by reason something midway between opinion (C+D) and intelligence (A).'

'You have understood me very well,' I said. 'So please take it that there are, corresponding to the four sections of the line, these four states of mind; to the top section intelligence, to the second reason, to the third belief, and to the last illusion. And you may arrange them in a scale, and assume that they have degrees of clarity corresponding to the degree of truth possessed by their subject-matter.'

'I understand,' he replied, 'and agree with your proposed arrangement.'

§ 7. THE SIMILE OF THE CAVE

This is a more graphic presentation of the truths presented in the analogy of the Line; in particular, it tells us more about the two states of mind called in the Line analogy Belief and Illusion. We are shown the ascent of the mind from illusion to pure philosophy, and the difficulties which accompany its progress. And the philosopher, when he has achieved the supreme vision, is required to return to the cave and serve his fellow, his very unwillingness to do so being his chief qualification.

As Cornford pointed out, the best way to understand the simile is to replace 'the dimmer apparatus' of the cave by the cinema, though today television is an even better comparison. It is the moral and intellectual condition of the average man from which Plato starts; and though clearly the ordinary man knows the difference between substance and shadow in the physical world, the simile suggests that his moral and intellectual opinions often bear as little relation to the truth as the average film or television programme does to real life.

1. The words used for 'belief' and 'illusion' do not (with the possible exception of a use of πίσις in Book X; see p. 430) occur elsewhere in Plato in the sense in which they are used here. Πίσις, 'belief,' conveys overtones of assurance and trustworthiness; 'commonsense assurance' (Cross and Woolley, p. 126). Εἴδοσις, 'illusion,' is a rare word whose few occurrences elsewhere in Greek literature give us little guidance. It can mean 'conjecture,' 'guesswork,' and some prefer so to translate it here. But 'illusion' is perhaps more appropriate for a 'state of mind'.

I want you to go on to picture the enlightenment or βεβαιότης of our human condition somewhat as follows. vii Imagine an underground chamber like a cave, with a long ιάτρος entrance open to the daylight and as wide as the cave. In this chamber are men who have been prisoners there since they were children, their legs and necks being so fastened that they can only look straight ahead of them and cannot turn their heads. Some way off, behind and higher up, a fire is burning, and between the fire and the prisoners and above them runs a road, in front of which a curtain-wall has been built, like the screen at a puppet shows between the operators and their audience, above which they show their puppets.'

'I see.'

'Imagine further that there are men carrying all sorts of gear along behind the curtain-wall, projecting above it and including figures of men and animals made of wood and stone and all sorts of other materials, and that some of these men, as you would expect, are talking and some not.'

'An odd picture and an odd sort of prisoner.'

'They are drawn from life,' I replied. 'For, tell me, do you think our prisoners could see anything of themselves or their fellows except the shadows thrown by the fire on the wall of the cave opposite them?'

'How could they see anything else if they were prevented from moving their heads all their lives?'

'And would they see anything more of the objects carried along the road?'

'Of course not.'

'Then if they were able to talk to each other, would they not assume that the shadows they saw were the real things?'

'Inevitably.'

'And if the wall of their prison opposite them reflected

1. Lit. 'like us.' How 'like' has been a matter of controversy. Plato can hardly have meant that the ordinary man cannot distinguish between shadows and real things. But he does seem to be saying, with a touch of caricature (we must not take him too solemnly), that the ordinary man is often very uncritical in his beliefs, which are little more than a 'careless acceptance of appearances' (Crombie).
sound, don't you think that they would suppose, whenever one of the passers-by on the road spoke, that the voice belonged to the shadow passing before them?

"They would be bound to think so."

'And so in every way would they believe that the shadows of the objects we mentioned were the whole truth.'

'Yes, inevitably.'

'Then think what would naturally happen to them if they were released from their bonds and cured of their delusions. Suppose one of them were let loose, and suddenly compelled to stand up and turn his head and look and walk towards the fire; all these actions would be painful and he would be too dazzled to see properly the objects of which he used to see the shadows. What do you think he would say if he was told that what he used to see was so much empty nonsense and that he was now nearer reality and seeing more correctly, because he was turned towards objects that were more real, and if on top of that he were compelled to say what each of the passing objects was when it was pointed out to him? Don't you think he would be at a loss, and think that what he used to see was far truer than the objects now being pointed out to him?'

