

‘It’s another thing you see in dogs,’ I replied. ‘Something which makes you wonder at the animal.’

‘What is that?’

‘When it sees someone it doesn’t know, a dog turns nasty, even though it hasn’t been badly treated by him in the past. When it sees someone familiar, it welcomes him, even if it has never been at all well treated by him. Haven’t you ever found that rather remarkable?’

‘I’d never really thought about it, up to now,’ he said. ‘But I think there’s no doubt a dog does behave like that.’

‘It seems clever, this side of its nature. It seems to show a true love of wisdom.’

b ‘In what way?’

‘Because,’ I replied, ‘it classifies what it sees as friendly or hostile solely on the fact that it knows one, and doesn’t know the other. It must be a lover of knowledge if it defines friend and enemy by means of knowledge and ignorance.’

‘Yes,’ he said, ‘it must.’

‘And are love of knowledge and love of wisdom the same thing?’

‘They are.’

c ‘So can we say with some confidence of a man too, that if he is going to be someone who is gentle towards those he knows and recognises, he must by his nature be a lover of knowledge and of wisdom?’

‘We can.’

‘Then will the person who is going to be a good and true guardian of our city be a lover of wisdom, spirited, swift and strong?’

‘He certainly will.’

d ‘Well, so much for his nature. But what about the upbringing and education of our guardians? What form will those take? Will looking into that question be of some use to us in finding the answer to our main enquiry, which is how justice and injustice arise in a city? We want to cover the subject properly, without going on at enormous length.’

Glaucon’s brother answered. ‘Speaking for myself,’ he said, ‘I’m quite sure that looking into it will be useful in our main aim.’

‘In that case, my dear Adeimantus,’ I said, ‘we must certainly not leave it out, even if it takes longer than we expect.’

‘No, we mustn’t.’

‘Very well, then. Let’s imagine we are telling a story, and that we have all the time in the world. Let’s design an education for these men of ours.’

e ‘Yes, that’s what we should do.’

‘What should their education be, then? Isn’t it hard to find a better education than the one which has been developed over the years? It consists, I take it, of physical education for the body, and music and poetry²⁸ for the mind or soul.’

‘It does.’

‘And shouldn’t we start their education in music and poetry earlier than their physical education?’

‘We should.’

‘Do you count stories as part of music and poetry, or not?’

‘Yes, I do.’

‘And are stories of two kinds – one true, the other false?’

‘Yes.’

‘Should we educate them in both, starting with the false?’

377 ‘I don’t understand what you mean,’ he said.

‘You mean you don’t understand that we start off by telling children legends? These, I take it, are broadly speaking false, though there is some truth in them. And we start children on these legends before we start them on physical education.’

‘That is right.’

‘That was what I meant when I said we should start their education in music and poetry before their physical education.’

‘You were right,’ he said.

b ‘Very well, then. You are aware that it is the beginning of any undertaking which is the most important part – especially for anything young and tender? That is the time when each individual thing can be most easily moulded, and receive whatever mark you want to impress upon it.’

‘Yes, of course.’

‘Shall we be perfectly content, then, to let our children listen to any old stories, made up by any old storytellers? Shall we let them open their minds to beliefs which are the opposite, for the most part, of those we think they should hold when they grow up?’

‘No. We shall certainly not allow that.’

c ‘For a start, then, it seems, we must supervise our storytellers. When they tell a good story, we must decide in favour of it; and when they tell a

²⁸ Instrumental music, at least until the end of Plato’s life, directly accompanied or otherwise complemented song, chant and declamation rather than being developed for its own sake. The single word *mousikē* can therefore denote accomplishment in both music and poetry.

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bad one, we must decide against it.²⁹ We shall persuade nurses and mothers to tell children the approved stories, and tell them that shaping children's minds with stories is far more important than trying to shape their bodies with their hands.³⁰ We must reject most of the stories they tell at the moment.'

'Which ones?'

'If we look at our greatest stories, we shall see how to deal with lesser examples as well,' I replied. 'Greater and lesser must have the same standard, and the same effect. Don't you think so?'

'Yes, I do,' he said. 'But I'm not even sure which these "great" stories are you talk about.'

'The ones Hesiod and Homer both used to tell us – and the other poets. They made up untrue stories, which they used to tell people – and still do tell them.'

'Which stories? What is your objection to them?'

'The one which ought to be our first and strongest objection – especially if the untruth is an ugly one.'

'What is this objection?'

'When a storyteller gives us the wrong impression of the nature of gods and heroes. It's like an artist producing pictures which don't look like the things he was trying to draw.'

'Yes,' he said, 'it is right to object in general to that sort of story. But what exactly do we mean? Which stories?'

'I'll start,' I said, 'with an important falsehood on an important subject. There is the very ugly falsehood told of how Ouranos did the things Hesiod says he did, and how Kronos in his turn took his revenge on him.³¹ As for what Kronos did, and what his son did to him, even if they were true I wouldn't think that in the normal course of events these stories should be told to those who are young and uncritical. The best thing

²⁹ While there was no state supervision in Athens of the stories children heard in the course of their education, the state did control the poetic works that adult citizens witnessed at the dramatic festivals, since it was the responsibility of various magistrates to select, from a pool of applicants, the dramatists who could take part each year.

³⁰ The reference is to the use of massage and swaddling clothes for directing the growth of infants.

³¹ Hesiod, *Theogony* 154–182, 453–506. The sky god Ouranos prevented the children conceived for him by the earth mother Gaia from emerging into the light. Gaia's son Kronos avenged them by castrating his father with a sickle of his mother's manufacture. Kronos in his turn swallowed the children borne him by his consort Rhea and succumbed likewise to the wiles of the mother and of one of those children, Zeus, who thereby became king of the gods.

would be to say nothing about them at all. If there were some overriding necessity to tell them, then as few people as possible should hear them, and in strict secrecy. They should have to make sacrifice. Not a pig, but some large and unobtainable sacrificial animal, to make sure the smallest possible number of people heard them.'

'Yes,' he said. 'Those stories are pretty hard to take.'

'We will not have them told in our city, Adeimantus. When the young are listening, they are not to be told that if they committed the most horrible crimes they wouldn't be doing anything out of the ordinary, not even if they inflicted every kind of punishment on a father who treated them badly. We won't tell them that they would merely be acting like the first and greatest of the gods.'

'Good heavens, no. Personally, I don't think these are at all the right stories to tell them.'

'Nor, in general, any of the stories – which are not true anyway – about gods making war on gods, plotting against them, or fighting with them. Not if we want the people who are going to protect our city to regard it as a crime to fall out with one another without a very good reason. The last thing they need is to have stories told them, and pictures made for them, of battles between giants, and all the many and varied enmities of gods and heroes towards their kinsmen and families. If we do intend to find some way of convincing them that no citizen has ever quarrelled with another citizen, that quarrelling is wrong, then this is the kind of thing old men and women must tell our children, right from the start. And as the children get older, we must compel our poets to tell stories similar to these. As for the binding of Hera by her son, the hurling of Hephaestus out of heaven by his father, for trying to protect his mother when she was being beaten, and the battles of the gods which Homer tells us about,³² whether these stories are told as allegories or not as allegories, we must not allow them into our city. The young are incapable of judging what is allegory and what is not, and the opinions they form at that age tend to be ineradicable and unchangeable.³³ For these reasons, perhaps, we

³² The son who bound Hera and the son who came to her defence against Zeus are one and the same: Hephaestus. The story is that he was rejected by his mother at birth and in revenge made a trick throne for her which caught her fast when she sat in it. The incident with Zeus is narrated by Homer, *Iliad* 1.586–594. Battles of the gods in Homer: *Iliad* 20.1–74, 21.385–513.

³³ At school, Athenian youngsters would memorise rather than interpret poetry, but it was characteristic of the professional intellectuals who offered the elite a higher education to find hidden meanings in the poets, especially Homer.

should regard it as of the highest importance that the first things they hear should be improving stories, as beautiful as can be.'

'That makes sense,' he said. 'But suppose someone were to go on and ask us what these things are, and what stories we should tell, which ones should we say?'

379 I. Adeimantus, I said, 'we are not acting as poets at the moment, you and I. We are the founders of a city. It is the founders' job to know the patterns on which poets must model their stories, or be refused permission if they use different ones. It is not their job to start creating stories themselves.'

'True,' he said. 'But what about this question of patterns for stories about the gods? What should these patterns be?'

'Something like this, I should think. They should always, I take it, give a true picture of what god is really like, whether the poet is working in epic, or in lyric, or in tragedy.'

'Yes, they should.'

'Well then, isn't god in fact good? Shouldn't he be represented as such?'

b 'Of course.'

'The next point is that nothing that is good is harmful, is it?'

'No, I don't think so.'

'Does what is not harmful do any harm?'

'No.'

'Can what does no harm do any evil?'

'No, it can't do that either.'

'But if something does no evil, it couldn't be the cause of any evil, could it?'

'Of course not.'

'Very well. Now, is the good beneficial?'

'Yes.'

'Responsible for well-being, in other words?'

'Yes.'

'In that case the good is not responsible for everything. It is responsible for what goes well, but not responsible for what goes badly.'

'Absolutely.'

c 'In which case,' I said, 'god, since he is good, could not be responsible for everything, as most people claim. Some of the things that happen to men are his responsibility, but most are not; after all, we have many fewer good things than bad things in our lives. We have no reason to hold anyone else responsible for the good things, whereas for the bad things we *should* look for some other cause, and not blame god.'

'I think you are absolutely right.'

d 'In that case,' I said, 'we should not allow Homer or any other poet to make such a stupid mistake about the gods, and tell us that two jars

Stand in the hall of Zeus, full filled with fates.

One of the two holds good, the other ill.

Nor that the person to whom Zeus gives a mixture of the two

Sometimes encounters evil, sometimes good,

whereas for the person to whom he does not give a mixture, but gives evil in its pure form,

Dread famine drives him over earth's fair face.³⁴

e Nor describe Zeus as

Of good and evil steward and dispenser.³⁵

As for Pandarus' violation of the oaths and the truce, we shall dis-
380 approve of anyone who says that Athena and Zeus were the cause of it,³⁶ or that Themis and Zeus were the cause of the quarrel of the goddesses, and the judgment between them.³⁷ Nor again must we let the young hear the kind of story Aeschylus tells, when he says:

For god implants the fatal cause in men,
When root and branch he will destroy a house.

