrive in full agreement. c  
d

I certainly know that much.

Then you also know that, although they use visible figures and make claims about them, their thought isn't directed to them but to those other things that they are like. They make their claims for the sake of the square itself and the diagonal itself, not the diagonal they draw, and similarly with the others. These figures that they make and draw, of which shadows and reflections in water are images, they now in turn use as images, in seeking to see those others themselves that one cannot see except by means of thought. e  
511

That's true.

This, then, is the kind of thing that, on the one hand, I said is intelligible, and, on the other, is such that the soul is forced to use hypotheses in the investigation of it, not travelling up to a first principle, since it cannot reach beyond its hypotheses, but using as images those very things of which images were made in the section below, and which, by comparison to their images, were thought to be clear and to be valued as such.

I understand that you mean what happens in geometry and related sciences. b

Then also understand that, by the other subsection of the intelligible, I mean that which reason itself grasps by the power of dialectic. It does not consider these hypotheses as first principles but truly as hypotheses—but as stepping stones to take off from, enabling it to reach the unhypothetical first principle of everything. Having grasped this principle, it reverses itself and, keeping hold of what follows from it, comes down to a conclusion without making use of anything visible at all, but only of forms themselves,  
 c moving on from forms to forms, and ending in forms.

I understand, if not yet adequately (for in my opinion you're speaking of an enormous task), that you want to distinguish the intelligible part of that which is, the part studied by the science of dialectic, as clearer than the part studied by the so-called sciences, for which their hypotheses are first principles. And although those who study the objects of these sciences are forced to do so by means of thought rather than sense perception, still,  
 d because they do not go back to a genuine first principle, but proceed from hypotheses, you don't think that they understand them, even though, given such a principle, they are intelligible. And you seem to me to call the state of the geometers thought but not understanding, thought being intermediate between opinion and understanding.

Your exposition is most adequate. Thus there are four such conditions in the soul, corresponding to the four subsections of our line: Understanding for the highest, thought for the second, belief for the third, and imaging  
 e for the last. Arrange them in a ratio, and consider that each shares in clarity to the degree that the subsection it is set over shares in truth.

I understand, agree, and arrange them as you say.

## Book VII

514 Next, I said, compare the effect of education and of the lack of it on our nature to an experience like this: Imagine human beings living in an underground, cavelike dwelling, with an entrance a long way up, which is both open to the light and as wide as the cave itself. They've been there since childhood, fixed in the same place, with their necks and legs fettered, able to see only in front of them, because their bonds prevent them from turning their heads around. Light is provided by a fire burning far above  
 b and behind them. Also behind them, but on higher ground, there is a path stretching between them and the fire. Imagine that along this path a low wall has been built, like the screen in front of puppeteers above which they show their puppets.

I'm imagining it.

Then also imagine that there are people along the wall, carrying all kinds of artifacts that project above it—statues of people and other animals,  
 c made out of stone, wood, and every material. And, as you'd expect, some  
 515 of the carriers are talking, and some are silent.

It's a strange image you're describing, and strange prisoners.

They're like us. Do you suppose, first of all, that these prisoners see anything of themselves and one another besides the shadows that the fire casts on the wall in front of them?

How could they, if they have to keep their heads motionless throughout life?

b

What about the things being carried along the wall? Isn't the same true of them?

Of course.

And if they could talk to one another, don't you think they'd suppose that the names they used applied to the things they see passing before them?<sup>1</sup>

They'd have to.

And what if their prison also had an echo from the wall facing them? Don't you think they'd believe that the shadows passing in front of them were talking whenever one of the carriers passing along the wall was doing so?

I certainly do.

Then the prisoners would in every way believe that the truth is nothing other than the shadows of those artifacts.

c

They must surely believe that.

Consider, then, what being released from their bonds and cured of their ignorance would naturally be like, if something like this came to pass.<sup>2</sup> When one of them was freed and suddenly compelled to stand up, turn his head, walk, and look up toward the light, he'd be pained and dazzled and unable to see the things whose shadows he'd seen before. What do you think he'd say, if we told him that what he'd seen before was inconsequential, but that now—because he is a bit closer to the things that are and is turned towards things that are more—he sees more correctly? Or, to put it another way, if we pointed to each of the things passing by, asked him what each of them is, and compelled him to answer, don't you think he'd be at a loss and that he'd believe that the things he saw earlier were truer than the ones he was now being shown?

d

Much truer.

And if someone compelled him to look at the light itself, wouldn't his eyes hurt, and wouldn't he turn around and flee towards the things he's able to see, believing that they're really clearer than the ones he's being shown?

e

He would.

And if someone dragged him away from there by force, up the rough, steep path, and didn't let him go until he had dragged him into the sunlight, wouldn't he be pained and irritated at being treated that way? And when he came into the light, with the sun filling his eyes, wouldn't he be unable to see a single one of the things now said to be true?

516

1. Reading *parionta autous nomizein onomazein* in b5.

2. Reading *hoia tis an eiē phusei, ei* in c5.



He would be unable to see them, at least at first.

I suppose, then, that he'd need time to get adjusted before he could see things in the world above. At first, he'd see shadows most easily, then images of men and other things in water, then the things themselves. Of these, he'd be able to study the things in the sky and the sky itself more easily at night, looking at the light of the stars and the moon, than during the day, looking at the sun and the light of the sun.

b

Of course.

Finally, I suppose, he'd be able to see the sun, not images of it in water or some alien place, but the sun itself, in its own place, and be able to study it.

Necessarily so.

And at this point he would infer and conclude that the sun provides the seasons and the years, governs everything in the visible world, and is in some way the cause of all the things that he used to see.

c

It's clear that would be his next step.

What about when he reminds himself of his first dwelling place, his fellow prisoners, and what passed for wisdom there? Don't you think that he'd count himself happy for the change and pity the others?

Certainly.

And if there had been any honors, praises, or prizes among them for the one who was sharpest at identifying the shadows as they passed by and who best remembered which usually came earlier, which later, and which simultaneously, and who could thus best divine the future, do you think that our man would desire these rewards or envy those among the prisoners who were honored and held power? Instead, wouldn't he feel, with Homer, that he'd much prefer to "work the earth as a serf to another, one without possessions,"<sup>3</sup> and go through any sufferings, rather than share their opinions and live as they do?

d

I suppose he would rather suffer anything than live like that.

e

Consider this too. If this man went down into the cave again and sat down in his same seat, wouldn't his eyes—coming suddenly out of the sun like that—be filled with darkness?

