

PLATO'S REPUBLIC, BOOK VII: THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE

Translated by Pierre Beaudry, April 4, 2026



“In an image posted by NASA on April 3, 2026, One-third of Earth is seen through the Orion capsule window as the NASA Artemis II mission continues towards the moon.”

REFLECTION ON THE LAUNCHING OF ARTEMIS II, April 1, 2026.

Looking back at the Earth, as astronauts do when in a space capsule, cannot be reduced to the simplistic and naive impression of linear and scalar time that the Earth is perceived as “*man’s common home*,” as if it were viewed from Plato’s Cave. The unique experience of Artemis II calls for a true reflection of the higher idea that man’s future is no longer on Earth, but lies in the Heavens, as man’s creative domain of temporal eternity, as Plato, Cusa, Leibniz, Vernadsky, and LaRouche have discovered.

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The true idea of the Common Good of Mankind, here, is that man is looking back at the Earth as a moment of looking back at his own past from the vantage point of how it has been changed from the future; which is as if you were experiencing the Platonic concept of the *Good in the simultaneity of temporal eternity*.

Looking back to Earth from the future is a glimpse into a changed past, as will also become all future subsequent moments of similar changes, from this unique moment on. This new form of time is unique, because it reflects a superior state of mind of someone looking at human existence as having transformed itself into a new and better domain of living, which is *both before and after in the here and now, at the same time*.

TRANSLATOR'S RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that before you get too tired and too old, you should give yourself the opportunity of spending several years of traveling around the world, just to discover how other people think; and try to figuring out why people don't think the way you think they should.

*Then, come back home, and learn ancient Greek for the sole purpose of understanding Plato's philosophy. Read first his **REPUBLIC, BOOK VII: THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE**, and you will be able to understand how you can change the way you think, and maybe also change how other people think. That should be enough for you to discover how truth works, and how to use it in order to improve the world you live in.*

*However, in order to discover how to think properly about truth, one must discover **how to avoid falling into the trap of why it is easier to hate your enemy than to love your neighbor**. And, therefore, in order to have peace on Earth, one must put the Peace of Westphalia principle of the **Advantage of the Other**, first and foremost ahead of everything else.*

*The way to succeed in applying this Peace of Westphalia principle of the **Advantage of the Other** is by orienting properly all of the shadows of Plato's Cave in the direction of their beneficial ends; that is, by manipulating them in such a way that they direct others toward **a triply-connected unity of the beautiful, the just, and the good**, which are related to a higher **Quadrivium** domain of knowledge, involving **Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy, and Music**. That is the key to understanding this fundamental Platonic dialogue.*

*The significance of the quadratic function of Plato's **Quadrivium**, which most translators misunderstand, or ignore altogether, is that only those four unified domains of knowledge are capable of enfolding together those three fundamental characteristics of **beauty, justice, and goodness**, at the same time, and only for the benefit of mankind as a whole. That is the secret of the **Quadrivium**.*

*I decided to do this English translation of Plato's **ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE** because very few of the three generations of youth, who were born after me, have any knowledge of the Greek language, and because all of the English speaking translators I know have failed at the task of understanding the significance of the quadratic domain of Plato's **Quadrivium**. So, this is not going to be your usual translation of Plato nor your usual way of looking at things.*

Furthermore, because Plato's work is the best historical example of an effort to bring mankind to a higher standpoint of knowledge of universal principles, through such a unique quadratic form of knowledge, and for demonstrating how to integrate, peacefully, a multiply-connected number of sovereign nation-states together.

*Such a higher multiply-connected way of thinking is essential to apply throughout the world, today, because it is the form of knowledge required for understanding how **the human soul is able to correct itself by eliminating its own delusions of sense perception, but only to the extent that it is able to help others do the same by elevating them by themselves**; and thus, reach the highest level of human knowledge, **through the principle of the coincidence of opposites in the simultaneity of temporal eternity**, as Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa established during the Italian Renaissance.*

THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE

514a

Now, said Socrates, represent to yourself our human nature and ask yourself whether it has been improved by education or not, with the following sort of experience. Imagine human beings living in a subterranean cavern with a long entrance which is opened to the light, and that light is extended all along the length of the cave. Imagine these humans having lived there since birth, with their legs and their necks chained, such that they

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cannot move from their places, nor can they see anything else but the wall that is in front of them, because their chains prevent them from moving their heads around. Imagine, further, that the light comes from a fire burning far behind their heads, and, lastly, imagine that between the prisoners and the fire, there is a road along which a low wall is built like a partitioning behind which puppet manipulators are showing their exhibits to those chained humans.

b

I can see all of that, replied Glaucon.

Imagine also, this time, that along that low wall, you see people carrying all sorts of implements, which rise above that wall, with humans, animals, and other shapes of things made up of stone and wood of all sorts; and among those carriers, some are speaking and others are silent.

515a

This is a strange picture you are describing and some strange prisoners, said he.

They resemble what we are, said I. And, first of all, do you think that in such a situation, they would be able to see anything of themselves or of each other, aside from the shadows cast by the fire on the wall of the cave which is in front of them?

How can it be any different, said he, if they are compelled to hold their heads motionless during their entire life?

b

And, is it not the same for the objects which are passing before them?

Absolutely, said he.

Therefore, if they were able to speak to each other, don't you think they would be convinced they are looking at the real objects themselves, instead of the shadows they see?

Necessarily, said he.

And if there was also an echo which resonated from the opposite wall, each time a passerby were to speak, don't you think that they would consider that voice belonged to the shadow?

By Zeus, yes of course, said he.

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Then, indubitably, said I, to the eyes of these people, true reality can be nothing else but the fabricated shadows of these objects.

It could not be otherwise, said he.

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Consider then, what would happen if, in the course of their lives, we liberated them from what has happened to them. Imagine how they would

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react if we were to liberate them from their chains and we would attempt to cure them of their ignorance.

Let's free one of these prisoners and force him to suddenly stand up, turn his head around, and walk with his eyes elevated toward the light. All of his movements would be filled with pain and the dazzle and glitter of the light would prevent him from looking at the objects which were merely shadows a moment ago.

What do you think his answer would be if someone told him that what he was looking at before were lies and falsifications, and that, now, being closer to reality, and turned toward more real things, he saw more truthfully? What if, finally, by having him look at each of the objects which are exposed before him, we forced him with questions to reveal the truth of what this is all about? Don't you think that he would be embarrassed and that he would declare the objects he previously looked at, a moment ago, to be more real than those he is presently looking at?

Much more real, said he.

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And, what if we forced him to look at the light itself, don't you think that his eyes would hurt, that he would go and hide, and that he would go back to things he can see, and that he would believe them more distinctly than those we are showing him now?

And what if we pulled him out of there by force and that we were to have him take on the rough and steep climb outward, and that we would not let him go until he reached the light of the sun, don't you think that he would suffer and would revolt for being treated in such a manner? And that, once arrived at the light, he would have his eyes so dazzled by its flash, that he could not see any of the objects that we have now called the truthful ones?

516a

He could not see them, said he, at least not immediately.

In fact, said I, he would have to get accustomed, if he wished to access that higher domain. At first, he would most easily discern the shadows and, after that, the likeliness and reflections in water of men and of other things, and later, the things themselves, and from these, he would go on to contemplate the appearances of the heavens, and heaven itself, more easily by night, looking at the light of the stars and the moon, than during daytime in the sunlight.

b

Without any doubt.

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Finally, I think, it would be the sun itself, not merely its reflections in water, nor its images reflected on some other object, but the sun in its own nature that he would be able to look at and to contemplate, as truth in itself.