If anyone writes about the sufferings of Niobe – as here³⁸ – or about the house of Pelops,³⁹ or the Trojan War, or anything like that, we must either not allow them to say that these events are the work of a god, or if the poet claims that they *are* the work of a god, then he must find more or less the

³⁴ A mixture of quotation and description of *Iliad* 24.527–532. The words are spoken by Achilles to Priam.

³⁵ Where this line comes from is not known.

³⁶ Homer, *Iliad* 4.30 ff. Despite the piety of the Trojans towards him, Zeus succumbs to cajoling by Hera and Athena, who support the Greeks, and agrees to permit Athena to beguile the Trojan archer Pandarus into breaking the truce currently holding between the two sides in the war.

³⁷ The Trojan prince Paris judged in favour of Aphrodite in the contest for beauty between her and the goddesses Hera and Athena – a decision that eventually led to the Trojan War.

³⁸ Aeschylus' *Niobe* has not been preserved. Niobe boasted of having finer children than those of the goddess Leto – Apollo and Artemis. As a result, these gods were sent by their mother to destroy the children of Niobe.

³⁹ The lurid travails of the descendants of Pelops – including adultery, child killing, cannibalism, and multiple murder between kin – were a frequent topic of tragic drama.

- b sort of explanation we are looking for at the moment. He must say that what god does is right and good, and that these people's punishments were good for them. We must not allow the poet to say that those who paid the penalty were made wretched, and that the person responsible was a god. If poets said that the wicked were made wretched because they needed punishment, and that in paying the penalty they were being helped by god, then we should allow that. But the claim that god, who is good, is responsible for bringing evil on anyone, is one we must oppose with every weapon we possess. We must not let anyone make this claim in
- c our city, if it is to be well governed, nor should we let anyone hear it, whether the hearer be young or old, and whether or not the storyteller tells his story in verse. These claims, if they were made, would neither be holy, nor good for us, nor consistent with one another.'

'You have my vote for this law,' he said. 'I thoroughly approve.'

'There you are, then,' I said. 'That would be one of the laws about the gods, one of the patterns on which storytellers must base their stories, and poets their poems – that god is not responsible for everything, but only for what is good.'

'Yes,' he said, 'that should do it.'

- d 'What about a second law, or pattern? Do you think god is a magician? Would he deliberately appear in different guises at different times? Are there times when he really becomes different, and changes his shape into many forms, and other times when he deceives us into thinking that is what he is doing? Or do you think he has a single form, and is of all creatures the least likely to depart from his own shape?'

'I'm not sure I'm in a position to answer that, just at the moment.'

'How about a different question? When things do depart from their own shape, isn't it necessarily true that they either change themselves or are changed by something else?'

- e 'Yes, it is.'

'Doesn't an external cause of change or motion have least effect on the finest specimens? Think of a body, for example, and the effect on it of food, drink and exertion. Or plants, and the effect of sun and wind and things like that. Isn't the healthiest and strongest specimen least affected?'

- 381 'Yes, of course.'

'And wouldn't the bravest and wisest soul be least disturbed and altered by an outside influence?'

'Yes.'

'The same, presumably, goes for anything manufactured – furniture,

houses and clothes. What is well made and in good condition is least affected by time and other influences.'

'That is so.'

- b 'So anything which is a fine example, whether by its nature or its design, or both, is the most resistant to being changed by an external agency.'

'It looks like it.'

'But god and his attributes are in every way perfect.'

'Of course.'

'So god would be most unlikely to take many shapes as a result of external causes.'

'Most unlikely.'

'Could he, in that case, change and transform himself?'

'Obviously he does,' he said. 'If he changes at all, that is.'

'Does he then turn himself into something better and more beautiful, or into something worse and uglier than himself?'

- c 'If he does change, it must necessarily be into something worse. I don't imagine we are going to say that god is lacking in beauty or goodness.'

'No, you are quite right,' I said. 'And that being so, do you think that anyone, Adeimantus, whether god or man, is prepared to make himself worse in any way at all?'

'No, that's impossible,' he said.

'In which case,' I replied, 'it is also impossible for god to have any desire to change himself. No, each of the gods, it appears, is as beautiful and good as possible, and remains for ever simply in his own form.'

'Yes,' he said, 'I think that must undoubtedly follow.'

- d 'Well, then, my friend, we don't want any of the poets telling us,' I said, 'that

Disguised as strangers from afar, the gods
Take many shapes, and visit many lands.⁴⁰

We don't want any of their falsehoods about Proteus and Thetis,⁴¹ nor do we want tragedies or other poems which introduce Hera, transformed into the guise of a priestess, collecting alms for

⁴⁰ Homer, *Odyssey* 17.485–486.

⁴¹ Both were divinities of the ocean who slipped from the grasp of mortals by changing into a multitude of different creatures.

The life-giving sons of Argive Inachus.⁴²

e And there are many other falsehoods of the same sort which we don't want them telling us – any more than we want mothers to believe them, and terrify their children with wicked stories about gods who go round at night, taking on the appearance of all sorts of outlandish foreigners. That way we can stop them from blaspheming against the gods, and also stop them turning their children into cowards.'

'No, we don't want any of that.'

'Well then,' I suggested, 'though the gods would not themselves change, maybe they nevertheless make it seem to us that they appear in all sorts of different guises? Perhaps they deceive us, and play tricks on us.'

'Possibly.'

382 'What! Would a god be prepared to deceive us, in his words or his actions, by offering us what is only an appearance?'

'I don't know.'

'You don't know,' I said, 'that the true falsehood – if one can call it that – is hated by god and man alike?'

'What do you mean?'

'I mean this. No one deliberately chooses falsehood in what is surely the most important part of himself, and on the most important of subjects. No, that is the place, more than any other, where they fear falsehood.'

b 'I still don't understand,' he said.

'That's because you think I'm talking about something profound,' I said. 'But all I mean is that the thing everyone wants above all to avoid is being deceived in his soul about the way things are, or finding that he has been deceived, and is now in ignorance, that he holds and possesses the falsehood right there in his soul. That is the place where people most hate falsehood.'

'I quite agree,' he said.

'As I was saying just now, this ignorance in the soul, the ignorance of the person who has been deceived, can with absolute accuracy be called true falsehood, whereas verbal falsehood is a kind of imitation of this
c condition of the soul. It comes into being later; it is an image, not a wholly unmixed falsehood. Don't you agree?'

'I do.'

⁴² We do not know why Hera was collecting alms for the sons of Inachus. The line quoted comes from a lost play of Aeschylus.

'The real falsehood is hated not only by gods but also by men.'

c 'Yes, I think so.'

'What about verbal falsehood? When is it useful, and for whom? When does it not deserve hatred? Isn't it useful against enemies, or to stop those who are supposed to be our friends, if as a result of madness or ignorance
d they are trying to do something wrong? Isn't a lie useful in those circumstances, in the same way as medicine is useful? And in the myths we were discussing just now, as a result of our not knowing what the truth is concerning events long ago, do we make falsehood as much like the truth as possible, and in this way make it useful?'

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

'In which of these ways, then, is falsehood useful to god? Does he make falsehood resemble the truth because he doesn't know about events long ago?'

e 'No, that would be absurd,' he said.

'So there is nothing of the false poet in god.'

'I don't think so.'

c 'Is he afraid of his enemies? Would he tell lies for that reason?'

'Far from it.'

'Or because of the ignorance or madness of his friends, perhaps?'

'No,' he said. 'No one who is ignorant and mad is a friend of the gods.'⁴³

'There is no reason, then, for god to tell a falsehood.'

'No, none.'

'So the supernatural and the divine are altogether without falsehood.'

'Absolutely.'

'In that case, god is certainly single in form and true, both in what he does and what he says. He does not change in himself, and he does not deceive others – waking or sleeping – either with apparitions, or with words, or by sending signs.'

383 'That's how it seems to me too,' he said, 'as I listen to what you say.'

'Do you agree then,' I asked, 'that this should be the second pattern for telling stories or writing poems about the gods? They are not magicians who change their shape, either in their words or their actions, and they do not lead us astray with falsehoods.'

'Yes, I agree.'

'So while there is much in Homer we approve of, we shall not approve

⁴³ Adeimantus gives full weight to a term (*theophilēs*) that usually means simply 'favoured by the gods', i.e. 'fortunate'.

- b of Zeus' sending a dream to Agamemnon;⁴⁴ nor of Aeschylus, when Thetis says that Apollo, singing at her wedding, "dwelt upon the children" she would have,

Their length of life, their freedom from disease,
And summing up, sang me a hymn of blessing
For my good luck and favour with the gods.
My hope was high, for Phoebus was a god,
And Phoebus' mouth, brimming with mantic art,
Must speak the truth, I thought. But he who sang,
He who was present at the feast, the one
Who said these things, is now the one who killed
My son.⁴⁵

- c When anyone talks in this way about the gods, we shall get angry with him, and not grant him a chorus.⁴⁶ Nor shall we allow teachers to use his works for the education of the young – not if we want our guardians to become god-fearing and godlike, to the greatest extent possible for a human being.'

'I entirely agree,' he said, 'with these patterns, and I would want to see them made law.'

⁴⁴ *Iliad* 2.1–34: Zeus sends a dream to Agamemnon promising him victory over the Trojans if he leads an immediate assault against them, but his real intention is to bring about a Greek defeat that will salve Achilles' wounded pride.

⁴⁵ The goddess Thetis was the mother of Achilles. Achilles was killed by an arrow from the Trojan Paris, guided by Apollo (also known as Phoebus). We have lost the play of Aeschylus from which these lines come.

⁴⁶ That is, not allow him to stage his play.

Book 3

- 386 'When it comes to stories about the gods, then,' I said, 'this is apparently the sort of thing which from their earliest childhood people must be told – and not told – if they are to show respect for the gods and their parents, and put a high value on friendship with one another.'¹

'Yes, I think our views on this are correct,' he said.

- b 'What about courage? If we want them to be brave, aren't these the stories we should be telling them, plus the kind of stories which will minimise their fear of death? Do you think anyone can ever get to be brave if he has this fear inside him?'

'Good heavens, no.'

- c 'How about belief in the underworld and its horrors? Do you think that makes people fearless in the face of death, makes them choose death in preference to defeat or slavery?'

