Republic

BOOK VII

514 a "Now," I said, "after this you should compare our nature, in respect of education and lack of education, to a condition such as the following. Behold men in a sort of underground cave-like dwelling, with a long entrance facing towards the light along the side of the entire cave. They have
514 b been in this place from childhood, with bonds both on their legs and on their necks, so that they remain looking only at what is in front of them, being unable to turn their heads around because of the chain on the neck.

"Light comes to them from a fire burning above and at a distance behind them, and higher up, between the fire and the prisoners, there is a path, and you can see a low wall built along the path, just like the screens which puppet-makers place in front of themselves, over which they display their puppets."

"I see," he said.

514 c "Besides this, you should also see men carrying a variety of objects past the wall, including statues
515 a of men and other animals made of wood, stone and all sorts of materials. Some of the object-carriers are likely to be speaking, while others are silent."

"You are describing a strange image," he said, "and strange prisoners."

"They are just like us," I said. "For in the first place, do you think such people would ever have seen anything of themselves, or one another, apart from the shadows cast by the fire onto the cave wall in front of them?"

515 b "How could they," he replied, "if they were compelled to keep their heads motionless throughout life?"

"And what about the objects being carried? Is not the situation the same?"

"Of course."

"Now, if they were able to converse with one another, do you not think they would name these things that they are seeing?"

"They must."

"What if the prison had an echo coming from the opposite wall? Whenever one of the passers-by spoke, do you think the men would believe the speaker to be anything other than the passing shadow?"

"By Zeus, I do not," he said.

515 c "Then, such people would believe," I said, "without reservation, that the truth is nothing but the shadows of the artificial objects."

"They really must," he said.

"Now," I said, "consider what liberation from their bonds, and cure of their ignorance, would be like for them, if it happened naturally in the following way. Suppose one of them were released, and suddenly compelled to stand up, crane his neck, walk, and look up towards the light. Would
515 d he not be pained by all this, and on account of the brightness be unable to see the objects whose

shadows he previously beheld? And if someone were to tell him that he beheld foolishness before, but now he sees more truly, since he is much closer to 'what is', and is turned towards things which partake of more being, what do you think he would say? Moreover, if they showed him each of the passing objects and forced him to answer the question 'what is this?', do you not think he would be perplexed, and would believe that what he saw before was truer than what he is now being shown?"

"Very much so," he replied.

"And if he were compelled to look towards the light itself, would not his eyes be pained? Would 515 e
he not turn away and flee to those things he really can see, and regard these as, in fact, clearer than what he is being shown?"

"Just so," he replied.

"And," I said, "if someone were to drag him forcibly from there, along the rough upward path, and not let him go until he had been dragged out into the light of the sun, would he not be distressed and upset by the process? And once he had come into the light, would not his eyes be flooded with 516 a
its glare, and be unable to see even one of what are now called truths."

"No, they would not," he said. "Not immediately anyway."

"Yes, I think he would need to become accustomed to it if he were ever to behold the objects of the upper realm. At first he would discern shadows very easily, after that images of men and other objects in water, then the actual objects. From these he would proceed to view the heavenly bodies and the heaven itself by night, looking at the light of the stars and the moon more easily than the 516 b
sun and the light of the sun by day."

"What else could he do?"

"Then, I imagine, he would finally be able to behold the sun, not its appearance in water or in an alien setting, but just by itself, in its own place, and he would see the sun as it is."

"This must be so," he said.

"And after this, he would then make deductions about it, that this is what provides the seasons and the years, presiding over everything in the visible realm, and in a way the cause of everything they 516 c
have been seeing."

"Obviously," he said. "Those are the steps he would take."

"What then? Remembering his first dwelling place, and the wisdom there, and his former fellow prisoners, would he not believe that he himself was blessed by the transformation, and feel compassion for them?"

"Very much so."

"And suppose they received certain honours and praises from one another, and there were privileges for whoever discerns the passing shadows most keenly, and is best at remembering which of them usually comes first or last, which are simultaneous, and on that basis is best able to predict 516 d
what is going to happen next. Do you think he would have any desire for these prizes, or envy those who are honoured by the prisoners and hold power over them? Or would he much prefer the fate described by Homer and 'work as a serf for a man with no land',[1] and suffer anything at all, rather than hold their opinions and live as they do?"

"I think it is just as you say. He would accept any fate rather than live as they do." 516 e

"Yes, and think about this," I said. "If such a person were to go back down, and sit in the same seat, would not his eyes become filled with darkness after this sudden return from the sunlight?"

"Very much so," he said.

"Now, suppose that he had to compete once more with those perpetual prisoners in recognising these shadows, while his eyesight was still poor, before his eyes had adjusted. Since it would take 517 a

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[1] *Odyssey* xi.489-490.

some time to become accustomed to the dark, would he not become a figure of fun? Would they not say that he went up, but came back down with his eyes ruined, and that it is not worth even trying to go upwards? And if they could somehow get their hands on and kill a person who was trying to free people and lead them upwards, would they not do just that?"

"Definitely," he said.

517 b "Then, dear Glaucon," I said, "you should connect this image, in its entirety, with what we were saying before. Compare the realm revealed by sight to the prison house, and the firelight within it to the power of our sun. And if you suggest that the upward journey, and seeing the objects of the upper world, is the ascent of the soul to the realm known by reason, you will not be misreading my intention, since that is what you wanted to hear. God knows whether it happens to be true, but in any case this is how it all seems to me. When it comes to knowledge, the form of the good is
517 c seen last, and is seen only through effort. Once seen, it is reckoned to be the actual cause of all that is beautiful and right in everything, bringing to birth light, and the lord of light, in the visible realm, and providing truth and reason in the realm known by reason, where it is lord. Anyone who is to act intelligently, either in private or in public, must have had sight of this."

"I also hold the same views that you hold," he said, "after my own fashion, anyway."

"Come on, then," I said, "and agree with me about something else. Do not be surprised that those
517 d who have attained these heights have no desire for involvement in human affairs. Their souls, rather, are constantly hastening to commune with the upper realm. For I presume that is what is likely to happen, if this really does accord with the image we described earlier."

"Yes, quite likely," he said.

"Yes. And do you think it would it be any surprise", I asked, "if someone who has returned from divine contemplations to human affairs disgraces himself badly, and appears utterly ridiculous, while his eyes are still dim, and if, before he has become accustomed to the prevailing darkness, he is compelled to argue, in courtrooms or elsewhere, about the shadows of justice or the artificial
517 e objects which cast those shadows, and dispute about these matters as understood by people who have never seen justice itself?"

"No, that would be no surprise at all," he replied.