They certainly would.

And before his eyes had recovered—and the adjustment would not be quick—while his vision was still dim, if he had to compete again with the perpetual prisoners in recognizing the shadows, wouldn't he invite ridicule? Wouldn't it be said of him that he'd returned from his upward journey with his eyesight ruined and that it isn't worthwhile even to try to travel upward? And, as for anyone who tried to free them and lead them upward, if they could somehow get their hands on him, wouldn't they kill him?

517

They certainly would.

3. *Odyssey* xi.489–90.

This whole image, Glaucon, must be fitted together with what we said before. The visible realm should be likened to the prison dwelling, and the light of the fire inside it to the power of the sun. And if you interpret the upward journey and the study of things above as the upward journey of the soul to the intelligible realm, you'll grasp what I hope to convey, since that is what you wanted to hear about. Whether it's true or not, only the god knows. But this is how I see it: In the knowable realm, the form of the good is the last thing to be seen, and it is reached only with difficulty. Once one has seen it, however, one must conclude that it is the cause of all that is correct and beautiful in anything, that it produces both light and its source in the visible realm, and that in the intelligible realm it controls and provides truth and understanding, so that anyone who is to act sensibly in private or public must see it.

b

c

I have the same thought, at least as far as I'm able.

Come, then, share with me this thought also: It isn't surprising that the ones who get to this point are unwilling to occupy themselves with human affairs and that their souls are always pressing upwards, eager to spend their time above, for, after all, this is surely what we'd expect, if indeed things fit the image I described before.

d

It is.

What about what happens when someone turns from divine study to the evils of human life? Do you think it's surprising, since his sight is still dim, and he hasn't yet become accustomed to the darkness around him, that he behaves awkwardly and appears completely ridiculous if he's compelled, either in the courts or elsewhere, to contend about the shadows of justice or the statues of which they are the shadows and to dispute about the way these things are understood by people who have never seen justice itself?

e

That's not surprising at all.

No, it isn't. But anyone with any understanding would remember that the eyes may be confused in two ways and from two causes, namely, when they've come from the light into the darkness *and* when they've come from the darkness into the light. Realizing that the same applies to the soul, when someone sees a soul disturbed and unable to see something, he won't laugh mindlessly, but he'll take into consideration whether it has come from a brighter life and is dimmed through not having yet become accustomed to the dark or whether it has come from greater ignorance into greater light and is dazzled by the increased brilliance. Then he'll declare the first soul happy in its experience and life, and he'll pity the latter—but even if he chose to make fun of it, at least he'd be less ridiculous than if he laughed at a soul that has come from the light above.

518

b

What you say is very reasonable.

If that's true, then here's what we must think about these matters: Education isn't what some people declare it to be, namely, putting knowledge into souls that lack it, like putting sight into blind eyes.

c

They do say that.

But our present discussion, on the other hand, shows that the power to learn is present in everyone's soul and that the instrument with which each learns is like an eye that cannot be turned around from darkness to light without turning the whole body. This instrument cannot be turned around from that which is coming into being without turning the whole soul until it is able to study that which is and the brightest thing that is, namely, the one we call the good. Isn't that right?

d Yes.

Then education is the craft concerned with doing this very thing, this turning around, and with how the soul can most easily and effectively be made to do it. It isn't the craft of putting sight into the soul. Education takes for granted that sight is there but that it isn't turned the right way or looking where it ought to look, and it tries to redirect it appropriately.

So it seems.

Now, it looks as though the other so-called virtues of the soul are akin to those of the body, for they really aren't there beforehand but are added later by habit and practice. However, the virtue of reason seems to belong above all to something more divine, which never loses its power but is either useful and beneficial or useless and harmful, depending on the way it is turned. Or have you never noticed this about people who are said to be vicious but clever, how keen the vision of their little souls is and how sharply it distinguishes the things it is turned towards? This shows that its sight isn't inferior but rather is forced to serve evil ends, so that the sharper it sees, the more evil it accomplishes.

519 Absolutely.

However, if a nature of this sort had been hammered at from childhood and freed from the bonds of kinship with becoming, which have been fastened to it by feasting, greed, and other such pleasures and which, like leaden weights, pull its vision downwards—if, being rid of these, it turned to look at true things, then I say that the same soul of the same person would see these most sharply, just as it now does the things it is presently turned towards.

b Probably so.

And what about the uneducated who have no experience of truth? Isn't it likely—indeed, doesn't it follow necessarily from what was said before—that they will never adequately govern a city? But neither would those who've been allowed to spend their whole lives being educated. The former would fail because they don't have a single goal at which all their actions, public and private, inevitably aim; the latter would fail because they'd refuse to act, thinking that they had settled while still alive in the faraway Isles of the Blessed.

c That's true.

It is our task as founders, then, to compel the best natures to reach the study we said before is the most important, namely, to make the ascent and see the good. But when they've made it and looked sufficiently, we mustn't allow them to do what they're allowed to do today.

d

What's that?

To stay there and refuse to go down again to the prisoners in the cave and share their labors and honors, whether they are of less worth or of greater.

Then are we to do them an injustice by making them live a worse life when they could live a better one?

You are forgetting again that it isn't the law's concern to make any one class in the city outstandingly happy but to contrive to spread happiness throughout the city by bringing the citizens into harmony with each other through persuasion or compulsion and by making them share with each other the benefits that each class can confer on the community.<sup>4</sup> The law produces such people in the city, not in order to allow them to turn in whatever direction they want, but to make use of them to bind the city together. 520

That's true, I had forgotten.

