Book 7

514 'If we're thinking about the effect of education – or the lack of it – on our nature, there's another comparison we can make. Picture human beings living in some sort of underground cave dwelling, with an entrance which is long, as wide as the cave, and open to the light. Here they live, from
b earliest childhood, with their legs and necks in chains, so that they have to stay where they are, looking only ahead of them, prevented by the chains from turning their heads. They have light from a distant fire, which is burning behind them and above them. Between the fire and the prisoners, at a higher level than them, is a path along which you must picture a low wall that has been built, like the screen which hides people when they are giving a puppet show, and above which they make the puppets appear.'

'Yes, I can picture all that,' he said.

'Picture also, along the length of the wall, people carrying all sorts of
515 implements which project above it, and statues of people, and animals made of stone and wood and all kinds of materials. As you'd expect, some of the people carrying the objects are speaking, while others are silent.'

'A strange picture. And strange prisoners.'

'No more strange than us,' I said. 'Do you think, for a start, that prisoners of that sort have ever seen anything more of themselves and of one another than the shadows cast by the fire on the wall of the cave in front of them?'

b 'How could they, if they had been prevented from moving their heads all their lives?'

'What about the objects which are being carried? Wouldn't they see only shadows of these also?'

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'Yes, of course.'

'So if they were able to talk to one another, don't you think they'd believe that the things they were giving names to were the things they could see passing?'

'Yes, they'd be bound to.'

'What if the prison had an echo from the wall in front of them? Every time one of the people passing by spoke, do you suppose they'd believe the source of the sound to be anything other than the passing shadow?'

'No, that's exactly what they would think.'

c 'All in all, then, what people in this situation would take for truth would be nothing more than the shadows of the manufactured objects.'

'Necessarily.'

'Suppose nature brought this state of affairs to an end,' I said. 'Think what their release from their chains and the cure for their ignorance would be like. When one of them was untied, and compelled suddenly to stand up, turn his head, start walking, and look towards the light, he'd find all these things painful. Because of the glare he'd be unable to see the d things whose shadows he used to see before. What do you suppose he'd say if he was told that what he used to see before was of no importance, whereas now his eyesight was better, since he was closer to what is, and looking at things which more truly are? Suppose further that each of the passing objects was pointed out to him, and that he was asked what it was, and compelled to answer. Don't you think he'd be confused? Wouldn't he believe the things he saw before to be more true than what was being pointed out to him now?'

'Yes, he would. Much more true.'

e 'If he was forced to look at the light itself, wouldn't it hurt his eyes? Wouldn't he turn away, and run back to the things he *could* see? Wouldn't he think those things really were clearer than what was being pointed out?'

'Yes,' he said.

'And if he was dragged out of there by force, up the steep and difficult path, with no pause until he had been dragged right out into the sunlight, 516 wouldn't he find this dragging painful? Wouldn't he resent it? And when he came into the light, with his eyes filled with the glare, would he be able to see a single one of the things he is now told are true?'

'No, he wouldn't. Not at first.'

'He'd need to acclimatise himself, I imagine, if he were going to see things up there. To start with, he'd find shadows the easiest things to look

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at. After that, reflections – of people and other things – in water. The things themselves would come later, and from those he would move on to
b the heavenly bodies and the heavens themselves. He'd find it easier to look at the light of the stars and the moon by night than look at the sun, and the light of the sun, by day.'

'Of course.'

'The last thing he'd be able to look at, presumably, would be the sun. Not its image, in water or some location that is not its own, but the sun itself. He'd be able to look at it by itself, in its own place, and see it as it really was.'

'Yes,' he said, 'unquestionably.'

'At that point he would work out that it was the sun which caused the
c seasons and the years, which governed everything in the visible realm, and which was in one way or another responsible for everything they used to see.'

'That would obviously be the next stage.'

'Now, suppose he were reminded of the place where he lived originally, of what passed for wisdom there, and of his former fellow-prisoners. Don't you think he would congratulate himself on the change? Wouldn't he feel sorry for them?'

'Indeed he would.'

'Back in the cave they might have had rewards and praise and prizes for the person who was quickest at identifying the passing shapes, who had
d the best memory for the ones which came earlier or later or simultaneously, and who as a result was best at predicting what was going to come next. Do you think he would feel any desire for these prizes? Would he envy those who were respected and powerful there? Or would he feel as Achilles does in Homer? Would he much prefer "to labour as a common serf, serving a man with nothing to his name," putting up with anything to avoid holding those opinions and living that life?'[1]

e 'Yes,' he said. 'If you ask me, he'd be prepared to put up with anything to avoid that way of life.'

'There's another question I'd like to ask you,' I said. 'Suppose someone like that came back down into the cave and took up his old seat. Wouldn't he find, coming straight in from the sunlight, that his eyes were swamped by the darkness?'

[1] *Odyssey* 11.489–491. The ghost of Achilles is speaking to Odysseus in the underworld. The quotation is among those censored in Book 3 (386c).

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'I'm sure he would.'

'And suppose he had to go back to distinguishing the shadows, in
517 competition with those who had never stopped being prisoners. Before his eyes had grown accustomed to the dark, while he still couldn't see properly – and this period of acclimatisation would be anything but short – wouldn't he be a laughing-stock? Wouldn't it be said of him that he had come back from his journey to the upper world with his eyesight destroyed, and that it wasn't worth even trying to go up there? As for anyone who tried to set them free, and take them up there, if they could somehow get their hands on him and kill him, wouldn't they do just that?'

'They certainly would,' he said.

b 'That is the picture, then, my dear Glaucon. And it fits what we were talking about earlier in its entirety. The region revealed to us by sight is the prison dwelling, and the light of the fire inside the dwelling is the power of the sun. If you identify the upward path and the view of things above with the ascent of the soul to the realm of understanding, then you will have caught my drift – my surmise – which is what you wanted to hear. Whether it is really true, perhaps only god knows. My own view, for what it's worth, is that in the realm of what can be known the thing seen last, and seen with great difficulty, is the form or character of the good.
c But when it is seen, the conclusion must be that it turns out to be the cause of all that is right and good for everything. In the realm of sight it gives birth to light and light's sovereign, the sun, while in the realm of thought it is itself sovereign, producing truth and reason unassisted. I further believe that anyone who is going to act wisely either in private life or in public life must have had a sight of this.'

'Well, I for one agree with you,' he said. 'As far as I can follow, at any rate.'

'Can you agree with me, then, on one further point? It's no wonder if those who have been to the upper world refuse to take an interest in every-
d day affairs, if their souls are constantly eager to spend their time in that upper region. It's what you'd expect, presumably, if things really are like the picture we have just drawn.'

'Yes, it is what you'd expect.'

'And here's another question. Do you think it's at all surprising if a person who turns to everyday life after the contemplation of the divine cuts a sorry figure, and makes a complete fool of himself – if before he can see properly, or can get acclimatised to the darkness around him, he is
e compelled to compete, in the lawcourts or anywhere else, over the

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shadows of justice or the statues which cast those shadows, or to argue about the way they are understood by those who have never seen justice itself?'

'No, it's not in the least surprising,' he said.