'Of course not.'

- 'This is another branch of storytelling, then, where it looks as if we must keep an eye on those who want to tell these stories. We shall have to ask them to stop being so negative about the underworld, and find something positive to say about it instead. What they say at the moment is neither true, nor helpful to those we want to become warlike.'

¹ 'Yes, we shall have to keep an eye on them,' he said.

'Then we shall eliminate all descriptions of that sort, starting with:

I had rather labour as a common serf,
Serving a man with nothing to his name,
Than be the lord of all the dead below.²

¹ Respect for parents: 378b; friendship with one another: 378c–d.

² Homer, *Odyssey* 11.489–491. The ghost of Achilles is speaking to Odysseus in the underworld.

Or:

d His halls revealed to mortals and immortals,
Grim, dank, abhorrent even to the gods.³

Or:

Alas, there is then, in the house of Hades,
A spirit and a phantom, but no mind
Within it dwells.⁴

Or:

Alone possessed of thought, the rest but shadows.⁵

Or:

Leaving his limbs, his soul to Hades flew,
Its fate lamenting, and lost youth and strength.⁶

387 Or:

Like smoke his soul departed, crying shrill,
Beneath the earth.⁷

Or:

As in dark corners of mysterious caves
The squeaking bats take flight when, from the bunch
That clings together on the rock, one falls –
So, shrilly crying, did these souls depart.⁸

b We shall ask Homer and the rest of the poets not to be angry with us if we strike out these passages, and any others like them. Not that they lack poetic merit, or that they don't give pleasure to most people. They do. But the more merit they have, the less suitable they are for boys and men who are expected to be free, and fear slavery more than death.'

'Absolutely.'

'So we must also discard all the weird and terrifying language used

³ Homer, *Iliad* 20.64–65. The 'halls' are the realm of Hades, god of the dead.

⁴ *Iliad* 23.103–104. This is Achilles' lament after he has tried and failed to grasp hold of the ghost of his friend Patroclus.

⁵ *Odyssey* 10.495: a description of the soul of the wise prophet Tiresias in the underworld, the single exception to the rule voiced by Achilles in the previous quote.

⁶ *Iliad* 16.856–857: a description of Patroclus slain by Hector.

⁷ *Iliad* 23.100–101: again of Patroclus, as he slips from Achilles' grasp.

⁸ *Odyssey* 24.6–9: a description of the souls of the suitors slain by Odysseus.

c about the underworld. No more wailing Cocytus, or hateful Styx,⁹ or food for worms, or mouldering corpses, or any other language of the kind which makes all who hear it shudder. It may be fine in some other context, but when it comes to our guardians, we are worried that this shuddering may make them too soft and impressionable for our needs.'

'We are right to be worried,' he said.

'That sort of language must go, then?'

'Yes.'

'And our storytellers and poets should use language which follows the opposite pattern?'

'Obviously.'

d 'Then we shall get rid of weeping and wailing by famous men.'

'We shall have to,' he said. 'We can't get rid of the other things, and not that.'

'What you *should* ask yourself, though,' I said, 'is whether or not we shall be right to get rid of them. Our view is that a good man does not regard it as a disaster when death comes to another good man, his friend.'

'Yes, that is our view.'

'So he certainly wouldn't lament on his friend's account, as if something awful had happened to him.'

'No, he wouldn't.'

e 'But we also say that when it comes to living a good life, a good man is the most capable of meeting his own needs, and has less need of other people than anyone else has.'

'True.'

'So he least of all will regard it as a misfortune to lose a son, or a brother, or some money, or anything like that.'

'Yes.'

'And he least of all will grieve over the loss. He more than anyone can take it in his stride when an accident of this kind happens to him.'

'He can indeed.'

388 'We shall be right, then, to get rid of the heroes' songs of lamentation, putting them in the mouths of women – and not even the best women, at that – and cowards. We want the people we say we are bringing up to be guardians of our country to be appalled at the idea of behaving like this.'

'Yes, we shall be right,' he said.

⁹ 'Wailing' and 'hateful' are the etymological meanings of these names of underworld rivers.

'So we have another request to make to Homer and the rest of the poets: not to show us Achilles, the son of a goddess,

First lying on his side, then on his back,
Then on his front,

and then when he gets up,

Drifting, distraught and aimless, on the shore
Of the unharvested sea.¹⁰

- b Nor, as he puts it, "taking the black, burnt dust in both his hands, and pouring it o'er his head".¹¹ We shall ask him to spare us all the rest of those tears and laments he makes him utter. We shall ask him not to show Priam, close kinsman of the gods, in his entreaties:

Rolling in dung, calling each man by name.¹²

Much more important, we shall ask him not to show the gods lamenting, and saying:

- c Ah! Woe is me,
Unhappy mother of a noble son.¹³

If he must show the gods behaving like this, let him at least not have the nerve to give us such a false picture of the greatest of the gods, when he makes him say:

How dear to me the man my eyes now see
Pursued around the city. My heart grieves.¹⁴

Or:

- d And must Sarpedon, that most dear of men,
Fall to Patroclus, son of Menoetius?¹⁵

¹⁰ *Iliad* 24.10–12: Achilles is unable to sleep for missing the dead Patroclus and remembering their experiences together.

¹¹ *Iliad* 18.23–24: Achilles' reaction on being brought the news of Patroclus' death.

¹² *Iliad* 22.414–415: Priam, king of Troy, was seventh in line from Zeus, the king of the gods. Here he implores his people to allow him to go to Achilles to beg back the corpse of his son Hector, slain by Achilles in revenge for Patroclus.

¹³ *Iliad* 18.54: Thetis' reaction on hearing the grief of her son Achilles at Patroclus' death, from which comes the quotation at 388b.

¹⁴ *Iliad* 22.168–169: Zeus expresses his sadness on behalf of Hector, about to be slain by Achilles.

¹⁵ *Iliad* 16.433–434: Sarpedon was a mortal son of Zeus, who here grieves that Patroclus is about to slay him.

If our young men take these kinds of things seriously, my dear Adeimantus, if they don't laugh at them as the unworthy offerings of storytellers, then, since they are only human, they are hardly going to think it beneath them to behave like this themselves. They won't be appalled at the very idea of speaking or acting in this way. No, they'll be quite unashamed, making not the slightest effort to put a brave face on it, as they give voice to great songs of grief and lamentation over trivial misfortunes.'

- c 'You're absolutely right,' he said.

'But that isn't how they should be behaving, as our reasoning just now showed. And until someone gives us a good reason for believing something different, we must have faith in our reasoning.'

'No, it isn't how they should be behaving.'

'On the other hand, they must not be too fond of laughter either. Abandonment to violent laughter, generally speaking, is a violent agent for change.'

'I agree,' he said.

- 389 'So we must not accept it if we are shown men of any importance – still less gods – being overcome by laughter.'

'Particularly not the gods.'

'So we won't accept this sort of thing about the gods from Homer:

Unquenchable the laughter that arose
Among the blessed gods. They sat and watched
Hephaestus bustling up and down the hall.¹⁶

We mustn't accept this, according to your reasoning.'

- b 'Call it mine, if you like,' he said. 'We certainly mustn't accept it, anyway.'

'Then again, truth is another thing we must value highly. If we were right just now,¹⁷ if lies really are useless to the gods, and useful to men only in the way medicine is useful, then clearly lying is a task to be entrusted to specialists. Ordinary people should have nothing to do with it.'

'Clearly.'

- c 'So if anyone is entitled to tell lies, the rulers of the city are. They may do so for the benefit of the city, in response to the actions either of enemies or of citizens. No one else should have anything to do with lying, and for

¹⁶ *Iliad* 1.599–600. Hephaestus, the lame and ugly god, is clowning in the role of wine-pourer, a role typically assigned to the youthful and attractive, in order to amuse and pacify his fellow-gods.

¹⁷ 382c.

an ordinary citizen to lie to these rulers of ours is as big a mistake – bigger, in fact – as telling your doctor or trainer lies about the condition of your body when you are ill or in training, or giving a ship's captain misleading information about the ship and its crew, and how you or your fellow-sailors are getting on.'

'Very true,' he said.

d 'So if a ruler catches anyone else in the city lying – any of those "who work as artisans,"

A prophet, healer of ills, or worker of wood,¹⁸

he will punish him for introducing a practice which is as subversive and destructive in a city as it is in a ship.'

'Yes, if actions are going to be true to words,' he said.

'And then what about self-discipline? Won't our young men need that?'

'Of course they will.'

e 'For the general population, doesn't self-discipline consist principally in being obedient to their masters, and being themselves masters of the pleasures of drink, sex and food?'

'Yes, I think it does.'

'We shall approve, I think, of the kind of thing Diomedes says in Homer:

Be seated, friend, in silence. Hear my advice.¹⁹

And the lines which come next:

The Achaeans now moved forward, breathing fire.
Silent they marched, in awe of their commanders.²⁰

And any other passages like these.'

'Yes, we shall approve of them.'

'What about lines like this?

You wine-dulled dolt,
With spaniel eyes, and courage of a deer.²¹

¹⁸ *Odyssey* 17.383–384. The sentence concludes: 'or an inspired poet, who pleases with his song'.

¹⁹ *Iliad* 4.412: the hero Diomedes rebukes his companion Sthenelus.

²⁰ In fact these two lines neither follow the previous quotation nor each other, but are from different descriptions contrasting the silence of the Greek advance with the racket made by the Trojans (*Iliad* 3.8 and 4.431).

²¹ *Iliad* 1.225: Achilles is insulting Agamemnon, commander-in-chief of the Greek army.

390 And the speech which follows? Shall we approve of them, and any other piece of insolence, in the works of the storytellers or the poets, addressed by an ordinary citizen to his rulers?'

'No, we shan't.'

'No. If we want the young to develop self-discipline, I don't think these are the right things for them to hear – though it's no surprise if they are entertaining in other ways. Do you agree?'

'Yes,' he said.

'How about making a very wise man say he thinks the finest of all sights is this:

b With bread and meat the tables laden full,
And pourers drawing wine from mixing-bowls
To fill the waiting cups.²²

Do you think hearing that is going to help a young man be master of himself? Or this?