'Yes, far truer.'

'And if he were made to look directly at the light of the fire, it would hurt his eyes and he would turn back and retreat to the things which he could see properly, which he would think really clearer than the things being shown him.'

'Yes.'

'And if,' I went on, 'he were forcibly dragged up the steep and rugged ascent and not let go till he had been dragged out into the sunlight, the process would be a painful one, to which he would much object, and when he emerged into the light his eyes would be so dazzled by the glare of it that he wouldn't be able to see a single one of the things he was now told were real.'

1. Lit: 'regard nothing else as true but the shadows'. The Greek word αἰσθέω (true) carries an implication of genuine, and some translators render it here as 'real'.

2. Or 'more real'.

3. Or 'true', 'genuine'.

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'Certainly not at first,' he agreed.

'Because, of course, he would need to grow accustomed to the light before he could see things in the upper world outside the cave. First he would find it easiest to look at shadows, next at the reflections of men and other objects in water, and later on at the objects themselves. After that he would find it easier to observe the heavenly bodies and the sky itself at night, and to look at the light of the moon and stars rather than at the sun and its light by day.'

'Of course.'

'The thing he would be able to do last would be to look directly at the sun itself, and gape at it without using reflections in water or any other medium, but as it is in itself.'

'But that must come last.'

'Later on he would come to the conclusion that it is the sun that produces the changing seasons and years and controls everything in the visible world, and is in a sense responsible for everything that he and his fellow-prisoners used to see.'

'That is the conclusion which he would obviously reach.'

'And when he thought of his first home and what passed for wisdom there, and of his fellow-prisoners, don't you think he would congratulate himself on his good fortune and be sorry for them?'

'Very much so.'

'There was probably a certain amount of honour and glory to be won among the prisoners, and prizes for keen-eyedness for those best able to remember the order of sequence among the passing shadows and so be best able to divine their future appearances. Will our released prisoner hanker after these prizes or envy this power or honour? Won't he be more likely to feel, as Homer says, that he would far rather be "a serf in the house of some landless man", or indeed anything else in the world, than hold the opinions and live the life that they do?'

'Yes,' he replied, 'he would prefer anything to a life like theirs.'

'And what do you think would happen,' I asked, 'if he

1. Odyssey, xi, 489.
PART SEVEN [BOOK SEVEN]

went back to sit in his old seat in the cave? Wouldn't his eyes be blinded by the darkness, because he had come in suddenly out of the sunlight?'

'Certainly.'

'And if he had to discriminate between the shadows, in competition with the other prisoners, while he was still blinded and before his eyes got used to the darkness—a process that would take some time—wouldn't he be likely to make a fool of himself? And they would say that his visit to the upper world had raised his sight, and that the ascent was not worth even attempting. And if anyone tried to release them and lead them up, they would kill him if they could lay hands on him.'

'They certainly would.'

'Now, my dear Glaucön,' I went on, 'this simile must be connected throughout with what preceded it. The realm revealed by sight corresponds to the prison, and the light of the fire in the prison to the power of the sun. And you won't go wrong if you connect the ascent into the upper world...

1. i.e. the similes of the Sun and the Line (though pp. 267-76 must surely also be referred to). The detailed relations between the three similes have been much disputed, as has the meaning of the word here translated ‘connected’. Some interpret it to mean a detailed correspondence (‘every feature ... is meant to fit’—Comford), others to mean, more loosely, ‘attached’ or ‘linked to’. That Plato intended some degree of ‘connection’ between the three similes cannot be in doubt in view of the sentences which follow. But we should remember that they are similes, not scientific descriptions, and it would be a mistake to try to find too much detailed precision. Plato has just spoken of the prisoners ‘getting their hands’ on their returned fellow and killing him. How could they do that if fettered as described at the opening of the simile (p. 317)? But Socrates was executed, so of course they must.