518 'Anyone with any sense,' I said, 'would remember that people's eyesight can be impaired in two quite different ways, and for two quite different reasons. There's the change from light to darkness, and the change from darkness to light. He might then take it that the same is true of the soul, so that when he saw a soul in difficulties, unable to see, he would not laugh mindlessly, but would ask whether it had come from some brighter life and could not cope with the unfamiliar darkness, or whether it had
b come from greater ignorance into what was brighter, and was now dazzled by the glare. One he would congratulate on what it had seen, and on its way of life. The other he would pity. Or if he chose to laugh at it, his laughter would be less absurd than laughter directed at the soul which had come from the light above.'

'Yes. What you say is entirely reasonable.'

'Well,' I said, 'if it's true, there's one conclusion we can't avoid.
c Education is not what some people proclaim it to be. What they say, roughly speaking, is that they are able to put knowledge into souls where none was before. Like putting sight into eyes which were blind.'

'Yes, that is what they say.'

'Whereas our present account indicates that this capacity in every soul, this instrument by means of which each person learns, is like an eye which can only be turned away from the darkness and towards the light by turning the whole body. The entire soul has to turn with it, away from what is coming to be, until it is able to bear the sight of what is, and in particular the brightest part of it. This is the part we call the good, isn't it?'

d 'Yes.'

'Education, then,' I said, 'would be the art of directing this instrument, of finding the easiest and most effective way of turning it round. Not the art of putting the power of sight into it, but the art which assumes it possesses this power – albeit incorrectly aligned, and looking in the wrong direction – and contrives to make it look in the right direction.'

'Yes,' he said. 'It looks as if that is what education is.'

'So while the other things we call virtues of the soul may perhaps be
e quite close to the virtues of the body, since it's true they are not there to start with, but are implanted by custom and habit, the virtue of rational thought is different. It seems that it really is made of some more divine

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material, which never loses its power, but becomes useful and beneficial,
519 or useless and harmful, depending on which way it is facing. Think of those people who have the reputation of being evil but clever. Have you never noticed the beady little eyes their souls have, how sharp they are at picking out the things they are after? This suggests that their soul has nothing wrong with its eyesight, but that it is coerced into the service of evil. The more acute its vision is, therefore, the more evil it does.'

'That's certainly true.'

'And yet,' I said, 'if this soul, the soul belonging to a nature of this sort, had been hammered into shape from earliest childhood, it might have had
b struck from it the leaden weights of birth and of becoming. These cling to it as a result of eating, gluttony, and pleasures of that sort, and direct the gaze of the soul downward. If it had rid itself of these weights, and turned towards the truth, then the same soul, in the same people, would be able to see things which are true with the same clarity as it sees the things it is directed towards at the moment.'

'Very likely.'

'And isn't something else very likely?' I said. 'In fact absolutely certain, on the basis of the discussion so far? Neither those who are uneducated
c and have no experience of the truth, nor those who are allowed to remain in education until their life's end, could ever manage the city properly. The uneducated ones lack that single mark in their life at which all their actions, whether in private life or in public life, must aim. The others, left to themselves, will never act, because they think they have emigrated while still alive to the islands of the blest.'[2]

'True,' he said.

'It is up to us, then, as founders of the city, to compel the best natures
d to get as far as that study which we said earlier was the most important[3] – to make that ascent, and view the good. And when they have made it, and seen all they need to see, we must not allow them to do what they are allowed to do at the moment.'

'What is that?'

'Remain there,' I said, 'and refuse to come back down again to the prisoners we were talking about, or share in their hardships and rewards – be they trivial or substantial.'

[2] The islands of the blest were in traditional belief a place reserved for the afterlife of heroes. Unlike Homeric shades, heroes were permitted to retain the full range of their faculties, and to engage after death, for eternity, in the activities they enjoyed in life. [3] 505a.

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'That seems very unfair! Are we going to make them live a worse life when it is in their power to live a better one?'

e 'Now it is your turn to forget, my friend, that the law does not exist for the exclusive benefit of one class in the city.[4] Its aim is to engineer the benefit of the city as a whole, using persuasion and compulsion to bring
520 the citizens into harmony, and making each class share with the other classes the contribution it is able to bring to the community. The law is what puts people like this in the city, and it does so not with the intention of allowing each of them to go his own way, but so that it can make use of them for its own purposes, to bind the city together.'

'True,' he said. 'I had forgotten that.'

'In which case, Glaucon, you should bear in mind that we won't after all be doing an injustice to those who become philosophers in our city. There will be justice in what we say to them when we compel them to look
b after and guard what belongs to other people. "It is fair enough," we shall say to them, "for philosophers in other cities not to take a share of the work in those cities. Their philosophy is a spontaneous growth, which arises despite the institutions of the particular city they live in. And what has developed naturally, indebted to nobody for its upbringing, is entitled to be unenthusiastic about paying anyone for its upbringing. But with you it's different. We produced you as guides and rulers both for yourselves and for the rest of the city – like leaders or kings in a hive of bees. You have been better and more fully educated than the rest, and are better able to play your part in both types of life. So you must go down, each of you
c in turn, to join the others in their dwelling-place. You must get used to seeing in the dark. When you do get used to it, you will see a thousand times better than the people there do. You will be able to identify all the images there, and know what they are images of, since you have seen the truth of what is beautiful and just and good. In this way the government of the city, for us and for you, will be a waking reality rather than the kind of dream in which most cities exist nowadays, governed by people
d fighting one another over shadows and quarrelling with one another about ruling, as if ruling were some great good. The truth is, I imagine, that the city in which those who are to rule are most reluctant to do so will inevitably be the city which has the best and most stable government, whereas the city with rulers of the opposite kind will have a government of the opposite kind."'

[4] Compare 420b, 465e–466a.

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'Exactly,' he said.

'Will they disobey us, then, do you think, these people we have brought up? Will they refuse to do their share of work in the city, each group in its turn, even though they can still spend most of their time in each other's company, in the clear air above?'

e 'They can't possibly refuse. It's a just demand, and they are just people. But they will undoubtedly approach ruling, each one of them, as something unavoidable – just the opposite of the people who rule in every city at the moment.'

521 'That's right, my friend. It's like this. If you can find a better life than ruling for the people who are going to be your rulers, then your well-governed city becomes a possibility. It will be the only city ruled by those who are truly rich. Not rich in money, but in a good and wise life, the riches needed for good fortune. If you get beggars – people who are starved of good things in their own lives – going into public life because they believe that the good is something to be taken from there as plunder, then your city is not a possibility. Ruling becomes something to be fought over, and a war of this kind, domestic and internal, destroys both those involved in it and the rest of the city with them.'

'Very true,' he said.

b 'All right, then. Can you think of any life, apart from the life of true philosophy, which has a contempt for public office?'

'Good heavens, no.'

'But ruling must be courted only by those who are not in love with her. Otherwise they will have rival suitors to contend with.'

'Of course.'

'And if you are going to compel people to enter upon the guardianship of the city, who better than those who are wisest in these matters – in what will give the city the best government – and who have their own rewards and their own way of life, better than the political?'

'There is no one better,' he said.

c 'In that case, do you want us now to address the question how people like this are going to come into being, how you can bring them into the light of day, in the way some people are said to have ascended from Hades to the realm of the gods?'

'Of course I do.'

