BOOK VII

BOOK VII BEGINS with another unforgettable image, the Allegory of the Cave, which fits together with the Sun and the Line (517b) analogies, and which illustrates the effects of education on the soul (514a). It leads to a brief but important discussion of education (518b–519b), in which Socrates makes it clear that the aim of education is to turn the soul around by changing its desires.

The next topic is the education of the philosopher-kings. (1) Their initial education is in music and poetry, physical training, and elementary mathematics (535a–537b). (2) This is followed by two or three years of compulsory physical training, rather like the military service that some countries still have (537b–c). (3) Those who are most successful in these studies next receive ten years of education in mathematical science (537c–d, 522c–531d). (4) Those who are again most successful receive five years of training in dialectic (537d–540a), 531e–535a). (5) Those who are still most successful receive fifteen years of practical political training (539e–540a). Finally, (6) those who are also successful in practical politics are "compelled to lift up the radiant eye-beams of their souls" to the good itself (540a) and are equipped to be philosopher-kings.

The third city, which contains philosopher-kings and the educational institutions necessary to produce them, constitute the final stage of Plato's construction of his ideal city (535a–536d, 543c–544a).

SOCRATES' NARRATION CONTINUES:

SOCRATES: Next, then, compare the effect of
514a education and that 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 that is open to the light and as wide as the cave itself. They have been there since childhood, with their necks and legs fettered, so that they are fixed in the same place, able to see only in front of them,
b because their fetter prevents them from turning their heads around. Light is provided by a fire burning far above and behind them. Between the prisoners and the fire, there is an elevated road stretching. Imagine that along this road a low wall has been built—like the screen in front of people that is provided by puppeteers, and above which they show their puppets.

GLAUCON: I am imagining it.

SOCRATES: Also imagine, then, that there are
c people alongside the wall carrying multifarious artifacts that project above it—statues of people
515a and other animals, made of stone, wood, and every material. And as you would expect, some of the carriers are talking and some are silent.

GLAUCON: It is a strange image you are describing, and strange prisoners.

SOCRATES: They are like us. I mean, in the first place, do you think these prisoners have ever seen anything of themselves and one another besides the shadows that the fire casts on the wall of the cave in front of them?

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

SOCRATES: What about the things carried along the wall? Isn't the same true where they are concerned?

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: And if they could engage in discussion with one another, don't you think they would assume that the words they used applied to the things they see passing in front of them?

GLAUCON: They would have to.

SOCRATES: What if their prison also had an echo from the wall facing them? When one of the carriers passing along the wall spoke, do you think they would believe that anything other than the shadow passing in front of them was speaking?

GLAUCON: I do not, by Zeus.

SOCRATES: All in all, then, what the prisoners would take for true reality is nothing other than the shadows of those artifacts. c

GLAUCON: That's entirely inevitable.

SOCRATES: Consider, then, what being released from their bonds and cured of their foolishness would naturally be like, if something like this should happen to them. When one was freed and suddenly compelled to stand up, turn his neck around, walk, and look up toward the light, he would be pained by doing all these things and be unable to see the things whose shadows he had seen before, because of the flashing lights. What do you think he would say if we told him
d that what he had seen before was silly nonsense, but that now—because he is a bit closer to what is, and is turned toward things that *are* more—he sees more correctly? And in particular, if we pointed to each of the things passing by and compelled him to answer what each of them is, don't you think he would be puzzled and believe that the things he saw earlier were more truly real than the ones he was being shown?

GLAUCON: Much more so.

SOCRATES: And if he were compelled to look
e at the light itself, wouldn't his eyes be pained and wouldn't he turn around and flee toward the things he is able to see, and believe that they are really clearer than the ones he is being shown?

GLAUCON: He would.

SOCRATES: And if someone dragged him by force away from there, along the rough, steep, upward path, and did not let him go until he had dragged him into the light of the sun, wouldn't he be pained and angry at being treated that way? And when he came into the light, wouldn't he have his
516a eyes filled with sunlight and be unable to see a single one of the things now said to be truly real?

GLAUCON: No, he would not be able to—at least not right away.

SOCRATES: He would need time to get adjusted, I suppose, if he is going to see the things in the world above. At first, he would see shadows most easily, then images of men and other things in water, then the things themselves. From these, it would be easier for him to go on to look at the things in the sky and the sky itself at night, gazing at the light of the stars and the moon, than during
b the day, gazing at the sun and the light of the sun.

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: Finally, I suppose, he would be able to see the sun—not reflections of it in water or some alien place, but the sun just by itself in its own place—and be able to look at it and see what it is like.

GLAUCON: Necessarily.

SOCRATES: After that, he would already be able to conclude about it that it provides the seasons and the years, governs everything in the visible world, and is in some way the cause of all the *c* things that he and his fellows used to see.

GLAUCON: That would clearly be his next step.

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

GLAUCON: Certainly.

SOCRATES: And if there had been honors, praises, or prizes among them for the one who was sharpest at identifying the shadows as they passed by; and was best able to remember which usually came earlier, which later, and which *d* simultaneously; and who was thus best able to prophesize the future, do you think that our man would desire these rewards or envy those among the prisoners who were honored and held power? Or do you think he would feel with Homer that he would much prefer to "work the earth as a serf for another man, a man without possessions of his own,"[151] and go through any sufferings, rather than share their beliefs and live as they do? *e*

GLAUCON: Yes, I think he would rather suffer anything than live like that.