518 a "But if someone were endowed with reason," I said, "he would recall that the confounding of the eyes is of two kinds and has two sources: a change from light to darkness, and from darkness to light. And having realised that the same thing happens to the soul, he will not laugh boorishly whenever he sees a soul confused and unable to see clearly. Instead, he will enquire whether it has come from a brighter life and is darkened because it is not used to the gloom, or it is coming from
518 b the utter darkness of ignorance into a brighter realm, and is dazzled by the greater brilliance. So, on this basis he would regard the condition and the life of one soul as blessed, while he would feel compassion for the other. And if he wished to laugh at it, his laughter would be less scornful than it would for a soul descended from the light above."

"Yes," he said. "What you are saying is very reasonable."

"Then," I said, "if this is all true, there is something we need to recognise about it: education is not the sort of thing which some people profess it to be. They somehow claim that although knowl-
518 c edge is not present in the soul, they can put it there as if they were putting sight into blind eyes."

"Yes, that is what they say."

"Yes," I said, "but the argument is now indicating that this capacity, present in the soul of each person, the instrument by which each learns, is like an eye which cannot turn to the light from the darkness unless the whole body turns. So, this instrument must be turned, along with the entire
518 d soul, away from becoming until it becomes capable of enduring the contemplation of 'what is' and the very brightest of 'what is', which we call the good. Is this so?"

"Yes."

"Then," I said, "there would be a particular skill dealing with this turning of the soul, which will turn it around in the most easy and effective manner, a skill which does not produce sight in the soul, but assumes that although sight is already present, it is not directed properly or looking where it should, and sets about correcting this."

"Yes, so it seems."

"Now, the other excellences, which are said to belong to the soul, are really somewhat closer to excellence of the body, for they are not actually present at first, but are generated later through habit and practice. However, that excellence wherein we employ reason surely belongs most of 518 e
all to something more divine, it seems, something whose power is never destroyed, but becomes either useful and beneficial or useless and harmful, depending upon how the soul is turned. Or 519 a
have you never noticed those men who are said to be evil and yet wise? Have you noticed the keen vision of their tiny soul, and how sharply it discerns whatever it happens to turn to? For there is no problem with its sight, but it is forced into the service of evil, and consequently the more keenly the soul sees, the more evil it accomplishes."

"Yes, certainly," he said.

"However," I said, "if this part of one who possesses a nature of this kind is worked upon from earliest childhood, the relationships with becoming are cut away, as if they were leaden weights. 519 b
These grow upon the soul through gluttony and similar pleasures, and the refinements thereof, and turn the vision of the soul downwards. But once the soul is quit of them, it turns around to the realm of truth, and the same part of the same people beholds that realm, just as clearly as it beholds whatever is in front of it now."

"Quite likely," he said.

"What about this? Is it not also likely," I said, "and must it not follow from what we said before, that neither the uneducated, with no experience of truth, nor those who are allowed to spend all 519 c
their time in education, would ever be adequate custodians of the city – the one, because they do not have a single purpose in life which they should aim at in all the actions they perform in public or in private, and the other because they will not willingly engage in action, believing that whilst still alive they are already dwelling on the far-off Isles of the Blest?"

"True," he said.

"Now," I said, "it is our task as founders to compel the best natures to attain the learning which we said previously was the most important: to see the good, and ascend that upward path. And once 519 d
they have ascended and seen enough, we must not allow them to do what is permitted at present."

"What is that?"

"They are allowed to remain there," I said, "with no desire to descend once more among those prisoners or to partake of their endeavours and their honours, whether these are mundane or more serious."

"In that case," he said, "shall we be doing them an injustice? Shall we make them live an inferior life when a better one is available to them?"

"My friend," I said, "you have just forgotten that the law is not concerned with how one particular 519 e
class in the city may fare better than the others. Instead, it tries to bring this about in the city as a whole, creating harmony among the citizens by persuasion and compulsion, and making them share with one another any benefit that each of them is able to contribute to the community. And 520 a
the law itself produces men like these in the city, not so that each may go in any direction he pleases, but to use them to bind the city together."

"True," he said. "I had forgotten this."

"Then," I said, "you must see, Glaucon, that we are not doing an injustice to the philosophers in our midst, but we shall be making just demands when we compel them to care for and protect the 520 b
other citizens. We shall say that 'when people like you arise in the other cities, it is reasonable that

they do not share in the labours of those cities. And this is justified there because such people develop of their own accord, through no intention on the part of that civic arrangement, and it is only fair that whatever develops of its own accord owes its nurture to no one, and should feel no urge to pay for that nurture.

"'But you have been bred by us like kings and rulers of the hive, both for your own sakes and for the rest of the city. Having been better and more perfectly educated than them, you are
520 c more capable of participating in both realms. Therefore, you must each play your part, and go down to where the others dwell together and become accustomed with them to the dark shadows. For once you are used to the darkness you will see a thousand times better than the people there. And you will know what each of the images is and what it is an image of, because you have seen the truth about things beautiful, just and good. Accordingly, the city will be governed by us and by you in a wakeful state, and not in a dream, as most cities are governed today by men who fight
520 d one another over shadows, and battle for public office as if that was the greatest good. But surely the truth is that the city in which those who are going to rule have the least desire to do so must be the best governed city and the one most free from strife. And if it gets the opposite sort of rulers, it must be ruled in the opposite manner.'"

"Yes, certainly," he said.

"Now, will our charges be unmoved when they hear this? And will they be reluctant to join in the work of the city when it is their turn, and then live together most of the time in the pure realm?"

520 e "Impossible," he replied. "We are laying just injunctions upon just men. However, each of them will approach public office very much as a necessity, in contrast to those who now rule each city."

521 a "So on this basis, my friend," I said, "if you can find a better life than ruling for these who are going to rule, a well-governed city becomes a possibility for you. For only there will the truly wealthy be the rulers, wealthy not in gold but in the wealth which a blessed man needs – a good and reasonable life. However, if beggars, starved of goods of their own, enter public affairs thinking that therein they may seize the good, then it is an impossibility. For public office then becomes something to fight over, and a domestic and internal battle like this destroys the disputants and the rest of the city."

"Very true," he said.

521 b "Now," I said, "other than the life of true philosophy, can you think of any life that despises political office?"

"By Zeus, I cannot," he said.

"Well, in that case, those who are not lovers of public office must take it on. Otherwise, the competing lovers will fight over it."

"How could it be otherwise?"

"Now, are there any others whom you would compel to act as guardians of the city, others who would manage it better than those who are wisest about these matters, who have other honours and a better life than politics?"

"There are no others," he replied.

521 c "Then, would you like to go on to consider the manner in which people like this will arise in our city and how we shall lead them to the light, just as certain people are said to have ascended from Hades to the gods?"

"How could I refuse?" he said.