Observe, then, Glaucon, that we won't be doing an injustice to those who've become philosophers in our city and that what we'll say to them, when we compel them to guard and care for the others, will be just. We'll say: "When people like you come to be in other cities, they're justified in not sharing in their city's labors, for they've grown there spontaneously, against the will of the constitution. And what grows of its own accord and owes no debt for its upbringing has justice on its side when it isn't keen to pay anyone for that upbringing. But we've made you kings in our city and leaders of the swarm, as it were, both for yourselves and for the rest of the city. You're better and more completely educated than the others and are better able to share in both types of life. Therefore each of you in turn must go down to live in the common dwelling place of the others and grow accustomed to seeing in the dark. When you are used to it, you'll see vastly better than the people there. And because you've seen the truth about fine, just, and good things, you'll know each image for what it is and also that of which it is the image. Thus, for you and for us, the city will be governed, not like the majority of cities nowadays, by people who fight over shadows and struggle against one another in order to rule—as if that were a great good—but by people who are awake rather than dreaming, for the truth is surely this: A city whose prospective rulers are least eager to rule must of necessity be most free from civil war, whereas a city with the opposite kind of rulers is governed in the opposite way." 520

Absolutely.

Then do you think that those we've nurtured will disobey us and refuse to share the labors of the city, each in turn, while living the greater part of their time with one another in the pure realm?

It isn't possible, for we'll be giving just orders to just people. Each of them will certainly go to rule as to something compulsory, however, which is exactly the opposite of what's done by those who now rule in each city. 520

4. See 420b–421c, 462a–466c.

521 This is how it is. If you can find a way of life that's better than ruling for the prospective rulers, your well-governed city will become a possibility, for only in it will the truly rich rule—not those who are rich in gold but those who are rich in the wealth that the happy must have, namely, a good and rational life. But if beggars hungry for private goods go into public life, thinking that the good is there for the seizing, then the well-governed city is impossible, for then ruling is something fought over, and this civil and domestic war destroys these people and the rest of the city as well.

That's very true.

b Can you name any life that despises political rule besides that of the true philosopher?

No, by god, I can't.

But surely it is those who are not lovers of ruling who must rule, for if they don't, the lovers of it, who are rivals, will fight over it.

Of course.

Then who will you compel to become guardians of the city, if not those who have the best understanding of what matters for good government and who have other honors than political ones, and a better life as well?

No one.

c Do you want us to consider now how such people will come to be in our city and how—just as some are said to have gone up from Hades to the gods—we'll lead them up to the light?

Of course I do.

This isn't, it seems, a matter of tossing a coin, but of turning a soul from a day that is a kind of night to the true day—the ascent to what is, which we say is true philosophy.

Indeed.

d Then mustn't we try to discover the subjects that have the power to bring this about?

Of course.

So what subject is it, Glaucon, that draws the soul from the realm of becoming to the realm of what is? And it occurs to me as I'm speaking that we said, didn't we, that it is necessary for the prospective rulers to be athletes in war when they're young?

Yes, we did.

Then the subject we're looking for must also have this characteristic in addition to the former one.

Which one?

It mustn't be useless to warlike men.

If it's at all possible, it mustn't.

e Now, prior to this, we educated them in music and poetry and physical training.

We did.

And physical training is concerned with what comes into being and dies, for it oversees the growth and decay of the body.

Apparently.

So it couldn't be the subject we're looking for.

No, it couldn't.

522

Then, could it be the music and poetry we described before?

But that, if you remember, is just the counterpart of physical training. It educated the guardians through habits. Its harmonies gave them a certain harmoniousness, not knowledge; its rhythms gave them a certain rhythmic quality; and its stories, whether fictional or nearer the truth, cultivated other habits akin to these. But as for the subject you're looking for now, there's nothing like that in music and poetry.

b

Your reminder is exactly to the point; there's really nothing like that in music and poetry. But, Glaucon, what is there that does have this? The crafts all seem to be base or mechanical.

How could they be otherwise? But apart from music and poetry, physical training, and the crafts, what subject is left?

Well, if we can't find anything apart from these, let's consider one of the subjects that touches all of them.

What sort of thing?

For example, that common thing that every craft, every type of thought, and every science uses and that is among the first compulsory subjects for everyone.

c

What's that?

That inconsequential matter of distinguishing the one, the two, and the three. In short, I mean number and calculation, for isn't it true that every craft and science must have a share in that?

They certainly must.

Then so must warfare.

Absolutely.

In the tragedies, at any rate, Palamedes is always showing up Agamemnon as a totally ridiculous general. Haven't you noticed? He says that, by inventing numbers, he established how many troops there were in the Trojan army and counted their ships and everything else—implying that they were uncounted before and that Agamemnon (if indeed he didn't know how to count) didn't even know how many feet he had? What kind of general do you think that made him?

d

A very strange one, if that's true.

Then won't we set down this subject as compulsory for a warrior, so that he is able to count and calculate?

e

More compulsory than anything. If, that is, he's to understand anything about setting his troops in order or if he's even to be properly human.

Then do you notice the same thing about this subject that I do?

What's that?

That this turns out to be one of the subjects we were looking for that naturally lead to understanding. But no one uses it correctly, namely, as something that is really fitted in every way to draw one towards being.

523

What do you mean?

I'll try to make my view clear as follows: I'll distinguish for myself the things that do or don't lead in the direction we mentioned, and you must study them along with me and either agree or disagree, and that way we may come to know more clearly whether things are indeed as I divine.

Point them out.

- I'll point out, then, if you can grasp it, that some sense perceptions *don't* summon the understanding to look into them, because the judgment of  
 b sense perception is itself adequate, while others encourage it in every way to look into them, because sense perception seems to produce no sound result.

You're obviously referring to things appearing in the distance and to *trompe l'oeil* paintings.

You're not quite getting my meaning.

Then what do you mean?

- The ones that don't summon the understanding are all those that don't go off into opposite perceptions at the same time. But the ones that do go  
 c off in that way I call *summoners*—whenever sense perception doesn't declare one thing any more than its opposite, no matter whether the object striking the senses is near at hand or far away. You'll understand my meaning better if I put it this way: These, we say, are three fingers—the smallest, the second, and the middle finger.

That's right.

Assume that I'm talking about them as being seen from close by. Now, this is my question about them.

What?

- It's apparent that each of them is equally a finger, and it makes no difference in this regard whether the finger is seen to be in the middle or  
 d at either end, whether it is dark or pale, thick or thin, or anything else of that sort, for in all these cases, an ordinary soul isn't compelled to ask the understanding what a finger is, since sight doesn't suggest to it that a finger is at the same time the opposite of a finger.