'We are not dealing here, by the looks of it, with something like the spin of a coin, but with the turning of a soul away from that day which is a kind

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of night, and towards the true day which is the ascent to what is, and which we shall say is true philosophy.'[5]

'Exactly.'

'Does that mean we should ask ourselves which subject of study has the
d power to do this?'

'Yes, of course.'

'Very well. Which subject, Glaucon, can act as a magnet to the soul, drawing it away from the world of becoming towards the world of what is? But even as I ask the question, I am reminded of something else. Didn't we say it was essential for these young men of ours, as a matter of course, to be warrior-athletes?'[6]

'We did.'

'So the subject we are looking for must possess a second characteristic in addition to the first.'

'What is that?'

'It must be some use to military men.'

e 'Yes,' he said, 'it must have that characteristic, if possible.'

'The education we gave them earlier on had a physical part and a musical part.'[7]

'It did.'

'Physical education busies itself with what comes to be and perishes. It presides over the growth and decay of the body.'

'Apparently.'

522 'So that, at any rate, cannot be the subject we are looking for.'

'No.'

'Could it, in that case, be the musical education we described earlier?'

'No,' he said. 'That, if you remember, was the counterpart to physical education. It trained the guardians by means of good habits, without giving them knowledge. Instead it used its qualities of harmony and rhythm to give harmony and rhythm to the guardians, and in its stories – those of them that were mythical, and those of them that were truer – it offered other qualities akin to these. But there was no subject of study in it which was any good for your present purpose.'

b 'Thank you,' I said, 'for reminding me so exactly. It really didn't

[5] In the game that Socrates uses for comparison here a shell or a fragment of pottery was spun in the air. It was painted white on one side (called 'day') and black on the other (called 'night'), and according to the side on which it landed one or other of two teams would chase or be chased.

[6] 403e–404a, 416d–e, 422b.

[7] Announced at 376e.

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contain anything of the kind we are looking for. But then, my excellent Glaucon, what kind of subject would? The practical arts, I think we decided, are all demeaning.'[8]

'They certainly are. But what other subject *is* there, apart from musical education, physical education and the practical arts?'

'All right,' I said. 'If we can't find a subject outside this range, let's find one which applies to all of them.'

c 'Such as?'

'Such as the one which is common to all arts, modes of thought and sciences, which these all make use of, and which is among the first things that everybody is obliged to learn.'

'What is that?'

'The small matter of distinguishing one, two and three. Number and calculation, in fact. Isn't it true of those that every art and science must necessarily get involved with them?'

'It certainly is,' he said.

'In which case,' I said, 'isn't the art of war necessarily involved with them?'

'Inevitably.'

d 'There's no doubt that in the tragedies Agamemnon's generalship is always shown up as utterly laughable by Palamedes. You remember Palamedes' claim that it was his invention of number which enabled him to deploy the army at Troy, and count the ships and the rest of the equipment. The suggestion is that these things had never been counted before, and that apparently Agamemnon, since he didn't know how to count, hadn't even known how many feet he had. Seriously, what sort of general do you think that would have made him?'

'A pretty strange one, I'd say – if what Palamedes said was true.'

e 'Shall we just say, then, that calculation and the ability to count are an essential subject of study for a man interested in warfare?'

'Absolutely essential, if he's to have any understanding of how to marshal his troops. Or if he's going to be any sort of human being at all, for that matter.'

'Well, then,' I said, 'do you feel the same way as I do about this subject?'

'What way is that?'

'It may well be that it is one of the subjects we are looking for, and that
523 its natural tendency is to lead us towards understanding, but that no one

[8] 475e, 495d–e.

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makes the right use of it as the perfect instrument for drawing them towards being.'

'What do you mean?'

'I'll try and explain,' I said, 'how it seems to me. If I distinguish in my own mind between things which lead in the direction we want, and things which don't, then you must keep an eye on them as well. You must say "yes" or "no," so that we can see with greater clarity whether my surmise is correct.'

'Show me the things you mean.'

'Very well. I'll show you – and I hope you can see – that among the
b things we perceive some do not invite the understanding to examine them, since they are adequately distinguished by perception, whereas others positively demand examination by the understanding, since perception produces no sound result.'

'You obviously mean objects appearing a long way off, and shadow-pictures."[9]

'No, that's not quite what I mean.'

'What *do* you mean, then?' he asked.

c 'The ones which do not invite examination are the ones which do not at the same time result in an opposite perception. The ones which do result in their opposites I define as those which invite examination, since perception in these cases does not make one thing any more clear than its opposite, regardless of whether it lights upon it at a distance or close by. Let me give you a clearer example of what I mean. Here, we might say, we have three fingers: smallest, second and middle.'

'Yes.'

'Now, take it I'm talking about them as seen close up. Can you answer a question about them?'

'What question?'

d 'Each of them strikes us equally as a finger. It makes no difference whether you see it in the middle or at one end, whether it is dark or pale, thick or thin, or anything of that sort. None of these things would make the soul of an ordinary person feel impelled to ask the understanding what a finger *is*, since sight at no point indicates to it that the finger is also the opposite of a finger.'

[9] 'Shadow-painting' was a technique for achieving the illusion of depth in two dimensions. It differed from perspective, but we are unsure how.

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'No, of course it doesn't,' he said.

'So you couldn't reasonably expect that sort of thing to appeal to or
e awaken the understanding.'

'No, you couldn't.'

'What about the size of fingers – large or small? Does sight perceive that in a satisfactory way? Does it make no difference to it whether the finger is in the middle or at one end? It's the same with touch, when it perceives thick and thin, or soft and hard. And the other senses as well – isn't there something defective about the way they show us things like
524 this? Don't we find the same thing with all of them? Isn't the sense with which we perceive what is hard, for example, bound to be also the sense with which we perceive what is soft? Doesn't it tell the soul that the same thing is both hard and soft, when it feels it to be so?'

'Yes, it does,' he said.

'Isn't it bound to be in cases of this sort that the soul is confused? It wonders what on earth this sense means by hard, if it can also describe the same thing as soft? And what does the sense of light and heavy mean by light and heavy, if it indicates that the heavy is light, and the light heavy?'

b 'Yes, the soul does find messages of this sort puzzling. They do need examination.'

'It's natural, then, that a situation like this should be the first in which the soul invites calculation and understanding to examine whether each of the things it is getting messages about is one or two.'

'Naturally.'

'If it regards them as two, does it regard each of them as separate, and one?'

'Yes.'

'In which case, if it regards each of them as one, but the two together as two, it will understand the two as separate. If they weren't separate, it
c would have understood them as one, not two.'

'Correct.'

'But sight also saw large and small – only not as separate, but rather as some sort of mixture. Isn't this our claim?'

'Yes.'

'Whereas understanding, in the course of trying to make all this clear, was compelled to see large and small not as a mixture, but as separate. Just the opposite of sight.'

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'True.'

'Is it things like this which first prompt us to ask what large and small can possibly be?'

'It certainly is.'

'Which is why we called one an object of understanding, and the other an object of sight?'

d 'Absolutely right,' he said.

'Well, that's what I meant just now, when I said that some things invite thought to investigate, and others don't. Those which impinge upon the senses in conjunction with their own opposites I classified as inviting the understanding. Those which don't I classified as failing to arouse it.'