Nothing so wretched as to meet one's fate
Dying of hunger.²³

c And what about showing Zeus remaining awake all alone while the other gods and mankind sleep, but then happily forgetting all his plans in his desire for sex, and being so carried away with the sight of Hera that he refuses to go inside, and wants to make love right there on the ground? He is gripped, he says, by desire greater even than when they first slept with one another, deceiving their dear parents.²⁴ Nor do we want to show the binding of Ares and Aphrodite by Hephaestus for the same kind of behaviour.²⁵

'No, I certainly don't think that is the right sort of thing to show,' he said.

²² *Odyssey* 9.8–10: a selective quotation of the proverbially clever Odysseus' actual remark after hearing the bard Demodocus sing, which is rather that no situation is more delightful than when banqueters sit listening happily to a singer, among laden tables.

²³ *Odyssey* 12.342. The speaker is one of Odysseus' shipwrecked crew, Eurylochus, urging his fellows to eat the sacred cattle of the Sun god. Odysseus has just commanded them to resist their hunger.

²⁴ The episode is narrated in *Iliad* 14.292–353. Hera, consort of Zeus, protests at the shameless behaviour; but she has in fact planned the seduction all along.

²⁵ *Odyssey* 8.266–366. Hephaestus punishes his consort Aphrodite and her lover Ares by trapping them under an invisible mesh while they are in bed together, then calling on the other gods to witness their embarrassment.

'On the other hand,' I said, 'if there are any examples, in the speeches
d or actions of distinguished men, of endurance in the face of everything,
then these are models for them to observe and listen to. For example:

He smote his chest, and thus rebuked his heart.
Bear up, my heart. You have borne yet worse than this.²⁶

'Yes, those are unquestionably the right models,' he said.

'Then again, we must not allow our citizens to be corrupt or avar-
icious.'

'No.'

e 'We won't let them hear this recited, then:

With gifts can gods, with gifts can noble kings
Be swayed.²⁷

We shall not praise Achilles' tutor Phoenix for giving sound advice to him,
to come to the defence of the Achaeans if he was rewarded with gifts, but
not lay aside his anger if there were no gifts.²⁸ Nor shall we think it right
391 – in fact, we shall not believe it – for Achilles himself to be so avaricious,
taking gifts from Agamemnon, or on another occasion refusing to release
Hector's body for burial except in return for payment.²⁹

'No,' he said, 'it would be quite wrong to praise this kind of behaviour.'

'It's only my high opinion of Homer,' I said, 'which stops me calling it
impious to talk like this, or give ear to people when they talk like this,
about Achilles. Or to suggest that he said to Apollo:

Thou most destructive out of all the gods,
Archer Apollo, thou hast injured me.
I'd swiftly take revenge, had I the power.³⁰

b Or that he refused to obey the river-god, and offered to fight him.³¹ Or
that he wanted to offer Patroclus, after his death, the locks of his hair
which were sacred to the other river, Spercheius:

²⁶ *Odyssey* 20.17–18. Odysseus, hearing his maidservants flirting with the suitors the night before he is to take his vengeance on them all, banishes thoughts of immediate slaughter.

²⁷ The quotation may be from Hesiod. The sentiment is cited as proverbial in Euripides, *Medea* 964.

²⁸ *Iliad* 9.515–523. The gifts are from king Agamemnon, with whom Achilles has his quarrel.

²⁹ *Iliad* 24.501–2, 552–562, 592–595.

³⁰ *Iliad* 22.15, 20. Apollo has tricked Achilles into allowing the Trojans to slip back inside their city walls.

³¹ Achilles challenges the river-god Scamander in *Iliad* 21.222 ff.

Now let me give Patroclus, noble hero,
This lock of hair, to take with him.³²

We should not believe Achilles did this. As for his dragging Hector round
the tomb of Patroclus, and slaughtering live prisoners on his funeral
c pyre,³³ we shall not admit that any of these are true stories. Achilles was
the son of a goddess and of Peleus – a most sensible man and a grandson
of Zeus – and he was brought up by the wise Cheiron. We're not going to
have our people believing that he was so utterly disturbed as to possess
two completely contradictory faults – an avaricious meanness of spirit,
and great arrogance towards gods and men.'

'You are right,' he said.

'In which case,' I said, 'let us not believe either – and let us not allow
d people to say – that Theseus the son of Poseidon and Peirithous the son
of Zeus set off to carry out those disgraceful abductions, or that any other
hero and child of a god could bring himself to do terrible godless deeds
of the kind which nowadays are falsely attributed to them.³⁴ Let us
require poets to say either that these were not their actions or that they
were not the children of gods. They must not say both, and they must not
e try to persuade our young men that gods can father evil deeds, or that
heroes are no better than men. As we said earlier, these beliefs are both
impious and untrue. We proved, didn't we, that it is impossible for evil to
come into being from the gods?'³⁵

'We did.'

'What is more, these beliefs are damaging to those who hear them.
Anyone will forgive himself for doing wrong if he believes that this sort
of thing was and is typical even of:

The gods' close kin, those near to Zeus, who have
An altar sacred to ancestral Zeus
On Ida's mountain, high among the clouds,
And in their veins the blood of demigods
Has not run dry.³⁶

³² *Iliad* 23.151. Since he is now doomed to die at Troy, Achilles releases himself from the vow made by his father to reserve the lock for a sacrifice to Spercheius, the river of Achilles' homeland, upon his return.

³³ Dragging Hector: *Iliad* 24.14–21; slaughtering the prisoners: *Iliad* 23.175–176.

³⁴ In collusion with his cousin Peirithous, Theseus, king of Athens, abducted Helen from Sparta to be his bride, thus provoking a war with Sparta. The pair then attempted to abduct the goddess Persephone from the underworld to be bride to Peirithous. ³⁵ 379a–380c.

³⁶ A fragment of Aeschylus' lost play *Niobe*. Niobe is speaking of her divine ancestry. Her father Tantalus was son of Zeus.

That's why we must put a stop to stories of this kind, before they produce a totally casual attitude in our young men toward wickedness.'

392 'Yes, we must,' he said.

'Well, then,' I asked, 'in our definition of the kind of stories which may and may not be told, what class of stories is left? We have dealt with stories about the gods, and about demigods, heroes and the dead.'

'We have.'

'The final class, then, would be stories about mankind.'

'Clearly.'

'And we are not in a position to lay down rules for that just at the moment, my friend.'

'Why not?'

'Because we shall say, I imagine, that writers of poetry and prose both
b make very serious errors about mankind. They say that lots of people are unjust but happy, or just but miserable, and that injustice pays if you can get away with it, whereas justice is what is good for someone else, but damaging to yourself. We shall stop them saying things like this, and tell them to say just the opposite in their poems and stories. Don't you think so?'

'I'm quite sure we shall,' he said.

'But if you admit I'm right about that, can't I claim that you have admitted what we have been trying to prove all along?'

'Yes,' he said, 'I see how the argument would go.'

c 'So we can't reach an agreement about mankind, and the kind of stories which should be told, until after we have discovered what sort of thing justice is, and shown that its nature is to be profitable for the person who possesses it, whether or not people *think* he is just.'

'Very true.'

'Let that be enough on the stories. The telling of them, I suggest, is the next thing for us to think about. Then we shall have completely covered both what should be told and how it should be told.'

'I don't understand,' said Adeimantus at this point. 'What do you mean?'

d 'It's important that you do understand, though,' I said. 'Here's a way of looking at it which may give you a better idea. Aren't all stories told by storytellers and poets really a narrative – of what has happened in the past, of what is happening now, or of what is going to happen in the future?'

'Well, obviously.'

'Don't they achieve their purpose either by simple narrative, or by narrative expressed through imitation, or by a combination of the two?'

'There again, I'm afraid, I still need a clearer explanation.'

'As a teacher,' I said, 'I seem to have a laughable inability to make my meaning clear. I'd better do what people who are no good at speaking do – avoid generalisations, take a particular example, and try to use that to
e show you what I mean. You know the beginning of the *Iliad*, where the poet says that Chryses asks Agamemnon to let his daughter go, and Agamemnon loses his temper, and then Chryses, when his request is
393 turned down, utters a prayer to Apollo against the Achaeans?'

'Yes. I do.'

'In that case, you must be aware that down as far as the lines

He implored the Achaean lords, but most of all
Atreus' two sons, the marshals of the host,³⁷

the poet speaks in person. He does not attempt to direct our imagination towards anyone else, or suggest that someone other than himself is
b speaking. But in the lines which follow he talks as if he himself *is* Chryses, and does everything he can to make us imagine it is not Homer speaking, but the priest. He talks like an old man. The whole of the rest of his narrative is constructed along more or less the same lines – not only events at Troy, but also events in Ithaca, and the whole of the *Odyssey*.'

'Exactly,' he said.

'But it's all narrative – both the individual speeches he delivers and the bits he says in between the speeches?'

'Yes, of course.'

c 'And when he makes a speech in the character of someone else, can we say that he always makes his own style as close as possible to that of the person he tells us is speaking?'

'No question of it.'

'But making yourself resemble someone else – either in the way you speak or in the way you look – isn't that imitating the person you make yourself resemble?'

'Of course it is.'

'In passages like this, apparently, Homer and the rest of the poets use imitation to construct their narrative.'

'Yes.'

'If there were no passages where the poet concealed his own person,

³⁷ *Iliad* 1.15–16. The passage Socrates is discussing runs from line 8 to line 42. Chryses, a priest of Apollo, comes to ransom his daughter. She has been captured in a raid by the Greeks (Achaeans) and is in the possession of the supreme commander Agamemnon, son of Atreus.

d then his whole work, his whole narrative, would have been created without using imitation. To save you telling me again that you don't understand how this can be, I will explain. Imagine Homer told us that Chryses came, bringing his daughter's ransom, as a suppliant to the Achaeans, and in particular to their kings, but then went on to tell the story not in the person of Chryses, but still as Homer. You realise that would be simple narrative, not imitation. The story would go something like this. I'm no poet, so I won't tell it in verse: "The priest came and prayed that the gods might grant to the Achaeans that they should capture Troy, and return home safely, but he asked them to release his daughter in return for the ransom, and out of reverence for the god. When he had finished, the rest of the Achaeans showed him respect, and would have agreed to his request, but Agamemnon lost his temper, telling him to depart immediately, and not come back again; otherwise his priest's staff and the god's garlands would be no protection to him. The priest's daughter would be an old woman living in Argos with him before there was any question of releasing her. He told the priest to go away and stop bothering him, if he wanted to get home safely. The old man was alarmed by Agamemnon's threats, and went away in silence. But after he had left the camp he addressed many prayers to Apollo, calling on the cult-names of the god, reminding him of past favours, and asking his help in return if he had ever, in the building of temples or the sacrifice of victims, given the god a gift which had been a source of pleasure to him. In return for these favours, he prayed that Apollo's arrows might make the Achaeans pay for his tears." That, my friend, is the simple narrative, without imitation.'