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

GLAUCON: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Now, if he had to compete once again with the perpetual prisoners in recognizing the shadows, while his sight was still dim and before his eyes had recovered, and if the time *517a* required for readjustment was not short, wouldn't he provoke ridicule? Wouldn't it be said of him that he had returned from his upward journey with his eyes ruined, and that it is not worthwhile even to try to travel upward? And as for anyone who tried to free the prisoners and lead them

151. *Odyssey* xi.489–90. The shade of Achilles speaks these words to Odysseus, who is visiting Hades.

upward, if they could somehow get their hands on him, wouldn't they kill him?

GLAUCON: They certainly would.

SOCRATES: This image, my dear Glaucon, must be fitted together as a whole with what we said before. The realm revealed through sight should be likened to the prison dwelling, and the light of the fire inside it to the sun's power. And if you think of the upward journey and the seeing of things above as the upward journey of the soul to the intelligible realm, you won't mistake my intention—since it is what you wanted to hear about. Only the god knows whether it is true. But this is how these phenomena seem to me: in the knowable realm, the last thing to be seen is the form of the good, and it is seen only with toil and trouble. Once one has seen it, however, one must infer that it is the cause of all that is correct and beautiful in anything, that in the visible realm it produces both light and its source, and that in the intelligible realm it controls and provides truth and understanding; and that anyone who is to act sensibly in private or public must see it.

GLAUCON: I agree, so far as I am able.

SOCRATES: Come on, then, and join me in this further thought: you should not be surprised that the ones who get to this point are not willing to occupy themselves with human affairs, but that, on the contrary, their souls are always eager to spend their time above. I mean, that is surely what we would expect, if indeed the image I described before is also accurate here.

GLAUCON: It is what we would expect.

SOCRATES: What about when someone, coming from looking at divine things, looks to the evils of human life? Do you think it is surprising that he behaves awkwardly and appears completely ridiculous, if—while his sight is still dim and he has not yet become accustomed to the darkness around him—he is compelled, either in the courts or elsewhere, to compete about the shadows of justice, or about the statues of which they are the shadows; and to dispute the way these things are understood by people who have never seen justice itself?

GLAUCON: It is not surprising at all.

SOCRATES: On the contrary, anyone with any sense, at any rate, would remember that eyes may be confused in two ways and from two causes: when they change from the light into the darkness, or from the darkness into the light. If he kept in mind that the same applies to the soul, then when he saw a soul disturbed and unable to see something, he would not laugh absurdly. Instead, he would see whether it had come from a brighter life and was dimmed through not having yet become accustomed to the dark, or from greater ignorance into greater light and was dazzled by the increased brilliance. Then he would consider the first soul happy in its experience and life, and pity the latter. But even if he wanted to ridicule it, at least his ridiculing it would make him less ridiculous than ridiculing a soul that had come from the light above.

GLAUCON: That's an entirely reasonable claim.

SOCRATES: Then here is how we must think about these matters, if that is true: education is not what some people boastfully profess it to be. They say that they can pretty much put knowledge into souls that lack it, like putting sight into blind eyes.

GLAUCON: Yes, they do say that.

SOCRATES: But here is what our present account shows about this power to learn that is present in everyone's soul, and the instrument with which each of us learns: just as an eye cannot be turned around from darkness to light except by turning the whole body, so this instrument must be turned around from what-comes-to-be together with the whole soul, until it is able to bear to look at what is and at the brightest thing that is—the one we call the good. Isn't that right?

GLAUCON: Yes.

SOCRATES: Of this then—of this very turning around—there would be a craft concerned with how this instrument can be most easily and effectively turned around, not of putting sight into it. On the contrary, it takes for granted that sight is there, though not turned in the right way or looking where it should look, and contrives to redirect it appropriately.

GLAUCON: That's probably right.

SOCRATES: The other so-called virtues of the soul then, do seem to be closely akin to those of the body: they really are not present in it initially, but are added later by habit and practice. The virtue of wisdom, on the other hand, belongs above all, so it seems, to something

more godlike, which never loses its power, but is
519a either useful and beneficial or useless and harmful, depending on the way it is led around. Or haven't you ever noticed in people who are said to be bad, but clever, how sharp the vision of their little soul is and how sharply it distinguishes the things it is turned toward? This shows that its sight is not inferior, but is compelled to serve vice, so that the sharper it sees, the more evils it accomplishes.

GLAUCON: I certainly have.

SOCRATES: However, if this element of this sort of nature had been hammered at right from childhood, and struck free of the leaden weights, as it were, of kinship with becoming, which have
b been fastened to it by eating and other such pleasures and indulgences, which turn its soul's vision downward—if, I say, it got rid of these and turned toward truly real things, then the same element of the same people would see them most sharply, just as it now does the things it is now turned toward.

GLAUCON: That's probably right.

SOCRATES: Isn't it also probable, then—indeed, doesn't it follow necessarily from what was said before—that uneducated people who have no experience of true reality will never adequately govern a city, and neither will people who have been allowed to spend their whole
c lives in education. The former fail because they do not have a single goal in life at which all their actions, public and private, inevitably aim; the latter because they would refuse to act, thinking they had emigrated, while still alive, to the Isles of the Blessed.

GLAUCON: True.

SOCRATES: It is our task as founders, then, to compel the best natures to learn what was said before[152] to be the most important thing: namely, to see the good; to ascend that ascent. And when they have ascended and looked sufficiently, we must not allow them to do what they are allowed
d to do now.

GLAUCON: What's that, then?

SOCRATES: To stay there and refuse to go down again to the prisoners in the cave and share their labors and honors, whether the inferior ones or the more excellent ones.

GLAUCON: You mean we are to treat them unjustly, making them live a worse life when they could live a better one?