No, it doesn't.

- Therefore, it isn't likely that anything of that sort would summon or  
 e awaken the understanding.

No, it isn't.

- But what about the bigness and smallness of fingers? Does sight perceive them adequately? Does it make no difference to it whether the finger is in the middle or at the end? And is it the same with the sense of touch, as regards the thick and the thin, the hard and the soft? And do the other senses reveal such things clearly and adequately? Doesn't each of them  
 524 rather do the following: The sense set over the hard is, in the first place, of necessity also set over the soft, and it reports to the soul that the same thing is perceived by it to be both hard and soft?

That's right.

And isn't it necessary that in such cases the soul is puzzled as to what this sense means by the hard, if it indicates that the same thing is also

soft, or what it means by the light and the heavy, if it indicates that the heavy is light, or the light, heavy?

Yes, indeed, these are strange reports for the soul to receive, and they do demand to be looked into. b

Then it's likely that in such cases the soul, summoning calculation and understanding, first tries to determine whether each of the things announced to it is one or two.

Of course.

If it's evidently two, won't each be evidently distinct and one?

Yes.

Then, if each is one, and both two, the soul will understand that the two are separate, for it wouldn't understand the inseparable to be two, but rather one. c

That's right.

Sight, however, saw the big and small, not as separate, but as mixed up together. Isn't that so?

Yes.

And in order to get clear about all this, understanding was compelled to see the big and the small, not as mixed up together, but as separate—the opposite way from sight.

True.

And isn't it from these cases that it first occurs to us to ask what the big is and what the small is?

Absolutely.

And, because of this, we called the one the intelligible and the other the visible.

That's right. d

This, then, is what I was trying to express before, when I said that some things summon thought, while others don't. Those that strike the relevant sense at the same time as their opposites I call summoners, those that don't do this do not awaken understanding.

Now I understand, and I think you're right.

Well, then, to which of them do number and the one belong?

I don't know.

Reason it out from what was said before. If the one is adequately seen itself by itself or is so perceived by any of the other senses, then, as we were saying in the case of fingers, it wouldn't draw the soul towards being. But if something opposite to it is always seen at the same time, so that nothing is apparently any more one than the opposite of one, then something would be needed to judge the matter. The soul would then be puzzled, would look for an answer, would stir up its understanding, and would ask what the one itself is. And so this would be among the subjects that lead the soul and turn it around towards the study of that which is. e

But surely the sight of the one does possess this characteristic to a remarkable degree, for we see the same thing to be both one and an unlimited number at the same time. 525



Then, if this is true of the one, won't it also be true of all numbers?

Of course.

Now, calculation and arithmetic are wholly concerned with numbers.

That's right.

b Then evidently they lead us towards truth.

Supernaturally so.

Then they belong, it seems, to the subjects we're seeking. They are compulsory for warriors because of their orderly ranks and for philosophers because they have to learn to rise up out of becoming and grasp being, if they are ever to become rational.

That's right.

And our guardian must be both a warrior and a philosopher.

Certainly.

c Then it would be appropriate, Glaucon, to legislate this subject for those who are going to share in the highest offices in the city and to persuade them to turn to calculation and take it up, not as laymen do, but staying with it until they reach the study of the natures of the numbers by means of understanding itself, nor like tradesmen and retailers, for the sake of buying and selling, but for the sake of war and for ease in turning the soul around, away from becoming and towards truth and being.

Well put.

d Moreover, it strikes me, now that it has been mentioned, how sophisticated the subject of calculation is and in how many ways it is useful for our purposes, provided that one practices it for the sake of knowing rather than trading.

How is it useful?

e In the very way we were talking about. It leads the soul forcibly upward and compels it to discuss the numbers themselves, never permitting anyone to propose for discussion numbers attached to visible or tangible bodies. You know what those who are clever in these matters are like: If, in the course of the argument, someone tries to divide the one itself, they laugh and won't permit it. If you divide it, they multiply it, taking care that one thing never be found to be many parts rather than one.

That's very true.

526 Then what do you think would happen, Glaucon, if someone were to ask them: "What kind of numbers are you talking about, in which the one is as you assume it to be, each one equal to every other, without the least difference and containing no internal parts?"

I think they'd answer that they are talking about those numbers that can be grasped only in thought and can't be dealt with in any other way.

b Then do you see that it's likely that this subject really is compulsory for us, since it apparently compels the soul to use understanding itself on the truth itself?

Indeed, it most certainly does do that.

And what about those who are naturally good at calculation or reasoning? Have you already noticed that they're naturally sharp, so to speak,

in all subjects, and that those who are slow at it, if they're educated and exercised in it, even if they're benefited in no other way, nonetheless improve and become generally sharper than they were?

That's true.

Moreover, I don't think you'll easily find subjects that are harder to learn or practice than this.

No, indeed.

Then, for all these reasons, this subject isn't to be neglected, and the best natures must be educated in it.

I agree.

Let that, then, be one of our subjects. Second, let's consider whether the subject that comes next is also appropriate for our purposes.

What subject is that? Do you mean geometry?

That's the very one I had in mind.

Insofar as it pertains to war, it's obviously appropriate, for when it comes to setting up camp, occupying a region, concentrating troops, deploying them, or with regard to any of the other formations an army adopts in battle or on the march, it makes all the difference whether someone is a geometer or not.

But, for things like that, even a little geometry—or calculation for that matter—would suffice. What we need to consider is whether the greater and more advanced part of it tends to make it easier to see the form of the good. And we say that anything has that tendency if it compels the soul to turn itself around towards the region in which lies the happiest of the things that are, the one the soul must see at any cost.

You're right.

Therefore, if geometry compels the soul to study being, it's appropriate, but if it compels it to study becoming, it's inappropriate.

So we've said, at any rate.

Now, no one with even a little experience of geometry will dispute that this science is entirely the opposite of what is said about it in the accounts of its practitioners.

How do you mean?

They give ridiculous accounts of it, though they can't help it, for they speak like practical men, and all their accounts refer to doing things. They talk of "squaring," "applying," "adding," and the like, whereas the entire subject is pursued for the sake of knowledge.

Absolutely.