He would, of necessity, said he.

c

After all of this, then, he would come to conclude that it is the sun which provides the seasons and the course of the years, and which presides over all things in the visible world, and that the sun is the cause of all of these things that he and his companions were looking at inside of the cavern.

Obviously, said he; that is the conclusion he would have to come to after all of these torments.

If, after all of that, he came to think about his first home and to the knowledge we now have of it, and about his companions in captivity, don't you think that he would congratulate himself for having made that change and that he would have pity on them?

Of course he would.

d

As for the honors and commendations they were giving to one another, and the prize given to the man who was the quickest to make out the shadows and who best remembered most exactly those who passed regularly, the first or the last, or all of them together, and who was the most able to guess the one who was to arrive next? Do you believe that our man would want to go back to that and that he would be jealous of whomever among those prisoners is in possession of such honors and such power? Would he not think like Achilles in Homer? Would he not prefer a hundred times more to simply be a plough farm-hand at the service of a poor farmer and endure all possible sufferings rather than come back to his former illusions and live like he used to?

e

I agree with you, said he: he would prefer all of this suffering rather than return to his former life.

Moreover, imagine this, said I. If our man were to go back down in the cave and take his former place again, would he not have his eyes blurred by the darkness, since he suddenly just came out of the sun?

Certainly, said he.

517a

And, if he had to judge again the value of these shadows and participate with the prisoners who have never left their chains, while his view is still confused and before his eyes had a chance to readapt to the darkness, which would take a long time, would he not be laughed at, and

wouldn't they say of him that, for having gone to the higher domain, he came back with his eyes so ruined that it is not worth making the effort of following him. And, if he attempted to liberate them and elevate them above their present state, wouldn't they grab him and kill him?

They would surely kill him, said he.

b

Now, said I, my dear Glaucon, we must apply this metaphor to what we have been saying earlier. We have to identify the visible world to the domain of the prison, and the light of the fire which illuminates it to the action of the sun. And as for the elevation to the superior world and to the contemplation of its marvels, if you see in it the elevation of the soul to the intelligible domain, you will not be mistaken about my thinking, because you asked for it: God knows if it is true, but in any case, here is my opinion. At the extreme limit of the intelligible domain, there is the idea of the Good that we perceive with difficulty, but which we cannot perceive without concluding that it is the universal cause of everything that is good and beautiful. It is that good which has created light and the dispenser of light; and that in the intelligible domain. It is the Good which is the source of truth and reason, which anyone must have caught the sight of if he wishes to conduct himself wisely either in private or in public. (Emphasis added)

c

I agree with you, said he, to the extent that I can follow you.

Very good then, said I. Then, follow me again on this point and don't be surprised if those who have elevated themselves to that level are not disposed to take on the responsibility of human affairs and that their souls aspire nonstop to remain at these levels. This is natural, given what we have already said about this allegory.

d

Quite natural, said he.

Furthermore, said I, are you also surprised to discover that someone returning from such divine contemplations down to the petty human miseries would look stupid and completely ridiculous when, still blinking through the gloom of the cave and not yet accustomed sufficiently to the darkness where he has now fallen back into, would become forced to enter into disputations in the tribunals or elsewhere about these shadows of justice or about these images which project these shadows, and that he would have to fight back these interpretations of justice by those who have never seen justice in itself?

That does not surprise me at all, said he.

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But, if we were of sane minds, said I, we would recall that our eyes were troubled in two different ways and by two opposite causes: one was by passing from light to obscurity and the other was by passing from obscurity to light. Thus, reflecting on the fact that these two causes also apply to the soul, what should we do when a troubled soul is incapable of discerning an object? Instead of laughing for no reason, should we not examine if, by coming from a more luminous life, the soul is offended by force of habits because of the darkness; or if, by coming from darkness to light, the soul is not dazzled by too much of that splendid bursting? In the first case, we should congratulate the soul for its embarrassment and for the life she has chosen; in the other case, we should pity the soul; and if we were to laugh at its expense, the laughter should be less ridiculous than if it were addressed to the soul coming down from the light.

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That is a very just distinction, said he.

We must therefore conclude, said I, if all of this is to be true, that education is not in reality what some people claim it to be. They believe, in fact, that they are putting science inside of the soul, where does not exist, as if they were able to put vision inside of the eyes of a blind man.

c

That is what they think they are doing, indeed, said he.

So, said I, the present discussion shows that every soul has, within itself, the internal power of knowing and the right instrument to do it with; and that, like the eye, we can turn it away from obscurity toward the light only by turning the entire body at the same time. Similarly, this instrument must be turned around with the entire soul away from the world of becoming, until it is capable of supporting the vision of being and the most brilliant part of that being, which is what we call the Good. Isn't that right?

Yes.

d

Therefore, education, said I, is the art of making that organ turn on itself, and its task is to find the least action method to do it, most efficiently. It does not require putting vision in the organ, because it already has it. So, because it is wrongly turned and it is looking elsewhere, education has the responsibility of managing that conversion.

So it appears, said he.

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Then, we can agree that the other so-called virtues of the soul are analogous to those of the body, for it is true that when they are originally missing, they can always be acquired later by habit and practice. But there is

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one, the faculty of thought, which appears to be more of a divine quality and which never loses its power, and which, depending on the direction it is given in its conversion, can become either useful and beneficial or useless and harmful.

519a

Have you not noticed about the devious people, whom we call rascals, how much their miserable minds, with their piercing insights, are able to distinguish clearly the bad things toward which they are turned? It is not because they have a poor vision, but because they were recruited to be at the service of dishonesty. And, therefore, the more acute their vision, the more evil they are.

I have noticed quite accurately, said he.

b

Consider then, said I, that if as early as childhood, we were to have educated the soul in conformity with its nature, and that we had cut out of that soul all of these leaden weights, which are attached to it through feasting and similar pleasures and gluttonies, which turn the soul's vision downward – if I say, free from these, the soul had gone through a conversion toward the things that are real and true, that same soul of the same man would see with the same keenness both the highest things and those things towards which the soul is now directed.

That is quite likely, said he.

c

Well, then, said I, is it not also likely, and a consequence of what we have said, that neither the uneducated and inexperienced in truth, nor those who pass their entire lives in books, are appropriate for the Government of the State? Because some of them have during their lives no ideal to which they can attribute their actions to, privately or publically; and because the others would not consent to voluntarily engage into action, since they have already been transported to the Islands of the Blessed.

True, said he.

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It is therefore our duty, said I, as the philosophical founders of the State, to force the elite people to orient themselves toward the science that we have recognized above as the most sublime of all, to see correctly and to take on the ascension that we have talked about. But, once we have brought them to that superior region and have sufficiently contemplated the Good, we should not permit them to do what is permitted for them today.

What is that? Asked Glaucon.

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To remain above, said I, and to no longer wish to come back down to our prisoners, and not participate in their works and their most estimable honors, however great they may be.

But then, said he, do you mean that we will do them wrong and compel them to live an inferior life, when the better one is already in their grasp?

e

You have forgotten, again one more time, my friend, said I, that the law is not imposed for the purpose of securing the exceptional *happiness* of a special class of citizens, but that its purpose is to help realize the *happiness of the State in its entirety*, by unifying the citizens either with persuasion or compulsion, and by requiring of them ways to impart to one another all of the benefits that they are able to bestow upon the community. *Such happiness, by itself, creates such human beings in the State, not by allowing them to take whatever course they wish, but with the view of helping others to participate in fortifying the binding power of the commonwealth.* (Emphasis added.)

520a

That is true, said he, I had forgotten it.