'I see,' he said.

'In that case,' I said, 'you can also see that you get just the opposite if you omit what the poet says between the speeches, and leave the dialogue.'

'Yes, I can see that too,' he said. 'That's the kind of thing you get in tragedy.'

'Exactly,' I said. 'Now I think I can make clear to you what I couldn't make clear before, that one type of poetry and storytelling is purely imitative – this is tragedy and comedy, as you say. In another type, the poet tells his own story. I imagine you'd find this mainly in dithyramb. The third type, using both imitation and narrative, can be found in epic poetry, and in many other places as well.³⁸ Are you following me?'

³⁸ Tragedy and comedy were in Socrates' and Plato's day the pre-eminent forms of literature. The dithyramb was a type of choral lyric, originally connected with the cult

'Yes. I see now what you were getting at.'

'Now, let me remind you what we have just been saying. We said we had decided *what* stories should be told, but still had to look into the question *how* they should be told.'

'Yes, I remember that.'

d 'So the thing I was really trying to say we should make up our minds about was this. Shall we permit poets to use imitation in their works? Or partly imitation and partly narrative? In which case, when should they use one, and when the other? Or should they not use imitation at all?'

'Let me make a prediction,' he said. 'You're going to ask whether or not we should allow tragedy and comedy into our city.'

'Possibly,' I said. 'Possibly more than that, even. I don't know yet. But we have set sail, and must go where the wind, or the argument, blows us.'

e 'You are right,' he said.

'Here's a question for you, then, Adeimantus. Do we want our guardians to be given to imitation, or not? Or does the same principle apply here as applied earlier?³⁹ The principle was that each individual can only do one thing well. He can't do lots of things. If he tries, he will be jack of all trades, and master of none.'

'Yes, it does apply. Why shouldn't it?'

'Does it apply to imitation as well? Is the same person incapable of imitating many things as well as he can imitate one?'

'Of course.'

395 'So he's unlikely both to follow one of the worthwhile occupations and also to be a versatile imitator, and given to imitation. After all, the same people aren't even able to be successful in two apparently quite similar forms of imitation such as comedy and tragedy. You did classify both of those, just now, as types of imitation?'

'I did. And you're right. The same people can't be good at both.'

'Nor as reciters and actors either.'⁴⁰

'True.'

b 'The same people can't even be actors in comedy as well as tragedy. These are all examples of imitation, aren't they?'

'Yes, they are.'

of Dionysus. The 'other places' in which both imitation and narrative are found would include the victory odes of Pindar and much other lyric poetry.

³⁹ 369e–370c, 374a–d.

⁴⁰ 'Reciters' (or 'rhapsodes') specialised in the performance of epic poetry, that of Homer above all. They did not act in drama.

'What's more, Adeimantus, I think man's nature is a currency minted into even smaller denominations than these. This means he can't be good at imitating many different things, nor good at doing the many real things of which the imitations are copies.'

'Very true,' he said.

'So if we stick to our original plan, which was that our guardians should be released from all other occupations, and be the true architects of freedom for our city, and that everything they do must contribute to this end, it is essential that they do not do or imitate anything else. If they do imitate anything, then from their earliest childhood they should choose appropriate models to imitate – people who are brave, self-disciplined, god-fearing, free, that sort of thing. They should neither do, nor be good at imitating, what is illiberal, nor any other kind of shameful behaviour, in case enjoyment of the imitation gives rise to enjoyment of the reality. Have you never noticed how imitation, if long continued from an early age, becomes part of a person's nature, turns into habits of body, speech and mind?'

'I certainly have,' he said.

'So imitating a woman, young or old, maybe abusing her husband, or competing with the gods and boasting about her good fortune, or in the grip of disaster, or grief, or mourning, will not be a legitimate activity for the people we say we are interested in – the ones we wanted to grow up into the right sort of men. They are, after all, men. And still less do we want them imitating a woman who is ill, or in love, or in childbirth.'

'Absolutely not,' he said.

'Nor should they imitate female or male slaves behaving in the way slaves behave.'

'No. Not that either.'

'Nor the wrong sort of men, presumably: cowards, and those whose behaviour is the opposite of what we said just now they *should* imitate – men who insult or ridicule one another, or use bad language, drunk or for that matter sober, and all the other faults which people of this sort are guilty of in their language and behaviour towards themselves and others. Nor, in my opinion, should they get in the habit of modelling themselves, in their language or behaviour, on people who are mad. They must recognise madness and wickedness in men and women, but none of this is behaviour for them to adopt or imitate.'

'Very true,' he said.

'What about people working in bronze?' I asked. 'Or practising some

other art or skill? Or rowing triremes, or calling the time to the rowers,⁴¹ or any other activity of this type? Should our guardians imitate them?'

'How can they,' he said, 'if they are not even allowed to be interested in any of them?'

'What about horses neighing and bulls bellowing? Will they imitate those? Or the sound of rivers, or the sea breaking on the shore, or thunder, or anything of that sort?'

'No. They are forbidden either to be mad or to behave like those who are mad.'

'If I understand you rightly, then,' I said, 'there is a form of speech and of narrative which is the one the right sort of man would employ when he needed to say something, and then again a second form of speech, quite unlike the first, which would appeal to a man with the opposite kind of nature and upbringing, and which he would employ.'

'What are these forms of speech?'

'I think the decent man, when he comes in his narrative to some saying or action of a good man, will be prepared to report it as if he himself really were the person concerned. He will not be ashamed of an imitation of this sort. He will imitate the good man most when he acts in a responsible and wise manner, and will imitate him less, and less fully, when the good man is led astray by disease or passion, or by drunkenness or misfortune of some kind. When he comes to someone who is unworthy of him, I think he'll refuse to make any serious attempt to resemble one who is his inferior – except perhaps briefly, when the character is doing something good – both because he has had no training in imitating people like this, and because he resents shaping and modelling himself on the pattern of his inferiors. Inwardly he treats behaviour of this sort as beneath him – unless of course it's in jest.'

'Very likely,' he said.

'So he'll use the kind of narrative we described a few moments ago, when we were talking about Homer's epics. The way he tells stories will combine both styles, imitation and the other kind of narrative, but with only a small amount of imitation even in a long story. Or have I got it wrong?'

'No,' he said, 'this is bound to be the style of a speaker of this sort.'

⁴¹ These military tasks were performed by the poorest class of Athenian society.

397 'Now, as for the speaker who is not of this sort, the worse he is, the more prepared he will be to use imitation all the time.⁴² There is nothing he will regard as beneath him, and so he will take it upon himself, in all seriousness, and at public performances, to imitate all the things we were talking about just now – thunder, the din of wind and hail, of wheels and pulleys, b the sound of trumpet, pipe, panpipe, and every musical instrument, even the noise of dogs, or sheep, or birds. Will the way this man tells stories consist entirely of imitation, in word and gesture, with maybe a small element of narrative?'

'Again, it's bound to.'

'There you are, then,' I said. 'That's what I meant when I said there were two styles of storytelling.'

'I accept that,' he said. 'There *are* two.'

'Of these two styles the first involves only slight variations. If he uses a musical mode and rhythm which are right for his style, it is pretty well possible for the person who tells stories in the right way – since the variations in his style are very slight – to achieve musical consistency, using a c single mode and of course a similarly appropriate rhythm.'

'That is certainly true.'

'What about the style of the other storyteller? Because of the enormous range of variations it contains, won't it need just the opposite treatment – all the musical modes, and every kind of rhythm – if it too is to be told in a way appropriate to it?'

'Undoubtedly.'

'Do all poets, then, and storytellers of all kinds, hit upon one or other of these styles, or some combination of the two?'

'They must,' he said.

d 'In that case,' I asked, 'what shall our policy be? Shall we allow them all into our city? Or one or other of the pure styles? Or the mixed style?'

'If my view prevails,' he said, 'we shall allow only the pure imitator of the good man.'

'And yet the mixed style is enjoyable as well, Adeimantus. In fact, the one which is the exact opposite of the one you are selecting is by far the most enjoyable, in the opinion of children and their attendants, and of the population at large.'

'Yes, it is the most enjoyable.'

'Possibly, however, you would say that this style is not in tune with our

⁴² An alternative version of Plato's text yields the translation: 'the more prepared he will be to narrate anything and everything'.

e regime. Our men do not have a dual or manifold nature, since each of them performs only one task.'

'No, it is not in tune.'

'Is this the reason, then, why ours is the only city in which we shall find a shoemaker who is only a shoemaker, and not a ship's captain as well as a shoemaker, a farmer who is only a farmer, and not a juryman as well as a farmer, a soldier who is only a soldier, and not a businessman as well as a soldier, and the others the same?'

'Yes,' he said.

398 'Suppose, then, there were a man so wondrous wise as to be utterly versatile, able to imitate anything. If he came to our city wanting to perform his poems in person, it looks as if we would fall down before him, tell him he was sacred, exceptional and delightful, but then explain to him that we do not have men like him in our city, that it is not right for them to be there. We would pour myrrh over his head, garland him with woollen garlands, and send him on his way to some other city.⁴³ For our own good, b we would content ourselves with a simpler, if less enjoyable, poet and storyteller, who can imitate the decent man's way of speaking, and model his stories on those patterns which we laid down at the beginning of our attempt to provide an education for our soldiers.'

'Yes, that is certainly what we should do, if it were up to us.'

'Well, my friend,' I said, 'on the poetic and musical side of our education it looks as if we have dealt pretty fully with the section on stories and myths. We have laid down both what stories are to be told and how they are to be told.'

'Yes, I agree,' he said. 'I think we have dealt with that.'

c 'Well then, does that leave the question of styles of songs and music?'

'Obviously it does.'

'Presumably anyone could now work out the kind of character we need to prescribe for those, to be in harmony with what has been laid down already.'