This translation assumes the following main correspondences:

Tied prisoner in the cave = Illusion
Freed prisoner in the cave = Belief
Looking at shadows and reflections in the world outside the cave = Reason
Looking at real things in the world outside the cave = Intelligence
Looking at the sun = Vision of the form of the good.

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and the sight of the objects there with the upward progress of the mind into the intelligible region. That at any rate is my interpretation, which is what you are anxious to hear; the truth of the matter is, after all, known only to god. But in my opinion, for what it is worth, the final thing to be perceived in the intelligible region, and perceived only with difficulty, is the form of the good; once seen, it is inferred to be responsible for whatever is right and valuable in anything, producing in the visible region light and the source of light, and being in the intelligible region itself controlling source of truth and intelligence. And anyone who is going to act rationally either in public or private life must have sight of it.'

'I agree,' he said, 'so far as I am able to understand you.'

'Then you will perhaps also agree with me that it won't be surprising if those who get so far are unwilling to involve themselves in human affairs, and if their minds long to remain in the realm above. That's what we should expect if our simile holds good again.'

'Yes, that's to be expected.'

'Now will you think it strange that anyone who descends from contemplation of the divine to human life and its ills should blunder and make a fool of himself, if, while still blinded and unaccustomed to the surrounding darkness, he's forcibly put on trial in the law-courts or elsewhere about the shadows of justice or the figures of which they are shadows, and made to dispute about the notions of them held by men who have never seen justice itself.'

'There's nothing strange in that.'

'But anyone with any sense,' I said, 'will remember that the eyes may be unsighted in two ways, by a transition either from light to darkness or from darkness to light, and will recognize that the same thing applies to the mind. So when he sees a mind confused and unable to see clearly he will not laugh without thinking, but will ask himself whether it has come from a clearer world and is confused by the unaccustomed darkness, or whether it is dazzled by the stronger light of the clearer world to which it has escaped from its

2. Cf. 514b-c above.
PART SEVEN [BOOK SEVEN]

previous ignorance. The first condition of life is a reason for congratulation, the second for sympathy, though if one wants to laugh at it one can do so with less absurdity than at the mind that has descended from the daylight of the upper world.

'You put it very reasonably.'

'If this is true, I continued, 'we must reject the conception of education professed by those say that they can put into the mind knowledge that was not there before rather as if they could put sight into blind eyes."

'It is a claim that is certainly made,' he said,

'But our argument indicates that the capacity for knowledge is innate in each man's mind, and that the organ by which he learns is like an eye which cannot be turned from darkness to light unless the whole body is turned; in the same way the mind as a whole must be turned away from the world of change until its eye can bear to look straight at d reality, and at the brightest of all realities which is what we call the good. Isn't that so?'

'Yes.'

'Then this turning around of the mind itself might be made a subject of professional skill, which would effect the conversion as easily and effectively as possible. It would not be concerned to implant sight, but to ensure that someone who had it already was not either turned in the wrong direction or looking the wrong way."

'That may well be so.'

'The rest, therefore, of what are commonly called excel-
ences of the mind perhaps resemble those of the body, in
that they are not in fact innate, but are implanted by sub-
sequent training and practice; but knowledge, it seems, must surely have a diviner quality, something which never loses its power, but whose effects are useful and salutary or again useless and harmful according to the direction in which it is turned. Have you never noticed how shrewd is the glance of the type of men commonly called bad but clever? They have small minds, but their sight is sharp and piercing enough in

1. Triest.
2. Aris.
PART SEVEN [BOOK SEVEN]

but of the society as a whole; and it uses persuasion or 320 compulsion to unite all citizens and make them share together the benefits which each individually can confer on the community; and its purpose in fostering this attitude is not to leave everyone to please himself, but to make each man a link in the unity of the whole.

'You are right; I had forgotten,' he said.

