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

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

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

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

 Republic: Book VII

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

I’m imagining it.

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

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

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

If so, how could they, if they have to keep their heads motionless throughout their lives?

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

Of course.

And if they could talk to one another, don’t you think they’d suppose that the names they used applied to the things they see passing before them?

They’d have to.

And what if their prison also had an echo from the wall facing them?

Don’t you think they’d believe that the shadows passing in front of them were talking whenever one of the carriers passing along the wall was doing so?

I certainly do.

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

They must surely believe that.

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

Much truer.

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

He would.

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

1. Reading παριστά τον αὐτὸν ομοίως εὐνοοῦσαι in b5.

2. Reading ἥοι τις ἐν εἰτὶ φθέγεται, εἰ in c5.
He would be unable to see them, at least at first.

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

Of course.

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

Necessarily so.

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

It's clear that would be his next step.

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

Certainly.

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

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

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

They certainly would.

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

They certainly would.

3. Odyssey xi.489–90.
But our present discussion, on the other hand, shows that the power to learn is present in everyone’s soul and that the instrument with which each learns is like an eye that cannot be turned around from darkness to light without turning the whole body. This instrument cannot be turned around from that which is coming into being without turning the whole soul until it is able to study that which is and the brightest thing that is, namely, the one we call the good. Isn’t that right?

Yes.

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

So it seems.

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

Absolutely.

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

Probably so.

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

That’s true.

It is our task as founders, then, to compel the best natures to reach the study we said before is the most important, namely, to make the ascent and see the good. But when they’ve made it and looked sufficiently, we mustn’t allow them to do what they’re allowed to do today.
This is how it is. If you can find a way of life that's better than ruling for the prospective rulers, your well-governed city will become a possibility, for only in it will the truly rich rule—not those who are rich in gold but those who are rich in the wealth that the happy must have, namely, a good and rational life. But if beggars hungry for private goods go into public life, thinking that the good is there for the seizing, then the well-governed city is impossible, for then ruling is something fought over, and this civil and domestic war destroys these people and the rest of the city as well.

That's very true.

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

No, by god, I can't.

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

Of course.

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

No one.

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

Of course I do.

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

Indeed.

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

Of course.

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

Yes, we did.

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

Which one?

It mustn't be useless to warlike men.

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

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

We did.

And physical training is concerned with what comes into being and dies, for it oversees the growth and decay of the body.
I’ll try to make my view clear as follows: I’ll distinguish for myself the things that do or don’t lead in the direction we mentioned, and you must study them along with me and either agree or disagree, and that way we may come to know more clearly whether things are indeed as I divine. Point them out. I’ll point out, then, if you can grasp it, that some sense perceptions don’t summon the understanding to look into them, because the judgment of sense perception is itself adequate, while others encourage it in every way to look into them, because sense perception seems to produce no sound result.

You’re obviously referring to things appearing in the distance and to trompe l’œil paintings. You’re not quite getting my meaning. Then what do you mean? The ones that don’t summon the understanding are all those that don’t go off into opposite perceptions at the same time. But the ones that do go off in that way I call summoners—whenever sense perception doesn’t declare one thing any more than its opposite, no matter whether the object striking the senses is near at hand or far away. You’ll understand my meaning better if I put it this way: These, we say, are three fingers—the smallest, the second, and the middle finger.

That’s right. Assume that I’m talking about them as being seen from close by. Now, this is my question about them. What? It’s apparent that each of them is equally a finger, and it makes no difference in this regard whether the finger is seen to be in the middle or at either end, whether it is dark or pale, thick or thin, or anything else of that sort, for in all these cases, an ordinary soul isn’t compelled to ask the understanding what a finger is, since sight doesn’t suggest to it that a finger is at the same time the opposite of a finger.

No, it doesn’t. Therefore, it isn’t likely that anything of that sort would summon or awaken the understanding.

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

That’s right. And isn’t it necessary that in such cases the soul is puzzled as to what this sense means by the hard, if it indicates that the same thing is also soft, or what it means by the light and the heavy, if it indicates that the heavy is light, or the light, heavy?

Yes, indeed, these are strange reports for the soul to receive, and they do demand to be looked into. Then it’s likely that in such cases the soul, summoning calculation and understanding, first tries to determine whether each of the things announced to it is one or two. Of course. If it’s evidently two, won’t each be evidently distinct and one? Yes. Then, if each is one, and both two, the soul will understand that the two are separate, for it wouldn’t understand the inseparable to be two, but rather one. That’s right. Sight, however, saw the big and small, not as separate, but as mixed up together. Isn’t that so?