Glaucon laughed. 'It looks, in that case, Socrates, as if I'm not "anyone." I'm not sure I'd trust myself to make a guess, on the spur of the moment, about the sort of thing we ought to prescribe. Though I have a pretty good idea.'

⁴³ Lavish treatment with myrrh and garlands was given to statues of a deity. But these statues were not then expelled from the city; this suggests rather the expulsion of a sacred scapegoat in order to remove impurities from the community, as in the annual festival of the Thargelia.

'What you certainly can say with some confidence, I imagine, is that music is essentially composed of three elements: words, harmonic mode⁴⁴ and rhythm.'

'Yes, I can say that,' he said.

'As far as the words go, then, they are no different from words which are not set to music. Shouldn't they conform to the same patterns we laid down just now, and be in the same style?'

'Yes, they should.'

'What is more, the mode and rhythm must follow from the words.'⁴⁵

'Of course.'

'And mourning and lamentation were things we said we could do without in our stories.'

'They were.'

'Which then are the mourning modes? You're musical. You tell me.'

'The Mixolydian,' he said. 'The Syntonolydian. That sort of thing.'

'Should these be banned, then?' I asked. 'After all, they are no use even to women – if we want them to be good women – let alone to men.'⁴⁶

'They certainly should.'

'Drunkenness is also something quite unsuitable for our guardians. And so are luxury and laziness.'

'Of course they are.'

'Which of the modes, then, are appropriate to luxury and parties?'

'There are some Ionian modes,' he said, 'and again Lydian, which are called relaxed.'

399 'Will these be any use to men of a warlike disposition?'

'No,' he said. 'So it looks as if that leaves you with the Dorian and Phrygian.'

'I don't know about modes,' I said. 'Leave me the mode which can most fittingly imitate the voice and accents of a brave man in time of war, or in any externally imposed crisis. When things go wrong, and he faces death

⁴⁴ The several harmonic modes (*harmoniai*) of Greek music are literally 'attunements'. The chief component of each mode was a fixed series of tonal intervals, but other matters beyond the bare notes of the scale seem also to have been specified, such as the relative frequency of the notes to be used, and the tessitura (the degree of high or low singing required). Thus the choice of mode could determine the style of the musical piece, and from early times differences in mode went with differences in poetic genre, occasion and mood. For further details consult M. L. West, *Ancient Greek Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁴⁵ A conventional but conservative opinion, which came under increased pressure during the fourth century from the rise of virtuoso instrumental playing.

⁴⁶ Ritualised keening at funerals was the province of women rather than men.

b and wounds, or encounters some other danger, in all these situations he holds out to the end in a disciplined and steadfast manner. Plus another mode for someone engaged in some peaceful, voluntary, freely chosen activity. He might be trying to persuade someone of something, making some request – praying to a god, or giving instructions or advice to a man. Or just the opposite. He might be listening patiently to someone else making a request, or explaining something to him, or trying to get him to c change his mind, and on that basis acting as he thinks best – without arrogance, acting prudently and calmly in all these situations, and being content with the outcome. These two modes, then. One for adversity and one for freely chosen activity, the modes which will best imitate the voices of the prudent and of the brave in failure and success. Leave me those.'

'Leave you, in other words, with precisely the two I suggested just now,' he said.⁴⁷

'That means we shan't want an enormous range of strings, and every possible mode, in our songs and melodies.'

'No, I think not,' he said.

d 'In which case we shan't produce any makers of those triangular harps, or regular harps, or all those many-stringed instruments which can play many modes.'⁴⁸

'Apparently not.'

'What about the makers and players of reed instruments? Will you allow them into your city? Isn't playing a reed instrument more "many-stringed" than anything else? And aren't the instruments which can play many modes in fact just imitations of the reed-pipe?'

'Yes, obviously they are.'

'That leaves you the lyre and the cithara,' I said.⁴⁹ 'They'll be right for the city. In the countryside, by contrast, there could be some sort of panpipe for our herdsman.'

⁴⁷ The classification of the Dorian mode as dignified and manly was long established, but the standard association of the Phrygian was rather with the freedom shown in excitement, as in ecstatic religious ritual.

⁴⁸ Harps were of Lydian origin and retained associations of foreignness.

⁴⁹ The reed-pipe (*aulos*) was nothing like a flute (the traditional translation of the word) but more like an oboe or clarinet. It had a strong and uncompromising tone, and was the favoured instrument of the wilder sorts of religious ritual. Many notes could be produced from manipulation of a single hole, whereas each string of a lyre produced only a single note. The lyre and the cithara were the fundamental stringed instruments. Their principal service was that of duplicating the sung melody. The reed-pipe, by contrast, lent itself to solos.

- c 'Well, that's certainly the way our reasoning points,' he said.
 'There's nothing very radical,' I said, 'in our preferring Apollo and Apollo's instruments to Marsyas and his instruments.'
 'Good heavens, no,' he said. 'I'm sure there isn't.'
 'Ye dogs!' I said.⁵⁰ 'Without meaning to, we have purged the city we said was too luxurious.'
 'That was sensible of us,' he said.
 'Come on, then,' I said. 'Let's purge the rest of it. Our next concern after mode will be rhythm. We should not pursue complexity, nor do we
 400 want all kinds of metres. We should see what are the rhythms of a self-disciplined and courageous life, and after looking at those, make the metre and melody conform to the speech of someone like that. We won't make speech conform to rhythm and melody. Which these rhythms are is for you to say, as it was with the modes.'
- b 'I really don't know what to say about that,' he said. 'In my experience, there are three types of rhythm from which metres are woven together, just as when it comes to tones, there are four elements from which all the modes are derived. But I have no idea which types imitate which lives.'
- b 'That's something we can ask Damon about,' I said. 'He can tell us which metres are appropriate to meanness of spirit, arrogance, madness and other faults of character, and which rhythms should be left for those whose character is the opposite. I seem to remember, though I can't be sure, hearing him use terms like "composite enoplion"; then there were "dactyls," and "heroic metre," which he arranged, somehow or other, so that upbeat and downbeat were made equal as it turns into short or long
 c at the end. Then there was the "iambic," I seem to remember, and another he called "trochaic," with their long and short syllables. For some of them, I think he condemned or approved the pulse of the metrical feet as much as the rhythms themselves.⁵¹ Or possibly it was the two together, I can't be sure. All these questions, as I say, can be referred to Damon. It

⁵⁰ It is characteristic of Socrates to swear 'by the dog' – a euphemistic oath, comparable to our substitution of 'gosh!' for 'God!'

⁵¹ Greek metre was based on length of syllable rather than stress-accent. One long syllable was the equal of two short. The three types of rhythm fundamental to poetic metre correspond to different proportions between the divisions (upbeat and downbeat) of the metrical foot: 2:2 or equal as in dactyl (—), spondee (—) and anapaest (—); 2:1 or double as in iamb (—) and trochee (—); 3:2 as in cretic (—). The enoplion (or 'martial') was a rhythm used for processional and marching songs; heroic metre is the dactylic hexameter of Homeric epic, in which dactyl and spondee can be substituted for each other.

- would take us a long time to decide them. Or do you think we should try?'
 'God forbid.'
 'But that gracefulness and want of grace can follow on from what is
 d rhythmical and unrhythmical, that is something you *can* decide.'
 'Of course.'
 'But then if rhythm and mode follow language, as we said just now, and not the other way round, what is rhythmical must follow and imitate fine language, while what is not rhythmical follows the opposite. The same with harmony and discord.'
 'Yes, rhythm and mode certainly should follow language,' he said.
 'What about manner of speaking,' I asked, 'and what is actually said? Don't they follow from the nature of the speaker's soul?'
 'Of course.'
 'And the other things follow from manner of speaking?'
 'Yes.'
 'In that case, all these things – the right way of speaking, the right
 e attunement, grace and rhythm – follow from a good nature. I don't mean the good nature which is the polite name we give to stupidity,⁵² but the true intelligence which consists in a character which is rightly and properly constituted.'
 'Exactly,' he said.
 'So if the young are to perform their proper function, aren't these the qualities they should be everywhere aiming at?'
 'They are.'
 401 'Painting is full of these qualities, I imagine, as is any skill of the same sort. So are weaving, embroidery, building – the manufacture of any household object, in fact – even the condition of our bodies and of all things that grow. All these contain gracefulness and want of grace. Want of grace or rhythm, and wrong attunement, are close relatives of wrong speech and a wrong nature, while their opposites are close relatives and imitations of the opposite, the self-disciplined and good nature.'
 'Precisely,' he said.
 b 'Is it only the poets we have to keep an eye on, then, compelling them to put the likeness of the good nature into their poems, or else go and write poems somewhere else? Don't we have to keep an eye on the other craftsmen as well, and stop them putting what has the wrong nature, what is undisciplined, slavish or wanting in grace, into their representations of

⁵² *Eu-etheia*, 'good nature', more usually meant 'simplicity' in the disparaging sense.

living things, or into buildings, or into any manufactured object? Anyone who finds this impossible is not to be allowed to be a craftsman in our city.

c That way our guardians will not be brought up among images of what is bad, like animals put out to graze on bad pasture. We don't want them browsing and feeding each day – taking in a little here and a little there – and without realising it accumulating a single large evil in their souls. No, we must seek out the craftsmen with a gift for tracking down the nature of what is fine, what has grace, so that our young can live in a healthy environment, drawing improvement from every side, whenever things

d some breeze from healthy regions and lead them imperceptibly, from earliest childhood, into affinity, friendship and harmony with beauty of speech and thought.'

'Yes, that would be by far the best way for them to be brought up,' he said.

'Aren't there two reasons, Glaucon, why musical and poetic education is so important? Firstly because rhythm and mode penetrate more deeply into the inner soul than anything else does; they have the most powerful

e effect on it, since they bring gracefulness with them. They make a person graceful, if he is rightly brought up, and the opposite, if he is not. And secondly because anyone with the right kind of education in this area will have the clearest perception of things which are unsatisfactory – things which are badly made or naturally defective. Being quite rightly disgusted by them, he will praise what is beautiful and fine. Delighting in it, and

402 receiving it into his soul, he will feed on it and so become noble and good. What is ugly he will rightly condemn and hate, even before he is old enough for rational thought. And when rationality does make its appearance, won't the person who has been brought up in this way recognise it because of its familiarity, and be particularly delighted with it?'