"Well this, it seems, would not be the mere flipping over of an oyster shell, but a process of turning the soul around from a day which is more like night, to the true day, the ascent to 'what is', an ascent which we may truly call philosophy. "

"Yes, certainly."

521 d "Then, is it necessary to consider which branch of learning possesses a power like this?"

"It is necessary."

"Now, Glaucon, what subject would draw the soul from becoming towards 'what is'? And something else occurs to me as I say this. Did we not state that these guardians must be practised in war when they are young?"

"Yes, we said that."

"So, the subject we are looking for must also have this characteristic as well as the other."

"What characteristic?"

"It must not be useless to military men."

"It certainly must not, if that is actually possible."

"In the earlier account they were educated by us in gymnastics and in music."

"They were," he said.

"Gymnastics is presumably concerned with what comes into being and passes away, for it presides 521 e
over the development and the decline of the body."

"So it appears."

"Then this would not be the subject we are looking for."

"It would not." 522 a

"So in that case, is it music in the sense we described it earlier?"

"But that was the counterpart of gymnastics," he said. "And if you recall, it educated the guardians through habit, imparting gracefulness through its harmony, and orderliness through its rhythm, without imparting knowledge. And it also contained habits akin to these in its words, both in the mythical stories and in the truer versions. However, music does not include a branch of learning that leads towards the sort of thing you are looking for now."

"A most exact reminder," I said, " for music actually contains nothing of that sort. But, my blessed 522 b
Glaucon, what kind of subject would this be? Indeed all of the skills seemed somehow to be mechanical."

"Yes, they must be. And yet what other subject is left apart from music, gymnastics and the various skills?"

"Come on," I said. "If we cannot come up with anything besides these, let us select something applicable to them all."

"Like what?"

"Like this, what they have in common, that which all skills, thoughts and knowledge refer to, and 522 c
which is also the first thing everyone must learn."

"What is it?" he asked.

"The ordinary process", I said, "of distinguishing one, two and three; in short, arithmetic and calculation. Is it not the case that all skill and knowledge must involve recourse to these?"

"Very much so," he replied.

"Military skill too?" I asked.

"It certainly must," he replied.

"In that case, Palamedes in the tragedies repeatedly shows up Agamemnon as an utterly ridiculous 522 d
general.[2] Or have you not noticed that he claims to have discovered number, and arranged the ranks of the army at Troy, counted the ships, and everything else, as though they had not been counted before? And apparently Agamemnon did not know how many feet he had since he did not know how to count. So what sort of general do you think he was?"

"A strange one," he replied, "if this is true."

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[2] Palamedes is depicted as a major figure in the events surrounding the Trojan War. It is he who discovered number and arranged the ranks of the army at Troy, counted the ships and everything else.

522 e "So," I said, "should we propose that the ability to calculate and count is a necessary branch of learning for a military man?"

"It is the most necessary of all," he said, "if he is going to have any understanding whatsoever of arranging armies, and more importantly if he is even to be human."

"Now, do you notice what I notice about this subject?"

"What is that?"

523 a "It is quite likely to be one of the subjects we are seeking, which, by nature, leads us towards reason. However, no one uses it correctly, that is, as a subject which can draw one comprehensively towards being."

"How do you mean?" he said.

"Well, I shall try to set out my opinion," I said. "Look at this with me, and agree or disagree so that we may see more clearly if my suspicion is correct. For I am distinguishing for myself between what leads and what does not lead in the direction we spoke of."

"Give an example," he said.

"Take this example," I said. "Observe, if you can, that in the case of sense perceptions, there are
523 b some which do not call upon reason to investigate them since they are adequately judged by the senses. Others, however, completely depend upon reason to investigate them, since the senses furnish nothing trustworthy."

"You are obviously referring to distant phenomena and to shadow-drawing," he said.

"You have not really got my meaning," I said.

"Then what do you mean?" he asked.

523 c "Those which do not call upon reason are those which do not extend into the opposite sensation at the same time. However, in the case of those which do extend, I suggest that they call upon reason whenever the sense impression reveals something, no more than its opposite, regardless of whether it impinges upon us from near or far. My meaning will be clearer from this example. We would say that these are three fingers, the smallest, the second and the middle."

"Certainly," he said.

"Assume that I am describing them as seen from close up. Now, there is a question you must consider in relation to them."

"What is it?"

523 d "Well, each of them, in the same way, appears to be a finger, and in this respect there is no difference, whether it is seen in the middle or at either extreme, whether it is white or black, or whether it is fat or thin, or anything of that sort. For in all these cases, the soul of most people is not compelled to put a question to reason as to what precisely a finger is. For at no stage does sight indicate to the soul that the finger is the opposite of a finger at the same time."

"No, it does not," he said.

"Therefore," I said, "a case such as this would be unlikely to call upon or awaken reason."

"Unlikely."

523 e "What about this? Does sight see their largeness or smallness adequately, and does it make no difference to sight whether one of them lies in the middle or on either side? Does the same apply to thickness and thinness, and hardness and softness in the case of touch? And do the other senses
524 a reveal things like this without any deficiency? Or does each of them behave in the following manner: the sense which extends to hard must also extend to soft, and it proclaims to the soul that the same thing is being perceived as both hard and soft?"

"Just so," he replied.

"Must not the soul," I said, "for its part, be perplexed in such circumstances, as to what precisely the hard that the particular sense is indicating actually is, since it also says that the same thing is soft. And if the sense of light and heavy indicates that heavy is light and light is heavy, must not

the soul be perplexed as to what is heavy and what is light?"

"Yes, indeed," he replied. "These messages to the soul are strange and require further investigation." 524 b

"So," I said, "it is likely that in these situations the soul first calls upon calculation and reason, and tries to investigate whether each of the proclamations is two or one."

"Yes, what else could it do?"

"If it turns out that it is two, would not each of the two appear to be both different and one?"

"Yes."

"So, if each is one and both are two, soul will recognise the two as separate, for if they were not separate it would not have recognised two, but only one." 524 c

"Correct."

"And we say sight too has seen large and small, not separately however, but in combination. Is this so?"

"Yes."

"But for the sake of clarity in this, reason, in contrast to sight, is compelled to view large and small, not mixed together but separately."

"True."

"Hence, the first thing that occurs to us is to ask what precisely 'large' and 'small' actually are. Is this not so?"

"Entirely so."

"And on this basis, of course, we said there was a realm known by reason, and also a realm known by sight."

"You are perfectly right."

"Well, this is what I was trying to explain earlier, that there are some things that call upon thought, and others that do not. Now, I define those things that impinge upon the sense at the same time as their own opposites as provoking reason, while those which do not do this do not awaken reason." 524 d

"Very well, I understand now," he said, "and I think this is right."

"Well then, to which realm do you think number and the one belong?"