'I see what you mean now. And I think you're right.'

'What about number and the one? Which category do you think they come in?'

'I've no idea,' he said.

'You can work it out from what we've said so far. If the one can be seen
e in a satisfactory way – or grasped by some other sense – completely by itself, then it will not draw the understanding towards being in the way we described in our example about the finger. But if some sort of contradiction of it is always seen at the same time, so that it seems to be no more the one than its opposite, then there would be a need for someone to make a decision about it. In a case like this the soul within him would be driven in its confusion to start searching. It would arouse the capacity for
525 reflection within itself, and ask it what the one itself actually was. In this way studying the one would be one of those things which lead and direct us towards the contemplation of what is.'

'Right. And seeing the one does have exactly this effect. After all, we can see the same thing, at one and the same time, both as one and also as an infinite number.'

'Well, if this is true of the one,' I said, 'is it not also true of number in general?'

'Yes, of course.'

'And arithmetic and the theory of number are exclusively concerned with number.'

'Absolutely.'

b 'Clearly, then, the study of number is conducive to truth.'

'To a remarkable degree.'

'In which case it looks like being one of the subjects we are looking for. It is an essential part of a soldier's education, for the deployment of

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troops, and of a philosopher's education, as he attempts to rise above becoming. He needs to make contact with being if he is ever to become capable of calculation or reasoning.'

'That is so,' he said.

'But our guardian is in fact both a soldier and a philosopher.'

'Of course.'

'So when we are framing our laws, Glaucon, this would be an ideal subject of study for us to demand. We should persuade those in the city
c who are going to have a hand in the most important decisions to take up arithmetical reasoning and practise it – not as a hobby, but until they reach the contemplation of the nature of numbers by means of thought alone. And it shouldn't be for the sake of buying and selling, like tradesmen and dealers. No, it should be for military reasons, and for their very soul's sake, to make it easier to redirect it away from becoming and towards truth and being.'

'I couldn't agree more.'

'What is more,' I said, 'now that we've started talking about the study
d of calculation, I can see how complex it is, and how many uses it has for our present purposes, provided people do it with a view to knowledge, and not with a view to becoming some sort of dealer.'

'What are these uses?'

'The kind we were talking about just now. It gives the soul a strong lead in an upwards direction, compelling it to discuss the numbers themselves, and refusing to allow people to bring numbers with visible or tangible
e bodies into the discussion. You know what these mathematicians are like. If you try and make a division in the one itself, they laugh at you, and tell you you can't. The more you chop it up, the more they multiply it, so making sure that the one is always clearly the one, and never a number of different parts.'

'You are absolutely right,' he said.

526 'Suppose, Glaucon, you asked them the following question: "All right, then, if you're so clever, what *are* these numbers you are discussing – including the one as you assume it to be, with each and every unit being equal to every other unit, and containing no variation at all, and no sub-division into parts?" What do think their answer would be?'

'I think they'd say they are talking about the numbers which can only be thought about, and which it is impossible to approach in any other way.'

'Do you see, then, my friend, how truly essential this subject is likely

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b to be for us, since it clearly forces the soul to use pure thought as a way of reaching pure truth?'

'Yes, that certainly is what it does,' he said. 'And very effectively.'

'And here's another question for you. Has it ever struck you that people with a natural gift for arithmetical reasoning are naturally quick at virtually all subjects? And those who are slow, if they get some education and training in this subject, do at least all go some way towards becoming quicker than they were before, even if they get nothing else out of it?'

'Yes, that is so,' he said.

c 'What is more, I'm inclined to think you won't easily find any other subjects – you certainly won't find many – which offer greater difficulty to the person learning them or doing them than this one does.'

'No, you won't.'

'So for all these reasons we must include this subject, and our best people must be educated in it.'

'I agree.'

'Very well, then,' I said, 'that's our first subject decided upon. For our second, let's ask ourselves if the one which follows on from it is any use to us.'

'Which do you mean? Geometry?'

'Precisely that.'

d 'Well, the part of it which has a bearing on warfare is obviously some use. In setting up camp, occupying a position, assembling or deploying an army, and all the other manoeuvres involved in the battle itself or on the march, it makes an enormous difference whether someone has a knowledge of geometry or not.'

'Yes,' I said, 'but for that sort of purpose you need only a very small part of geometry and arithmetic. What we must ask ourselves is whether

e the main body of the subject, the part which goes beyond that, is going to contribute to helping us see the form or character of the good. And what *does* contribute, in our view, is anything which forces the soul to turn towards that place where lies the most blessed part of what is, which the soul must do everything it can to see.'

'That is correct,' he said.

'So if geometry forces the soul to contemplate being, it is some use to us. If it forces it to contemplate becoming, then it is no use.'

'That's certainly our claim.'

527 'There's one thing we can say which no one with the slightest acquain-

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tance with geometry will challenge. It's a branch of knowledge whose character is the exact opposite of the terminology employed in it by those who practise it.'

'In what way?' he asked.

'Well, they're hard put to it for words to describe what they do – with laughable results, sometimes. All this squaring, extending and adding. They're full of utterances of that kind. Everything they say is in terms of
b doing things, and practical applications, whereas the truth, I take it, is that this is a subject which is pursued entirely for knowledge's sake.'

'Absolutely.'

'And is there something else we have to agree on?'

'What is that?'

'That this knowledge is knowledge of what always is, not knowledge of what at some particular time comes to be, or perishes.'

'That's easily agreed,' he said. 'Geometrical knowledge *is* knowledge of what always is.'

'In that case, my noble friend, it is indeed something that draws the soul towards truth. It is an instrument which produces a philosophical way of thinking by directing upwards that part of us which we now, quite wrongly, direct downwards.'

'Yes, it does do that. More than anything else does.'[10]

c 'More than anything else, then, you must tell the people in your Callipolis, your ideal city,[11] not to neglect geometry in any way. After all, even its secondary benefits are of considerable value.'

'What benefits are those?' he asked.

'The ones you mentioned, to do with war. And in any subject, come to that, if we're looking for an improved ability to learn, I think we can be confident there will be all the difference in the world between those with a grasp of geometry and those without.'

'Heavens, yes. All the difference in the world.'

'In which case, shall we make this the second subject for our young people?'

'Yes, let's,' he said.

d 'And what about astronomy for our third subject? Don't you agree?'

[10] The Greek here and in the next sentence could also mean 'To the highest degree possible'.

[11] 'Callipolis' means 'city of beauty', and was the name of some actual Greek cities, none of them grand or influential.

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'Yes, I do. An increased awareness of the moon's cycle, or the season of the year, is useful not only in farming or sailing, but also, just as much, in commanding an army.'

'I can't help being amused,' I said, 'by your apparent fear that people will see no practical value in the subjects you are putting in your curriculum. The truth is that it is not at all easy – in fact, it is extremely hard –
e to accept that it is these subjects which purify and rekindle that instrument in each person's soul which is destroyed and blinded by his other pursuits, and whose preservation is more important than the sight of a thousand eyes, since truth cannot be seen without it. Those who agree with you will find your ideas extraordinarily convincing. Those who've never become aware of the existence of this instrument in the soul will probably think you're talking nonsense, since they can see no benefit worth
528 speaking of in these subjects. So make up your mind, here and now, which group you are talking to. Or are you talking to neither group, and constructing your arguments chiefly for your own benefit – though you would have no objection to others deriving what benefit they can from them?'