'Yes,' he said. 'If you ask me, that certainly is the point of a musical and poetic education.'

'It's just like learning to read,' I said. 'We could do it as soon as we realised that there are only a few letters, and that they keep recurring in all the words which contain them. We never dismissed them as unworthy of our attention, either in short words or in long, but were keen to

b recognise them everywhere, in the belief that we would not be able to read until we could do this.'

'True.'

'Well, then. We shan't recognise copies of the letters – supposing

reflections of them were to appear in water, or in a mirror – until we can recognise the letters themselves. Don't both involve the same skill and expertise?'

'Of course they do.'

'And isn't it, as I say, exactly the same with musical and poetic

c education? There's not the remotest chance of becoming properly educated – either for ourselves or for the people we say we must educate to be our guardians – until we recognise the sort of thing self-discipline is. Likewise courage, liberality and generosity of spirit, which keep recurring all over the place, plus all the qualities which are closely related to them, and their opposites. We must see the presence both of them and of their likenesses in all the things they are present in, and we must learn never to dismiss them, be the context trivial or important, but to regard them as part of the same skill and expertise.'

'Yes,' he said, 'it is absolutely essential that we learn this.'

d 'So if someone is lucky enough to possess a soul containing a good character, and a physical form which matches and harmonises with that character, which is modelled on the same pattern, wouldn't that be the fairest of sights for anyone with eyes to see it?'

'Very much so.'

'But what is fairest is most desirable.'

'Naturally.'

'So the well educated man will fall in love with people as much like this as possible. But he will not fall in love with someone whose soul and body are out of tune.'

'Not if the defect is in the soul,' he said. 'If it is in the body, he might put up with it, and be prepared to love him.'

e 'Ah, yes, of course,' I said. 'Am I right in thinking you are – or were – the lover of a boy like this? Anyway, be that as it may, I think you're right. Now, the next question. Does too much pleasure have anything to do with self-discipline?'

'How could it? Too much pleasure makes you as irrational as pain does.'

'Does it have anything to do with any other good quality?'

'No.'

403 'How about arrogance and indiscipline? Does it have anything to do with those?'

'Yes, everything.'

'Can you think of any pleasure greater or keener than sexual pleasure?'

'No,' he said. 'Nor a more insane pleasure, either.'

'Whereas the right sort of love is by its nature the self-controlled and harmonious love of what is self-disciplined and beautiful?'

'Precisely,' he said.

'So we must not offer the right sort of lover what is insane, or what is related to lack of discipline?'

'No, we mustn't.'

b 'In which case we mustn't offer him sexual pleasure, must we? Neither lover nor boy must have anything to do with it, if they are loving and being loved in the right way.'

'Good heavens, no, Socrates. We certainly mustn't offer them that.'

'You will pass a law to that effect, presumably, in this city you are founding. A lover can kiss his boy friend, spend time with him and touch him, as he would a son – for beauty's sake, and if the boy says "yes." Apart c from that, his relationship with the boy he is interested in should never allow anyone to imagine he has gone any further than that. Otherwise he will be condemned as uneducated, and blind to beauty.'

'Yes, I shall pass a law to that effect,' he said.

'Well, then, do you think our discussion of musical and poetic education has come to an end?' I asked. 'It has certainly ended where it ought to end. Music and poetry ought, I take it, to end in love of beauty.'

'I agree,' he said.

'And after musical and poetic education, our young men must be given a physical education.'

'Naturally.'

d 'Here, too, from their earliest childhood and throughout their lives, they must be brought up very carefully. The situation is something like this, I believe, but see what you think. It's my opinion that if the body is in good shape, it does not by its own excellence make the soul good. On the other hand, a good soul *can* by its own excellence make a body as good as it is capable of being. What is your opinion?'

'I agree with you,' he said.

e 'Let's assume we have made adequate provision for the mind. If we were now to entrust it with making detailed prescriptions for the body, contenting ourselves for brevity's sake with providing general guidelines, would we be going about things in the right way?'

'We would.'

'Well, drunkenness was one thing we said they should avoid. A guard

is the last person who can be allowed to get drunk, and not know where on earth he is.'

'Yes,' he said, 'it's absurd for a guardian to need a guardian.'

'What about their food? After all, these men are competing for us, aren't they, in the most important of all competitions?'

'Yes.'

404 'In that case, would the diet of present-day athletes be the right thing for them?'

'It might well be.'

'It's a pretty soporific diet,' I said, 'and unreliable from a health point of view. Haven't you noticed that these athletes spend most of their lives asleep, and that if they depart even slightly from their prescribed regime, they contract serious and acute diseases?'

'Yes, I have noticed that.'

b 'We need something a bit less crude as a regimen for our warrior-athletes. It's vital that they should be alert, like hounds, as keen of sight and hearing as possible, and capable, when they are on active service, of tolerating a variety of drink and food, extremes of heat, storms, without any adverse effect on their health.'

'Yes, I think I agree.'

'Well, then, won't the best physical education be sister, in a way, to the musical and poetic education we have just outlined?'

'How do you mean?'

'It will be physical education, I take it, of a simple and judicious type – especially since it is intended for those who are soldiers.'

'Simple and judicious in what way?'

c 'This is the sort of thing you could learn from Homer, actually. In the heroes' feasts when they are on campaign, you remember, he does not feast them on fish – despite the fact that they are on the Hellespont, right by the sea – nor on stewed meat, but only on roast, which is what soldiers would find easiest to cope with. Wherever you are, more or less, it is easier just to use fire than to carry pots and pans around with you.'

'It certainly is.'

'As for seasonings, Homer never, as far as I remember, says anything about them. All athletes know, don't they, that if you want your body to be in good shape you must avoid anything like that?'

'They are right about this,' he said, 'and they do well to avoid that kind of thing.'

'This was the point of agreement I wanted to reach when I said that painting – and imitation in general – operates in an area of its own, far removed from the truth, and that it associates with the element in us which is far removed from intelligence – a liaison and friendship from which nothing healthy or true can result.'

'Precisely,' he said.

'An inferior art, then, imitation. And its union with what is inferior produces inferior offspring.'

'That's the way it looks.'

'And is that only imitation in things we see?' I asked. 'Or is it also imitation in things we hear – what we call poetry?'

'Poetry as well, I would guess.'

↓ c 'Well,' I said, 'let's not trust to guesswork alone, and the analogy with painting. Let's turn directly to the actual part of our thought which poetic imitation has to do with, and see whether that is something trivial or something important.'

'Yes, that is what we should do.'

'We can put it to ourselves like this. Imitation, we say, imitates men performing actions freely or under compulsion. As a result of their actions, they believe they have done well or badly, and in all these situations they feel pain or pleasure. There wasn't any more to it than that, was there?'

'No.'

d 'Now, is a man's attitude consistent in all these activities? Or is it the same with actions as it was with vision? Then he was in a state of civil war, and held opposite opinions about the same things within himself. Is he at odds with himself in the same way when it comes to his actions? Is he at war with himself? Come to think of it, though, that isn't a question which is still waiting to be answered. We answered all those questions quite satisfactorily in the earlier part of our discussion, when we agreed that there were countless contradictions of this kind, that the soul was full of them.'¹²

'Correct,' he said.

e 'Yes, it was correct,' I said. 'But there was something we left out then which I think we now have to explain.'

'What is that?'

'What we said then, I think, was that if something happens to a good

¹² 439c-441c.

man – losing a son, perhaps, or something else of great value – he will more easily endure it than anyone else would.'¹³

'He certainly will.'

'The question we now have to ask ourselves is whether he will feel no pain at all. Or if that is impossible, will he nonetheless observe some moderation in his grief?'

'Yes,' he said, 'that seems closer to the truth.'

604 'Right. In that case, tell me something else about him. Do you think he will put up a better fight and resistance against his grief when he is being observed by his equals, or when he is on his own, in a deserted place, all by himself?'

'I should think there'll be a big difference when he is being observed,' he said.

'Yes. When he is on his own, I imagine, he will not be ashamed to say all sorts of things which he would be embarrassed if anyone else heard him saying. And he'll do all sorts of things which he wouldn't be prepared to have anyone see him doing.'

'That is so,' he said.

b 'Are reason and established custom the things which encourage him to resist, while what drags him back to his grief is his misfortune itself?'

'Yes.'

'And when a human being has opposing impulses, relating to the same thing, at the same time, we say these must necessarily be two different elements.'

'Yes, of course.'

'Is one element prepared to follow custom wherever custom leads?'

'And where would that be?'

c 'Custom says, presumably, that in misfortune the best thing is not to be upset, but to be as calm as possible – for a number of reasons. In the first place, it is not clear how much is good and how much bad in situations of this sort. Second, if we look to the future, it does no good to take things hard. Third, nothing in human affairs is worth taking that seriously. And fourth, grieving gets in the way of the thing which ought, in these situations, to come to our assistance as swiftly as possible.'

'What thing do you mean?' he asked.

'Reflection on what has happened,' I replied. 'People should accept the way things have fallen out the way they accept the fall of the dice, and then

¹³ 387d-e.

make their plans in the way reason prescribes as best for them. They shouldn't spend their time howling, clutching hold of the part which is hurt, like children who have fallen over. They should always accustom their souls to concentrate straight away on curing and repairing the damaged and injured part. They should use healing to do away with lamentation.¹⁴

'Yes,' he said, 'that would certainly be the right attitude to take towards misfortune.'

'So it's the best element, we say, which is prepared to use this kind of rational calculation as a guide.'

'Clearly.'

'Whereas the element which draws us towards mourning and the recollection of our sufferings, which can never get its fill of these things – won't we describe this as irrational, lazy and a friend to cowardice?'

'Yes, we will.'

'This element, the fretful element, is highly susceptible to all sorts of varied imitation. The calm, thoughtful character, on the other hand, unchanging and true to itself, is hard to imitate, and not a simple matter to understand if it is imitated – particularly in public, when you get a diverse collection of people in the theatre.¹⁵ What is being imitated is quite unfamiliar to them.'

605 'Absolutely.'

'The imitative poet's nature is obviously not adapted to this element in the soul, nor is his wisdom framed to appeal to it. Not if he's going to be popular with the general public. His concern is with the fretful, variegated character, because that is the one which is easy to imitate.'