And mustn't we also agree on a further point?

What is that?

That their accounts are for the sake of knowing what always is, not what comes into being and passes away.

That's easy to agree to, for geometry *is* knowledge of what always is.

Then it draws the soul towards truth and produces philosophic thought by directing upwards what we now wrongly direct downwards.

As far as anything possibly can.

- c Then as far as *we* possibly can, we must require those in your fine city not to neglect geometry in any way, for even its by-products are not insignificant.

What are they?

The ones concerned with war that you mentioned. But we also surely know that, when it comes to better understanding any subject, there is a world of difference between someone who has grasped geometry and someone who hasn't.

Yes, by god, a world of difference.

Then shall we set this down as a second subject for the young?

Let's do so, he said.

- d And what about astronomy? Shall we make it the third? Or do you disagree?

That's fine with me, for a better awareness of the seasons, months, and years is no less appropriate for a general than for a farmer or navigator.

- e You amuse me: You're like someone who's afraid that the majority will think he is prescribing useless subjects. It's no easy task—indeed it's very difficult—to realize that in every soul there is an instrument that is purified and rekindled by such subjects when it has been blinded and destroyed by other ways of life, an instrument that it is more important to preserve than ten thousand eyes, since only with it can the truth be seen. Those who share your belief that this is so will think you're speaking incredibly well, while those who've never been aware of it will probably think you're talking nonsense, since they see no benefit worth mentioning in these subjects. So decide right now which group you're addressing. Or are your arguments for neither of them but mostly for your own sake—though you won't begrudge anyone else whatever benefit he's able to get from them?

The latter: I want to speak, question, and answer mostly for my own sake.

Then let's fall back to our earlier position, for we were wrong just now about the subject that comes after geometry.

What was our error?

- b After plane surfaces, we went on to revolving solids before dealing with solids by themselves. But the right thing to do is to take up the third dimension right after the second. And this, I suppose, consists of cubes and of whatever shares in depth.

You're right, Socrates, but this subject hasn't been developed yet.

- c There are two reasons for that: First, because no city values it, this difficult subject is little researched. Second, the researchers need a director, for, without one, they won't discover anything. To begin with, such a director is hard to find, and, then, even if he could be found, those who currently do research in this field would be too arrogant to follow him. If an entire city helped him to supervise it, however, and took the lead in valuing it, then he would be followed. And, if the subject was consistently and vigorously pursued, it would soon be developed. Even now, when it isn't valued and is held in contempt by the majority and is pursued by

researchers who are unable to give an account of its usefulness, nevertheless, in spite of all these handicaps, the force of its charm has caused it to develop somewhat, so that it wouldn't be surprising if it were further developed even as things stand.

The subject *has* outstanding charm. But explain more clearly what you were saying just now. The subject that deals with plane surfaces you took to be geometry.

Yes.

And at first you put astronomy after it, but later you went back on that.

In my haste to go through them all, I've only progressed more slowly. The subject dealing with the dimension of depth was next. But because it is in a ridiculous state, I passed it by and spoke of astronomy (which deals with the motion of things having depth) after geometry.

That's right.

Let's then put astronomy as the fourth subject, on the assumption that solid geometry will be available if a city takes it up.

That seems reasonable. And since you reproached me before for praising astronomy in a vulgar manner, I'll now praise it your way, for I think it's clear to everyone that astronomy compels the soul to look upward and leads it from things here to things there.

It may be obvious to everyone except me, but that's not my view about it.

Then what *is* your view?

As it's practiced today by those who teach philosophy, it makes the soul look very much downward.

How do you mean?

In my opinion, your conception of "higher studies" is a good deal too generous, for if someone were to study something by leaning his head back and studying ornaments on a ceiling, it looks as though you'd say he's studying not with his eyes but with his understanding. Perhaps you're right, and I'm foolish, but I can't conceive of any subject making the soul look upward except one concerned with that which is, and that which is invisible. If anyone attempts to learn something about sensible things, whether by gaping upward or squinting downward, I'd claim—since there's no knowledge of such things—that he never learns anything and that, even if he studies lying on his back on the ground or floating on it in the sea, his soul is looking not up but down.

You're right to reproach me, and I've been justly punished, but what did you mean when you said that astronomy must be learned in a different way from the way in which it is learned at present if it is to be a useful subject for our purposes?

It's like this: We should consider the decorations in the sky to be the most beautiful and most exact of visible things, seeing that they're embroidered on a visible surface. But we should consider their motions to fall far short of the true ones—motions that are really fast or slow as measured in true numbers, that trace out true geometrical figures, that are all in

relation to one another, and that are the true motions of the things carried along in them. And these, of course, must be grasped by reason and thought, not by sight. Or do you think otherwise?

Not at all.

Therefore, we should use the embroidery in the sky as a model in the study of these other things. If someone experienced in geometry were to come upon plans very carefully drawn and worked out by Daedalus or  
 e some other craftsman or artist, he'd consider them to be very finely executed, but he'd think it ridiculous to examine them seriously in order to  
 530 find the truth in them about the equal, the double, or any other ratio.

How could it be anything other than ridiculous?

Then don't you think that a real astronomer will feel the same when he looks at the motions of the stars? He'll believe that the craftsman of the heavens arranged them and all that's in them in the finest way possible for such things. But as for the ratio of night to day, of days to a month, of a month to a year, or of the motions of the stars to any of them or to each other, don't you think he'll consider it strange to believe that they're  
 b always the same and never deviate anywhere at all or to try in any sort of way to grasp the truth about them, since they're connected to body and visible?

That's my opinion anyway, now that I hear it from you.

Then if, by really taking part in astronomy, we're to make the naturally intelligent part of the soul useful instead of useless, let's study astronomy by means of problems, as we do geometry, and leave the things in the  
 c sky alone.

The task you're prescribing is a lot harder than anything now attempted in astronomy.

And I suppose that, if we are to be of any benefit as lawgivers, our prescriptions for the other subjects will be of the same kind. But have you any other appropriate subject to suggest?

Not offhand.

Well, there isn't just one form of motion but several. Perhaps a wise  
 d person could list them all, but there are two that are evident even to us.

What are they?

Besides the one we've discussed, there is also its counterpart.

What's that?