'Yes, that's what I would choose: to speak and ask and answer mainly for my own benefit.'

'In that case,' I said, 'it's time to retreat a little. We were wrong just now in what we took to be the next thing in order after geometry.'

'What did we take to be next?'

b 'After plane surfaces, we went on to rotating solids, before taking solids in isolation. But the thing which comes next, after the increase from one dimension to two, is the increase from two to three. I take it this concerns itself with cubic increase, and anything that has volume.'

'Yes. But solutions to these problems don't seem to have been found yet, Socrates.'

'There are two kinds of reason for that. In the first place, the solutions are difficult, and not pursued with any determination, since no city puts a high value on them. And in the second place, those looking for the solutions need a director or supervisor. They won't find the answers without one. Finding such a director is a problem, to start with. And even if you did find one, as things stand now, the people interested in this kind of enquiry would be too conceited to do what he tells them.

c 'But if a whole city were to become joint-director, and put a high value on these studies, then the people trying to find the solutions would do what they were told. Systematic, energetic investigation would lead to

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clear answers being found. Even now, when the subject is undervalued and belittled by most people – including those who pursue it, since they can give no reason why it is of value – it still has enough natural appeal to force its way forward in the face of all these handicaps. So it will be no
d surprise if solutions are found.'

'Yes,' he said, 'the subject does have a remarkable natural appeal. But please explain something you said just now. You were taking geometry, presumably, to be the study of plane surfaces.'

'Yes.'

'And you began by putting astronomy after it, though you subsequently retreated from that position.'

'It was a question of more haste, less speed, I'm afraid. I was trying to get through things in a hurry. The next in order was the study of the
e dimension of depth, but the study of that is in such a laughable state that I left it out, and put astronomy, which is solid bodies in motion, after geometry.'

'Correct,' he said.

'Let's make astronomy our fourth subject, then, not our third. Let's assume that the subject we are leaving out at the moment is only waiting for a city to get interested in it.'

'Fair enough. And since you accused me just now, Socrates, of praising astronomy for mundane reasons, let me praise it now for the reasons
529 which attract you to it. I think it's clear to everyone that astronomy compels the soul to look upwards, directing it away from things here and towards things up there.'

'Well, it may be clear to everyone,' I said, 'but it isn't clear to me. *I* don't think that's what it does at all.'

'What *do* you think it does, then?'

'As currently tackled by those leading us on the upward path to philosophy, I think its effect is entirely to direct the gaze downwards.'

'What do you mean?'

'I admire the freedom,' I said, 'with which you put forward your
b personal view of the nature of the higher learning! Imagine someone lying on his back, looking at a decoration or pattern on a ceiling, and observing something about it. It sounds as if you would say he was studying the ceiling with his intellect, not his eyes. Well, you may be right, and I may be being naive, but as far as I'm concerned the only subject *I* can regard as making the soul look upwards is the one which concerns what is, what can *not* be seen. Anyone trying to learn about objects of perception by

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gaping up at the sky or frowning down at his feet can never learn anything, I would say – since no object of perception admits of knowledge.
c His soul is looking down, not up, even if he makes his observations lying on his back – whether on land or floating in the sea.'

'I plead guilty as charged,' he said. 'Your criticisms are quite justified. But if people are going to study astronomy in a way which will be useful for the purposes we have in mind, in contrast with the way it is studied nowadays, how *did* you mean them to study it?'

'Like this. The decorations or patterns in the vault of heaven, since
d their workmanship appears in the realm of sight, can by all means be regarded as the most beautiful and perfect of visible objects. But they should also be regarded as falling far short of the true motions, those with which genuine velocity and genuine slowness, using true number and following in every case a true orbit, move relative to one another and cause the objects which they contain to move. These true motions are to be grasped by reason and thought, not by sight. Or would you disagree?'

'Certainly not,' he said.

'Well, then, this heavenly pattern is to be used as a set of examples or models, as a way of learning about the true patterns. It's exactly like
e finding diagrams drawn and executed with great skill, by Daedalus or some other artist or draftsman. If you were an expert in geometry, you would no doubt think they were technically excellent when you saw them, but you would regard it as absurd to study them seriously in the expectation of finding in them the truth about things which are equal, or double, or in any other ratio.'

530 'Of course it would be absurd.'

'Don't you think that's just how the true astronomer will feel when he looks at the motions of the stars? He will regard heaven and everything in it as having been put together by its maker as beautifully as such things can be put together. But as for the ratio of night to day, of these to the
b month, of the month to the year, or of the other stars to the sun, moon and one another, don't you think he'll regard as extremely odd anyone who believes that these things are always the same – never varying in any way, though they are corporeal and visible – and who makes a determined effort to learn the truth from them?'

'Yes, I do think he will, now that I hear you putting it like that.'

'In which case,' I said, 'our approach to astronomy will be like our
c approach to geometry. It will be based on problems. If we want to take

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part in true astronomy, and make the naturally rational part of the soul useful instead of useless, we shall forget about the heavenly bodies.'

'That's a much, much larger task you are requiring of us, compared with the way astronomy is done at the moment.'

'Yes, and if we are going to be any use as lawgivers, I think we shall have to impose the same requirements in other subjects as well. Can you suggest any other subjects that might be useful?'

'No, I can't,' he said. 'Not on the spur of the moment.'

'Well, I'm sure motion doesn't take just a single form. It takes several.
d No doubt an expert could give you a comprehensive list. But there are two which are obvious even to us.'

'What are they?'

'The one we've just been talking about, and its counterpart.'

'What is its counterpart?'

'The chances are,' I said, 'that our ears can be fixed on harmonic motion in the same way as our eyes on astronomical motion. These may well be in some sense sister sciences. That's what the Pythagoreans say, and you and I agree with them, Glaucon. Or do we not?'

'We do.'

e 'Very well. It's a massive task, so let's ask them what they have to say on the subject – and possibly other subjects as well. Meanwhile we will stick to our maxim throughout.'

'What maxim is that?'

'We should not allow the people for whose upbringing we are responsible ever to try and learn any pointless part of the subject, any part that is not constantly leading them to the goal that all things must reach – as
531 we were proposing in the case of astronomy just now. You must be aware that students of harmonics behave in more or less the same way. In trying to make comparative measurements of the harmonies and sounds which can be heard, they set themselves an endless task, just as the astronomers do.'

'Good god, yes,' he said. 'They certainly do. They make complete fools of themselves with their "close" intervals, applying their ears to the instrument as if they were eavesdropping on their neighbours. One group claims it can still distinguish an intermediate sound, and says this is the smallest interval which should be used as a unit of measurement. Others
b disagree. They say the two sounds are the same. Both groups trust their ears in preference to their reason.'

'You mean the worthy individuals who make life a misery for their strings by torturing them and using pegs to stretch them on the rack. I

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don't want to labour the metaphor – the plectrum striking and accusing, the strings refusing to speak or noisily defiant[12] – so I'll abandon it, and simply say that those aren't the people I mean. The people I'm talking about are the ones we said just now we would ask about harmonics. What
c they do is the same as what the astronomers do. They look for the numerical ratios in these harmonies which can be heard, without ever rising above those to an approach based on problems. They don't investigate which ratios are harmonious, which are not, and why.'