"I cannot decide," he replied.

"But you can work it out from what was said before," I said. "If the one is seen adequately just by itself, or apprehended by some other sense, it would be like the finger we referred to and would not draw people towards being. However, if the one is always seen along with something which is opposite to it, so that what is presented is no more one than its opposite, discrimination would then be required. And in that situation, the soul, activating the intelligence within itself, would have to be perplexed, and search, and ask, 'What precisely is the one itself?' And accordingly, getting knowledge of the one would be among the branches of learning that lead the soul, and turn it around towards the contemplation of 'what is'." 524 e 525 a

"And, indeed," he said, "this applies in no less measure to seeing it, for we see the same thing both as one, and as an unlimited multiplicity, at the same time."

"Since this is what happens in the case of the one," said I, "will not the same thing happen with all number?"

"It must."

"And, indeed, calculation and arithmetic are entirely concerned with number."

"Very much so."

"Yes, and these appear to lead towards truth."

"Yes, to an enormous extent."

"So apparently, these would be among the subjects we are seeking. For a military man must learn them in order to arrange an army in ranks, and a philosopher has to learn them too, because he 525 b

must lay hold of being and rise out of becoming, otherwise he will never be able to calculate."

"This is the case," he replied.

"Now, our guardian turns out to be both a military man and a philosopher."

"Of course."

"In that case, Glaucon, it would be appropriate to establish this subject by law, and persuade those
525 c who are going to participate in the most important affairs of the city to have recourse to calculation, and take it up not as a personal matter, but until they attain the contemplation of the nature of the numbers by means of reason itself. They should not practise it for the sake of buying and selling, like merchants or retailers, but for the sake of war, and the ready turning of the soul itself away from becoming, towards truth and being."

"That is beautifully expressed," he said.

525 d "And, indeed," I said, "in the light of what is being said about the subject of calculation, I realise that it is nicely and entirely suited to our purpose, provided it is pursued for the sake of knowledge and not for shop-keeping."

"In what way then?" he asked.

"In the way we already described. It leads the soul powerfully upwards to some place, and compels it to engage in dialectic in relation to the numbers themselves. It will not accept it at all if someone presents the soul with numbers associated with visible or tangible things, and discusses them. For
525 e I presume you know that its skilled exponents are amused if anyone, in discussion, attempts to divide the one itself, and they will not accept this. If you divide it, they will multiply, being careful lest the one ever proves to be not one, but a multiplicity of parts."

"What you are saying is very true," he said.

526 a "Glaucon, if someone were to ask them, 'Wonderful men, what sort of numbers are you talking about in which the one is as you are proposing, each in every case equal to each, not the slightest bit different, and having no parts within itself?' What do you think their reply would be?"

"I think they would say that they are referring to those numbers which it is possible to grasp only by thought, and which it is not possible to deal with in any other way at all."

526 b "Now, my friend," I said, "do you see that in truth this is likely to be the subject we require, since it evidently compels the soul to resort to reason itself, for the sake of truth itself?"

"Yes, indeed," he said. "It certainly does that."

"Well then, have you ever considered the fact that those who take naturally to calculation are said to be bright in all subjects? While those who are dull, if they are educated and exercised in this subject, all improve and become brighter than they were before, even if they derive no other benefit?"

"That is the way it is," he replied.

526 c "And indeed, in my view, you would not easily find many subjects which involve greater toil in learning or in practising than this one."

"Indeed not."

"So for all these reasons, the subject must not be dismissed, and the best natures must be educated in it."

"I agree," he said.

"Then let us leave it at that, and consider whether the second subject, the one that follows it, is appropriate to our purpose."

"What sort of subject?" he asked. "Do you mean geometry?"

"The very one," I replied.

526 d "Insofar as it is applicable to military affairs, it will obviously be appropriate," he said. "Indeed, the man who knows geometry would be superior to one who does not in setting up camp, capturing territory, drawing the army into close formation or dispersing it, and in any other arrangements of the army in the battle itself or on a march."

"But, of course," said I, "even a little geometry and calculation would be sufficient for these purposes. But we need to consider whether most of it, and the more advanced part thereof, is inclined 526 e
to make the form of the good easier to discern. That is the objective. And according to us, any subject inclines to this, provided it compels the soul to turn around to that place where the most blessed part of 'what is' resides, a part that the soul must behold in every way."

"Correct," said he.

"And in that case, if it compels the soul to behold being, it is an appropriate subject. But if it compels it to behold becoming, it is not appropriate."

"Yes, so we say."

"Well," said I, "no one with even the slightest experience of geometry will argue with us over this 527 a
proposition, that this knowledge itself stands in total contrast to what is said about it in discussion by those who practise it."

"How so?" said he.

"Well, they somehow speak quite comically, and they are actually compelled to do so. In fact, by using terms like 'squaring' and 'applying' and 'extending', and so on, they speak as though they are engaging in activity and as if they are constructing arguments for some practical purpose, even though, I presume, the entire subject is pursued for the sake of knowledge."

"Yes, entirely so," he said. 527 b

"Can we agree on a further point?"

"What is it?"

"They pursue it for the sake of knowledge of 'what always is', and not of what becomes something at some time and is then destroyed."

"That is easy to accept," said he. "Geometrical knowledge is knowledge of what always is."

"So, my noble friend, it would be a subject that draws the soul towards truth and produces a philosophic mind, directing upwards whatever we now, incorrectly, direct downwards."

"Yes, as best it can," said he.

"So," said I, "you must arrange, as best you can, that the people in 'Noble-City' do not refrain 527 c
from geometry in any way, for even its incidental benefits are significant."

"What are they?" he asked.

"Those you mentioned," said I, "those concerned with warfare. And of course we know, I presume, that for any subject to be better assimilated, it generally makes all the difference whether the student has already taken to geometry or not."

"All the difference indeed, by Zeus," said he.

"So, should we propose this as the second subject for our young folk?"

"We should."

"What about this? Should we propose astronomy as a third subject? Or do you not think we 527 d
should?"

"I do, indeed," said he. "For being better able to discern the seasons, the months and the years is appropriate, not only for agriculture and navigation, but also for generalship, no less."

"You amuse me," said I. "You seem to be afraid of what most people may think of you if you prescribe impractical subjects. It is no ordinary matter; in fact, it is quite difficult to be convinced that
some organ of the soul, an organ that everyone has, is purified and rekindled by these studies, hav- 527 e
ing been corrupted and blinded by our other pursuits, and that it is more important to preserve this organ than it is to preserve ten thousand eyes. For truth is seen only by this. Now, those who hold these opinions already will think that what you are saying is really sound, while those with no awareness of this at all are likely to think you are talking nonsense, for they will see no other benefit worth mentioning from these. So decide here and now which group you are conversing 528 a

with, if any. Or perhaps you are formulating the arguments mainly for your own sake, although you would not, of course, begrudge anyone else who might derive some benefit from them."