It's likely that, as the eyes fasten on astronomical motions, so the ears fasten on harmonic ones, and that the sciences of astronomy and harmonics are closely akin. This is what the Pythagoreans say, Glaucon, and we agree, don't we?

We do.

Therefore, since the subject is so huge, shouldn't we ask them what they  
 e have to say about harmonic motions and whether there is anything else besides them, all the while keeping our own goal squarely in view?

What's that?

That those whom we are rearing should never try to learn anything incomplete, anything that doesn't reach the end that everything should reach—the end we mentioned just now in the case of astronomy. Or don't you know that people do something similar in harmonics? Measuring audible consonances and sounds against one another, they labor in vain, just like present-day astronomers. 531

Yes, by the gods, and pretty ridiculous they are too. They talk about something they call a "dense interval" or quartertone—putting their ears to their instruments like someone trying to overhear what the neighbors are saying. And some say that they hear a tone in between and that *it* is the shortest interval by which they must measure, while others argue that this tone sounds the same as a quarter tone. Both put ears before understanding. b

You mean those excellent fellows who torment their strings, torturing them, and stretching them on pegs. I won't draw out the analogy by speaking of blows with the plectrum or the accusations or denials and boastings on the part of the strings; instead I'll cut it short by saying that these aren't the people I'm talking about. The ones I mean are the ones we just said we were going to question about harmonics, for they do the same as the astronomers. They seek out the numbers that are to be found in these audible consonances, but they do not make the ascent to problems. They don't investigate, for example, which numbers are consonant and which aren't or what the explanation is of each. c

But that would be a superhuman task.

Yet it's useful in the search for the beautiful and the good. But pursued for any other purpose, it's useless.

Probably so.

Moreover, I take it that, if inquiry into all the subjects we've mentioned brings out their association and relationship with one another and draws conclusions about their kinship, it does contribute something to our goal and isn't labor in vain, but that otherwise it is in vain. d

I, too, divine that this is true. But you're still talking about a very big task, Socrates.

Do you mean the prelude, or what? Or don't you know that all these subjects are merely preludes to the song itself that must also be learned? Surely you don't think that people who are clever in these matters are dialecticians. e

No, by god, I don't. Although I have met a few exceptions.

But did it ever seem to you that those who can neither give nor follow an account know anything at all of the things we say they must know?

My answer to that is also no.

Then isn't this at last, Glaucon, the song that dialectic sings? It is intelligible, but it is imitated by the power of sight. We said that sight tries at last to look at the animals themselves, the stars themselves, and, in the end, at the sun itself. In the same way, whenever someone tries through 532

- argument and apart from all sense perceptions to find the being itself of each thing and doesn't give up until he grasps the good itself with understanding itself, he reaches the end of the intelligible, just as the other reached the end of the visible.

Absolutely.

And what about this journey? Don't you call it dialectic?

I do.

- Then the release from bonds and the turning around from shadows to statues and the light of the fire and, then, the way up out of the cave to the sunlight and, there, the continuing inability to look at the animals, the plants, and the light of the sun, but the newly acquired ability to look at divine images in water and shadows of the things that are, rather than, as before, merely at shadows of statues thrown by another source of light that is itself a shadow in relation to the sun—all this business of the crafts we've mentioned has the power to awaken the best part of the soul and lead it upward to the study of the best among the things that are, just as, before, the clearest thing in the body was led to the brightest thing in the bodily and visible realm.

- I accept that this is so, even though it seems very hard to accept in one way and hard not to accept in another. All the same, since we'll have to return to these things often in the future, rather than having to hear them just once now, let's assume that what you've said is so and turn to the song itself, discussing it in the same way as we did the prelude. So tell us: what is the sort of power dialectic has, what forms is it divided into, and what paths does it follow? For these lead at last, it seems, towards that place which is a rest from the road, so to speak, and an end of journeying for the one who reaches it.

- 533 You won't be able to follow me any longer, Glaucon, even though there is no lack of eagerness on my part to lead you, for you would no longer be seeing an image of what we're describing, but the truth itself. At any rate, that's how it seems to me. That it is really so is not worth insisting on any further. But that there is some such thing to be seen, *that* is something we must insist on. Isn't that so?

Of course.

And mustn't we also insist that the power of dialectic could reveal it only to someone experienced in the subjects we've described and that it cannot reveal it in any other way?

That too is worth insisting on.

- b At any rate, no one will dispute it when we say that there is no other inquiry that systematically attempts to grasp with respect to each thing itself what the being of it is, for all the other crafts are concerned with human opinions and desires, with growing or construction, or with the care of growing or constructed things. And as for the rest, I mean geometry and the subjects that follow it, we described them as to some extent grasping what is, for we saw that, while they do dream about what is, they are unable to command a waking view of it as long as they make use of

hypotheses that they leave untouched and that they cannot give any account of. What mechanism could possibly turn any agreement into knowledge when it begins with something unknown and puts together the conclusion and the steps in between from what is unknown? c

None.

Therefore, dialectic is the only inquiry that travels this road, doing away with hypotheses and proceeding to the first principle itself, so as to be secure. And when the eye of the soul is really buried in a sort of barbaric bog, dialectic gently pulls it out and leads it upwards, using the crafts we described to help it and cooperate with it in turning the soul around. From force of habit, we've often called these crafts sciences or kinds of knowledge, but they need another name, clearer than opinion, darker than knowledge. We called them thought somewhere before.<sup>5</sup> But I presume that we won't dispute about a name when we have so many more important matters to investigate. d e

Of course not.

It will therefore be enough to call the first section knowledge, the second thought, the third belief, and the fourth imaging, just as we did before. The last two together we call opinion, the other two, intellect. Opinion is concerned with becoming, intellect with being. And as being is to becoming, so intellect is to opinion, and as intellect is to opinion, so knowledge is to belief and thought to imaging. But as for the ratios between the things these are set over and the division of either the opinable or the intelligible section into two, let's pass them by, Glaucon, lest they involve us in arguments many times longer than the ones we've already gone through. 534

I agree with you about the others in any case, insofar as I'm able to follow. b

Then, do you call someone who is able to give an account of the being of each thing dialectical? But insofar as he's unable to give an account of something, either to himself or to another, do you deny that he has any understanding of it?