SOCRATES: You have forgotten again, my friend, that the law is not concerned with making any one class in the city do outstandingly well, but is contriving to produce this condition in the e
city as a whole, harmonizing the citizens together through both persuasion and compulsion, and making them share with each other the benefit they can confer on the community. It produces 520a
such men in the city, not in order to allow them to turn in whatever direction each one wants, but to make use of them to bind the city together.

GLAUCON: That's true. Yes, I had forgotten.

SOCRATES: Observe, then, Glaucon, that we won't be unjustly treating those who have become philosophers in our city, but that what we will say to them, when we compel them to take care of the others and guard them, will be just. We will say: "When people like you come to be in other cities, they are justified in not sharing in the others' labors. After all, they have grown there spon- b
taneously, against the will of the constitution in each of them. And when something grows of its own accord and owes no debt for its upbringing, it has justice on its side when it is not keen to pay anyone for its upbringing. But both for your own sakes and for that of the rest of the city, we have bred you to be leaders and kings in the hive, so to speak. You are better and more completely educated than the others, and better able to share in c
both types of life. So each of you in turn must go down to live in the common dwelling place of the other citizens and grow accustomed to seeing in the dark. For when you are used to it, you will see infinitely better than the people there and know precisely what each image is, and also what it is an image of, because you have seen the truth about fine, just, and good things. So the city will be awake, governed by us and by you; not dreaming like the majority of cities nowadays, governed by men who fight against one another over shadows and form factions in order to rule—as if that were d
a great good. No, the truth of the matter is surely this: a city in which those who are going to rule are least eager to rule is necessarily best and freest

152. 505a–b.

from faction, whereas a city with the opposite kind of rulers is governed in the opposite way."

GLAUCON: Yes, indeed.

SOCRATES: Then do you think the people we have nurtured will disobey us when they hear these things, and be unwilling 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?

GLAUCON: No, they couldn't possibly. After *e* all, we will be giving just orders to just people. However, each of them will certainly go to rule as to something compulsory, which is exactly the opposite of what is done by those who now rule in each city.

SOCRATES: That's right, comrade. If you can *521a* find a way of life that is better than ruling for those who are going to rule, your well-governed city will become a possibility. You see, in it alone the truly rich will rule—those who are rich not in gold, but in the wealth the happy must have: namely, a good and rational life. But if beggars—people hungry for private goods of their own—go into public life, thinking that the good is there for the seizing, then such a city is impossible. For when ruling is something fought over, such civil and domestic war destroys these men and the rest of the city as well.

GLAUCON: That's absolutely true.

SOCRATES: Do you know of any other sort of *b* life that looks down on political offices besides that of true philosophy?

GLAUCON: No, by Zeus, I do not.

SOCRATES: But surely it is those who are not lovers of ruling who must go do it. Otherwise, the rivaling lovers will fight over it.

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: Who else, then, will you compel to go be guardians of the city if not those who know best what results in good government, and have different honors and a better life than the political?

GLAUCON: No one else.

SOCRATES: Do you want us to consider now *521c* how such people will come to exist, and how we will lead them up to the light, like those who are said to have gone up from Hades to the gods?

GLAUCON: Yes, of course that's what I want.

SOCRATES: It seems, then, that this is not a matter of flipping a potsherd,[153] but of turning a soul from a day that is a kind of night in comparison to the true day—that ascent to what is, which we say is true philosophy.

GLAUCON: Yes, indeed.

SOCRATES: Then mustn't we try to discover what subjects have the power to bring this about? *d*

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: So what subject is it, Glaucon, that draws the soul from what is coming to be to what is? It occurs to me as I am speaking that we said, didn't we, that these people must be athletes of war when they are young?[154]

GLAUCON: Yes, we did say that.

SOCRATES: Then the subject we are looking for must also have this characteristic in addition to the former one.

GLAUCON: Which?

SOCRATES: It must not be useless to warlike men.

GLAUCON: If possible, it must not.

SOCRATES: Now, earlier they were educated by us in musical and physical training. *e*

GLAUCON: They were.

SOCRATES: And surely physical training is concerned with what-comes-to-be and dies, since it oversees the growth and decay of the body.

GLAUCON: Obviously.

SOCRATES: So it could not be the subject we are looking for. *522a*

GLAUCON: No, it could not.

SOCRATES: Is it, then, the musical training we described before?

GLAUCON: But it is just the counterpart of physical training, if you remember. It educated the guardians through habits, conveying by harmony a certain harmoniousness of temper, not knowledge; and by rhythm a certain rhythmical

153. A proverbial expression, referring to a children's game. The players were divided into two groups. A shell or potsherd—white on one side, black on the other—was thrown into space between them to the cry of "night or day?" Note the reference to night and day in what follows. According to whether white or black fell uppermost, one group ran away pursued by the other.

154. 404a, 412b–417b.

quality. Its stories, whether fictional or nearer the truth, cultivated other habits akin to these. But as for a subject that leads to the destination you have in mind, of the sort you are looking for now,
b there was nothing of that in it.

SOCRATES: Your reminder is exactly to the point. It really does not have anything of that sort. You're a marvelous fellow, Glaucon, but what is there that does? The crafts all seemed to be somehow menial.

GLAUCON: Of course. And yet, what subject is left that is separate from musical and physical training, and from the crafts?

SOCRATES: Well, if we have nothing left beyond these, let's consider one of those that touches all of them.

GLAUCON: Which?

SOCRATES: Why, for example, that common
c thing, the one that every type of craft, thought, and knowledge uses, and that is among the first things everyone has to learn.

GLAUCON: Which one is that?

SOCRATES: That inconsequential matter of distinguishing the numbers one, two, and three. In short, I mean number and calculation. Or isn't it true that every type of craft and knowledge must share in them?