"That is my choice," said he. "I am speaking, asking questions and answering them, mostly for my own sake."

"Let us fall back then," said I, "since we did not pick the subject that comes next after geometry correctly just now."

"How did we go wrong?" he asked.

"After flat surfaces," I said, "we took solids already in rotation before taking solids just by themselves. The correct sequence is to take the third dimension after the second, and this is presumably the dimension associated with cubes, and whatever has depth."

"Quite so, Socrates," he said, "but these do not seem to have been found yet."

"Yes," said I, "for two reasons. Firstly, because no city affords them proper respect, these matters, being so difficult, are not thoroughly investigated. Secondly, investigators in this area need a guide, without whom they will not discover anything. But a guide is hard to find in the first place, and when found, as matters now stand, the arrogant fellows who would be able to investigate this would pay no heed to him. But if an entire city were to co-operate with the guide by treating these matters with respect, these people would heed him, and under close and intensive investigation the true state of affairs would become evident. Even now, although they are disrespected and criticised by most people, and by those who investigate them without being able to explain their usefulness, nevertheless, in the face of all this they develop by force, due to their inherent charm, and it would be no surprise if they were to come to light."

"Yes, indeed," said he. "They do possess exceptional charm. But explain what you are saying more clearly, for I presume you designated the study of flat surfaces as geometry."

"Yes," said I.

"Then," said he, "initially you put astronomy after that, but later on you changed your mind."

"Yes," said I. "In my haste to recount everything quickly I am making slower progress. For, although the study of the dimension of depth is next in sequence, I passed over this because of the comical state of the investigation, and after geometry I spoke of astronomy, which is the motion of objects with depth."

"Right," said he.

"Then, provided the city pursues it, let us propose astronomy as the fourth subject, on the assumption that the third, the one we are now passing over, exists."

"Quite likely," said he. "And I will now praise astronomy, Socrates, in the way you set about it, and avoid the commonplace manner of praise for which you rebuked me. Indeed, it is obvious to everyone that this study compels the soul to look upwards, and leads it away from what is here to what is there, above."

"This is probably obvious to everyone except me," said I, "since that is not how it seems to me."

"How does it seem to you?" he asked.

"Handled, as it is nowadays, by those who are elevating us towards philosophy, it really makes the soul look downwards."

"How do you mean?" he asked.

"I think you have a very liberal understanding of the subject concerned with the upper realm," I said. "Indeed, if someone were to throw his head back and contemplate adornments on the ceiling and arrive at some understanding, you would probably think he was contemplating them with his intellect rather than his eyes. Now, perhaps your thinking is sound and I am being simple-minded, for I cannot think of anything that makes the soul look to the upper realm except the subject that is concerned with 'what is' and the unseen. Whether someone attempts to understand sense objects by gaping upwards or squinting downwards, I would never maintain that he has ever understood

anything. For things of this sort do not admit of knowledge, and his soul is not gazing upwards 529 c
but downwards even if he tries to understand while floating on his back, on land or in the sea."

"I am getting my just desserts," said he, "and you are right to rebuke me. But in what way are you saying astronomy should be studied, contrary to the way they study it nowadays, if its study is to confer the benefits we are speaking of?"

"As follows," said I. "These adornments that are in the heavens adorn in the visible realm, and although they should be regarded as the most beautiful and perfect of visible objects, they do fall 529 d
far short of the true adornments, the motions with which actual speed and actual slowness are moved with respect to one another in the true number and in all the true shapes, carrying whatever they contain. These can be apprehended by reason and by thought, but not by sight. Or do you think otherwise?"

"Not at all," he replied.

"Therefore," said I, "we must use the heavenly adornments as patterns in order to understand what is unseen, just as if we had come across diagrams, exceptionally well drawn and executed by Daedalus,[3] or some other craftsman or draughtsman. For anyone experienced in geometry, on see- 529 e
ing this sort of thing, would surely think that although the workmanship is very beautiful, it would be quite ridiculous to scrutinise them seriously with a view to finding the truth about equals, or 530 a
doubles, or any other proportion, in these."

"Yes, it must be ridiculous," said he.

"Do you not think, then," I asked, "that the genuine astronomer will come to the same conclusion when he looks upon the motions of the stars? Will he not be of the opinion that these, and whatever they contain, have been fashioned in the most beautiful manner possible for objects of this sort by the craftsman of the heaven? But what about the proportion of night to day, of these to the month, of the month to the year, and of the other stars to these and to one another? Well, do you not believe 530 b
the true astronomer will think it strange if anyone regards these as unchanging and as undergoing no alteration whatsoever, even though they are physical objects and are visible; and if someone seeks in various ways to grasp the truth about these?"

"Well, I think so now at any rate," said he, "now that I hear you saying so."

"So," said I, "we should engage in astronomy by making use of problems, just as we do in geometry, and bid farewell to the heavenly bodies, if we are actually going to engage in astronomy, so 530 c
as to make the intelligence that is naturally present in the soul useful rather than useless."

"You are prescribing a task", said he, "that is very much larger than what astronomy deals with nowadays."

"I think", said I, "that our other prescriptions will be of the same sort if we are to be of any use as lawgivers. But anyway, do you have any other appropriate subject to suggest?"

"I do not have any," said he, "not immediately at any rate."

"Well," said I, "motion, in my opinion, does not consist of one form only, but of many. Now, a 530 d
wise man could perhaps list them all, but two are evident, even to us."

"What are they?"

"Besides this one, astronomy, there is the counterpart of this."

"Which is?"

"It is quite likely", said I, "that just as the eyes have been framed for astronomy, so too were the ears framed for harmonic motion, and that these two branches of knowledge are kindred to one another, as the Pythagoreans maintain. And we are agreeing with them, Glaucon. Is that what we are doing?"

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[3] Daedalus was a skilled architect and craftsman, said to have sculpted figures so real that they appeared to live and move.

"Just so," he replied.

530 e "Therefore," said I, "since this is a considerable task, we shall find out from them what they have to say on these matters, and whether there is anything else besides these. But throughout the entire process we shall guard our own concern."

"Which is?"

"That our charges should never attempt to learn anything incomplete, anything that does not consistently reach the point which everything needs to reach, a failing we ascribed earlier to astronomy.

531 a Or do you not know that in the case of harmony too, the practitioners do something similar? Indeed, for their part, they measure the concords and sounds that are heard, against one another, engaging in useless labour, just like the astronomers."