'You see, then, Glaucon,' I went on, 'we shan't be unfair to our philosophers, but shall be quite fair in what we say when we compel them to have some care and responsibility for others. We shall tell them that philosophers born in other states can reasonably refuse to take part in the hard work of politics; for society produces them quite involuntarily and unintentionally, and it is only just that anything that grows up on its own should feel it has nothing to repay for an upbringing which it owes to no one. 'But,' we shall say, 'we have bred you both for your own sake and that of the whole community to act as leaders and king-bees in a hive; you are better and more fully educated than the rest and better qualified to combine the practice of philosophy and politics. You must therefore each descend in turn and live with your fellows in the cave and get used to seeing in the dark; once you get used to it you will see a thousand times better than they do and will distinguish the various shadows, and know what they are shadows of, because you have seen the truth about things admirable and just and good. And so our state and yours will be really awake, and not merely dreaming like most societies today, with their shadow battles and their struggles for political power, which they treat as some great prize. The truth is quite different: the state whose prospective rulers come to their duties with least enthusiasm is bound to have the best and most tranquil government, and the state whose rulers are eager to rule the worst.'

'I quite agree.'

1. Cf. 420b and 466a above, pp. 185 and 252.
2. Socrates takes up here a point made to Thrasymachus at 347b, p. 89.

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Then will our pupils, when they hear what we say, dissent and refuse to take their share of the hard work of government, even though spending the greater part of their time together in the pure air above?

'They cannot refuse, for we are making a just demand of just men. But of course, unlike present rulers, they will approach the business of government as an unavoidable necessity.'

'Yes, of course,' I agreed. 'The truth is that if you want a well-governed state to be possible, you must find for your future rulers some way of life they like better than government; for only then will you have government by the truly rich, those, that is, whose riches consist not of gold, but of the true happiness of a good and rational life. If you get, in public affairs, men whose life is impoverished and destitute of personal satisfactions, but who hope to snatch some compensation for their own inadequacy from a political career, there can never be good government. They start fighting for power, and the consequent internal and domestic conflicts ruin both them and society.'

'True indeed.'

'Is there any life except that of true philosophy which looks down on positions of political power?'

'None whatever.'

'But what we need is that the only men to get power should be men who do not love it, otherwise we shall have rivals' quarrels.'

'That is certain.'

'Who else, then, will you compel to undertake the responsibilities of Guardians of our state, if it is not to be those who know most about the principles of good government and who have other rewards and a better life than the politician's?'

'There is no one else.'
PART EIGHT (BOOK SEVEN)

they look for numerical relationships in audible concords, and never get as far as formulating problems and asking which numerical relations are concordant and why.

"But that would be a fearsome job," he protested.

"A useful one, none the less," I said, "when the object is to discover what is right and good; though not otherwise."

"That may well be."

§ 3. DIALECTIC

The mathematical studies are only the preliminary to Dialectic. We are reminded of the Line and Cave (Part VII, §§ 6 and 7). Dialectic is the exercise of pure thought or intelligence, the highest section of the Line; its object is the vision of the Good, the last stage in the ascent from the Cave, when the eye can look at the sun itself. Exactly what Plato meant by Dialectic has been much disputed. It is clearly concerned with both mathematics and morals, in each bringing coherence and certainty lacking at an earlier stage; but Plato deliberately avoids detail and precision, and if we say that Dialectic is a purely philosophic activity, that it gives coherence to the whole of a man's knowledge, and leads finally to a vision of ultimate reality, we have, perhaps, said as much as can be said with certainty.

"Yes," I said, "for it's only if we can pursue all these studies until we see their kinship and common ground, and can work out their relationship, that they contribute to our purpose and are worth the trouble we spend on them."

"So I should imagine. But it means a great deal of work."

"And you don't suppose it's more than a beginning, do you?" I asked. "The subjects we've described are only a prelude to our main theme. For you don't think that people who are good at them are trained philosophers, do you?"

"Heavens, no, with very few exceptions."

"And can they ever acquire the knowledge we regard as essential if they can't argue logically?"

"No, they can't."