GLAUCON: Indeed it is.

SOCRATES: Then warfare must too.

GLAUCON: It must.

SOCRATES: In tragedies, at any rate, Palamedes
d 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 army at Ilium and counted their ships and everything else. The implication is that they had not been counted before, and that Agamemnon apparently did not even know how many feet he had, since he did not know how to count. What kind of general do you think that made him?

GLAUCON: A very strange one, I'd say, if there is any truth in that.

SOCRATES: Won't we posit this subject, then,
e as one a warrior is compelled to learn so he can count and calculate?

GLAUCON: It is more essential than anything else—if, that is, he is going to know anything at all about marshaling his troops—or if he is even going to be human, for that matter.

SOCRATES: Then do you notice the same thing about this subject as I do?

GLAUCON: What?

SOCRATES: That in all likelihood it is one of the subjects we were looking for that naturally stimulate the understanding. But no one uses it correctly, as something that really is fitted in 523a
every way to draw us toward being.

GLAUCON: How do you mean?

SOCRATES: I will try to make what I believe clear, at any rate. I will distinguish for myself the things that lead in the direction we mentioned from those that do not. Then you must look at them along with me, and either agree or disagree, so that we may see more clearly whether the distinction is as I imagine.

GLAUCON: Show me the things you mean.

SOCRATES: All right, I will show you, if you can see that some sense-perceptions do not summon the understanding to look into them, because the b
judgment of sense-perception is itself adequate; whereas others encourage it in every way to look into them, because sense-perception does not produce a sound result.

GLAUCON: You are obviously referring to things appearing in the distance and illusionist paintings.

SOCRATES: No, you are not quite getting what I mean.

GLAUCON: Then what do you mean?

SOCRATES: The ones that do not summon the understanding are all those that do not at the same time result in an opposite sense-perception. But the ones that do I call *summoners*. That is when sense-perception does not make one c
thing any more clear than its opposite, regardless of whether what strikes the senses is close by or far away. What I mean will be clearer if you look at it this way: these, we say, are three fingers—the smallest, the second, and the middle finger.

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: Assume that I am talking about them as being seen from close by. Now consider this about them with me.

GLAUCON: What?

SOCRATES: It is obvious, surely, that each of
d them is equally a finger, and it makes no difference whether it is seen to be in the middle or at either end; whether it is dark or pale, thick or thin, or anything else of that sort. You see, in all these cases, the soul of most people is not compelled to ask the understanding what a finger is, since sight does not at any point suggest to it that a finger is at the same time the opposite of a finger.

GLAUCON: No, it does not.

SOCRATES: It is likely, then, that a perception
e of that sort would not summon or awaken the understanding.

GLAUCON: It is likely.

SOCRATES: Now, what about their greatness and smallness? Does sight perceive them adequately? Does it make no difference to it whether one of them is in the middle or at the end? And is it the same with the sense of touch, as regards thickness and thinness, hardness and softness? What about the other senses, then—do they make such things sufficiently clear? Or doesn't each of them work as follows: in the first
524a place, the sense that deals with hardness must also deal with softness; and it reports to the soul that it perceives the same thing to be both hard and soft?

GLAUCON: That's right.

SOCRATES: In cases of this sort then, isn't the soul inevitably puzzled as to what this sense-perception means by hardness, if it says that the same thing is also soft; and in the case of the sense-perception of lightness and heaviness, what it means lightness and heaviness are, if what
b is heavy is light and what is light heavy?

GLAUCON: Yes, indeed, those are strange messages for the soul to receive and do need to be examined.

SOCRATES: It is likely, then, that it is in cases of this sort that the soul, summoning calculation and understanding, first tries to determine whether each of the things reported to it is one or two.

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: If there are obviously two, won't each of them be obviously one and distinct?

GLAUCON: Yes.

SOCRATES: If each of them is one, then, and both together are two, the soul will understand that the two are separate. I mean, it would not understand inseparable things as two, but as one. c

GLAUCON: That's right.

SOCRATES: But sight, we say, saw greatness and smallness, not as separate, but as mixed up together. Right?

GLAUCON: Yes.

SOCRATES: And to get clear about this, understanding was compelled to see greatness and smallness, too, not mixed up together, but distinguished—the opposite way from sight.

GLAUCON: True.

SOCRATES: Isn't it in cases like this that it first occurs to us to ask what greatness is, and smallness, too?

GLAUCON: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: Which is why we called one section the intelligible and the other the visible.

GLAUCON: Right. d

SOCRATES: That, then, is what I was trying to express before when I said that some things summon thought, while others do not. I define summoners as those that strike the relevant sense at the same time as do their opposites. Those that do not do this, I said, do not wake up the understanding.

GLAUCON: I understand now, and I think you are right.

SOCRATES: Well then, to which of them does number, including the number one, belong?

GLAUCON: I do not know.

SOCRATES: Use what has already been said as an analogy. If the number one is adequately *seen* just by itself, or grasped by any of the other senses, then just as we were saying in the case of fingers, it would not draw the soul toward being. But if e
something opposite to it is always seen at the same time, so that it no more appears to be one than the opposite of one, then there would be a need at that point for someone to decide the matter. And he would compel the soul within him to be puzzled, to inquire, to stir up the understanding within itself, and to ask what the number one itself is. So, learning about the number one will be among the subjects that lead the soul and turn it around to look at what is. 525a

GLAUCON: But surely the visual perception of it has just that feature, since we do see the same thing as one and as an unlimited number at the same time.

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

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: But now, calculation and arithmetic are wholly concerned with numbers.

b GLAUCON: Right.

SOCRATES: Then they obviously lead toward truth.