Yes. And in order to get clear about all this, understanding was compelled to see the big and the small, not as mixed up together, but as separate—the opposite way from sight. True. And isn’t it from these cases that it first occurs to us to ask what the big is and what the small is? Absolutely. And, because of this, we called the one the intelligible and the other the visible.

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

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

But surely the sight of the one does possess this characteristic to a remarkable degree, for we see the same thing to be both one and an unlimited number at the same time.
Then, if this is true of the one, won't it also be true of all numbers?
Of course.
Now, calculation and arithmetic are wholly concerned with numbers.
That's right.
Then evidently they lead us towards truth.
Supernaturally so.
Then they belong, it seems, to the subjects we're seeking. They are
compulsory for warriors because of their orderly ranks and for philoso-
phers because they have to learn to rise up out of becoming and grasp
being, if they are ever to become rational.
That's right.
And our guardian must be both a warrior and a philosopher.
Certainly.
Then it would be appropriate, Glauc, to legislate this subject for those
who are going to share in the highest offices in the city and to persuade
them to turn to calculation and take it up, not as laymen do, but staying
with it until they reach the study of the natures of the numbers by means
of understanding itself, nor like tradesmen and retailers, for the sake
of buying and selling, but for the sake of war and for ease in turning the
soul around, away from becoming and towards truth and being.
Well put.
Moreover, it strikes me, now that it has been mentioned, how sophisti-
cated the subject of calculation is and in how many ways it is useful for
our purposes, provided that one practices it for the sake of knowing rather
than trading.

How is it useful?
In the very way we were talking about. It leads the soul forcibly upward
and compels it to discuss the numbers themselves, never permitting anyone
to propose for discussion numbers attached to visible or tangible bodies.
You know what those who are clever in these matters are like: If, in the
course of the argument, someone tries to divide the one itself, they laugh
and won't permit it. If you divide it, they multiply it, taking care that one
thing never be found to be many parts rather than one.
That's very true.
Then what do you think would happen, Glauc, if someone were to
ask them: "What kind of numbers are you talking about, in which the one
is as you assume it to be, each one equal to every other, without the least
difference and containing no internal parts?"
I think they'd answer that they are talking about those numbers that
can be grasped only in thought and can't be dealt with in any other way.

Then do you see that it's likely that this subject really is compulsory for
us, since it apparently compels the soul to use understanding itself on the
truth itself?
Indeed, it most certainly does do that.
And what about those who are naturally good at calculation or reason-
ing? Have you already noticed that they're naturally sharp, so to speak,
in all subjects, and that those who are slow at it, if they're educated and
exercised in it, even if they're benefited in no other way, nonetheless
improve and become generally sharper than they were?
That's true.
Moreover, I don't think you'll easily find subjects that are harder to
learn or practice than this.
No, indeed.
Then, for all these reasons, this subject isn't to be neglected, and the
best natures must be educated in it.
I agree.
Let that, then, be one of our subjects. Second, let's consider whether the
subject that comes next is also appropriate for our purposes.
What subject is that? Do you mean geometry?
That's the very one I had in mind.
Insofar as it pertains to war, it's obviously appropriate, for when it
comes to setting up camp, occupying a region, concentrating troops, de-
ploying them, or with regard to any of the other formations an army adopts
in battle or on the march, it makes all the difference whether someone is
a geometer or not.
But, for things like that, even a little geometry—or calculation for that
matter—would suffice. What we need to consider is whether the greater
and more advanced part of it tends to make it easier to see the form of
the good. And we say that anything has that tendency if it compels the
soul to turn itself around towards the region in which lies the happiest of
the things that are, the one the soul must see at any cost.
You're right.
Therefore, if geometry compels the soul to study being, it's appropriate,
but if it compels it to study becoming, it's inappropriate.
So we've said, at any rate.
Now, no one with even a little experience of geometry will dispute that
this science is entirely the opposite of what is said about it in the accounts
of its practitioners.
How do you mean?
They give ridiculous accounts of it, though they can't help it, for they
speak like practical men, and all their accounts refer to doing things. They
talk of "squaring," "applying," "adding," and the like, whereas the entire
subject is pursued for the sake of knowledge.
Absolutely.
And mustn't we also agree on a further point?
What is that?
That their accounts are for the sake of knowing what always is, not what
comes into being and passes away.
That's easy to agree to, for geometry is knowledge of what always is.
Then it draws the soul towards truth and produces philosophic thought
by directing upwards what we now wrongly direct downwards.
As far as anything possibly can.
Then as far as we possibly can, we must require those in your fine city not to neglect geometry in any way, for even its by-products are not insignificant.