'That would be a superhuman task,' he said.

'Well, it would certainly be a useful one, in the pursuit of the beautiful and the good. Pursued for any other reason it is useless.'

'Very likely.'

d 'It's my opinion,' I said, 'that if the investigation of all these subjects we've outlined arrives at what they have in common with one another, their kinship with one another, and if it can work out how they are related to one another, then it's not a pointless task. It's an activity which contributes to what we are trying to achieve. Otherwise it is pointless.'

'I agree. I have the same presentiment myself. But it's an enormous task you're proposing, Socrates.'

'And that's merely the prelude. Or don't you agree? Are we in any doubt that all these subjects are merely preludes to the main theme we have to learn?[13] After all, you presumably don't regard people as dialecticians just because they are good at these subjects.'

e 'Good heavens, no,' he said. 'A very few perhaps of those I've ever come across.'

'And did you think that people who were incapable of explaining or understanding the basis of their subject were ever going to know any of the things we say they need to know?'

532 'Again, the answer is no.'

'Well, Glaucon, isn't this finally the true tune or theme which the study of dialectic plays? It is in the realm of thought, though the power of sight can imitate it, as when we said that sight attempts to look at animals themselves, and stars themselves, and even finally at the sun itself.[14] In the same way, when someone tries to use dialectic to arrive at what each thing itself is, by means of reason, without using any of the senses, and does not give

[12] The metaphor is drawn from the lawcourts, where the evidence of slaves was taken under torture.

[13] Socrates follows his discussion of harmonics with a musical metaphor, but the word *nomos*, 'theme' or 'tune', also means 'law'. [14] 516a–b.

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b up the attempt until he grasps what good itself is, by means of thought itself, then he has come to the true end or goal of the intelligible, just as the man in the cave, in our earlier example, came to the true end or goal of the visible.'

'Exactly,' he said.

'Very well. Isn't "dialectic" the name you give to this journey?'

'Of course.'

'And the release from chains?' I asked. 'The turning away from the shadows towards the images and the firelight? The upward path from the
c underground cave to the daylight, and the ability there to look, not in the first instance at animals and plants and the light of the sun, but at their divine reflections in water and the shadows of real things, rather than the shadows of models cast by a light which is itself a shadow in comparison with the sun? All this practice of the sciences we have just outlined has precisely this power to direct the best element in the soul upwards, towards the contemplation of what is best among the things that are – just as earlier on the clearest element in the body was directed to the contemplation of what was brightest in the corporeal and visible region.'

d 'Personally speaking, I accept that,' he said, 'though I find it extremely hard. But then again, in another way it is very hard *not* to accept. Still, this won't be our only opportunity to hear what you have to say on the subject. We shall often have to return to it in the future. So let's take it these things are as we have just said they are, and go on to the main theme
e itself, and describe that in the same way we described the prelude. Tell us, how does it operate, this power of dialectic? Into what forms is it divided? And by what routes, again, does it progress? After all, it is these routes which can apparently take a man to the destination which is his place of rest after the road, and the end of his journey.'

533 'My dear Glaucon, you will not be able to follow me that far – though not for any want of enthusiasm on my part. From now on what you would be seeing would not be an image or model of what we are talking about, but the truth itself – at least as it seems to me. Whether it's precisely like this doesn't seem worth insisting on. But that there is something *like* this to see – that we must insist on, mustn't we?'

'Of course.'

'Do we insist also that the power of dialectic is the only power which can reveal this? That it reveals it to the person who is expert in the subjects we have just been talking about? And that it is impossible in any other way?'

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'Yes, these are things we should insist on,' he said.

b 'At the very least, then, no one will quarrel with us if we claim it is a distinct and separate inquiry which systematically and universally attempts, for each thing just by itself, to grasp what that thing is. All other arts and sciences, without exception, are directed either towards human opinions and desires, or towards creation or manufacture, or towards the care of things which are growing or being manufactured. As for the subjects which we said *did* grasp some part of what really is – studies in c geometry and the disciplines which go with geometry – we can now see that as long as they leave the assumptions they use untouched, without being able to give any justification for them, they are only dreaming about what is. They cannot possibly have any waking awareness of it. After all, if the first principles of a subject are something you don't know, and the endpoint and intermediate steps are interwoven out of what you don't know, what possible mechanism can there ever be for turning a coherence between elements of this kind into knowledge?'[15]

'None,' he said.

'Very well,' I said. 'The dialectical method is the only one which in its determination to make itself secure proceeds by this route – doing away d with its assumptions until it reaches the first principle itself. Dialectic finds the eye of the soul firmly buried in a kind of morass of philistinism. Gently it pulls it free and leads it upwards, using the disciplines we have described as its allies and assistants in the process of conversion. We have generally followed convention in calling these disciplines branches of knowledge, but they really need some other name. Something clearer than opinion, but more obscure than knowledge. We may have used the term e "thinking" at some point earlier on.[16] But I don't think people need argue about names when they have as many important matters still to investigate as we have.'

'No, they needn't,' he said.

'We'll be happy enough, then, to do what we did before. We'll call the 534 first section or category knowledge, the second thinking, the third belief, and the fourth conjecture. Three and four taken together we can call opinion, and one and two taken together, understanding. We'll say that opinion has to do with becoming, whereas understanding has to do with being; that as being is to becoming, so understanding is to opinion; and as understanding is to opinion, so knowledge is to belief, and thinking is to

[15] Socrates is recalling the description of geometry at 510c–511a. [16] 511d–e.

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conjecture. As for the proportions holding between the objects in these categories, and the division of the objects of opinion or the objects of understanding into two parts, let's leave all that on one side, Glaucon. Otherwise it will overwhelm us with a discussion many times as long as the one we've had so far.'

b 'Very well. But as far as the rest of it goes, I for one agree with what you say. As far as I can follow it, that is.'

'In which case, is "dialectician" the name you give to the person who grasps the explanation of the being of each thing? As for the person who has no explanation, will you say that to the extent that he is unable to give an account of it, to himself or to anyone else, he has no intelligent understanding of it?'

'Of course I will,' he said.

'The same goes for the good. Anyone who cannot use reason to
c distinguish the form of the good from everything else, who cannot fight his way through all attempts to disprove his theory in his eagerness to test it by the standard of being rather than the standard of opinion, who cannot make his way through all these dangers with his explanation unscathed – won't you say that a person who is in this state knows neither the good itself nor any other good? That if at any point he does lay hold of some image of it, he does so using opinion, not knowledge? That he is dreaming and dozing away his life on earth, and that one day
d he will come to Hades and go to sleep for good, without ever waking up here at all?'

'Yes, all that is exactly what I shall say. And with some emphasis.'

'These children of yours, then, for whom you are providing this theoretical upbringing and education – suppose one day you found yourself bringing them up in real life. If they had as little reason to them as incommensurable lines in mathematics,[17] I don't imagine you would still allow them to be rulers in your city and exercise control over matters of the greatest importance.'

'No, I wouldn't,' he said.