Now, Glaucon, said I, consider that we are not going to be unjust either toward our own philosophers, who will be formed in our home States, and that we will have good reasons for having given them charge of educating the behavior and care of others. We will tell them in fact:

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“In non-Greek States, it is natural that those who elevate themselves to the level of philosophy do not concern themselves with the worries of politics, because they are formed by themselves, outside of their respective governments, because, when you develop independently of the needs of your government, and you are not indebted to anyone else but to yourself for your breeding, there is no reason for you to pay for the nourishment you never got from anyone, in the first place.

“But you, from your home States, we have formed you for the benefit of the State, like the Queen-Bees and the leaders of the hive. And we gave you an education more perfect and more complete than those of foreign philosophers, because we have made you better suited to integrate philosophy and politics together.

c

“You must, therefore, each one of you in your turn, go down to the common domain of other people and familiarize yourself with the darkness of the shadows that you see there; because, once you have familiarized yourself with that darkness, you will be able to see a thousand times better

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than others do and you will be able to recognize each image for what it is, because you will have had a prior experience of seeing the true nature of the exemplars of the beautiful, of the just, and of the Good.

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“In this manner, therefore, our Greek Constitution will become for us and for you a true reality, and not just a dreamed-up fantasy, like you have in most States of the world today, where leaders fight each other off with shadows and dispute each other’s authority, as if their holding office was dealing with the greatest Good.

“But, finally, this is what the truth is all about: The truth is that the best State is the one in which those who are to rule must be the least eager to hold office, because the State needs to be administered by those who are most free from dissention; the State government which has the opposite type of leaders, will develop the most dissenting results.” (Emphasis added)

This is perfectly true, said he.

Do you think our students will refuse to accept these reasonable conditions? Will they refuse, each in their turn, to participate in the labors of the State, while they are also spending most of their time educating each other in the domain of pure ideas?

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They could not refuse, said he, because they are just and we are only demanding justice from them; however, without any doubt, each one of them will accept their commanding role only by duty, contrary to those who presently govern our States.

521a

The issue, said I, is as follows. If you are able to find a better way of life for your future rulers, aside from exercising power as office holding, then, a well-governed-State becomes a real option; because it is only in such a governing State, which is commanded by such people who are truly rich in virtue and wisdom, and not in gold, that the ***wealth of happiness*** can become the foundation of a good and wise life.

But, when beggars and seekers of personal wealth, for the lack of good of their own, come to public affairs, persuaded that this is where they can make their fortune, there is no possibility of having a good government; because when office holding and rule become the prize of contention, such a civil and internecine strife destroys the office seekers and the State as well.

That is most true, said he.

b

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Then, do you know, said I, of any other way of life than that of true philosophers, which can inspire more contempt for power than the seeking of public office?

No, by Zeus, said he.

But, what must be made clear, said I, is that those philosophers who agree to take office are not looking for power; otherwise, there will be rivalries and internal fights.

No doubt, said he.

Therefore, who else would you choose to be responsible for the guardianship of the State, if not those who have the best intelligence of the principles and the means of governing for the Good, and who possesses honors of other kinds, and a life that is preferable to that of politicians?

Only them, said he.

THE CONCEPTUAL QUADRIVIUM THAT PHILOSOPHERS MUST MASTER

c

Next, do you wish to examine, said Socrates, in which manner these men of characters will be educated and how they may be led upward to the light, like certain heroes have ascended from Hades to the domain of the gods?

Of course I would, said Glaucon.

But, this not as the whirling of the disk, said I, like in a child's shell game. We have to do a conversion and turn the soul from the day of darkness to the true day of light, that is to say, we have to elevate it to the domain of reality. This is what we have called true philosophy.

d

Without a doubt, said he.

What then would be the study, said I, which draws the soul away from the world of becoming to the world of being? But, while I am speaking, I am thinking of something else. Did we not say that these men had to be athlete-warriors during their youth?

Yes we did, said he.

Then, the science we are looking for must therefore have this additional qualification.

Which one is that?

The one which should be useful for military purposes.

That should really be the case, whenever possible, said he.

e

Their education was formerly based on gymnastic and music, said I.

That is true, said he.

But, gymnastic is applied to what is born and what dies; because its purpose is to maintain growth and avoid decay in the body.

Obviously, said he.

522a

Then, this cannot be the study that we are looking for.

No.

Could it be music as we have described it above?

No, said he, because it was merely the counterpart of gymnastics, if you recall. Music was used by the guardians only for purposes of forming habits and not as a science, but to teach them how to play chords by studying the regularity of rhythms, for making speeches, either truthful or fabricated, and things like that. But, it was never used for teaching the superior purpose of elevating the mind, like you are doing now.

b

Your recollection of what we had said is most exact, said I. Music did not have that purpose. But, what in heaven's name, Glaucon, is the kind of study which could give access to such a teaching? Are they some art forms? All we looked at before were mechanical devices.

That's right, said he, but, what other study is there, apart from music, arts, and gymnastics?

Come then, said I, if we cannot find anything out of these, let us take a science which is applicable to everything else, equally.

Which one is that? He asked.

C

1. ARITHMETIC

Take, for example, this general science which applies to all of the arts, to all of our intellectual operations, and to all sciences, and that each of us must study among the very first ones.

Which one? asked Glaucon.

This very ordinary science, said Socrates, which distinguishes numbers, one, two, three; in one word, the science of numbers and the art of calculating. Is it not true that each art form and science must have some relationship to numbers?

Indeed, they must, said he.

The art of war also, said I.

We cannot do anything without numbers, said he.

d

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Certainly, said I, isn't this the ridiculous general that Palamedes always introduces in tragedies under the role of Agamemnon? Have you not noticed that after having invented arithmetic, Palamedes claimed that he marshaled the troops of the army in front of Troy, in ranks and companies, and he enumerated the ships and all of the rest as if, before him, nothing had never been calculated and that Agamemnon, as they say, did not even know how many feet he had, because he did not know how to count? What do you think of such a general?

He's quite a singular general, said he, if all of this is true.

e

Shall we not, then, said I, set down as a study requisite for a soldier the ability to calculate and acquire the science of numbers?

Most certainly, said he. This is a most indispensable knowledge if he is to know anything whatsoever about the ordering of his troops – or rather if he is to be human at all.

Yes, but do you have, said I, the same idea of this science as I have?

What idea?

523a

I will try, said I, to show you at least my opinion. Do you keep watch and observe the things I distinguish in my mind as being or not being conducive to our purpose, and either concur or dissent, in order that here too we may see more clearly whether my surmise is right.

Expose your ideas, he said, and we shall see.

b

Then, pay attention, I said, and see if you can discern that some among the objects which strike our senses provoke or not our intelligence to reflections, because some sensations seem adequate, while others always invite the intellect to reflection because such sensations yield nothing that can be trusted.

You obviously mean distant appearances, he said, and shadow painting.

You have quite missed my meaning, said I.

What do you mean then? He said.

c

The experiences that do not provoke reflections, said I, are those that do not at the same time produce two opposite impressions. Those that do have that effect, however, I set down as provocative because they suggest reflections, and such is the case when the impression we get, coming from nearby or from afar, is either this or that. An illustration will

make my meaning clearer. Here, let's say, are three fingers, the little finger, the second, and the middle finger.

Quite so, he said.

Assume that I speak of them as being seen near at hand, and then, make with me the following observation about them.

What observation?

d

Each one of them appears to be equally a finger, and in this respect it makes no difference whether it is observed as intermediate or at either extreme, whether it is white or black, thick or thin, or of any other quality of this kind. For in none of these cases is the soul of most men impelled to question the reason and to ask what in the world is a finger, since the faculty of sight never means to say about it, at the same time, that a finger is the opposite of a finger.