"Yes, by the gods," said he. "And they call some intervals 'dense', bending their ears towards them as if they were eavesdropping on their neighbours, some declaring that they still hear a note in between, and that this is the smallest interval by which we should measure, while others dispute this and say it is the same as the note already sounding, both parties

531 b granting their ears priority over their intelligence."

"You are referring", said I, "to the good fellows who inflict trouble upon the strings, and torture them by tightening them upon the pegs. But in case this image gets out of hand I will put a stop to it now, before it refers to the strings being beaten with the plectrum, the various accusations against them, and their reluctance or readiness to answer. These are not the people I am referring to, but the others, those we said just now we would ask about harmony. Indeed, these fellows do the same

531 c thing as those who are involved in astronomy since they are looking for numbers in the concords that they can hear, and they do not ascend to the level of problems and investigate which numbers are concordant and which are not, and the reason why this is so."

"The task you are describing", said he, "is not of this world."

"Well," said I, "it is useful if it is done in search of the beautiful and the good; otherwise it is useless."

"Quite likely," said he.

531 d "And I also think", said I, "that if the method we have described for all these subjects gets to their kinship and what they have in common, and works out their mutual affinities, then their pursuit does contribute something to our desired ends and is not unprofitable; otherwise it is pointless."

"And I feel the same way, Socrates," said he. "But you are describing an enormous undertaking."

"Are you speaking of the prelude," said I, "or what? Or do we not know that these are all a prelude to the main theme, the one that we must learn? For you surely do not think that those who are clever in these subjects are skilled in dialectic."

531 e "By Zeus, I do not," said he, "apart from a few exceptions I have come across."

"Well, then," said I, "do you think those who are unable to present an argument, and respond to one, will ever know anything of what we say they must know?"

"In that case, too," said he, "the answer is no."

532 a "Glaucon," said I, "is not this, at last, the main theme, the very one that dialectic performs? And although it is known by reason, it would imitate the power of sight that we described in our earlier image, which at a certain stage tries to look at the actual living creatures, then at the stars themselves, and finally at the sun itself. And whenever someone attempts in this way, by dialectic, with-

532 b out any of the senses, to get to what each thing itself is, through reason, and does not give up until he apprehends what the good itself is, by the reasoning process itself, he then arrives at the end of the realm known by reason, just as the other man in our allegory came to the end of the visible realm."

"Entirely so," said he.

"Yes, and do you not refer to this process as dialectical?"

"Indeed."

"And what about the release of the prisoner from his bonds, his turning from the shadows to the images that cast them, and to the light, the ascent from underground into the sunlight, and his inability when he gets there to look yet at the actual animals and plants and the light of the sun, 532 c and his looking instead at divine appearances in water, or at shadows of things that are, rather than the shadows of images, cast by another such light which, when compared to the sun, is like another shadow? All this practice of the subjects we have described has this power, and leads what is best in the soul upwards to the sight of what is most excellent among things that are, just as in our allegory what is brightest in the body was led upwards towards the sight of what is most resplendent 532 d in the realm of the physical and visible."

"I accept", said he, "that this is so. And yet, although I find it extremely difficult to accept, in another way it is difficult not to. Nevertheless, this needs to be heard often, not only today, but in future, so we should return to this. But let us assume for now that what has been proposed is indeed so, and then proceed to the main theme itself and go through it in detail, just as we did with the prelude. So tell me, what is the manner of this power of dialectic, what sort of forms is it divided into, and what paths does it follow? For these would be 532 e the ones that lead at last to where there is, for whoever gets there, a sort of rest from the journey and an end to the process."

"Dear Glaucon," said I, "you will not be able to follow me any longer, even though there will not 533 a be any lack of eagerness on my part. Nor would you still be seeing an image of what we are speaking of, but the truth itself, as it appears to me anyway. At the moment it is not right to insist that this is actually so, or that it is not. But we should insist that there is something of this sort to be seen. Is this so?"

"Of course."

"And should we not also insist that the power of dialectic alone would reveal this to someone with experience in what we have been describing just now, and that this is not possible in any other way?"

"It is only right", said he, "that we insist upon this too."

"Well," said I, "no one will argue against us when we say that some other method, apart from the 533 b five subjects, attempts to grasp systematically, in each and every case, what each itself is. But all the other skills are concerned with people's opinions and desires, or with producing things or assembling them, or with looking after them once they have been produced or assembled. As for the rest, geometry and so on, we maintained that these apprehended something of what is. But we 533 c see that although they dream about what is, they are unable to see it, wide awake, as long as they make use of hypotheses that are left unchallenged because they are unable to give an account of them. For when the first principle is something that is not known, and the conclusion and everything in between is woven from what is not known, is there any way that a combination like this could ever constitute knowledge?"

"None at all," said he.

"Does not the dialectical method alone", said I, "proceed in this way to the first principle itself by doing away with hypotheses in order to be sure of its ground? It draws the eye of the soul, which 533 d is actually buried in some outlandish mire, and leads it upwards, using the very subjects we have described as helpmates and assistants in the conversion. We have often referred to these subjects as branches of knowledge out of habit, but they need another name to indicate greater clarity than opinion, and more vagueness than knowledge. I think we used 'understanding' to make the distinction earlier, but in my opinion there is no point in arguing over a name, when an enquiry into such important matters lies before us."

533 e "No, indeed," he replied.

"So," said I, "are you content to do what we did before and call the first part knowledge, the second
534 a understanding, the third belief, and the fourth imagination? The last two, both together, constitute opinion; the first two, intelligence. Opinion is concerned with becoming, while intelligence is concerned with being. And as being is to becoming so is intelligence to opinion, and as intelligence is to opinion so is knowledge to belief, and understanding to imagination.

"But the proportion between what these two are directed towards, Glaucon, and the twofold division of each of these – what is grasped by opinion and what is grasped by intelligence – this we should leave aside in case we get involved in many times more arguments than we have already been through."

534 b "Well," said he, "insofar as I am able to follow, I agree with you about the others."

"And do you describe someone who acquires an account of the being of each thing as dialectical? And would you not say that someone who cannot do so, insofar as he is unable to give an account, either to himself or to anyone else, lacks intelligence about the thing to that extent?"

"How could I say otherwise?" he replied.

534 c "Does not the same also apply to the good? If someone is not able to separate the form of the good by argument – setting it apart from everything else, going through all the refutations like a warrior, eager to practise refutation based upon being rather than opinion, and coming through all this with his argument still standing – you will say, will you not, that someone who cannot do this does not know the good itself, nor any other good either? And if he does, somehow, get hold of some image of the good, he does so by opinion and not by knowledge? He is dreaming and sleeping this life
534 d away, and before he ever wakes up here, he arrives finally in Hades and sleeps on forever. Is this not what you would say?"

"Yes, by Zeus," said he. "I'd say all that, very much so."