'Will you enact a law, then, requiring them to have a particularly good grasp of that branch of education which will give them the ability to ask and answer questions in the most expert way?'

e 'Yes. I will enact such a law – with your help.'

'Would you say, in that case, that dialectic sits as a kind of coping-stone

[17] 'Incommensurable' lines are, in Greek, 'irrational' (*alogos*) lines.

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on the top of our educational edifice, and that there is no other subject left which we'd be justified in putting on top of it? Do you think our list of subjects for study is now complete?'

535 'I do,' he said.

'That just leaves you with the question of allocation, then. Who are we going to give these subjects to? And how are we going to give them?'

'Yes, that obviously needs to be decided.'

'Do you remember our selection of rulers earlier on? Do you remember the kind of people we selected?'[18]

'Of course I do.'

'Well, you can take it that in general those must be the natures we should select. We must choose the most steadfast, the bravest and as far

b as possible the best-looking. In addition, not only must we look for noble and virile character; we also need people with a natural talent for this kind of education.'

'What talent is that?'

'I tell you, they must be like razors when it comes to studying,' I said, 'and they must find learning easy. The soul gives up much more easily during hard study than it does during physical exercise, since when it is studying the pain is more its own – specific to it, not shared with the body.'

'True.'

'The person we are looking for must also have a good memory, great

c resilience and tremendous energy. How else, do you suppose, will anyone be prepared both to endure the physical hardships and to complete such an extensive course of study and training?'

'I don't suppose anyone will be prepared to. Not unless he is altogether exceptional.'

'The trouble at the moment,' I said, 'the reason why philosophy has fallen into disrepute, as I was saying a little while ago, is that the wrong kind of people are taking it up.[19] We didn't want bastard, or illegitimate, philosophers taking it up. We wanted legitimate philosophers.'

'What do you mean by "legitimate"?'

d 'Well, take love of hard work, for a start. It's no good having a gammy leg if you're going to take up philosophy. No good working really hard in one half of the subject, and doing no work in the other half. That's what

[18] 374e–376c (character of guardians); 412b–414a (testing and selection of rulers from among the guardians); 485a–487a (character of philosophers, with retrospective summaries at 490c–d and 494b); 503a–504a (testing and selection of philosopher-rulers). [19] 495c–496a.

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happens when you get someone who is athletic, fond of hunting, and ready to work hard in all branches of physical exercise, but with no love of learning, no love of listening, no love of enquiry – in fact, bone idle in all these subjects. And anyone whose love of hard work is one-sided in the opposite direction is just as lame.'

'Very true,' he said.

e 'Then there's the question of truth. Won't we in the same way define a soul as crippled if it hates a deliberate lie, cannot bear to tell one itself, and gets furious when other people tell them, but is quite content to put up with falsehoods which are not deliberate, doesn't mind some deficiency in its knowledge being revealed, and wallows happily in ignorance like a wild pig?'

536 'We certainly will.'

'And when it comes to self-discipline, courage, greatness of spirit, and all the other parts of virtue, we should be particularly careful to distinguish the illegitimate from the legitimate. Individuals and cities who don't know how to look for these characteristics can't help using those who are lame and, for their need of the moment, illegitimate. As a result individuals choose the wrong friends, and cities the wrong rulers.'

'Yes, that's exactly how it is,' he said.

'This is an area where we have to proceed with extreme caution,' I said.

b 'If the people we introduce to an education in such an important branch of knowledge and such an important discipline are sound of limb and sound of mind, then justice herself will have no fault to find with us, and we shall be the saviours of our city and its regime. But if we introduce people of a quite different character, we shall achieve entirely the opposite result, and expose philosophy to a further flood of ridicule.'

'That would certainly be something to be ashamed of,' he said.

'It would indeed. Meanwhile *I* seem to be making a bit of a fool of myself, here and now.'

'In what way?'

c 'I forgot this is just a game we are playing, and I got rather carried away. My eye fell on philosophy as I was speaking, and I think I got annoyed when I saw her undeservedly covered in filth. I spoke with too much heat, as if I were angry with those responsible.'

'You didn't speak with too much heat. Not for this hearer's taste, anyhow.'

'Well, it was too much for the *speaker's* taste,' I said. 'And there's another point we don't want to lose sight of. In our original selection of

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d rulers we were choosing old men,[20] but this time that won't do. We must not believe Solon when he tells us how good the old are at learning things. They are worse at learning than they are at running. Great and repeated effort is always the province of the young.'

'Inevitably.'

'So arithmetic, geometry, and all the education our future rulers need as a preliminary to dialectic – these are things we should offer them while they are still children. But we shouldn't present these subjects as a compulsory syllabus they have got to learn.'

'Why is that?'

e 'Because for a free man learning should never be associated with slavery. Physical exertion, imposed by force, does the body no harm, but for the soul no forced learning can be lasting.'

'True,' he said.

537 'In which case, my friend, when you're bringing children up, don't use compulsion in teaching them. Use children's games instead. That will give you a better idea what each of them has a natural aptitude for.'

'There is some sense in what you say.'

'Do you remember us saying that children should be taken to war, mounted on horseback, as spectators? And that if the situation allowed it they should be taken in close and given a taste of blood, like young hounds?'[21]

'Yes, I do,' he said.

'Well, in all these situations – exertion, or study, or when exposed to

b danger – we should select those who seem quickest, and put them on a shortlist.'

'At what age?'

'When they are finished with their compulsory physical education, that being a period of two or three years when it is impossible for them to do anything else.[22] Exhaustion and sleep are the enemies of study. Besides, the performance of each individual in physical training is one of the yardsticks – and an important one at that.'

'Of course.'

'At the end of this period,' I said, 'the chosen few among the

c twenty-year-olds will win greater recognition than the others. They must now take a unified view of subjects that were all mixed up in the course

[20] 412c. [21] 466e–467e.

[22] Eighteen-year-old males at Athens in Plato's time entered a two-year period of compulsory military training and guard duty at frontier posts.

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of their education as children, so that they can get an overall picture of these subjects' kinship with one another and to the nature of what is.'

'Yes,' he said, 'there's no doubt that learning of that kind – for those who possess it – is the only sort of learning which can be relied on.'

'It's also the most important test of the dialectical and non-dialectical nature. Anyone who has this overall picture is dialectical. Anyone who doesn't have it is not.'

'I agree.'

d 'In that case, this is something you will have to keep an eye open for. You will have to see which among them most possess this quality, and which are resolute in their studies as well as being resolute in war and the other activities expected of them. These are the ones, when they reach the age of thirty, whom you must choose from among the chosen, and promote to greater distinctions. You must use the power of dialectic as your yardstick to decide who is capable of giving up eyesight – and sense-perception in general – and progressing, with the help of truth, to that which by itself is. This is an area, my friend, where we must be very much on our guard.'

'Over what, in particular?'

e 'Aren't you aware of the damage done at the moment in the name of dialectic?'

'What damage?' he asked.

'Its students are filled with what I suppose we'd call contempt for the law.'

'Yes, utter contempt.'

'Do you find it at all surprising that they should be like that?' I asked. 'Can't you find excuses for them?'

'What excuses?'