'Obviously.'

'So we'd be justified now in taking him and putting him on a par with the painter. His products, like the painter's, are inferior by comparison with the truth, and he resembles him also in associating with an inferior part of the soul, not with the best part. By rights, therefore, we ought not to admit him into a city which is going to be well governed, since it is an inferior part of the soul that he arouses and feeds, and by making this strong destroys the rational part. It's the same with a city. If you give

¹⁴ The evidence for conventional Greek attitudes towards grieving speaks more ambiguously than the voice of custom here. Greek males were less inhibited from weeping than those in some modern cultures. On the other hand, appeals for restraint in mourning were not uncommon. See *GPM* 167–169.

¹⁵ Greek drama was mass entertainment, performed at festivals on public holidays.

power to those who are bad, and hand the city over to them, you destroy those who are better. In exactly the same way, we shall say, the imitative poet sets up a bad regime in the soul of each individual, gratifying the senseless part of it, the part which cannot distinguish larger from smaller, and which regards the same things at one time as large and at another time as small. He is nothing but an image-maker, and he stands far removed from the truth.'

'He does indeed.'

'However, we haven't yet brought our most serious accusation against imitative poetry. Its ability to corrupt even good people – with a very few exceptions – is surely a disgrace.'

'Of course it is, if that really is what it does.'

'Listen, and see what you think. The best of us, I imagine, when we hear Homer or one of the tragic poets imitating some hero in a state of grief, as he drags out a long speech of lamentation, or even breaks into song, or starts beating his breast . . . well, you know how it is. We enjoy it, and surrender ourselves to it. We follow and share the hero's sufferings, treat them as real, and praise as an excellent poet the person who most affects us in this way.'

'Yes, I know how it is. How could I fail to?'

'And yet when some misfortune affects one of us personally, you're aware how we pride ourselves on doing the exact opposite – if we can have the strength to remain silent, and endure. We seem to regard this as men's behaviour, and what we praised in the poetic context as women's behaviour.'

'Yes, I'm aware of that,' he said.

'Is praise of that sort justified, then – if you see a man behaving in a way you wouldn't dream of behaving yourself, a way you'd be ashamed to behave, and are not repelled by it, but take pleasure in it and praise it?'

606 'Heavens, no,' he said. 'That kind of praise sounds quite unreasonable.'

'Yes, it does,' I said. 'At least, it does if you look at it like this.'

'Like what?'

'Think about it. Here we have this element which in one situation – in our private misfortunes – is forcibly held in check, though it has this hunger which can only be satisfied by weeping and wholesale lamentation, since these are the satisfactions this kind of thing by its nature desires. Then in another situation this same part is fulfilled and gratified by the poets, and what is by nature the best part of us, inadequately educated by reason or habit, abandons its watch over grieving of that

kind. It says the sorrows it is watching are another's, and if someone else, who claims to be a good man, is grieving inappropriately, there is nothing for us to be ashamed of in applauding him and pitying him. We believe there is a positive benefit, which is pleasure, and would not be prepared to lose that by rejecting the whole poem. It is given to few people, I suspect, to work out that the pleasure they take in what happens to others necessarily carries over into what happens to them. If they allow the faculty of pity to grow strong, by feeding it on the sorrows of others, it is hard to restrain it when it comes to their own sorrows.'

'Very true,' he said.

c 'The same argument applies to laughter, doesn't it? If there are jokes you wouldn't dream of making yourself, but which you very much enjoy when you hear them in the comic theatre, or even in private company – if you don't regard them as the wrong sort of jokes, or hate them, isn't what you are doing the same as with the things you pity? That element in yourself which wanted to make jokes, but which you kept in check by means of reason because you were frightened of being thought a buffoon, you now release. You don't realise that giving it its head in this way results in your playing the comedian, over and over again, in your own life.'

d 'Exactly.'

'Doesn't it apply also to sex, anger, and all the desires, pains and pleasures in the soul which we say accompany any of our actions? Isn't the effect of poetic imitation on us the same? It feeds and waters these things, when they ought by rights to wither away. And it makes them our rulers, though if we want to be better and happier rather than worse and more wretched, they ought to be ruled by us.'

'I have to agree with you,' he said.

e 'In that case, Glaucon, when you come across Homer's admirers saying that this is the poet who has educated Greece, that he is worth studying both for our general education and for the management of human affairs, 607 that we should learn from him and follow this poet in the arrangement and conduct of the whole of our own lives, then by all means show them the warmth of friendship and affection. They are, after all, excellent people within their limitations. By all means agree that Homer is highly poetic, and first among tragic writers, but be aware that the only poetry we can accept into our city are hymns to the gods and verses in praise of good men. If you accept the honeyed Muse, in song or poetry, pleasure and pain will be twin kings in your city in place of established custom and the thing which has always been generally accepted as best – reason.'

'Very true,' he said.

b 'Well, since we've brought up the subject of poetry again, let our defence be this. Since that is what she is like, it was not unreasonable of us to banish her from our city. Reason demanded it. And let us say to her, if she looks like accusing us of being harsh or uncultured, that there is a long-standing antagonism between poetry and philosophy. The "howling dog" which "yelps against its master," "great in the empty eloquence of fools," "the mob of wise men who have mastered Zeus," "how c subtle thinkers are but beggars yet," and countless other passages, are evidence of their long-standing opposition.¹⁶ And if, despite this, imitation, the poetry which is for pleasure, has any argument to show that she should be included in a well-governed city, let our reply be that left to ourselves we would gladly allow her back. We know how beguiling we ourselves find her. But it is wrong to abandon what we believe d to be true. Don't you find that as well, my friend? Don't you find her beguiling, especially when it is through Homer that you behold her?'

'Yes, very.'

'So is she entitled to make her return – but only after having defended herself, in lyric or some other metre?'

'Absolutely.'

'And I suppose we might allow those of her defenders who have no gift for poetry, but are lovers of poetry, to speak in prose on her behalf, and tell us she is not only pleasurable but also a good thing – for political regimes and individual human lives. We'll be good listeners, since I e imagine it will clearly be to our advantage if she is shown to be a good thing as well as pleasurable.'

'How can it not be to our advantage?' he said.

'And if they can't tell us that, my dear friend, then we must do what lovers do when they have fallen in love with someone and decided their love is not a good thing. They stay away. It may be a struggle, but they stay away nonetheless. It's the same with us. The love of imitative poetry has 608 grown in us as a result of our being brought up in these wonderful regimes of ours, and this will predispose us to believe that she is as good and as true as possible. But while she remains incapable of making this

¹⁶ The quotations are all taken from poetic attacks on philosophers, for their useless chatter, their unjustified arrogance, their irregularity in religion, their inability to achieve worldly success. We do not know the sources of the citations here, but at least some of them probably come from comic drama, which loved to take pot-shots at philosophers.

defence, we shall recite to ourselves, as we listen to her, this argument we have put forward, as a kind of charm to prevent any relapse into our childish but popular passion. And this will be the spell we shall recite, that this kind of poetry is not something to be taken seriously, as something important, with some bearing on the truth. The listener should be on his guard against it if he is concerned about the regime within him, and his views on poetry should be the ones we have put forward today.'

'I couldn't agree more,' he said.

'It's a great test, Glaucon, greater than people realise – this question of turning out good or bad. We shouldn't be led by success, money, power – or even poetry – into neglecting justice, or virtue in general.'

'After what we have said today, I agree. So would anyone else, I imagine.'

c 'And that's without even mentioning the greatest of the rewards and prizes which are on offer for virtue.'

'Greater than we can imagine, you must mean, if there are other rewards greater than the ones we have described.'

'Nothing great can happen in a short space of time,' I said. 'And presumably, compared with eternity, our whole span of time from childhood to old age is a short space of time.'

'A mere nothing,' he said.

d 'Well, then. Do you think something which is immortal should be seriously interested in this short period of time, and not in the whole of time?'

'No, I think it should be interested in the whole of time. What are you getting at?'

'Don't you know for a fact,' I said, 'that our soul is immortal, that it never dies?'

He looked at me in astonishment. 'Good heavens, no,' he said. 'I don't know that for a fact. What about you? Are you in a position to say so for certain?'

'Yes, I am – unless I'm greatly at fault. So are you, I imagine. There's no difficulty about it.'

'There is for me,' he said. 'So I'd very much like you to tell me about this thing which presents no difficulty.'

'Listen, then,' I said.

'Tell me.'

e 'Do you say there is a good and a bad?'

'Yes, I do.'

'And is your opinion about them the same as mine?'

'What is your opinion?'

'That what corrupts and destroys is always the bad, whereas what saves and preserves is the good?'

'Yes, I do believe that,' he said.

609 'What about a bad and a good for each thing? Do you accept those? Ophthalmia for the eyes, for example. Or if it's the whole body, disease. For corn it's blight, for wood it's rot, and for bronze and iron it's rust. Doesn't practically everything, as I say, have its own characteristic evil and disease?'

'Yes, I accept that.'

'When one of these agents attacks something, does it weaken the thing it attacks? Does it in the end break it down and destroy it completely?'

'It's bound to.'

b 'So it's this characteristic evil each thing has, and the weakness it causes, which destroys each thing. And if this doesn't destroy it, then nothing else can destroy it either. The good is certainly never going to destroy anything. Nor will what is neither good nor bad.'

'No, of course not,' he said.

'So if we find among existing things something which has an evil which makes it bad, and yet this evil is incapable of destroying it and breaking it down, won't we then know that in that case it was never in its nature to be destroyed?'

'That would be reasonable,' he said.

'Very well. What about the soul? Doesn't that have something that makes it bad?'

c 'It certainly does,' he said. 'All the things we've just been describing. Injustice, lack of discipline, cowardice, ignorance.'

'Well, then, does any of these break it down and destroy it? Be careful, now. We don't want to make the mistake of thinking, when someone unjust and foolish is detected being unjust, that he has been destroyed by injustice, which is the defect of the soul. Look at it like this instead. In the case of the body, the defect of the body – which is disease – wastes it away, corrupts it, and brings it to the point of not even being a body at all. In the same way all the things we've just been talking about reach the point d of not being, when their own specific evil attaches itself to them, occupies them, and destroys them. Isn't that right?'

'Yes.'

'Good. Now, look at the soul in the same way. When injustice and the

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The Republic

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