"But of course in the case of your own children, whom you are bringing up and educating in our discussion, if you were ever actually bringing them up, I presume you would not allow them to be irrational, like lines in geometry, when ruling the city and presiding over matters of the utmost importance."

"Indeed not," said he.

"Then will you pass a law by which they receive an education that enables them, above all, to ask and answer questions in the most knowledgeable manner possible?"

534 e "I shall, indeed," said he, "with your help."

"In that case," said I, "do you think we now have dialectic positioned above the other subjects,
535 a like a coping stone, that no other subject may rightly be placed higher, and that our discussion of the various subjects is now complete?

"I do, indeed," said he.

"Well," said I, "your remaining task is their distribution and deciding to whom we shall allocate these subjects, and in what way."

"Of course," said he.

"Do you remember the kind of people we chose when we selected our rulers earlier?"

"How could I forget?" said he.

"Well, in general," said I, "those very natures are the ones that must be selected. The most steadfast
535 b and the bravest should be chosen, and, as far as possible, the most comely. As well as this, we must look not only for those who are noble and virile in character, but they should also have the natural qualities suited to this particular education."

"What qualities?"

"They need to be keen, my friend, on the subjects they learn, and have no difficulty in understanding them. Indeed, men's souls are much more inclined to turn coward in the face of demanding

studies than in the gymnasium, since the exertion is more personal to themselves because it is private and not shared with the body."

"True," said he.

"Well, we should look for good memory, robustness, and a total love of hard work. Or how else 535 c
do you think anyone would be prepared to undertake the physical labour and also complete so much study and practice?"

"No one would," said he, "not unless he was extraordinarily gifted by nature."

"Our current problem," said I, "and the associated disrespect for philosophy, has come about because, as I said before, those who take to philosophy are unworthy of it. What philosophy needs are genuine adherents, not fakes."

"In what way?" he asked.

"Firstly," said I, "someone who takes to philosophy should not be handicapped in his love of hard 535 d
work so that he loves half the work and does not bother with the other half. This happens when someone loves exercise and loves hunting and loves all physical labour but is not a lover of learning, does not like to listen, has no spirit of enquiry, and hates any work that involves any of these. And when the situation is reversed, the man's love of labour is handicapped in the opposite way."

"Very true," said he.

"And will we not suggest", said I, "that a soul is maimed in relation to truth in the same way if it
hates the deliberate lie, finds it unbearable in itself, and gets extremely angry when lied to by others 535 e
and yet calmly accepts the unintentional lie, is untroubled by the lack of understanding when caught out somehow, and has no qualms about being debased in ignorance like some swinish beast?"

"Yes, entirely so," said he. 536 a

"And when it comes to sound-mindedness, courage, magnanimity, and all the other parts of excellence," said I, "must we not be on our guard just as much to distinguish between the genuine and the fake? For whenever a city or an individual does not know how to look at things like this comprehensively, they unwittingly rely on fakes or those whose work is handicapped as their allies or rulers as the case may be."

"That is what happens," said he, "very much so."

"Then, we should be extremely careful about everything of this sort," said I, "because if we intro- 536 b
duce sensible people, sound of body, to such extensive study and exercise, and educate them, justice itself will find no fault with us and we shall save our city and its form of government. But if we introduce people of the wrong sort to these studies, we shall achieve the complete opposite, and deluge philosophy with even more ridicule."

"That, indeed," said he, "would be shameful."

"It certainly would," said I. "But at the moment, I too seem to be inviting ridicule."

"How so?" said he.

"I forgot", said I, "that we were just playing, and I spoke with too much intensity. For as I was 536 c
speaking I turned my gaze towards philosophy, and seeing it being trampled undeservedly in the mire, I think I went into a rage and said what I said too seriously, as though I were angry with those responsible."

"By Zeus, no," said he. "That is not how it sounded to me as I listened."

"Well," said I, "that is how it sounded to me as I said it. But we must not forget that in the previous selection process we picked old men, but in this case that is not allowed. Indeed, we should not
believe Solon,[4] that a person is able to learn a lot in old age. He can no more learn than run a race! 536 d
No, all great labours, and there are many, belong to the young."

"They must," said he.

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[4] Solon was an Athenian statesman and legislator who is credited with laying the foundation for the Athenian democracy.

"Now, calculation, geometry, and all the preliminary instruction that should precede education in dialectic, needs to be set before them when they are still children, without presenting it in the form of compulsory instruction that they must learn."

"Why not?"

536 e "Because," said I, "a free man should never learn any subject under conditions of slavery. Indeed, physical labours performed under compulsion do not make the body any worse, but no instruction, forcibly imparted, is retained by the soul."

"True," said he.

537 a "So, my friend," said I, "as you bring up the children in these various subjects, do not do it forcibly, but playfully, so that you will be better able to discern what each of them is naturally adapted to."

"That sounds reasonable," said he.

"Do you not remember", said I, "that, assuming it was safe to do so, we also maintained that the children should be brought to the battlefield on horseback, as spectators, and brought close to the fray to get a taste of blood like young hunting dogs?"

"I remember," said he.

"And in all these exertions, studies, and dangers," said I, "whoever should prove consistently to be most adept is to be admitted to a select number."

"At what age?" he asked.

537 b "At the time", said I, "when their compulsory gymnastics comes to an end. For during that period of about two or three years, it is impossible to undertake anything else, since tiredness and sleep are inimical to study. And at the same time, their prowess in gymnastics is in itself one of their most important tests."

"Yes," said he, "it would have to be."

"And when this period is over," said I, "those twenty-year-olds who have been selected will have
537 c to bring the subjects that were presented unsystematically during their childhood education into a combined view of the interrelatedness of the subjects with one another, and with the nature of 'what is'."

"Yes," said he, "only this sort of learning becomes steadfast in those who receive it."

"And this", said I, "is the greatest test of whether their natures are dialectical or not; someone who can take a combined view is dialectical, while someone who cannot do so is not."

"I concur," said he.

537 d "Well," said I, "you will need to consider all this. Those among our young folk who are most like these people and are also reliable in their studies, in war, and in their other appointed duties, these again, once they reach thirty, should be selected from among the previous selection and awarded even greater honour. You should then see, testing them by the power of dialectic, who is able to let go the eyes and the other senses, and proceed in the company of truth to what just 'is'. And here, my friend, the task requires the utmost care."

"Why exactly?" said he.

537 e "Are you not aware", said I, "of how much harm is done by dialectic as it is practised nowadays?"

"What sort of harm?" he asked.

"Its practitioners", said I, "are filled with lawlessness."

"Very much so," said he.

"Now," said I, "do you think it is any surprise that this happens to them, and do you not sympathise with them?"

"In what way exactly?" he asked.