How could I do anything else?

Then the same applies to the good. Unless someone can distinguish in an account the form of the good from everything else, can survive all refutation, as if in a battle, striving to judge things not in accordance with opinion but in accordance with being, and can come through all this with his account still intact, you'll say that he doesn't know the good itself or any other good. And if he gets hold of some image of it, you'll say that it's through opinion, not knowledge, for he is dreaming and asleep throughout his present life, and, before he wakes up here, he will arrive in Hades and go to sleep forever. c d

Yes, by god, I'll certainly say all of that.

Then, as for those children of yours whom you're rearing and educating in theory, if you ever reared them in fact, I don't think that you'd allow

5. See 511d–e.



them to rule in your city or be responsible for the most important things while they are as irrational as incommensurable lines.

Certainly not.

Then you'll legislate that they are to give most attention to the education that will enable them to ask and answer questions most knowledgeably?

e I'll legislate it along with you.

Then do you think that we've placed dialectic at the top of the other subjects like a coping stone and that no other subject can rightly be placed above it, but that our account of the subjects that a future ruler must learn  
535 has come to an end?

Probably so.

Then it remains for you to deal with the distribution of these subjects, with the question of to whom we'll assign them and in what way.

That's clearly next.

Do you remember what sort of people we chose in our earlier selection of rulers?<sup>6</sup>

Of course I do.

In the other respects, the same natures have to be chosen: we have to select the most stable, the most courageous, and as far as possible the most graceful. In addition, we must look not only for people who have a noble  
b and tough character but for those who have the natural qualities conducive to this education of ours.

Which ones exactly?

They must be keen on the subjects and learn them easily, for people's souls give up much more easily in hard study than in physical training, since the pain—being peculiar to them and not shared with their body—is more their own.

That's true.

c We must also look for someone who has got a good memory, is persistent, and is in every way a lover of hard work. How else do you think he'd be willing to carry out both the requisite bodily labors and also complete so much study and practice?

Nobody would, unless his nature was in every way a good one.

In any case, the present error, which as we said before explains why philosophy isn't valued, is that she's taken up by people who are unworthy of her, for illegitimate students shouldn't be allowed to take her up, but only legitimate ones.

How so?

d In the first place, no student should be lame in his love of hard work, really loving one half of it, and hating the other half. This happens when someone is a lover of physical training, hunting, or any kind of bodily labor and isn't a lover of learning, listening, or inquiry, but hates the work involved in them. And someone whose love of hard work tends in the opposite direction is also lame.

6. See 412b ff.

That's very true.

Similarly with regard to truth, won't we say that a soul is maimed if it hates a voluntary falsehood, cannot endure to have one in itself, and is greatly angered when it exists in others, but is nonetheless content to accept an involuntary falsehood, isn't angry when it is caught being ignorant, and bears its lack of learning easily, wallowing in it like a pig? e

Absolutely. 536

And with regard to moderation, courage, high-mindedness, and all the other parts of virtue, it is also important to distinguish the illegitimate from the legitimate, for when either a city or an individual doesn't know how to do this, it unwittingly employs the lame and illegitimate as friends or rulers for whatever services it wants done.

That's just how it is.

So we must be careful in all these matters, for if we bring people who are sound of limb and mind to so great a subject and training, and educate them in it, even justice itself won't blame us, and we'll save the city and its constitution. But if we bring people of a different sort, we'll do the opposite, and let loose an even greater flood of ridicule upon philosophy. b

And it would be shameful to do that.

It certainly would. But I seem to have done something a bit ridiculous myself just now.

What's that?

I forgot that we were only playing, and so I spoke too vehemently. But I looked upon philosophy as I spoke, and seeing her undeservedly besmirched, I seem to have lost my temper and said what I had to say too earnestly, as if I were angry with those responsible for it. c

That certainly wasn't my impression as I listened to you.

But it was mine as I was speaking. In any case, let's not forget that in our earlier selection we chose older people but that that isn't permitted in this one, for we mustn't believe Solon<sup>7</sup> when he says that as someone grows older he's able to learn a lot. He can do that even less well than he can run races, for all great and numerous labors belong to the young. d

Necessarily.

Therefore, calculation, geometry, and all the preliminary education required for dialectic must be offered to the future rulers in childhood, and not in the shape of compulsory learning either.

Why's that?

Because no free person should learn anything like a slave. Forced bodily labor does no harm to the body, but nothing taught by force stays in the soul. e

That's true.

Then don't use force to train the children in these subjects; use play instead. That way you'll also see better what each of them is naturally fitted for. 537

7. Athenian statesman, lawgiver, and poet (c. 640–560).

That seems reasonable.

Do you remember that we stated that the children were to be led into war on horseback as observers and that, wherever it is safe to do so, they should be brought close and taste blood, like puppies?

I remember.

In all these things—in labors, studies, and fears—the ones who always show the greatest aptitude are to be inscribed on a list.

b At what age?

When they're released from compulsory physical training, for during that period, whether it's two or three years, young people are incapable of doing anything else, since weariness and sleep are enemies of learning. At the same time, how they fare in this physical training is itself an important test.

Of course it is.

c And after that, that is to say, from the age of twenty, those who are chosen will also receive more honors than the others. Moreover, the subjects they learned in no particular order as children they must now bring together to form a unified vision of their kinship both with one another and with the nature of that which is.

At any rate, only learning of that sort holds firm in those who receive it.

It is also the greatest test of who is naturally dialectical and who isn't, for anyone who can achieve a unified vision is dialectical, and anyone who can't isn't.

I agree.

d Well, then, you'll have to look out for the ones who most of all have this ability in them and who also remain steadfast in their studies, in war, and in the other activities laid down by law. And after they have reached their thirtieth year, you'll select them in turn from among those chosen earlier and assign them yet greater honors. Then you'll have to test them by means of the power of dialectic, to discover which of them can relinquish his eyes and other senses, going on with the help of truth to that which by itself is. And this is a task that requires great care.

What's the main reason for that?

e Don't you realize what a great evil comes from dialectic as it is currently practiced?

What evil is that?

Those who practice it are filled with lawlessness.

They certainly are.

Do you think it's surprising that this happens to them? Aren't you sympathetic?

