

Plato's *Laws*

Book 2

Translated by David Horan

Persons in the dialogue: Athenian Stranger, Cleinias, Megillus

Athenian Stranger: It seems then, that the next question we need to consider is whether discerning one another's natures is the only good that comes from the correct use of wine parties, or whether they involve some important benefit that deserves to be taken very seriously. Well, what do we say? The argument, it seems, wishes to indicate that such a benefit is involved but we should hear how, and in what sense, paying close attention ^{652B} in case we get tangled up in the argument.

Cleinias: Speak on.

Ath: Well then, I wish to recall once more, what exactly we say ^{653A} right education is, in our view. For my guess now is, that the salvation of education lies in this activity being organised in the right way.

Cle: That's a bold claim.

Ath: Well, I am saying that the first, primitive, sensation in children is pleasure and pain, and it is in these that excellence and vice first come to the soul. As for understanding and confident true opinions, fortunate is the man to whom they come, even in old age, and perfect is the person who has acquired these, and all the goods that are in them. ^{653B} And I call education, the excellence that comes to children first, when pleasure, affection, pain and hate are engendered in the right way in those who are not yet able to understand the reason. And when they do come to understand they will concur with reason and accept that they have become accustomed to acting in the correct manner because the habits of their childhood are so fitting. Now this total concurrence is excellence, but there is a part of this that may be isolated in the argument and may be referred to as education, and in my opinion, it would be right to do so. This part is the correct upbringing in relation to pleasure and pain, so as to hate ^{653C} what one should hate, from the very beginning, right until the end, and love what one should love.

Cle: Yes indeed, stranger, what you said earlier about education, and what you are saying now, sounds right to us.

Ath: Good. Now although this correct training in pleasures and pains constitutes education, it slackens and diminishes, to a considerable extent, over the course of one's life, and the gods, taking pity ^{653D} on the natural hardship suffered by the human race, have instituted festival days as respites from our labours, and they have provided the Muses and Apollo their leader, and Dionysos too, as our festival companions, to regulate the festivals and they provided sustenance there in the company of the gods.

There is an argument that is repeated constantly nowadays, and we should see whether or not it is true and accords with nature. It maintains that the young, all of them, are more or less incapable of keeping their bodies or their mouths quiet. Their constant endeavour is to move ^{653E} and make sounds, leaping and jumping, dancing with delight and playing around, and making all sorts of noises. Now the other animals have no awareness of the kinds of order or disorder in their various movements, order that we call rhythm and harmony. But to us humans who, as we said, ^{654A} were given the gods as our companions in dance, these very gods have

given us an awareness of rhythm and harmony, accompanied by pleasure. By this awareness they move us, and act as our chorus leaders, connecting us to one another with songs and dances. And they gave the chorus its name, “chorus”, because of its natural charm.¹ First then, do we accept this, and may we propose that education is, initially, through the Muses and Apollo or what should we say?

Cle: Just that.

Ath: So, for us, the uneducated person ^{654B} will be someone who has not participated in the chorus, and we should propose that the educated person has participated enough.

Cle: Indeed.

Ath: Now a choral performance involves dancing and singing combined together.

Cle: Of course.

Ath: So the person who has been well educated would be capable of singing and dancing well.

Cle: So it seems.

Ath: Let’s look at what exactly we are saying now.

Cle: What are you referring to?

Ath: We say that “he sings well” or “he dances well” but should ^{654C} we add, “provided that what he sings is good and what he dances is good”, or should we not add this?

Cle: We should add this.

Ath: What about someone who regards what is good as good and what is base as base and makes use of them accordingly? Will such a person, in our view, be better educated in choral performance and music when he is consistently able to be faithful enough, physically and verbally, to his concept of what is proper, but takes no delight in anything good and has no aversion to whatever is not? Would he be better educated than someone who was not really able, verbally ^{654D} or physically, to successfully accomplish anything good, or to conceive of it mentally, but is right when it comes to pleasure and pain, because he embraces whatever is good and detests whatever is not?

Cle: These two cases, stranger, are vastly different in terms of education.

Ath: Well then, if the three of us recognise what’s good in relation to singing and dancing, we shall also know, correctly, who has been educated and who is uneducated. But if we don’t recognise this we would never be able to recognise clearly whether a guardian of education exists and where it is. ^{654E} Isn’t this so?

Cle: It is so indeed.

Ath: So what we have to track down next, like hounds following a trail, is what’s good in bodily bearing, in melody, in song and in dance. But if these escape us, and get away, vain would be our subsequent argument about correct education, Greek or barbarian.

Cle: Yes.

¹Here χορός is fancifully derived from χαρά, “joy”. For similar etymologies, see the *Cratylus*, *passim*.