"But isn't this just the note which Dialectic must strike? It is an intellectual process, but is paralleled in the visible world, as we said, by the progress of sight from shadows to real creatures, and then to the stars, and finally to the sun itself. So when one tries to reach ultimate realities by the exercise of pure reason, without any aids from the senses, and refuses to give up until the mind grasps what the Good is, one is at the end of an intellectual progress parallel to the visual progress we described."

"That's perfectly true."

"And isn't this progress what we call "dialectic"?"

"Yes."

"The prisoners in our cave," I went on, "were released and turned round from the shadows to the images which cast them and to the fire, and then climbed up into the sunlight; there they were unable to look at animals and plants and at the light of the sun, but turned to 1 reflections in water and shadows of things (real things, that is, and not mere images throwing shadows in the light of a fire itself derivative compared with the sun). Well, the whole study of the subjects we have described has the effect of leading the best element in the mind up towards the vision of the highest reality, just as the body's most perceptive organ was led to see the brightest of all things in the material and visible world."

"I quite agree with all you've said myself," said Glaucos; "I think it's very difficult to accept in some ways, but as hard to deny in others. However, as this isn't the only occasion on which we shall hear about it and there will be plenty of opportunities to return to it in the future, let us suppose it is so for the present and go on to deal with the main course as thoroughly as we have dealt with the prelude. Tell us what sort of power Dialectic has, and how many kinds of it there are and how they are pursued; for they seem to lead to our destination, where we shall get some rest at the end of our journey."

"My dear Glaucos," I said, "you won't be able to follow me further, not because of any unwillingness on my part, but be-

1. I prefer Asc's ἅρμος to the O.C.T. ἅρμος, but if Adam's explanation of ἅρμος is correct (a 'Platonic phrase for reflections of natural objects'), my translation is still, I think, accurate.
PART EIGHT BOOK SEVEN

cause what you'd see would no longer be an image but truth itself, that is, so far as I can see it; I wouldn't like to be sure my vision is true, but I'm quite sure there is something for us to see, aren't you?'

'Of course.'

'And you agree that dialectic ability can only be acquired after the course of study we have described, and in no other way?'

'I'm quite sure of that.'

'And it can't be denied that it's the only activity which systematically sets about the definition of the essential nature of things. Of other activities some are concerned with human opinions or desires, or with growing or making things and looking after them when they are grown or made; others, geometry and the like, though, as we have said, concerned with reality, can only see it in a kind of dream, and never clearly, so long as they leave their assumptions unquestioned and cannot account for them. For how can any chain of reasoning result in knowledge if it starts from a premise it does not really know and proceeds to a conclusion and through steps which it does not know either?'

'It can't possibly.'

'Dialectic, in fact, is the only activity whose method is to challenge its own assumptions so that it may rest firmly on first principles. When the eye of the mind gets really bogged down in a morass of ignorance, dialectic gently pulls it out and leads it up, using the studies we have described to convert and help it. These studies we have often, through force of habit, referred to as branches of knowledge, but we really need another term, to indicate a greater degree of clarity than opinion but a lesser degree than knowledge - we called it Reasoning earlier on. But I don't think we shall quarrel about a word, the subject of our inquiry is too important for that.'

'It is indeed.'

'So we shall be content to use any term that will indicate clearly the faculty we mean.'

'Yes.'

'Then let us be content with the terms we used earlier on for

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the four divisions of our line - knowledge, reason, belief, and illusion. The last two we class together as opinion, the first two as intelligence, opinion being concerned with the world of becoming, knowledge with the world of reality. Knowledge stands to opinion as the world of reality does to that of becoming, and intelligence stands to belief and reason to illusion as knowledge stands to opinion. The relation of the realities corresponding to intelligence and opinion and the twofold divisions into which they fall we had better omit if we're not to land ourselves in an argument even longer than we've already had.'

'Yes,' said Glaucn; 'I agree about all that, so far as I can follow you.'

'So you agree in calling the ability to give an account of the essential nature of each particular thing Dialectic; and in saying that anyone who is unable to give such an account of things either to himself or to other people has to that extent failed to understand them.'

'I can hardly do otherwise.'