538 'It's like the supposed child of a large and influential family, brought up in the midst of great wealth and among numerous flatterers, who realises, when he grows up to be a man, that he is not the son of these people claiming to be his parents, but can't find the people who really were his parents. Can you hazard a guess at his attitude both to the flatterers and to those who made the substitution – first during the time when he didn't know about the substitution, and then during the time when he did know? Or would you like to hear my guess?'

'Yes, I would,' he said.

'Very well. My guess is that during the time when he didn't know the b truth he would have more respect for his father, mother and other

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members of his supposed family than he would for those who flattered him. He would be unlikely to ignore their needs, unlikely to break the law at all in the way he treated them or spoke to them, and unlikely to disobey them in anything important. But he would disobey the flatterers.'

'Very likely,' he said.

'But then when he realised the truth, my guess is that it would all change. His respect and enthusiasm for his relatives would dwindle, and
c he'd turn to the flatterers instead. He'd take their advice more than he did before, start living by their values, and spend his time quite openly in their company. Unless he was an exceptionally well-balanced character, he would completely lose interest in his former father and the rest of those who made themselves out to be his family.'

'Yes, that's exactly the kind of thing that would happen. But what's your comparison got to do with people who take up argument?'

'This. We all have strongly held beliefs, I take it, going back to our childhood, about things which are just and things which are fine and beautiful. They're like our parents. We've grown up with them, we accept their authority, and we treat them with respect.'

d 'That is so.'

'But then we have other habits which are opposed to these opinions. They bring us pleasure, flattering our soul and trying to seduce it. People with any sense pay no attention to them. They value the opinions they got from their parents, and those are the ones they obey.'

'True.'

'When someone like this encounters the question "What is the beautiful?", and gives the answer he used to hear from the lawgiver, and argument shows it to be incorrect, what happens to him? He may have many of his answers refuted, in many different ways, and be reduced to
e thinking that the beautiful is no more beautiful or fine than it is ugly or shameful. The same with "just", "good", and the things he used to have most respect for. At the end of this, what do you think his attitude to these strongly held beliefs will be, when it comes to respect for them and obedience to their authority?'

'It's impossible for him to go on feeling the same respect for them, or obeying them.'

'In which case,' I said, 'if he no longer regards these opinions as his own, or worthy of respect, in the way he once did, and if he cannot find
539 the true opinions, where else can he possibly turn, except to the life that flatters him?'

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'Nowhere else,' he said.

'I imagine he'll be thought to have changed from a law-abiding citizen into a criminal.'

'Bound to be.'

'Isn't that just what you'd expect to happen to people who take up argument in this sort of way? As I said a few moments ago, it entitles them to a large measure of forgiveness.'

'Yes, and pity,' he said.

'Very well, then. If you don't want your thirty-year-olds to qualify for this kind of pity, you will have to take the greatest possible care how you allow them to take up argument.'

'I certainly will.'

b 'Isn't one very effective safeguard not to let them get a taste for argument while they are young? You can't have forgotten what adolescents are like, the first time they get a taste of it. They regard it as a kind of game to be constantly turning arguments into their opposites. They imitate those they hear proving other people wrong by going out and doing the same thing themselves. They're like puppies in the delight they take in tugging at anyone within reach, and tearing them to pieces with their arguments.'

'Yes, they really do overdo it, don't they?'

'And when they have themselves often proved other people wrong, and
c often been proved wrong, they suffer a sudden and disastrous lapse into the state of not believing any of the things they believed before. The result is that they themselves come in for a lot of criticism in the eyes of the world – and so does everything to do with philosophy.'

'That's absolutely true,' he said.

'An older man would refuse to take part in that kind of madness. He will imitate the person who chooses to employ dialectic in the search for truth, rather than the person who engages in a game of contradiction for
d entertainment's sake. He will be a more balanced person himself, and will make philosophy more respected, not less respected.'

'Rightly so.'

'Hasn't everything that has been said so far been said precisely with a view to making sure that only people with orderly and reliable natures are to be introduced to argument? Not like now, when anybody at all, however unsuitable, can go in for it.'

'Exactly,' he said.

'Is it enough if they devote themselves to argument, and nothing else,

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continuously and energetically, in a training equivalent to their physical training in the gymnasiums, only twice as long?'

e 'Does that mean six years, or four?' he asked.

'It doesn't really matter. Call it five. After that you will have to make them go back down into the cave we were talking about. You will have to compel them to hold military command, and any other position which is suitable for the young, so that others will not have an advantage over them
540 in practical experience. And even in these positions they must be on trial, to see if they will stand firm when they are pulled in different directions, or if they will to some extent give way.'

'And how long do you think this stage should be?'

'Fifteen years,' I said. 'Then, when they are fifty years old, those who have survived and been completely successful in every sphere, both in practical affairs and in their studies, should now be conducted to the final goal, and required to direct the radiant light of the soul towards the contemplation of that which itself gives light to everything. And when they
b have seen the good itself, they must make that their model, and spend the rest of their lives, each group in turn, in governing the city, the individuals in it, and themselves. They can spend most of their time in philosophy, but when their turn comes, then for the benefit of the city each group must endure the trials of politics, and be rulers. They will regard it as a necessity rather than a privilege. In this way, after educating a continuous succession of others like themselves, and leaving them behind to take their place as guardians of the city, they will finally depart,
c and live in the islands of the blest. The city will put up memorials to them, and institute sacrifices, at the public expense, honouring them as divine spirits, if the Pythian priestess permits – or if not, as divinely inspired and fortunate.'

'What wonderful men you have fashioned as your rulers, Socrates. Just like a sculptor.'

'Men *and women*, Glaucon. You mustn't think that in what I have been saying I have had men in mind any more than women – those of them who are born with the right natural abilities.'

'Quite right,' he said. 'Assuming, that is, that they are going to be equal partners with men in the way we described.'[23]

d 'Very well. Do you agree that our ideas about the city and its regime have not just been wishful thinking? What we want is difficult, but not

[23] 451c–466d.

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impossible. However, it is possible only in the way we have described, when true philosophers – it might be a number of them, or it might be just one – become rulers in our city. They will show their contempt for what are now regarded as honours, believing them to be worthless and
e demeaning. They will set the highest possible value on what is right, and the honours resulting from it. Their most important and demanding guide will be justice. They will serve justice, watch over its growth, and in this way keep their city on the right lines.'

'How will they do that?' he asked.

541 'Let them send everyone in the city over the age of ten into the countryside. Then they can isolate these people's children from the values they hold at the moment – their parents' values – and bring the children up according to their own customs and laws, which are of the kind we described earlier. Don't you agree that this will be the quickest and simplest way for the city and regime we were talking about to come into being, making itself happy and bringing a large number of benefits to the nation in which it originates?'

b 'Yes. Much the quickest and simplest. I think you have given us a good idea, Socrates, of the way it would come about, if it ever did come about.'[24]

'In that case,' I said, 'isn't our discussion of this city, and the corresponding individual, now complete? After all, I imagine it's pretty clear what we are going to say that individual should be like.'

'Yes, it is clear,' he said. 'And in reply to your question, I do think this subject of discussion is complete.'

[24] Banishing elements of a population from a city to the surrounding countryside was not without historic parallel (see pp. xv–xvii of the introduction), and in the Greek world in general populations were relocated with what to us would seem alarming frequency. But there was no historic parallel for removing a whole class of parents to the countryside without their children.

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