Ath: So be it. What exactly then is good bearing and melody; what should we say? Come on then, consider a courageous soul in difficult circumstances and a cowardly ^{655A} soul under the very same circumstances: will their bearing and their utterances turn out to be much the same?

Cle: No, how could they when their very complexions differ?

Ath: Well said, my friend. But bearing and melody are present in music, which is concerned with rhythm and harmony, and so we may rightly speak of good rhythm and harmony in melody and bearing but it is not right to use the analogous term “good colour”, as the choral teachers do. And yet it is right to speak this way about the bearing and the melody of the coward and of the brave, and in the case of the brave, these may correctly ^{655B} be referred to as good, and in the case of the cowards, as base. Indeed then, to avoid an excessively lengthy speech, let’s just say, that altogether, the bearings and melodies associated with excellence itself, or some image of this, are good, while those associated with badness are bad. This applies to excellence and badness of soul or body.

Cle: You’re right to propose this and, for now, our response is that this is how things are.

Ath: There is a further question: do all of us take a similar ^{655C} delight in all choral performances or is this far from being the case?

Cle: Far from it – totally.

Ath: Well then, what precisely is it that has sent us astray? Is it that what’s good is not the same for all of us, or is it the same but does not seem to be the same? For I presume no one will ever say that choral performances of badness are better than those of excellence or that he himself delights in the bearing that belongs to degeneracy, while others prefer a Muse of the opposite sort. And yet, most people say that the ability of music ^{655D} to provide pleasure to souls is the correct standard to judge it by, but this is unacceptable, and it is irreverent in the extreme even to say so, but what sends us astray is, more likely, something else.

Cle: What?

Ath: Since choral performances involve imitations of characteristics arising in activities and situations of all sorts, each of the performers goes through the process using habit and imitation. Now in cases where anything that’s said, sung or performed accords with their character, by nature, ^{655E} by habit or by both, they are delighted and can’t help but praise these performances, and pronounce them good. But in cases where the performances go against their nature, character or some habit, they are unable to take any delight in them, or to praise them so they pronounce them bad. Those whose nature is correct but whose habit is not, or those whose habit is correct but whose nature is not, are people who praise ^{656A} what does not please them. For they declare that each of these performances is pleasant but degenerate, and in the presence of others whom they regard as wise, they are ashamed to adopt the sort of bodily bearing that features in these performances, and ashamed also to sing songs of this sort, and imply that they seriously approve of them. But, in private, they enjoy all this.

Cle: You’re quite right.

Ath: Now does any harm come to someone who takes delight in bodily bearing or melodies that are degenerate, or do any benefits come to those who take pleasure in the opposites of these?

Cle: Quite likely.

Ath: ^{656B} Likely? Is he not, necessarily, in the same predicament as someone who keeps company with bad people, of degenerate behaviour, and is delighted rather than repelled? He censures them, half joking, barely dreaming of just how vile this is. Then, of course, this happy man, inevitably becomes like whatever company he delights in, even though he would be ashamed to be heard praising it. And indeed what greater good or evil could befall us, than a totally inevitable process of this sort: a process of becoming like the company we keep? Can we say?

Cle: I don't think there is one.

Ath: ^{656C} Now where laws dealing with education about music, in general, and entertainment are established in the right way, or will be so in future, do we think the poets will be allowed, in their poetry, to adhere to whatever rhythm, melody or utterance pleases the poet himself, and by teaching this to the children of citizens who have such good laws, and to the young people in the choruses, regardless of the effect this has in terms of excellence or vice?

Cle: No, that does not make sense; how could it?

Ath: ^{656D} And yet, nowadays, this is what is permitted, more or less, in all cities, except in Egypt.

Cle: Tell us then: what laws about such matters have been put in place in Egypt?

Ath: It is an amazing story to hear. For the very argument that we are now stating was, it seems, recognised by them long ago: the argument that the young people in the cities should practice good bearing and good melody in familiar actions. They codified all the rules, indicating what they are and what they are like, and they displayed these in their temples. They did not allow, either painters or anyone else who represents bodily bearing and that sort of thing, to innovate or contrive, ^{656E} contrary to these, either in these areas or in music generally, except along traditional lines, nor do they allow this today. And you will find, if you take a look, that the ten thousand year old paintings and sculptures there, and they are literally ten thousand years old, are neither more beautiful, nor less so than what is being produced ^{657A} today, because the same skill is being applied.

Cle: Amazing.