Why, no, it does not, he said.

e

Then, said I, it is to be expected that such a perception will not provoke or awaken reflection and thought. (Emphasis added)

Its normal, said he.

But now, said I, what about the size of fingers, their largeness or smallness? Is our vision adequate to distinguish them separately and does it make any difference if one of them is in the middle or at one of the extremities? And similarly, for the sensation of touch, are they also inadequate in telling whether an object is thick or lean, and soft or hard? In general are the sense perceptions not always defective in their reference to such things? Do they not all proceed in the following manner?

524a

First of all the sense which has the responsibility to tell what is hard was necessarily also in charge of perceiving what is soft, and therefore, when it tells the soul that the same object is both soft and hard, there is a problem.

It is as you say, said he.

Therefore, said I, is it not inevitable that in that case, the soul becomes perplexed and asks itself what is the meaning of a sensation which signals both hardness and softness from the same object at the same time? And similarly, for the sensation of the heavy and of the light, what is there to understand when a sensation signals that something heavy is light, and that something light is heavy?

b

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Indeed, said he, these are strange testimonies for the soul, which require further examination.

It is therefore, natural, said I that, subjected to such perplexity, the soul should call upon its understanding and its reflexive powers, and first attempt to clarify if each of these testimonies is dealing with a single thing or with two.

Of course, said he.

And, if it appears to be two, then each of the two must be dealt with as separate units.

Yes.

c

Therefore, each unit is a single one, said I, and both of them taken together are two. And, the very meaning of "two" signifies that the soul will conceive them separately; otherwise the mind will not consider them as two things, but as a single one.

That's true.

Therefore, our vision, said I, has perceived largeness and smallness not as separated but as fused together, did it not?

Yes.

And then, in order to dissipate that confusion, the mind was forced to consider largeness and smallness, not as confounded, but as separated, contrary to what sensation did.

True.

It is from there that we originally get the idea of looking for what is the nature of largeness and smallness.

Yes.

And, it is in that same way that we have made the difference between what is intelligible and what is perceptible.

d

That's very true, said he.

This, then, is just what I was trying to explain a little while ago, when I said that some objects are provocative of thought and some are not, defining as provocative things that which impinge upon the senses together with their opposites, while those that do not, I said, do not tend to awaken reflection.

Well, now I understand, said he, and I agree. Your opinion is correct.

To which class, then, do we think number and the one belong to?

I cannot conceive of it, said he.

Well, said I, reason it out from what we have already said. For, if unity lets itself be seen adequately by the eyes, or apprehended by some

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other sensation, they would not be able to draw the mind to the apprehension of essence, no more than the finger could, like we were talking about before.

e

But, if the view of unity always contains some contradiction, so that it does not appear to be unity any more than multiplicity, there would forthwith be need of something to judge between them, and this would compel the soul to be at a loss and to inquire, by arousing understanding itself, and to ask, whatever then is the one in itself. And thus, the study of unity would be one that guides and turns the soul toward the contemplation of true being.

525a

But surely, said he, vision has this property of unifying what you see to the highest degree, because we are able to see the same thing at once as one and multiple, up to infinity.

Then, if this is true of the one, said I, the same must hold for any number, does it not?

Of course.

Therefore, the science of calculating and the science of arithmetic are wholly concerned with number.

They are indeed.

b

Therefore, they are appropriate sciences leading to the truth.

Marvelously appropriate, he said.

Then, as it seems, this science of number would be among the studies that we are looking for. For a soldier must learn them in order to marshal his troops, and a philosopher must do it because he must rise out of the region of generation and lay hold on essence or he can never become a true arithmetician.

It is so, he said.

And so, our guardian is both soldier and philosopher in one.

Of course.

c

Therefore, It would be appropriate, Glaucon, that such a science be prescribed by law for everyone who is destined to be employed into the highest functions of the State, and that it should be mastered, not merely superficially, as do amateurs, but for the purpose of attaining the level of contemplation of the pure intelligence of numbers, by pure thought, and not for the purpose of buying and selling, as if they were preparing to be merchants or tradesmen, but for the use of understanding the purpose of warfare and for facilitating the conversion of the soul itself away from the

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pragmatists of the world of generation and up toward the higher domain of essence and truth. (Emphasis added)

Excellently put, said he.

d

And furthermore, said I, It occurs to me, after having discussed with you this science of numbers, that there is also something which is beautifully useful for our purpose in many ways, provided that it is pursued for the sake of knowledge and not for any practical reason.

What is it that makes it so precious, said he?

It is, as I have just stated, said I, that it strongly directs the soul upward and compels it to deal with pure numbers in themselves; that is, without having to worry about introducing numbers which represent visible or tangible objects.

e

I suppose that you know what those experts of this science say when you wish to divide unity in itself: they laugh at you and they don't want to know anything. If you divide it, they multiply it; for fear that unity may no longer be the one, but a multiplicity of parts.

Quite true, said he.

526a

Imagine then, Glaucon, that someone were to ask them: "Dear knowledgeable friends, what numbers are you referring to when you are talking about the one which is, as you postulate, such that each unity is equal to every other, without any of the slightest difference between them, and which admits of no possible divisions into parts?" What do you think they would answer?

I think they would reply, said he, that they are speaking of units which can only be conceived by thought, and which are not possible to deal with in any other way.

b

You see, then, my friend, said I, that this branch of science really seems indispensable for us, because it is evident that it forces the soul to make use of pure intelligence in order to access truth in itself.

That is most emphatically clear, said he.

But, have you ever noticed, said I, that those who are born calculators understand quickly practically all of the sciences; and that the slow-minded ones, when they are trained and drilled in calculation, aside from other advantages, benefit from it by increasing their penetration of mind?

That is true, said he.

c

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However, I believe it is almost impossible to find a science which is more difficult to learn and to practice than the science of numbers.

Indeed, said he.

For all of these reasons, then, we must not neglect this study and it must be used for the education of the best minds.

I agree with you, said he.

2. GEOMETRY

Now that we have established our first study for our teaching curriculum, said Socrates, let us examine a second science and see if it is also suited for our purpose.

What science is that? asked Glaucon. Do you mean geometry?

Yes, precisely, said I.

d

This is obviously required, said he, because geometry is suitable for warfare operations. For in dealing with encampments and the occupation of strong places, as well as for bringing troops into columns and in line, and all other formations of an army ready for battle and on the march, a general who studied geometry would be more effective than one who has not mastered geometry.

e

To be honest with you, said Socrates, such tasks could be accomplished with a fairly small and elementary amount of knowledge in geometry and some calculation. But, what I am proposing is much more demanding; that is, we need to examine if the more powerful aspect of geometry and the more elevated aspect of its constructability are suitable for elevating the soul up to the task of apprehending more easily the idea of the Good. So, it is toward that objective of geometry that the soul must orient itself, in my view, when we are forced to turn toward the domain of light, which is where the most blessed part of reality dwells, and which is imperative that it should behold.

You are right, said he.

Therefore, said I, if geometry compels you to contemplate essence, it is suitable; but if it is limited to simply generating things, it is not appropriate.

I also agree with you, said he.

527a

So finally, there is one thing, said I, which anyone who is the least familiar with geometry will not disagree with me on, and that is, that such a

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science has for object something which is completely different from what those who practice it say it is.

What is that? He asked.

They talk about it, said I, in mean and ridiculous ways, because all they can articulate is in practical terms and for practical reasons, as if they could only do something physical with it; and their language is oriented toward doing only that physical thing. For example, they talk about squaring something, or constructing something on a given line, and then, apply and add things and so on *ad nauseam*, while the real subject of the whole study is pure knowledge.

That is absolutely the case, said he.

b

So, must we not also agree on one last thing? I asked.