'Then doesn't the same apply to the Good? If a man can't define the Form of the Good and distinguish it clearly from everything else, and then defend it against all comers, not merely as a matter of opinion but in strict logic, and come through with his argument unshaken, you wouldn't say he knew what Absolute Good was, or indeed any other good. Any notion such a man has is based on opinion rather than knowledge, and he's living in a dream from which he's unlikely to awake this side of the grave, where he will finally sleep for ever.'

'With all that I agree emphatically.'

'Well, then, if you ever really had the job of bringing up and educating these imaginary children of yours, you would not, I imagine, let them reach positions of high responsibility in society without having their ideas put in order?

'No.'

'So you will lay it down that their powers of argument must be developed by an appropriate education.'

'With your help I will.'
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'Then we can regard Dialectic as the coping-stone of our educational system, which completes the course of studies and needs no further addition.'

'Yes.'

§ 4. SELECTION AND CURRICULUM

Plato first emphasizes the moral and, more particularly, intellectual virtues necessary in those who are to embark on the course outlined. He then specifies the length of time needed for each stage and the age at which it should be started. The first stage, described in Part III, lasts till the age of eighteen. From eighteen to twenty there are two years of physical training and military service. Then, between the ages of twenty and thirty, selected candidates are put through the mathematical disciplines; that stage is followed (after further selection) by five years' Dialectic, any earlier introduction to which is, we are reminded, very dangerous; then follow fifteen years' practical experience in subordinate offices, after which those who survive all these tests are fully qualified Philosopher Rulers and divide their time between philosophy (which they prefer) and ruling.

'All you have to do now, then,' I went on, 'is to decide who should study these subjects and how.'

'Yes, that's all.'

'Do you remember the kind of people we picked when you were choosing our Rulers?'

'Of course I do.'

'In most respects we should pick them again - we should prefer the steadiest and bravest and, so far as possible, the best-looking. But we shall also look not only for moral integrity and toughness, but for natural aptitude for this kind of education.'

'And how would you define that?'

'Well, my dear chap,' I said, 'they need intellectual eagerness, and must learn easily. For the mind shirks mental effort more than physical, in which it can share the hard work with the body.'

1. P. 156.

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'True.'

'They must have good memories, determination and a fondness for hard work. How, otherwise, will they be ready to go through with such an elaborate course of study on top of their physical training?'

'They won't unless they have every natural advantage.'

'Which explains what is wrong with philosophy to-day and why it has a bad reputation; as we said before, it isn't taken seriously enough, and the people who take it up aren't genuine about it as they should be.'

'How do you mean?' he asked.

'First of all,' I said, 'anyone who takes it up must have no inhibitions about hard work. He mustn't be only half inclined to work, and half not - for instance, a man who is very fond of hunting and athletics and all kinds of physical exercise, but has no inclination to learn and dislikes intellectual effort of any kind. And there are people just as one-sided in the opposite way.'

'That's very true.'

'We shall regard as equally crippled for the pursuit of truth a mind which, while it detests deliberate lying, and will not abide it in itself and is indignant to find it in others, cheerfully acquiesces in conventional misrepresentations and feels no indignation when its own ignorance is shown up, but wallows in it like a pig in a sty.'

'I entirely agree.'

'We must be as careful to distinguish genuine and bogus in dealing with all the virtues - discipline, courage, broad-mindedness and the rest. Failure to make the distinction on the part of an individual or a community merely leads to the unwitting employment of people who are unsound and bogus in some way whether as friends or rulers.'

'That is very true.'

'We must avoid these mistakes,' I went on. 'If we pick those who are sound in body and mind and then put them through our long course of instruction and training, Justice herself can't blame us and we shall preserve the constitution of our
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society; if we make any other choice the effect will be precisely the opposite, and we shall plunge philosophy even deeper in ridicule than it is at present.'

'Which would be a shameful thing to do.'

'It would,' I agreed. 'But I'm not sure I'm not being slightly ridiculous at the moment myself.'

'How?'

'I was forgetting that we are amusing ourselves with an imaginary sketch, and yet too worked up. I had in mind as I spoke the unjust criticisms that are made of philosophy, which annoyed me, and my anger at the critics made me speak more seriously than I should.'