Ath: Yes indeed, it is a triumph of legislation and statesmanship, but you will find problems there, in other areas. But in the case of music, this is the truth and it is worthy of consideration: it was possible to be firm about such matters, and pass laws encouraging melodies that possess a natural correctness. This would be a task for a god or some divine man, and, in fact, there, in Egypt, they say that the melodies that have been preserved ^{657B} for such a lengthy period of time are actually compositions of Isis. So as I said, if someone is able to grasp the correctness of these, in any way at all, he should be bold enough to arrange them into a legal framework, since the yearning, driven by pleasure and pain, to indulge continually in new music does not really possess any great power to corrupt the sacred choral performance, merely by referring to it as outdated. In Egypt, at any rate, it seems to have had no such corrupting influence at all: quite the opposite in fact.

Cle: ^{657C} Yes, that appears to be how matters stand, based on what you are now saying.

Ath: In that case, may we be so bold as to describe the correct use of music and entertainment with choral performances, somewhat as follows? We are delighted whenever we think we are doing well and, conversely, whenever we are delighted we think we are doing well. Isn't this so?

Cle: It is so, indeed.

Ath: And indeed, in a situation like this, where we are delighted, we are unable to come to rest.

Cle: True.

Ath: ^{657D} Now aren't our young folk ready and willing to perform in the chorus themselves, while we, their elders, think it more appropriate to spend our time watching them, delighting in their play and festive celebrations. Indeed our own liveliness is forsaking us now, and because we yearn for this and cherish it, we set up contests for those who are able, as best they can, to rouse us, through memory, into youthfulness.

Cle: Very true.

Ath: So we should not presume that what is commonly said nowadays ^{657E} about people who celebrate festivals is completely unfounded. It is said that whoever does the best job of cheering us up and delighting us should be regarded as the wisest, and judged to be the winner. In fact, since we are allowed to enjoy ourselves on such occasions, whoever brings most delight to the most people should be honoured most and, as I said just now, he should carry off the victory prizes. ^{658A} So consider what has been said: isn't it right and wouldn't this be the right course of action if it were to happen like this?

Cle: Perhaps.

Ath: But, blessed man, let's not judge such an issue in haste, let us, rather, take it part by part and consider it somewhat as follows: what if someone, sometime, were to set up a contest in some very simple way, without even defining whether it was a contest in gymnastics, music or horse riding. Suppose he were to bring everyone in the city together, set up some victory prizes and proclaim that anyone who wishes may come along and compete in a contest that is concerned only ^{658B} with pleasure; whoever provides most entertainment to the spectators, without any restriction on how he does so, and who is better than everyone else at doing just this, and is adjudged to be the most pleasing competitor of all, will win. What do you think would come of a proclamation like this?

Cle: In what sense?

Ath: It's likely, I suppose, that someone would present an epic poem, just like Homer, someone else a guitar-song or a comedy, and I wouldn't be surprised if someone were to imagine that he really should be victorious because he put on a puppet ^{658C} show. So when people like this, and thousands of others too, enter the contest, can we say who deserves to win?

Cle: What a strange question? Indeed who could ever answer you, knowledgeably, until he had heard each of the contestants, and listened to them himself?

Ath: Well then, would you like me to give you this equally strange response?

Cle: Indeed.

Ath: If very little children are to be the judges, they will opt for the puppet show, won't they?

Cle: ^{658D} How could they do otherwise?

Ath: And if the bigger children decide, they will opt for the comedy, while educated women, young adolescents and the vast majority of the population will probably choose a tragedy.

Cle: Probably indeed.

Ath: And perhaps old men like us would be most pleased at hearing a rhapsode reciting the Iliad or the Odyssey or something from Hesiod, in a glorious manner, and would declare that he is the outright winner. So, who would be the rightful winner? This is the next question, isn't it?

Cle: Yes.

Ath: ^{658E} Obviously myself and yourselves will inevitably declare that whoever is chosen by people of our own age are the rightful winners. For of all the customs prevailing nowadays in all of the cities, ours seems to be the best.

Cle: Indeed.

Ath: I agree with the majority viewpoint, to this extent at least; we should judge music by the pleasure it gives, but not to any random person. Rather, music that gives pleasure to the best adequately educated people is almost the very finest music of all, especially ^{659A} the music that pleases the one person who excels in excellence and education. That's why we maintain that those who judge such matters need excellence: they have to possess understanding, in general, and courage in particular. Nor should the true judge, arrive at his judgement by learning from the audience, and be overpowered by the commotion of the crowd and his own lack of education. Nor again, even though he knows better, should he deliver his judgement, without due care, because he is a coward who lacks courage, thus speaking lies from the very same mouth out of which he invoked ^{659B} the gods when becoming a judge. For a judge, rightly speaking, does not sit as the pupil of the spectators but rather as their teacher, and he opposes those who ply them with pleasure in a way that is neither appropriate nor correct. Indeed the ancient Greek law allowed the judges to do this. But nowadays, in Sicily and Italy, the law hands the decision over to the majority of the spectators to decide the winner by a show of hands. This process corrupts the poets themselves who then ^{659C} compose for the degenerate pleasure of their judges, the audience, thus corrupting the tastes of the actual audience members. Consequently the audience itself is instructing the judges. For although they need to adopt more elevated pleasures by constantly hearing of behaviour that is superior to their own, the very opposite now happens to them, and they do it to themselves. What precisely do these various considerations in our argument wish to indicate to us? Think about it; is it as follows?