What is that? he asked.

That the subject we are talking about is of a domain which always exists, and not of something which at some point in time, comes into being and passes away.

I have no problem with that, said he, because geometry is the knowledge of what always exists; that is, which is eternally present.

This is, my good friend, how geometry would tend to draw the soul to the truth and would give rise to a philosophical spirit, which directs our minds upward to eternal things, instead of downward toward earthly things.

There is nothing more true, said he. (Emphasis added)

c

Then, what we need to do, said I, is to require that the citizens of our beautiful republic not neglect geometry, because even the byproducts of such a study are not to be ignored.

Which ones are these? He asked.

They are precisely those that you have yourself recognized, said I, and which relate to warfare; furthermore, geometry helps you to better understand other sciences, and that makes all the difference in the world for those who have mastered it as opposed to those who have not.

By Zeus! An immense difference, indeed, said He.

Here is, therefore, our second science, said I, which is to be prescribed for our youth.

Let us do so, he said.

d

3. ASTRONOMY

Now then, asked Socrates, should we consider astronomy as our third science? What do you think?

I certainly agree, said Glaucon, because quickness of perception about the seasons and the courses of the months and the years is very useful, not only for agriculture and navigation, but also for the military art.

You amuse me, said I, because you are acting as if you were afraid that ordinary people are going to reproach you for advocating useless studies. The studies we have chosen are for a higher form of usefulness, which is not negligible, even though they are difficult to conceive.

e

And the reason is that they purify and revitalize, in each of us, an organ of the soul which has been spoiled and blinded by the other occupations, an organ whose conservation is a thousand times more precious than that of the eyes of the body, because it is the only organ by means of which we can perceive truthfulness.

Those who understand this, will not stop from encouraging you; but those who don't have a clue as to what you are talking about will naturally consider that what you are saying means nothing at all, because outside of the practical manipulation of these sciences, they see nothing else which merits their consideration.

528a

Then, ask yourself, said I, before going any further, to which of those two groups are you addressing your remarks? Or, is it mostly for your own benefit that you reason, without however begrudging any other who may be able to profit by it?

This is the choice I make, said he. It is for me that I speak most of all, that I question and that I answer to.

If that is the case, said I, then, take a step back, because, a little while ago, we had not spoken about the science which comes next after geometry.

And, what is that? He asked.

b

After considering surfaces, said I, we have considered the solids in motion before considering them in themselves. So, the way to proceed, in an orderly way, is to go from two dimensions to three dimensions. This, I presume, is the dimension of cubes and of everything else that has depth.

Why yes it is, said he, but this subject, Socrates, does not appear to have been investigated yet.

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There are two reasons for that, said I. The first is that there is no support for this kind of study in any State. Their investigations are not encouraged because the subject matter is difficult. The second reason is because the researchers require a director of study without whom their efforts would be worthless. And it is difficult to find one, because, in the present state of affairs, those who have talent for such research are too arrogant to submit to his guidance.

c

But, if the State as a whole was to join together for superintending such studies with that director, and was to honor those kinds of work, these researchers would accept his advice, and the studies pursued vigorously and with purpose, would result in discoveries, because even as things stand right now, however mishandled as they are by the vulgar, however truncated, even when those solids are constructed by people who don't realize their usefulness, they are being produced extensively, in spite of all these obstacles, and because of the mysterious charm they exude, I won't be surprised to see that they become increasingly in demand.

d

Of course, they have their charm, said he, and a superior charm at that, but can you explain to me more clearly what you meant when you said, a while ago, that geometry was first of all, a science of surfaces?

Yes, said I.

Then, said he, immediately after you spoke about astronomy, you came back on your steps.

The reason is because in my rush to finish up my review, I needed to go back one step in order to better go forward, because the next thing to be considered was the study of the third dimension. Therefore, I needed to discuss the issue of solids. I had passed over it, because of my unacceptable neglect; and that is when I mentioned astronomy, because that is the science of the movement of solids.

e

We stand corrected, said he.

Then, as our next step, said I, let us now go back to astronomy and leave the construction of solids behind, assuming that such a three dimensional science will be restored, when the State decides to take care of it.

Let us do that, said he, and since, a moment ago, you corrected me for having badly spoken about astronomy, let me now praise it in accordance with what you are now looking at.

529a

It now should become obvious to everybody, that astronomy is forcing the soul to look up and that we should, from now on, instead of looking at things from down below, we should look at the realities of the sky.

It may be obvious to everybody, except to me, said I, because I am not looking at this the same way you do.

You don't, said he. How do you look at it?

As it is now handled by those who are trying to establish astronomy as a philosophy, said I, I think they turn the soul's gaze very much downward.

What do you mean? he asked in a puzzled state.

b

It seems to me, said Socrates, that what you have in mind is a most liberal interpretation of the "study of higher things." You seem to believe that the man who raises his head to look at the ornaments of the ceiling in order to get a vague notion of them, would use the eyes of the body and not those of the soul?

You may be right, and I may just be foolish, but as for me, I am unable to suppose that there is no other science capable of turning the gaze of the soul upward except the one which deals with Being and the invisible domain. So, if it is a physical thing that you wish to observe, whether you are looking up with your mouth open or looking down with your mouth closed, what I am saying to you is that there has never been any knowledge in that, because *science does not involve anything physical*. [Emphasis added] In that case, the soul is not looking up but is looking down, even when the subject is studying it while swimming on his back, on land or at sea.

c

That's a fair reply, said he. I deserve your correction. But, how then can we change the present method of teaching and understand astronomy in the way that you do? How can we change our way of thinking in order to have this science serve our purpose?

d

Look at those different constellations, said I, and the way they are braided together within visible matter. We must certainly regard them as the fairest and most precisely formed material things that exist, but, we must also recognize that they fall very short of the truth, because they are inferior to true constellations and to their ideal motions according to which the true acceleration and the true deceleration, in accordance with true number and

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with respect to true figures, move their relationships simultaneously with respect to each other and with respect to everything that exists in the infinity of time. However, these are things that can only be grasped by the intelligence of reason, but not by sense perception. Don't you agree with that?

Of course I agree, said he.

e

Then, we must use the blazonry of the heaven as an exemplar in order to help us in the study the invisible domain of those higher realities, just as one would do if, by chance, he had fallen upon the diagrams drawn with special care and elaboration by Daedalus or some other genial craftsman or painter. For, upon visualizing these things, a geometer would recognize the execution of master pieces and admit of the beauty of their craftsmanship, but would find it ridiculous to study them seriously with the idea of discovering the absolute truth behind the relationship of equality, of doubling, or of any other proportion.

530a

Without a doubt, said he. That would be ridiculous.

And the real astronomer, said I, would he not also take the same point of view when looking at celestial movements, and would he not think also that the architect of the heavens and of all the stars that it contains, were ordered with all of the beauty that is possible to bring to these works? But, when it comes to proportions of day time and night time, and their relationship to the month, and that of the month to the year, and of the relation of other stars to these, and to one another, do you not suppose that he will regard as some very strange fellow, the man who believes that these things go on forever without any change, or without the slightest deviation, even though they are material and visible? Would he not, by all means possible, search for the true reality hidden behind them?

b

Now that I hear this from you, said he, I think you are right.

It is therefore by means of problem solving, said I that we shall study astronomy as well as geometry, but we shall not stop at what takes place in the heavens, if we wish to really make our study useful for the natural part of our soul to improve beyond the uselessness that it displayed before.

You are greatly increasing the task of astronomers, said he, by comparison with what they usually do.

And I also believe, said I, that if we are serious legislators, we have to prescribe the same method for our other sciences as well.

c

4. MUSIC

Now, said Socrates, could you identify another study which would be useful for our project?