'Oh, come!' he said, 'I didn't think you were too serious.'

'Well, I felt I was. However, don't let's forget that when we were making our earlier choice, we chose elderly men; but that won't do now. We mustn't let Socrates persuade us that as one grows old one's capacity for learning increases, any more than one's ability to run; the time for all serious effort is when we are young.'

'Undoubtedly.'

'Arithmetic and geometry and the other studies leading to dialectic should be introduced in childhood, though we mustn't exercise any form of compulsion.'

'Why?' he asked.

'Because a free man ought not to learn anything under duress. Compulsory physical exercise does no harm to the body, but compulsory learning never sticks in the mind.'

'True.'

'Then don't use compulsion,' I said to him, 'but let your children's lessons take the form of play. You will learn more about their natural abilities that way.'

'There's something in what you say.'

'Do you remember,' I reminded him, 'that we said that our children ought to be taken on horseback to watch fighting, and, if it was safe, taken close up and given their taste of blood, like your hounds?'

'Yes, I remember.'

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'Well, we must enrol in a select number those who show themselves most at home in all these exercises and studies and dangers.'

'At what age?' he asked.

'As soon as their necessary physical training is over. During that time, whether it be two or three years, they won't be able to do anything else; physical fatigue and sleep are unfavourable to study. And one of the most important tests is to see how they show up in their physical training.'

'True.'

'After that time, then, at the age of twenty, some of them will be selected for promotion, and will have to bring together the disconnected subjects they studied in childhood and take a comprehensive view of their relationship with each other and with reality.'

'That is the only way to make knowledge permanent.'

'And also the best test of aptitude for dialectic, which is the ability to take the comprehensive view.'

'I agree.'

'You will have to keep all this in view and make a further choice among your selected candidates when they pass the age of thirty. Those who show the required perseverance in their studies, in war, and in their other duties, will be promoted to higher privileges, and their ability to follow truth into the realm of pure reality, without the use of sight or any other sense, tested by means of dialectic. And here, my friend, you will have to go to work very carefully.'

'Why particularly?'

'Haven't you noticed the appalling harm done by dialectic at present?'

'What harm?'

'It fills people with indiscipline.'

'Oh, yes, I've noticed that.'

'And does it surprise you?' I asked. 'Aren't you sorry for the victims?'

'Why should I be?'

'Well, imagine a child who has been brought up in a large, rich, and powerful family, with many hangers-on; when he
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grows up he discovers that he is not the child of his so-called parents, but can’t discover who his real parents are. Can you imagine how he will feel towards the hangers-on and his supposed parents. first while he still doesn’t know they aren’t his real parents, and then when he does? Shall I tell you what I should expect?’

‘Yes, do.’

‘Well, I should expect that, so long as he didn’t know they weren’t his real parents, he would respect his mother and father and supposed relations more than the hangers-on, be more concerned with their needs, and less inclined to do or say anything outrageous to them, or to disobey them in matters of importance.’

‘Very likely.’

‘But when he discovered the truth, I should expect him to give up respecting them seriously and devote himself to the hangers-on; their influence with him would increase, he’d associate with them openly and live by their standards, and, unless his natural instincts were particularly decent, he’d pay no more attention to his reputed parents and relations.’

‘That’s all very likely. But,’ he asked, ‘what bearing has the illustration on philosophic discussions?’

‘This. There are certain opinions about what is right and fair in which we are brought up from childhood, and whose authority we respect like that of our parents.’

‘True.’

‘And there are certain habits of an opposite kind, which have a deceitful attraction because of the pleasures they offer, but which no one of any decency gives in to, because he respects the authority of tradition.’

‘True again.’

‘Yes,’ I said, ‘but what happens when he is confronted with the question, “What do you mean by “fair”?” When he gives the answer tradition has taught him, he is refuted in argument, and when that has happened many times and on many different grounds, he is driven to think that there’s no difference between fair and foul, and so on with all the other moral values, like right and good, that he used to revere. What sort of re-

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spect for their authority do you think he’ll feel at the end of it all?’