GLAUCON: To an unnatural degree.

SOCRATES: Then they would belong, it seems, among the subjects we are seeking. I mean, a soldier must learn them in order to marshal his troops; and a philosopher, because it is necessary to be rising up out of becoming so as to grasp being, or he will never become able to calculate.

GLAUCON: That's right.

SOCRATES: And our guardian is, in fact, both a warrior and a philosopher.

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: Then it would be appropriate, Glaucon, to prescribe this subject in our legislation and to persuade those who are going to take *c* part in the greatest things in the city to go in for calculation and take it up, not as laymen do, but staying with it until they reach the point at which they see the nature of the numbers by means of understanding itself; not like tradesmen and retailers, caring about it for the sake of buying and selling, but for the sake of war and for ease in turning the soul itself around from becoming to truth and being.

GLAUCON: Very well put.

SOCRATES: Moreover, it occurs to me now that the subject of calculation has been mentioned, how refined it is and in how many ways it is use- *d* ful for our purposes, provided you practice it for the sake of knowledge rather than trade.

GLAUCON: Which ways?

SOCRATES: Why, in the very one we were talking about just now. It gives the soul a strong lead upward and compels it to discuss the numbers themselves, never permitting anyone to propose for discussion numbers attached to visible or tangible bodies. I mean, you surely know what people who are clever in these matters are like. If, in the course of the argument, someone tries *e* to divide the number one itself, they laugh and won't permit it. If *you* divide it, they multiply it, taking care that the number one never appears to be, not one, but many parts.

GLAUCON: That's very true.

SOCRATES: Then what do you think would happen, Glaucon, if someone were to ask them: *526a* "What kind of numbers are you amazing fellows discussing, where the number one is as you assume it to be, wholly equal in each and every case, without the least difference, and having no internal parts?" What do you think they would answer?

GLAUCON: I think they would answer that they are talking about those that are accessible only to thought and can be grasped in no other way.

SOCRATES: Do you see then, my friend, that this subject really does seem to be necessary to us, since it apparently compels the soul to use understanding itself on the truth itself? *b*

GLAUCON: It does so very strongly, in fact.

SOCRATES: Now, have you ever noticed that those who are naturally good at calculation are also naturally quick in all subjects, so to speak, and that those who are slow, if they are educated and exercised in it, even if they are benefited in no other way, nonetheless improve and become generally sharper than they were?

GLAUCON: That's right.

SOCRATES: Moreover, I do not think you will easily find many subjects that are harder to learn or practice than it. *c*

GLAUCON: No indeed.

SOCRATES: For all these reasons, then, this subject is not to be neglected. On the contrary, the very best natures must be educated in it.

GLAUCON: I agree.

SOCRATES: Well, then, let's require that one. Second, let's consider whether the subject that follows after it is also appropriate for our purposes.

GLAUCON: Which one? Or do you mean geometry?

SOCRATES: That's it exactly.

GLAUCON: Insofar as it pertains to war, it is clearly appropriate. You see, when it comes to *d*

setting up camp, occupying a region, gathering and ordering troops, and all the other maneuvers armies make whether in battle itself or on the march, it makes all the difference whether someone is skilled in geometry or not.

SOCRATES: But still, for things like that, even a little bit of geometry—and of calculation—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 that tendency, we say, is to be found *e* in anything that compels the soul to turn itself around toward the region in which lies the happiest of the things that are; the one the soul must do everything possible to see.

GLAUCON: You are right.

SOCRATES: Therefore, if geometry compels one to look at being, it is appropriate; but if at becoming, it is inappropriate.

GLAUCON: Yes, that's what we are saying.

SOCRATES: Now, no one with even a little *527a* experience of geometry will dispute with us that this science is itself entirely the opposite of what is said about it in the accounts of its practitioners.

GLAUCON: How so?

SOCRATES: Well, they say completely ridiculous things about it because they are so hard up. I mean, they talk as if they were practical people who make all their arguments for the sake of action. They talk of squaring, applying, adding, and the like; whereas, in fact, the entire subject *b* is practiced for the sake of acquiring knowledge.

GLAUCON: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: Mustn't we also agree on a further point?

GLAUCON: What?

SOCRATES: That it is knowledge of what always is, not of something that comes to be and passes away.

GLAUCON: That's easy to agree to, since geometry is knowledge of what always is.

SOCRATES: In that case, my noble fellow, it can draw the soul toward truth and produce philosophical thought by directing upward what we now wrongly direct downward.

c GLAUCON: More than anything else.

SOCRATES: More than anything else, then, we must require the inhabitants of your beautiful city not to neglect geometry in any way, since even its byproducts are not insignificant.

GLAUCON: What are they?

SOCRATES: The ones you mentioned that are concerned with war. And in addition, when it comes to being better able to pick up any subject, we surely know there is a world of difference between someone with a grasp of geometry and someone without one.

GLAUCON: Yes, by Zeus, a world of difference.

SOCRATES: Shall we prescribe it, then, as a second subject for the young?

GLAUCON: Let's.

SOCRATES: What about astronomy? Shall we make it the third? What do you think? *d*

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

SOCRATES: You are funny! You are like someone who is afraid that the masses will think he is prescribing useless subjects. It is no inconsequential task—indeed it is a very difficult one—to become persuaded that in everyone's soul there is an instrument that is purified and rekindled by such subjects when it has been blinded and *e* destroyed by other pursuits—an instrument that it is more important to preserve than 10,000 eyes, since only with it can the truth be seen. Those who share your belief that this is so will think you are speaking incredibly well, while those who are completely unaware of it will probably think you are talking nonsense, since they can see no other benefit worth mentioning in these subjects. So, decide right now which group you are engaging in discussion. Or is it neither of them, and are you making your arguments mostly for your own sake—though you do not begrudge anyone else *528a* whatever profit he can get from them?