No, not off hand, replied Glaucon.

Nevertheless, said I, motion in general provides for more than one form of action, in my opinion. A genius could probably give us a complete list of them, but I can only think of two.

d

Which two are they? he asked.

Aside from those we have just talked about, said I, there is one which corresponds to the measure.

Which one is it? He asked.

It seems to me, said I, that while the eyes can be formed by astronomical motion, the ears can similarly be formed by the harmonic motion of music; and that, therefore, those two sciences are like two sisters, as the Pythagoreans say. Do you disagree with that, Glaucon?

No I do not, said he.

e

Then, the matter is of such importance, said I, should we not ask those Pythagoreans what their opinion is, and whether they have anything to suggest? But meanwhile, we shall hold on to our principle.

Which one? He asked.

The principle of watching over our students so that they don't undertake from these sciences a study which would remain imperfect and would lead them invariably where all other knowledge lead up to, as we have just identified for the case of astronomy. Don't you realize that harmony is not treated any better than astronomy?

531a

By limiting themselves to measuring and comparing chords and sounds perceived by the ear, musicians accomplish a useless work, exactly like astronomers do. [Emphasis added]

Yes, by heaven, said he, and in a most ridiculous fashion too. Our musicians talk about what they call diatonic scales. They extend their ear as if to listen indiscreetly to the conversation of their neighbors, and some of them pretend to hear between two sounds, a third note, which is the smallest interval and that such an interval should serve as the basic measure. Others, to the contrary, claim that such sounds are the same as the former ones, such that both of them end up giving priority to the ear instead of to the mind.

b

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You are talking about those musicians, said I, who vex and torture the strings and rack them over the pegs. I could push further your description by talking about those who strike their strings with their bow, charging them with such accentuations where the sound is either restricted or inflated in ridiculous ways; but I prefer to drop this subject and declare to you that it is not about these musicians that I want to talk about, but about those Pythagoreans that we wanted to investigate, a moment ago, on the subject of harmony, because they do the same thing like astronomers do.

c

They are looking for numbers inside of the chords that strike your ears and they don't elevate themselves to the level of looking at problems which consist in asking yourself which are the harmonic numbers and which are none harmonic ones, and where does the difference between them come from?

You are now talking about a transcendental task, said he.

A task, said I, which is nevertheless necessary for discovering beauty and the Good, but useless otherwise if it is for some other end.

This might be true, said he.

d

And what is more, said I, I take it that if the investigation of all of these studies goes far enough to bring out their relationship and the kinship they have with one another, I believe that this study can contribute to get us to our objective, and that we will not have wasted out time; otherwise we will have done all this work for nothing.

I also agree with you, said he, but this would be an unending task.

But, I am only talking about the prelude, said Socrates. Are you thinking about something else? Don't you realize that all of this is only the prelude of the song that we must now learn to compose? Do you think that those who are versed in such studies are dialecticians?

By Zeus no! said he, except for the very few that I have already met.

OK then, said I, do you think that those who are incapable of leading and sustaining such a discussion will ever be able to understand what we say they must know?

532a

I don't think so either, said he.

Well then, finally, Glaucon, said I, is this not precisely that song which the dialectician must sing? Even though it may only be intelligible, we may see in it an imitation in the progress of the faculty of vision, as we have described its endeavor to look at living things, then at stars, and finally at the sun itself. In similar manner, when a man attempts to investigate

dialectics, and without the use of his senses, he uses only his reason for the purpose of understanding the essence of each thing and he doesn't stop until he has reached with his intelligence the essence of the Good. Then, he is able to reach the intelligible just as others who, a while ago, were able to reach the visible domain.

This is quite right, said he.

Therefore, said I, is this not what you called the dialectical process?

Without a doubt, said he.

THE SCIENCE OF DIALECTIC

Remember then, said I, how the prisoner from the cave, when he was delivered from his shackles, was able to turn himself toward the sun, and the clarity which it projects was able to lead him from his cave toward the sun and that he was still unable to distinguish the animals, the plants, and the light of the sun reflected in the water that reflected their divine images, and that the shadows of those real objects and not the shadows of the figures projected by this other light, which was merely an image of the sun. The study of the sciences that we have just looked into, therefore, produces exactly the same effect by elevating the most noble part of the soul to the contemplation of the most excellent of all beings, as we have just seen a moment ago, the most piercing organ of the body elevating itself to the contemplation of the most luminous object in the visible and material world.

d

As for me, said he, I also conceive of it, just like you do; but, even though it seems difficult to accept, it is also something which is difficult to reject.

However, since this is not the only time that we are going to speak about this, today, and that we are going to have to come back to it several times, let's accept, for the time being, the point in contention, and let us pass on to the melody itself, and go through with it, as we have gone through the prelude. Tell me, then, what is the nature of this faculty of dialectic?

e

In how many species does dialectic divide itself into? And what routes does it take? Because it is these routes which will lead us to the objective where we will find, like people on a trip, a place to rest at the end of the journey of our achievement.

533a

My dear Glaucon, you would not be able to follow me any further, said I, although there will be, on my part, no lack of good will, because it

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would no longer be the image of the Good which you would see but truth itself as it appears to me. Whether that truth is really as I see it, I cannot confirm. But, I can confirm that this is the sort of thing that we have to consider. Am I right?

Absolutely!

And may we not also declare that no less than the power of dialectic could reveal this, and only to someone experienced in the studies we have described. Otherwise, the thing is impossible.

That too, said he, is worth emphasizing. (Emphasis added)

b

At any rate, no one can dispute against us, said I, that there is any other way of inquiring, which attempts, systematically, and in all cases, to determine what each thing truly is. In general, all of the other arts and sciences have for their object the opinions and tastes of men, and they have been developed only for the purpose of generating, fabricating, and servicing natural or artificial products.

c

As for the other studies, which as we said, capture something of the essence of things; that is to say, geometry and the studies they are attached to, we can see that for them, the knowledge of their existence is like a dream and they are incapable of seeing this, as long as they keep following hypotheses which avoid them, because they cannot see any reason for it.

Therefore, if you take as a principle something that we know nothing about, and that the conclusions and the propositions in between are filled with unknowns, you may try to put all of this together, but you will never make a science out of it.

No. That is absolutely impossible, said he.

d

Then, said I, is the dialectical method not the only process which, by successively doing away with hypotheses, elevates itself up to principles in order to establish solidly its conclusions, the only one which is able to extirpate the eye of the soul, slowly but surely, away from the barbaric slough of the Olympic myth, where it is kept down, and then pulled out, from where it is, upward by putting it at the service of the studies that we have said we are using for its conversion? We have given it several times the name of science; but it should carry another name, which should imply more clarity than opinion and less obscurity than that of science. We had accepted, a little while back to call it "discursive knowledge," but, this is not the time to debate over the name, when we have such important questions to investigate as those we have submitted.[Emphasis added.]

e

No indeed, said he. We should simply choose a name which would make our mind clearly understood.

534a

I agree with you, then, said I, that we should do as we have done before, and call *science of knowledge* the first division, *discursive thinking* the second, *belief* the third, and the fourth *conjecture*. As for the last two, we should call them opinion, and the first two should be called intelligence. The object of generation should be for the domain of opinion, while the essence of things should be for the domain of intelligence.

I would add that essence is to generation as intelligence is to opinion; and that what intelligence is to opinion is the same as what science is to belief in the same proportion that what discursive knowledge is with respect to conjecture.

As for the correspondence of things on which these distinctions are founded, and the division into two in each category, like the one between opinion and intelligence, let's leave these questions for later, because if we deal with them now, they will throw us into discussions a hundred times longer than the previous ones. (Emphasis added)

b

As for me, said he, I am rallying behind what you have been saying, as far as I am able to follow.