Why isn't it surprising? And why should I be sympathetic?

538 Because it's like the case of a child brought up surrounded by much wealth and many flatterers in a great and numerous family, who finds out, when he has become a man, that he isn't the child of his professed parents and that he can't discover his real ones. Can you divine what the

attitude of someone like that would be to the flatterers, on the one hand, and to his supposed parents, on the other, before he knew about his parentage, and what it would be when he found out? Or would you rather hear what I divine about it?

I'd rather hear your views.

Well, then, I divine that during the time that he didn't know the truth, he'd honor his father, mother, and the rest of his supposed family more than he would the flatterers, that he'd pay greater attention to their needs, be less likely to treat them lawlessly in word or deed, and be more likely to obey them than the flatterers in any matters of importance.

b

Probably so.

When he became aware of the truth, however, his honor and enthusiasm would lessen for his family and increase for the flatterers, he'd obey the latter far more than before, begin to live in the way that they did, and keep company with them openly, and, unless he was very decent by nature, he'd eventually care nothing for that father of his or any of the rest of his supposed family.

c

All this would probably happen as you say, but in what way is it an image of those who take up arguments?

As follows. We hold from childhood certain convictions about just and fine things; we're brought up with them as with our parents, we obey and honor them.

Indeed, we do.

There are other ways of living, however, opposite to these and full of pleasures, that flatter the soul and attract it to themselves but which don't persuade sensible people, who continue to honor and obey the convictions of their fathers.

d

That's right.

And then a questioner comes along and asks someone of this sort, "What is the fine?" And, when he answers what he has heard from the traditional lawgiver, the argument refutes him, and by refuting him often and in many places shakes him from his convictions, and makes him believe that the fine is no more fine than shameful, and the same with the just, the good, and the things he honored most. What do you think his attitude will be then to honoring and obeying his earlier convictions?

e

Of necessity he won't honor or obey them in the same way.

Then, when he no longer honors and obeys those convictions and can't discover the true ones, will he be likely to adopt any other way of life than that which flatters him?

539

No, he won't.

And so, I suppose, from being law-abiding he becomes lawless.

Inevitably.

Then, as I asked before, isn't it only to be expected that this is what happens to those who take up arguments in this way, and don't they therefore deserve a lot of sympathy?

Yes, and they deserve pity too.

Then, if you don't want your thirty-year-olds to be objects of such pity, you'll have to be extremely careful about how you introduce them to arguments.

That's right.

And isn't it one lasting precaution not to let them taste arguments while they're young? I don't suppose that it has escaped your notice that, when  
 b young people get their first taste of arguments, they misuse it by treating it as a kind of game of contradiction. They imitate those who've refuted them by refuting others themselves, and, like puppies, they enjoy dragging and tearing those around them with their arguments.

They're excessively fond of it.

Then, when they've refuted many and been refuted by them in turn, they forcefully and quickly fall into disbelieving what they believed before.

c And, as a result, they themselves and the whole of philosophy are discredited in the eyes of others.

That's very true.

But an older person won't want to take part in such madness. He'll imitate someone who is willing to engage in discussion in order to look for the truth, rather than someone who plays at contradiction for sport. He'll be more sensible himself and will bring honor rather than discredit  
 d to the philosophical way of life.

That's right.

And when we said before that those allowed to take part in arguments should be orderly and steady by nature, not as nowadays, when even the unfit are allowed to engage in them—wasn't all that also said as a precaution?

Of course.

Then if someone continuously, strenuously, and exclusively devotes himself to participation in arguments, exercising himself in them just as he did in the bodily physical training, which is their counterpart, would that be enough?

e Do you mean six years or four?

It doesn't matter. Make it five. And after that, you must make them go down into the cave again, and compel them to take command in matters of war and occupy the other offices suitable for young people, so that they won't be inferior to the others in experience. But in these, too, they must be tested to see whether they'll remain steadfast when they're pulled this  
 540 way and that or shift their ground.

How much time do you allow for that?

Fifteen years. Then, at the age of fifty, those who've survived the tests and been successful both in practical matters and in the sciences must be led to the goal and compelled to lift up the radiant light of their souls to what itself provides light for everything. And once they've seen the good itself, they must each in turn put the city, its citizens, and themselves in  
 b order, using it as their model. Each of them will spend most of his time

with philosophy, but, when his turn comes, he must labor in politics and rule for the city's sake, not as if he were doing something fine, but rather something that has to be done. Then, having educated others like himself to take his place as guardians of the city, he will depart for the Isles of the Blessed and dwell there. And, if the Pythia agrees, the city will publicly establish memorials and sacrifices to him as a daemon, but if not, then as a happy and divine human being. c

Like a sculptor, Socrates, you've produced ruling men that are completely fine.

And ruling women, too, Glaucon, for you mustn't think that what I've said applies any more to men than it does to women who are born with the appropriate natures.

That's right, if indeed they are to share everything equally with the men, as we said they should.

Then, do you agree that the things we've said about the city and its constitution aren't altogether wishful thinking, that it's hard for them to come about, but not impossible? And do you also agree that they can come about only in the way we indicated, namely, when one or more true philosophers come to power in a city, who despise present honors, thinking them slavish and worthless, and who prize what is right and the honors that come from it above everything, and regard justice as the most important and most essential thing, serving it and increasing it as they set their city in order? d e

How will they do that?

They'll send everyone in the city who is over ten years old into the country. Then they'll take possession of the children, who are now free from the ethos of their parents, and bring them up in their own customs and laws, which are the ones we've described. This is the quickest and easiest way for the city and constitution we've discussed to be established, become happy, and bring most benefit to the people among whom it's established. 541

That's by far the quickest and easiest way. And in my opinion, Socrates, you've described well how it would come into being, if it ever did. b

Then, isn't that enough about this city and the man who is like it? Surely it is clear what sort of man we'll say he has to be.

It is clear, he said. And as for your question, I think that we have reached the end of this topic.

## Book VIII

Well, then, Glaucon, we've agreed to the following: If a city is to achieve the height of good government, wives must be in common, children and all their education must be in common, their way of life, whether in peace or war, must be in common, and their kings must be those among them who have proved to be best, both in philosophy and in warfare. 543