GLAUCON: That's what I prefer—to speak, question, and answer mostly for my own sake.

SOCRATES: Let's backtrack a bit. You see, we were wrong just now about the subject that comes after geometry.

GLAUCON: How so?

SOCRATES: After a plane surface, we went immediately to a solid that was revolving, without taking one just by itself. But the right way is

to take up the third dimension after the second. And it, I suppose, consists of cubes and of whatever shares in depth.

GLAUCON: Yes, you are right. But Socrates, that subject has not even been investigated yet.

SOCRATES: There are two reasons for that. Because no city values it, it is not vigorously investigated, due to its difficulty. And investigators need a director if they are to discover anything. Now, in the first place, such a director is difficult to find. Second, even if he could be found, as things stand now, those who investigate it are too arrogant to obey him. But if an entire city served as his co-director and took the lead in valuing this subject, then they would obey him, and consistent and vigorous investigation would reveal the facts about it. For even now, when it is not valued by the masses and is hampered by investigators who lack any account of its usefulness—all the same, in spite of all these handicaps, the force of its appeal has caused it to be developed. So it would not be at all surprising if the facts about it were revealed in any case.

GLAUCON: Yes, indeed, it *is* an outstandingly appealing subject. But explain more clearly to me what you were saying just now. You took geometry, presumably, as dealing with plane surface.

SOCRATES: Yes.

GLAUCON: Then at first you put astronomy after it, but later you went back on that.

SOCRATES: Yes, the more I hurried to get through them all, the slower I went! You see, the subject dealing with the dimension of depth was next. But because of the ridiculous state of the methodical inquiry into it, I passed it by and spoke of astronomy—which deals with the motion of things having depth—after geometry.

GLAUCON: That's right.

SOCRATES: Let's then prescribe astronomy as the fourth subject, on the assumption that solid geometry, which we are now omitting, will be available if a city takes it up.

GLAUCON: That seems reasonable. And since you reproached me just now, Socrates, for praising astronomy in a vulgar manner, I will now praise it your way. You see, I think it is clear to everyone that it compels the soul to look upward and leads it from things here to things there.

SOCRATES: It is clear to everyone except me, then, since that is not how I think of it.

GLAUCON: Then how do you think of it?

SOCRATES: As it is handled today by those who teach philosophy, it makes the soul look very much downward.

GLAUCON: How do you mean?

SOCRATES: In my opinion, your conception of "higher studies" is a good deal too generous! I mean, if someone were looking at something by leaning his head back and studying ornaments on a ceiling, it seems as though you would say that he is looking at them with his understanding, not with his eyes! Maybe you are right and I am foolish. You see, I just cannot conceive of any subject making the soul look upward except the one that is concerned with what is—and that is *invisible*. If anyone tries to learn something about perceptible things, whether by gaping upward or squinting downward, I would say that he never really learns—since there is no knowledge to be had of such things—and that his soul is not looking up but down, whether he does his learning lying on his back on land or on sea!

GLAUCON: A fair judgment! You are right to reproach me. But what did you mean, then, when you said that astronomy must be learned in a different way than people learn it at present, if it is going to be useful with regard to what we are talking about?

SOCRATES: It is like this: these ornaments in the heavens, since they are ornaments in something visible, may certainly be regarded as having the most beautiful and most exact motions that such things can have. But these fall far short of the true ones—those motions in which the things that are really fast or really slow, as measured in true numbers and as forming all the true geometrical figures, are moved relative to one another, and that move the things that are in them. And these, of course, must be grasped by reason and thought, not by sight. Don't you agree?

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: Therefore, we should use the ornaments in the heavens as models to help us study these other things. It is just as if someone chanced to find diagrams by Daedalus or some other craftsman or painter, which were very carefully

drawn and worked out. I mean, anyone experienced in geometry who saw such things would consider them to be very beautifully executed, I suppose. But he would think it ridiculous to examine them seriously in order to find there the
530a truth about equals, doubles, or any other ratio.

GLAUCON: How could it be anything but ridiculous?

SOCRATES: Don't you think, then, that a real astronomer will feel the same way when he looks at the motions of the stars? He will believe that the craftsman of the heavens arranged them and all that is in them in the most beautiful way possible for such things. But as for the ratio of night to day, of these to a month, of a month to a year, or of the motions of the stars to them or to each other, don't you think he will consider it strange
b to believe that they are always the same and never deviate in the least, since they are connected to body and are visible things, or to seek by every means possible to grasp the truth about them?

GLAUCON: That's what I think—anyway, now that I hear it from you!

SOCRATES: Just as in geometry, then, it is by making use of problems that we will pursue astronomy too. We will leave the things in the heavens alone, if we are really going to participate in astronomy and make the naturally wise
c element in the soul useful instead of useless.

GLAUCON: The task you are prescribing is a lot greater than anything now attempted in astronomy.

SOCRATES: And I suppose we will prescribe other subjects in the same way, if we are to be of any benefit as lawgivers. But can you in fact suggest any other appropriate subjects?

GLAUCON: Not at the moment, anyway.

SOCRATES: But motion, it seems to me, presents itself, not just in one form, but in several. A wise person could probably list them all, but
d there are two that are evident even to us.

GLAUCON: What are they?

SOCRATES: Besides the one we have discussed, there is also its counterpart.

GLAUCON: What's that?

SOCRATES: It is probable that as the eyes fasten on astronomical motions, so the ears fasten on harmonic ones, and that these two sciences are somehow akin, as the Pythagoreans say. And we agree, Glaucon. Don't we?