‘He’s bound to feel quite differently.’

‘Then when he’s lost any respect or feeling for his former beliefs but not yet found the truth, where is he likely to turn? Won’t it be to the deceitful attractions of pleasure?’

‘Yes, it will.’

‘And so we see indiscipline supplanting tradition.’

‘Inevitably.’

‘Yet all this is a natural consequence of starting on philosophic discussions in this way, and, as I’ve just said, there’s every reason for us to excuse it.’

‘Yes, and be sorry about it,’ he agreed.

‘Then if you want to avoid being sorry for your thirty-year-olders, you must be very careful how you introduce them to such discussions.’

‘Very careful.’

‘And there’s one great precaution you can take, which is to stop their getting a taste of them too young. You must have noticed how young men, after their first taste of argument, are always contradicting people just for the fun of it; someone proves them wrong, and they follow his lead and argue that other people are wrong, like puppies who love to pull and tear at anyone within reach.’

‘They like nothing better,’ he said.

‘So when they’ve proved a lot of people wrong and been proved wrong often themselves, they soon slip into the belief that nothing they believed before was true; with the result that they discredit themselves and the whole business of philosophy in the eyes of the world.’

‘That’s perfectly true,’ he said.

‘But someone who’s a bit older,’ I went on, ‘will refuse to have anything to do with this sort of idiocy; he won’t contradict just for the fun of the thing but will be more likely to follow the lead of someone whose arguments are aimed at finding the truth. He’s a more reasonable person and will get philosophy a better reputation.’

‘True.’
PART EIGHT [BOOK SEVEN]

"In fact all we've been saying has been said in the attempt to ensure that only men of steady and disciplined character shall be admitted to philosophic discussions, and not anyone, however unqualified, as happens at present."

"I entirely agree."

"Then suppose twice as long is spent on a continuous and intensive study of philosophy as we proposed should be spent on physical training, will that be enough?"

"Do you mean six years or four?"

"It doesn't matter," said I; "make it five. After that they must be sent down again into the Cave we spoke of, and compelled to hold any military or other office suitable for the young, so that they may have as much practical experience as their fellows. And here again they must be tested to see if they stand up to the temptations of all kinds or give way to them."

"And how long do you allow for this stage?"

"Fifteen years. And when they are fifty, those who have come through all our practical and intellectual tests with success must be brought to their final trial, and made to lift their mind's eye to look at the source of all light, and see the Good itself, which they can take as a pattern for ordering their own life as well as that of society and the individual. For the rest of their lives they will spend most of their time in philosophy, but when their turn comes they will turn to the weary business of politics and do their duty as Rulers, not for the honour they get by it but as a matter of necessity. And so, when they have brought up successors like themselves, they will depart this life, and the state will set up a public memorial to them and sacrifice to them, if the Pythian Oracle approves, as divinities, or at any rate as saints."

"It's a fine picture you have drawn of our Rulers, Socrates."

"And some of them will be women," I reminded him. "All I have said about men applies equally to women, if they have the necessary qualifications."

"Of course," he agreed, "if they are to share equally in everything with the men, as we described."

"Well, then, do you agree that the society and constitution we have sketched is not merely an idle dream, difficult though it's realization may be? The indispensable condition is that political power should be in the hands of one or more true philosophers. They would despise all present honours as mean and worthless, and care most for doing right and any rewards it may bring; and — most important and essential of all — they would, throughout their reorganization of society, serve and forward the interests of justice."

"How would they proceed?"

"They would begin by sending away into the country all citizens over the age of ten; having thus removed the children from the influence of their parents' present way of life, they would bring them up on their own methods and rules, which we have described. This is the best and quickest way to establish our society and constitution, and for it to succeed and bring its benefits to any people among which it is established."

"Yes, that's much the best way; and I think, Socrates," he added, "that you have explained very well how such a society would come into existence, if ever it did."

"Then haven't we said enough about this state of ours and the corresponding type of man? For it's surely obvious what type we shall want."

"Perfectly obvious," he agreed. "And I agree with you that there's no more to be said."