538 a "Suppose", said I, "that a changeling child was brought up amidst great wealth, in a large and extensive family, surrounded by lots of flatterers. What if he became aware as a grown man that he was not related to these so-called parents and was unable to find his real parents? Can you guess

what his attitude would be towards those flatterers and the substitute parents, either during the time when he did not know about the switch, or later when he did know? Or would you like to hear my guess?"

"I would like that," said he.

"Well," said I, "my guess is that during the time when he did not know the truth, he would honour his father and mother and his other supposed family members more than those who flatter him. 538 b
He would be less inclined to allow them to want for anything or to do or say anything unlawful to them, and more inclined to be persuaded by them rather than by the flatterers on important matters."

"Quite likely," said he.

"But once he had become aware of the actual situation, my guess is that, in contrast, he would lose his honour and respect for them, intensify his respect for the flatterers, and be persuaded by them to a greater extent than before. He would then live as they do, associate openly with them, 538 c
and pay no heed to that pretended father and the rest of his pretended relatives, unless he was extremely reasonable by nature."

"Everything you are describing", said he, "is the sort of thing that would actually happen. But what relevance does this image have for those who are encountering dialectic?"

"As follows. There are, I presume, certain doctrines about what is just and beautiful that we have from childhood, doctrines we have been brought up on, so that we grant them authority and honour them like parents."

"There are indeed."

"And there are pursuits, opposed to these doctrines, pursuits that involve pleasure which flatter 538 d
this soul of ours and drag it in their direction. However, these do not sway people who have some element of measure, who continue to honour the traditional doctrines and grant them authority."

"That is right."

"What about this?" said I. "Suppose there comes a time when someone in such a situation is faced with a question and asked, 'What is the beautiful?', and he gives the answer he heard from the conventional source, but the argument refutes this. Suppose it refutes him many times in lots of different ways, and reduces him to the opinion that this is no more beautiful than it is ugly, and the 538 e
same thing happens with the just, the good, and whatever is held in the highest esteem. How do you think he will behave after this towards those doctrines in terms of honour and granting them authority?"

"Inevitably," said he, "he will no longer honour them in the same way, or be persuaded by them either."

"Now," said I, "when he regards these doctrines as no longer worthy of the honour he gave them before, and has no affinity with them, but cannot discover the true ones, is he likely to have recourse to any other life besides the flatterer's life?" 539 a

"He is not," said he.

"In that case, I think, he will seem to have become lawless, having previously been law abiding."

"He must."

"Is this not", said I, "the likely predicament of those who encounter dialectic in this way and who, as I said earlier, deserve a lot of sympathy?"

"Yes," said he, "and pity too."

"Well, should you not be careful with every detail of their encounter with dialectic so that there is no need to pity your thirty-year-old students?"

"Very much so," said he.

"So, there is one thing to be extremely careful about, is there not? That they do not get a taste of this when they are still young. For I presume you have noticed that youngsters, when they first get 539 b
a taste of dialectic, misuse it as if it was their plaything, by using it always to come up with counter-

arguments. They themselves imitate those who engage in refutation by refuting other people, taking delight, like puppies, in verbally tugging at and pulling apart anyone who ever comes near them."

"Exceedingly so," said he.

539 c "And so, when they themselves have refuted many, and have been refuted by many, they descend rapidly and inexorably to a state where they believe nothing they believed before, and, as a consequence, they themselves, and philosophy in general, are held in low regard by everyone else."

"Very true," he said.

"But someone older", said I, "would not want to be involved in such madness. He will imitate the one who is willing to engage in dialectic and consider the truth rather than the one who plays with
539 d it for fun and just argues against people. And he himself will be more measured and will bring honour to this activity rather than dishonour."

"That is right," said he.

"Now, was not everything that was said previous to this said as a caution? That dialectic is to be imparted to the orderly and stable natures, and not, as is done nowadays, to anyone at all, even if they are unsuited."

"Yes, certainly," said he.

"Is it enough then to persist with the practice of dialectic continuously and intensively, without
539 e any involvement in anything else, as a mental counterpart of the bodily exercises they practised for twice as many years as that?"

"Do you mean six years or four?" he asked.

"It does not matter," said I. "Let us suggest five. For after this they will be brought down again into that cave, and compelled to rule over military matters and take up other positions of authority suited to the young so that they do not lag behind the others in experience. And in these situations,
540 a too, they will still be tested to see if they hold firm or shift their ground when they are being dragged in all directions."

"How much time", he asked, "are you proposing for this?"

"Fifteen years," said I. "And when they have turned fifty, those who have come through safely and have excelled in every way at everything, in action and in knowledge, should be led at that stage to the final destination. They should be compelled to lift the ray of the soul upwards to behold that which provides light to everything, and, seeing the good itself and using that as their pattern,
540 b bring order to the city, its citizens and themselves, for the rest of their lives. Each in turn should spend most of their time in philosophy. But when their turn comes, they should get involved in the drudgery of civic affairs, each exercising authority for the sake of the city, doing so not as some fine activity but as a necessity. And having continually educated others in this way, others who are like themselves, and having left these behind as guardians of the city, they themselves depart to the Isles of the Blest to dwell there. And the city should have memorials to them and
540 c offer sacrifices publicly, as if to demigods, if the Pythia consents, and if not, as to blessed or divine personages."

"You are like a sculptor, Socrates," said he, "fashioning rulers who are absolutely beautiful."

"Female rulers too," said I. "Do not presume that what I have said applies any more to men than it does to those women among their number who are naturally equipped for the role."

"You are right," said he, "if they really are to share everything equally with the men, as we have explained."

540 d "Well, then," said I, "do you agree that what we have said about the city and its system of government has not been a mere aspiration? Rather, although it is difficult, it is still possible, but only in the way we have described. Whenever true philosophers, many or just one, come to power in the city, despise the honours of the age, which they regard as unworthy of free men and attach most importance to what is right and to the honours that come from that, and treat justice as

supreme and absolutely necessary, then by serving this and strengthening this they will set their own city in order." 540 e

"How?" said he.

"They will send anyone in the city who happens to be more than ten years old", said I, "out into the countryside. They will then isolate the children from their present habits, the habits of their parents, and bring them up in their own manners and regulations, the sort we just described. And once the city and form of government we were speaking of has been established very quickly and easily in this way, do you not agree that it will be a happy city and that the people among whom it arises will benefit enormously?" 541 a

"Very much so," he said. "And I think, Socrates, that you have described nicely how it might come into existence, if it were ever to do so." 541 b

"At this stage," said I, "have we not had our fill of arguments about this city and the sort of person who resembles it? For surely it is also obvious what sort of person we shall say he must be."

"It is obvious," said he. "And as for your question, I think that is the end of the matter."

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