GLAUCON: We do. e

SOCRATES: Then, since the task is so huge, shouldn't we ask them their opinion and whether they have anything to add, all the while guarding our own requirement?

GLAUCON: What's that?

SOCRATES: That those we will be rearing should never attempt to learn anything incomplete, anything that does not always come out at the place all things should reach—the one we mentioned just now in the case of astronomy.[155] Or don't you know that people do something similar with har- 531a
mony, too? They measure audible concordances and sounds against one another, and so labor in vain, just like astronomers.

GLAUCON: Yes, by the gods, and pretty ridiculous they are, too. They talk about something they call a "dense interval" or quarter tone[156]—putting their ears to their instruments, like someone trying to overhear what the neighbors are saying. And some say 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 groups put ears before the understanding. b

SOCRATES: You mean those excellent fellows who vex their strings, torturing them and stretching them on pegs. I won't draw out the analogy by speaking of blows with the pick, or the charges laid against strings that are too responsive or too unresponsive. Instead, I will drop the analogy and say that I do not mean these people, but the ones we just said we were going to question about harmonics. You see, they do the same as the astronomers do. I mean, c
it is in these audible concordances that they search for numbers, but they do not ascend to problems or investigate which numbers are in concord and which are not, or what the explanation is in each case.

GLAUCON: But that would be a daimonic task!

155. 528d.

156. A dense interval is evidently the smallest difference in pitch that was recognized in ancient music.

SOCRATES: Yet, it is useful in the search for the beautiful and the good! Pursued for any other purpose, though, it is useless.

GLAUCON: I suppose so.

SOCRATES: Moreover, I take it that if the methodical inquiry into all the subjects we have mentioned arrives at what they share in
d common with one another and what their affinities are, and draws conclusions about their kinship, it does contribute something to our goal and is not labor in vain; but that otherwise it is in vain.

GLAUCON: I have the same hunch myself. But you are still talking about a very great task, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Do you mean the prelude, or what? Or don't you know that all these subjects are merely preludes to the theme itself that must be learned? I mean, you surely do not think that people who are clever in these matters are dia-
e lecticians.

GLAUCON: No, by Zeus, I do not. Although, I have met a few exceptions.

SOCRATES: But did it ever seem to you that those who can neither give an account nor approve one know what any of the things are that we say they must know?

GLAUCON: Again, the answer is no.

SOCRATES: Then isn't this at last, Glaucon, the
532*a* theme itself that dialectical discussion sings? It itself is intelligible. But the power of sight imitates it. We said that sight tries at last to look at the animals themselves, the stars themselves, and, in the end, at the sun itself.[157] In the same way, whenever someone tries, by means of dialectical discussion and without the aid of any sense-perceptions, to arrive through reason at the being of each thing itself, and does not give up until he grasps what good itself is with understanding itself, he reaches the end of the intel-
b ligible realm, just as the other reached the end of the visible one.

GLAUCON: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: Well, then, don't you call this journey dialectic?

GLAUCON: I do.

157. See 516a–b.

SOCRATES: Then the release from bonds and the turning around from shadows to statues and the light; and then the ascent out of the cave to the sun; and there the continuing inability to look directly at the animals, the plants, and the light of the sun, but instead at divine reflections in water and shadows of the things that are, and not, as before, merely at shadows of statues thrown by another source of light that, *c* when judged in relation to the sun, is as shadowy as they—all this practice of the crafts we mentioned has the power to lead the best part of the soul upward until it sees 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 world. *d*

GLAUCON: I accept that this is so. And yet, I think it is very difficult to accept; although—in another way—difficult not to accept! All the same, since the present occasion is not our only opportunity to hear these things, but we will get to return to them often in the future, let's assume that what you said about them just now is true and turn to the theme itself, and discuss it in the same way as we did the prelude. So, tell us then, in what way the power of dialectical discussion works, into what kinds it is divided, and what roads it follows. I mean, it is these, it seems, that would lead us at last to *e* that place which is a rest from the road, so to speak, for the one who reaches it, and an end of his journey.

SOCRATES: You won't be able to follow me any farther, my dear Glaucon—though not because 533*a* of any lack of eagerness on my part. You would no longer see an image of what we are describing, but the truth itself as it seems to me, at least. Whether it is really so or not—that's not something on which it is any longer worth insisting. But that there is some such thing to be seen, *that* is something on which we must insist. Isn't that so?

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: And mustn't we also insist that the power of dialectical discussion could reveal it only to someone experienced in the subjects we described, and cannot do so in any other way?

GLAUCON: Yes, that is worth insisting on, too. *b*

SOCRATES: At the very least, no one will dispute our claim by arguing that there is another road of inquiry that tries to acquire a methodical and wholly general grasp of what each thing itself is. By contrast, all the other crafts are concerned with human beliefs and appetites, with growing or construction, or with the care of growing or constructed things. As for the rest, we described them as to some extent grasping what is—I mean, geometry and the subjects that follow it. For we saw that while they do dream about what is, they cannot see it while wide awake as long
c as they make use of hypotheses that they leave undisturbed, and for which they cannot give any account. After all, when the first principle is unknown, and the conclusion and the steps in between are put together out of what is unknown, what mechanism could possibly turn any agreement reached in such cases into knowledge?

GLAUCON: None.

SOCRATES: Therefore, dialectic is the only
d method of inquiry that, doing away with hypotheses, journeys to the first principle itself in order to be made 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 upward, using the crafts we described to help it and cooperate with it in turning the soul around. From force of habit, we have often called these branches of knowledge. But they need another name, since they are clearer than belief and darker than knowledge. We distinguished them by the term "thought" somewhere before.[158] But I don't suppose we will dispute about names, with matters as
e important as those before us to investigate.