Do you also call dialectician the man who is able to exact an account of the essence of each thing? And will you not say that the man, who is unable to do this, in so far as he is incapable of rendering an account of this to himself and to others, does not possess full reason and intelligence on this matter?

How could I say that he does? he replied.

The same is applicable to the Good, said I. If a man cannot establish the idea of the Good, by differentiating it from all of the other objects, if he cannot clarify, like the brave individual, who in the tussle, has to deal with all of the objections by securing his proofs, not on what appears to be but on what is. If he is not able to deal with all of these difficulties with an infallible logic, will you not say that this man does not know the Good for itself, nor any other good, but that if he is able to grasp some phantom of the Good, it will be through opinion and not through science that he does it, and that his present life is nothing but a dream and that he is in a dozing state out of which he is not going to wake up from in this world, because he has gone down to Hades where he is going to go into an infinite sleep?

d

Yes, by Zeus, all of this I will stoutly affirm, said he.

But, if one day, you have to nurture your children that you are presently forming and educating in your imagination, will you suffer them to be irrational, like those geometrical diagonals, and presume that they are able to make supreme decisions and to hold any status in the State?

Of course not, he replied.

Then, said I, you will make sure that by law, they will be specially submitted to the type of education which is going to enable them to ask and answer questions in the most scientific manner possible.

e

I would so legislate, said he, in collaboration with you.

Do you agree, then, said I, that we have now established the science of dialectic above all other studies, as if it were their capstone; that no other kind of study could rightly be placed above it; and that, finally, our discussion on the subject of studies is now complete?

I do, he said.

HOW TO CHOOSE FUTURE PHILOSOPHERS?

535a

What remains to be done then, said I, is to identify to whom we are to assign these studies, and in what manner.

Clearly, said he.

Do you remember, then, said I, the kind of individual we chose in our former selection of rulers?

Of course, he said.

In most respect, then, said I, you must suppose that we have to choose those that have the same nature. The most stable, courageous, and enterprising are to be preferred.

b

But, in addition, we must further require that they not only be generous and vigorous of temper, but that they also possess a natural disposition which is appropriate for this type of education.

What is that disposition?" he asked.

They must have, my happy friend, said I, first and foremost, a certain keen disposition for study and they must not have any difficulty in learning. The reason is that souls are much more likely to flinch and faint in severe studies than bodies will do in gymnastics, because when it is peculiar to them, the toil touches the soul more severely, since it is not shared with the body.

True, said he.

c

What is also required, said I, is a good memory, a strong resistance against fatigue, and love of work in all of its forms. Otherwise, how do you suppose anyone could at the same time suffer all of the toils of the body and at the same time, complete a great course of study and discipline for his mind?

No one could, he said, unless nature has given him exceptional powers.

Our present mistake, said I, and the misestimating that has fallen, consequently, on philosophy, are, as I have said before, caused by associates and manipulators who are unfit for its dignity. Philosophy should be absorbed only by well disposed spirits and not by bastardized minds.

What do you mean? he asked.

d

First of all, said I, the aspirant to philosophy must not limp in his work, with one half of him loving the work and the other half shunning toil. This happens when anyone is a lover of gymnastics, of hunting, and of all of the labors of the body, and yet, is not fond of learning or of listening and inquiring, and that in all such matters, hates work. And, he must not limp either when his love of work has turned against him.

Quite true, said he.

e

And the same thing can be applied to the soul with respect to truth, said I. Shall we not regard as maimed in precisely the same way the individual who hates the voluntary lie, because he is revolted by its repugnance and the indignation done to others, but who accepts easily the involuntary lie because, he is convinced of its ignorance and is not angered by it, but wallows insensitively in it like a pig in the mud.

Yes, we should, said he.

536a

Furthermore, said I, as far as sobriety, courage, loftiness of the soul, and all other aspects of virtue, we must especially be on our guard and *make the difference between the mind of a bastard and the mind of a trueborn*. [Emphasis added] For when the knowledge necessary to make such a discrimination is lacking, the particulars as well as the State will resort blindly to lame individuals and bastards, no matter who they may be, whether they are close friends or important magistrates.

Indeed, that is the case, said he.

b

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Therefore, it is up to us, said I, to be on our guard in all such cases and to advise wisely on all of these points. Since, if we bring men sound of limb and of mind to such a great study and to such important exercises, justice itself will have no fault to find with us, and we shall preserve both our State and our Constitution. But, if we introduce into this project these other sorts of individuals, it is the opposite which will happen and we shall be covering philosophy with an even greater ridicule.

This would certainly be a great shame, said he.

Without a doubt, said I, but here again, at this point, I find myself a little ridiculous.

In what way? he replied.

c

It's just that I forgot, said I, that all of this is nothing but a game, and that I have spoken with too great intensity. For while speaking, I turned my eyes upon philosophy, and when I saw how she was undeservingly reviled, I got upset, and, as if in anger, I spoke too strongly against those who were at fault.

No, by Zeus, not strongly enough for me, as a listener.

But, too much so for me, as a speaker, said I. But, whatever happens, we must not forget that in our first selection, we chose older men, but in this one, that will not do. Because we must not take Solon's word for it, when he says that while growing old, an old man is able to learn many things. He is less able to do that than to run a race. These multiple and difficult labors are for the youth.

d

Necessarily, said he.

Now, said I, all of these studies in arithmetic and geometry and all of the preliminary studies that are indispensable preparation for dialectic must be presented to the youth while they are still young, but not in a form of instruction which is hard to digest.

Why is that so, said he.

e

Because, said I, a free man must never learn anything like a slave, for while bodily labors performed under constraint do not harm the body, nothing that is learned by the mind in a compulsive manner will remain in the mind.

Fascinating, said he.

Do not, then, my friend, keep children to their studies by compulsion, but by play. That will also help you identify the natural tendencies of each.

537a

That is quite reasonable, he said.

And, do you not remember, said I, what we said above that we had to lead children to war on horseback as spectators and, when it can be done without danger, bring them to the front and give them a taste of blood as we do with young dogs.

I remember, said he.

And those who, as time goes by, show the most facility in all of these toils and studies, and those who are the best, you will select and enroll them into a separate group.

At what age? he asked.

At the age, said I, when the children leave their compulsory gymnastic class, because during all of this period of time, which lasts two to three years, it is impossible for them to do anything else, because fatigue and sleep are the two worst enemies of study. Furthermore, this course is also an important test for evaluating each one of them in the domain of physical exercises.

It surely is, he said.

c

After this period, said I, we shall make a choice from among the youth who have arrived at their twentieth year; and those we will have chosen will achieve distinctions more honorable than others, because they will have discovered the merit of putting together the disconnected studies they had to pursue as children during their former education, and of setting them into a comprehensive survey of their affinities in accordance with the proportions that these four sciences have among one another; that is, in accordance with the nature of Being in itself.

It is certain, said he, that such a method is the only one which is capable of fixing such knowledge solidly into their minds.

And it is also, said I, the best testing measure for identifying the minds that are appropriate for dialectic and those that are not; that is to say, those who are capable of having such a proportional overview of it and those who cannot.

I agree with you, said he. (Emphasis added)

d

Therefore, said I, this test that you will have them do, and when you have recognized these qualities of mind among them, you will choose those who have the best dispositions for dialectic, who are steadfast in their studies and in war, and in all lawful requirements.

When they will have reached thirty years of age, you will have to pull them out from that already chosen group of young men and elevate them to

still greater honors, and to prove and test them by the powers of dialectic in order to see which among them is capable, without the help of their eyes or any other form of sense perception, and of having them elevating themselves only by the power of truth to the level of Being itself. And, at this level, my friend, you will have to take the greatest precaution.