What are they?

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

Yes, by god, a world of difference.

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

Let’s do so, he said.

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

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

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

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

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

What was our error?

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

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

There are two reasons for that: First, because no city values it, this difficult subject is little researched. Second, the researchers need a director, for, without one, they won’t discover anything. To begin with, such a director is hard to find, and, then, even if he could be found, those who currently do research in this field would be too arrogant to follow him. If an entire city helped him to supervise it, however, and took the lead in valuing it, then he would be followed. And, if the subject was consistently and vigorously pursued, it would soon be developed. Even now, when it isn’t valued and is held in contempt by the majority and is pursued by researchers who are unable to give an account of its usefulness, nevertheless, in spite of all these handicaps, the force of its charm has caused it to develop somewhat, so that it wouldn’t be surprising if it were further developed even as things stand.

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

Yes.

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

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

That’s right.

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

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

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

Then what is your view?

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

How do you mean?

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

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

It’s like this: We should consider the decorations in the sky to be the most beautiful and most exact of visible things, seeing that they’re embroidered on a visible surface. But we should consider their motions to fall far short of the true ones—-motions that are really fast or slow as measured in true numbers, that trace out true geometrical figures, that are all in
That those whom we are rearing should never try to learn anything incomplete, anything that doesn’t reach the end that everything should reach—the end we mentioned just now in the case of astronomy. Or don’t you know that people do something similar in harmonics? Measuring audible consonances and sounds against one another, they labor in vain, just like present-day astronomers.

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

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

But that would be a superhuman task.

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

Probably so.

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

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

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

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

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

My answer to that is also no.

Then isn’t this at last, Glauc? the song that dialectic sings? It is intelligible, but it is imitated by the power of sight. We said that sight tries at last to look at the animals themselves, the stars themselves, and, in the end, at the sun itself. In the same way, whenever someone tries through
Do you call it dialectic? Drastic and the turning from shadows to

Then the release from bonds and, the turning around from shadows to

And what about this journey? Do you call it dialectic? Drastic and the turning from shadows to

Then the release from bonds and, the turning around from shadows to
them to rule in your city or be responsible for the most important things
while they are as irrational as incommensurable lines.

Certainly not.

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

I'll legislate it along with you.

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

Probably so.

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

That's clearly next.

Do you remember what sort of people we chose in our earlier selection
of rulers?

Of course I do.

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

Which ones exactly?

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

That's true.

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

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

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

How so?

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

6. See 412b ff.

Republic VII

That's very true.

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

Absolutely.

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

That's just how it is.

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

And it would be shameful to do that.

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

What's that?

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

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

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

Necessarily.

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

Why's that?

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

That's true.

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

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

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

I remember.

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

At what age?

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

Of course it is.

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

At any rate, only learning of that sort holds firm in those who receive it. It is also the greatest test of who is naturally dialectical and who isn't, for anyone who can achieve a unified vision is dialectical, and anyone who can't isn't.

I agree.

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

What's the main reason for that?

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

What evil is that?

Those who practice it are filled with lawlessness.

They certainly are.

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

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

Because it's like the case of a child brought up surrounded by much wealth and many flatterers in a great and numerous family, who finds out, when he has become a man, that he isn't the child of his professed parents and that he can't discover his real ones. Can you divine what the attitude of someone like that would be to the flatterers, on the one hand, and to his supposed parents, on the other, before he knew about his parentage, and what it would be when he found out? Or would you rather hear what I divine about it?

I'd rather hear your views.

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

Probably so.

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

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

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

Indeed, we do.

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

That's right.

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

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

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

No, he won't.

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

Inevitably.

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

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

That’s right.

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

They’re excessively fond of it.

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

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

That’s very true.

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

That’s right.

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

Of course.

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

Do you mean six years or four?

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

How much time do you allow for that?

Fifteen years. Then, at the age of fifty, those who’ve survived the tests and been successful both in practical matters and in the sciences must be led to the goal and compelled to lift up the radiant light of their souls to what itself provides light for everything. And once they’ve seen the good itself, they must each in turn put the city, its citizens, and themselves in order, using it as their model. Each of them will spend most of his time with philosophy, but, when his turn comes, he must labor in politics and rule for the city’s sake, not as if he were doing something fine, but rather something that has to be done. Then, having educated others like himself to take his place as guardians of the city, he will depart for the Isles of the Blessed and dwell there. And, if the Pythia agrees, the city will publicly establish memorials and sacrifices to him as a daemon, but if not, then as a happy and divine human being.

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

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

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

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

How will they do that?

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

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

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

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

Book VII

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