GLAUCON: Of course not, just as long as they express the state of clarity the soul possesses.

SOCRATES: It will be satisfactory, then, to do what we did before and call the first section knowledge, the second thought, the third opinion, and the fourth imagination. The last two together
534a we call belief, the other two, understanding. Belief is concerned with becoming; understanding with being. And as being is to becoming, so understanding is to belief; and as understanding is to belief, so knowledge is to belief and thought to imagination. But as for the ratios between the things these deal with, and the division of either the believable or the intelligible section into two, let's pass them by, Glaucon, in case they involve us in discussions many times longer than the ones we have already gone through.

GLAUCON: I agree with you about the rest of them, anyway, insofar as I am able to follow. b

SOCRATES: So don't you, too, call someone a dialectician when he is able to grasp an account of the being of each thing? And when he cannot do so, won't you, too, say that to the extent that he cannot give an account of something either to himself or to another, to that extent he does not understand it?

GLAUCON: How could I not?

SOCRATES: Then the same applies to the good. Unless someone can give an account of the form of the good, distinguishing it from everything else, and can survive all examination as if in a battle, striving to examine things not in accor- c
dance with belief, but in accordance with being; and can journey through all that with his account still intact, you will say that he does not know the good itself or any other good whatsoever. And if he does manage to grasp some image of it, you will say that it is through belief, not knowledge, that he grasps it; that he is dreaming and asleep throughout his present life; and that, before he wakes up here, he will arrive in Hades and go to d
sleep forever.

GLAUCON: Yes, by Zeus, I will certainly say all that.

SOCRATES: Then as for those children of yours, the ones you are rearing and educating in your discussion, if you ever reared them in fact, I don't suppose that, while they are still as irrational as the proverbial lines,[159] you would allow them to rule in your city or control the greatest things.

GLAUCON: No, of course not.

SOCRATES: Won't you prescribe in your legislation, then, that they are to give the most attention to the education that will enable them to ask and answer questions most knowledgeably? e

158. 511d–511e.

159. A pun made possible by the fact that *alogon* can mean "irrational" (as applied to people) and "incommensurable" (as applied to lines in geometry).

GLAUCON: I will prescribe it—together with you.

SOCRATES: Doesn't it seem to you, then, that dialectic is just like a capstone we have placed on top of the subjects, and that no other subject can rightly be placed above it, but that our account of
535a the subjects has now come to an end?

GLAUCON: It does.

SOCRATES: Then it remains for you to deal with the distribution of these subjects: to whom we will assign them and in what way.

GLAUCON: Clearly.

SOCRATES: Do you remember what sort of people we chose in our earlier selection of rulers?[160]

GLAUCON: How could I not?

SOCRATES: Well then, as regards the other requirements too, you must suppose that these same natures are to be chosen, since we have to select the most stable, the most courageous, and—as far as possible—the best-looking. In addition, we must look not only for people who
b have a noble and valiant character, but for those who also have natural qualities conducive to this education of ours.

GLAUCON: Which ones in particular?

SOCRATES: They must be keen on the subjects, bless you, and learn them without difficulty. For people's souls are much more likely to give up during strenuous studies than during physical training. The pain is more their own, you see, since it is peculiar to them and not shared with the body.

GLAUCON: That's true.

SOCRATES: We must also look for someone who has a good memory, is persistent, and is wholeheartedly in love with hard work. How else
c do you suppose he would be willing to carry out such hard physical labors and also complete so much learning and training?

GLAUCON: He would not, not unless his nature were an entirely good one.

SOCRATES: In any case, the mistake made at present—which, as we said before, explains why philosophy has fallen into dishonor—is that unworthy people take it up. For illegitimate people should not have taken it up, but genuine ones.

GLAUCON: How do you mean?

SOCRATES: In the first place, the one who takes it up must not be halfhearted in his love of hard work, with one half of him loving hard work and the other shirking it. That is what happens when someone is a lover of physical training and a d
lover of hunting and a lover of all kinds of hard bodily labor; yet is not a lover of learning, a lover of listening, or a keen investigator, but hates the work involved in all such things. And someone whose love of hard work tends in the opposite direction is also defective.

GLAUCON: That's absolutely true.

SOCRATES: Similarly with regard to truth, won't we say that a soul is maimed if it hates a voluntary lie, cannot endure to have one in itself, and is greatly angered when others lie; but is nonethe- e
less content to accept an involuntary lie, does not get irritated when it is caught being ignorant, and bears its ignorance easily, wallowing in it like a pig?

GLAUCON: Absolutely. 536a

SOCRATES: And with regard to temperance, courage, high-mindedness, and all the other parts of virtue, too, we must be especially on our guard to distinguish the illegitimate from the genuine. You see, when private individuals or cities do not know how to investigate all these things fully, they unwittingly employ defectives and illegitimates as their friends or rulers for whatever services they happen to need.

GLAUCON: Yes, that's just what happens.

SOCRATES: So we must take good care in all these matters, since, if we bring people who are sound of limb and mind to so important a subject, and train and educate them in it, jus- b
tice itself will not find fault with us, and we will save both the city and its constitution. But if we bring people of a different sort to it, we will achieve precisely the opposite and let loose an even greater flood of ridicule upon philosophy as well.

GLAUCON: That would be a shame.

SOCRATES: It certainly would. But I seem to have made myself a little ridiculous just now.

GLAUCON: In what way? c

SOCRATES: I forgot we were playing and spoke too vehemently. You see, while I was speaking

160. 412b–417b.