Why? He asked.

DANGERS OF DIALECTICAL MALPRACTICE

e

Are you not aware, said I, how great is the harm that has been caused by the present treatment of dialectic, and what proportion it has taken?

What harm? he asked.

The practitioners are completely filled with lawlessness, I replied.

They are indeed, said he.

Do you suppose, I said, that there is anything surprising about this state of mind, or do you think it is excusable?

In what way excusable? he asked.

538a

Their case, said I, resembles that of an imaginary son reared in a famously wealthy and large family amid many flatterers, and, who upon arriving at manhood, must become aware that he is not the child of those who call themselves his parents, but who is unable to discover who his real father and mother are. Can you guess what his feelings might be toward those flatterers and those fake parents, at the time when he does not know the truth about his adoption and when he is suddenly made aware of it? Or, would you rather hear what I imagined it would be?

I prefer to hear what you have imagined, said he.

b

Very well then, said I, at the time when he did not know the truth, I imagined that he would be more likely to honor his would be father and mother and his other kin, rather than the flatterers, and that there would be less likelihood of his allowing them to be lacking of anything, and that he would be less inclined to do or to say to them anything unlawful, and less liable to disobey them in important matters than to disobey the flatterers, as he used to do.

This is more than likely, said he.

c

But, when he found out the truth, said I, I imagined that he would grow more remiss in honor and devotion to them and pay more regard to the flatterers, whom he would heed more than before and would henceforth live

by their rule, associating with them openly, while for that former father and his adopted kin, he would not care at all, unless he was naturally of an excellent disposition.

That is precisely what would happen, said he. But, how does this apply to the new comers to dialectic?

Here it is. We have, as far back as childhood, acquired certain dogmatic tendencies toward justice and honesty, which, as parents do, have formed our minds, and from which we have taken the habits to follow and to respect.

Indeed.

d

There are, also, other dogmatic tendencies opposed to them, which are seductive and which flatter our souls and which attract us to them, but which do not persuade human beings who are more or less wise to adopt them; and it is those dogmatic tendencies which they honor and follow.

True.

e

Therefore, said I, let's ask a man who has such a fluctuating disposition what he understands by honesty. Once he has answered what he has learned from the legislator, then, confront him and disconcert him in a hundred and one ways, and reduce him to thinking that the honest man is no more honest than the dishonest one, and that he will come to the same uncertainty with respect to justice, goodness, and all those things that he used to revere the most. Tell me, what is going to happen to the respect and the submission that he formerly had for those values?

Obviously, his respect and submission will no longer be the same, said Glaucon.

539a

But then, said I, what will happen when he no longer recognizes the price of these values and their attachment to his soul, and that, otherwise, he no longer knows what to believe? What tendency will he naturally adopt for his conduct if not the one which flatters him the most?

For him, going back to the opposite is longer possible, said he.

From that moment on, I think, he will revolt against lawfulness itself and drop every ounce of respect he ever had.

Inevitably.

Nothing more natural is to be expected, said I, for those who undertake the science of dialectic, and that is why they are excusable, as I said before.

Yes, and deserving of our pity, said he. (Emphasis added)

PLATO'S REPUBLIC, BOOK VII: THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE

In order not to expose those thirty year old men that you have chosen to that sort of pity, said I, I suggest that we take all possible precautions before we introduce them to dialectic.

For sure, said he.

b

Are we not already taking an important precaution, said I, by preventing the young from getting a taste of dialectic? You are not without having noticed, I think, that the adolescents who have once tasted dialectics have abused it by misusing it as a sort of sport, employing it contentiously, and, imitating confusion seekers, they themselves contradict others. They delight themselves like puppies by pulling and tearing the words of everyone who approaches them.

It is for them, indeed, a pleasure without compare, he said.

c

And, when they have themselves confused many, as they have themselves been confused by many, they quickly fall into a violent distrust of everything they formerly considered to be true, and the outcome is that they, themselves, and the whole business of philosophy, are discredited by such public opinion.

Totally true.

But, an older man will not share this madness, said I. He will rather choose to imitate the one who consents to examine truth dialectically rather than the one who makes a jest and a sport of mere contradictions. And so, he will, himself, be more reasonable and moderate, and will bring credit rather than discredit upon such a pursuit.

d

Most true, he said.

And were not all of our preceding statements made with a view to this precaution that we imposed the requirement that those who are permitted to take part in such discussions must have orderly and stable natures, instead of the present practice of admitting the first comer who will bring to it a false disposition.

By all means, said he.

The study of dialectic, therefore, exercised with an assiduous application, at the exclusion of all other occupation, will be the counterpart of gymnastics, and shall require twice as many years as were allotted to the education of the body.

e

Do you mean six years instead of four years? Glaucon inquired.

PLATO'S REPUBLIC, BOOK VII: THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE

Let's not quibble over this, said I. Let's say five years, after which you will bring them back down into the cave again and you will have them take on military duties and all sorts of other offices suitable for the youth, in such a manner that they will not have to catch up any delay over the others. And these functions will permit you to verify, one more time, that they will remain firm against all temptations that will be attracting them from all sides, in order to prevent them from sliding where they will tend to err.

540a

How many years do you allow for all of that? he asked.

Fifteen years, said I, and at the age of fifty, those who have survived the test and proved themselves to be the best in every task and form of knowledge, must be brought finally to their goal, where they will be required to open the eye of their souls and elevate their glance toward the Being that gives light to everything. Then, once they have seen the Good in itself, they can make use of it as a model to establish order in the State, for all individuals and for themselves.

b

Throughout the remainder of their lives, each in turn, when their turn comes, will toil in the service of the State and hold office, for the State's sake, considering their task not as an honorable thing, but as an indispensable necessity. And so, when each generation has educated others like themselves to take their place as guardians of the State, they shall depart for the Island of the Blessed, and dwell there forever. And, the State shall establish public memorials and offer sacrifices to them as to divinities that the Pythian Oracle will authorize for remembering their divine and blissful souls.

c

A most beautiful conclusion, Socrates, you have put upon your rulers, as if they were a statuary, said Glaucon.

And, this also applies to women, Glaucon, said I, for you must not suppose that my words apply to men more than to women who arise from among us endowed with the requisite qualities.

That is right, said he, if everything is equal and common to the two sexes, as we have established.

d

And now, said I, do you recognize with me that our State and our Constitution are not altogether daydreams, but that although they may be difficult to understand, they can be realized, but only in the way we have just described; that is, only when we shall see at the leadership of the State, one or several philosophers who, disinterested in honors that everyone is looking

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for, and considering them as unworthy of a free man who is not looking for glory.

e

On the contrary, these philosophers will make the best case for duty and honor, which will be their only rewards, and by looking at justice as the most important and most necessary thing, they will put themselves at the service and maintenance of that State and they will make it flourish by reorganizing it and by administering it.

In what way? he asked.

541a

All of the inhabitants above the age of ten, said I, should be sent out into the fields and the philosophers should take charge of their children for their education. The manners and the habits acquired from their parents will be transformed, and they will be brought up in accordance with these new principles and laws, which are such as we have just described. This is the speediest and easiest way in which such a State and Constitution, as we have portrayed, can be established and prosper, and be most beneficial for the people they are established for.

b

Much the easiest, said he, and I think you have done a good job of explaining the manner of its realization, if ever it is to become a reality.

Then, said I, we have said enough about this State and its corresponding type of leader – for it is now clear what our conception of him should be.

It is clear, said he, and to answer your question, I think we have come to the end of it.