Cle: What?

Ath: It seems to me that the argument has come back, full circle, ^{659D} to the same place for the third or fourth time, and it says that education consists in drawing or leading children towards the argument that is said, by the law, to be correct, and is confirmed as indeed correct by the experience of the most reasonable and mature people. The soul of the child should not get into the habit of being delighted or pained, in a manner that is opposed to the law and to those who obey it. The child's soul should follow along and be delighted and pained by the very same things as the elder folk. ^{659E} That's why we have songs, as we call them, which are really charms for the soul, seriously intended to produce the sort of concord we are speaking of. But because the souls of the young are unable to bear the seriousness, we refer to these as entertainments and songs, and we act accordingly. It's just like the situation where those who care for sick people with weak bodies try to give them the wholesome nourishment in some pleasant food and drink, ^{660A} and the unwholesome substances in unpleasant food and drink so that they develop the good habit of being fond of one and detesting the other. In the same way, then, the good lawgiver will persuade or, failing that, compel, the poetical type, in beautiful and encouraging language, to portray the bearing and the melodies of sound-minded, courageous and entirely good men, in his rhythms and melodies, by composing them correctly.

Cle: ^{60B} By Zeus, stranger, do you really think that that's how they compose in other cities these days? For, as far as I can see, apart from ourselves and Sparta, I don't know of any cities doing what you are describing. Innovations are constantly being introduced in dance and in the entire realm of music in general, and the changes, are not based upon the law but on certain disordered pleasures, which are very far from being the same and unchanging, as they are in Egypt, ^{60C} according to your description. In fact they are never the same.

Ath: That's excellent, Cleinias, but if you think I am saying that what you are referring to is current practice, in that case then, I wouldn't be surprised if this happened because I am not expressing my thoughts clearly enough. I was describing what I would like to see happening in relation to music, and perhaps I gave you the impression that I was describing current practice. Now it is not at all pleasant to criticise practices that are beyond remedy and well advanced in error, but sometimes it is necessary ^{60D} to do so. But since you agree with me on these matters, tell me, do you maintain that such practices are more prevalent among yourselves, in Crete, and among the Spartans, than they are among other Greeks?

Cle: Indeed.

Ath: And what if they were to be adopted by the other Greeks too? Should we maintain that these practices would be an improvement over the current situation?

Cle: I expect it would make a big difference if the Spartan practices, or ours, or even the ones you prescribed just now, were adopted.

Ath: Come on then, let's agree on the immediate issues. In your ^{60E} cities, isn't this what's said on the entire subject of education and music? You compel the poets to say that the good man, being sound-minded and just, is also happy and blessed, and it makes no difference whether he is big and strong, or small and weak, or whether he is rich or poor. In fact, even if he is richer than Cinyras or Midas, but is unjust, he is a wretched man living a miserable life. And your poet says, if he is right about this, "I would not even mention a man, or write his name down" unless he enacted and acquired everything that is said to be good, but did so in consort with justice. And indeed ^{61A} he shows a man like this "lunging at the enemy in close combat", while the unjust man doesn't even dare "to look upon the face of bloody slaughter", nor does he outrun the "Thracian North Wind", nor does he ever achieve anything else that is attributed to good people.

Indeed the things that are said to be good by most people are not being described correctly. For it is said that what's best is health, beauty is second, wealth third, and countless other goods are listed, including acuteness of sight and hearing, and keen perception of sense objects, generally, ^{61B} and even becoming a tyrant and doing whatever you like, and the very pinnacle of all blessedness is, they say, to acquire all these and become immortal, there and then. But I presume that yourselves, and myself, say that these are all excellent possessions for men who are just and holy, but to the unjust they are, all of them, thoroughly bad, beginning with health. And indeed we would say that seeing, ^{61C} hearing, perceiving and being alive at all, are evil in the extreme when someone is immortal forever and possesses all these so called goods, in the absence of justice and total excellence, but the evil is less when such a person has a shorter span of life. Now I think you will compel your own poets to say all that I say, and to educate your young people in this way by giving them rhythms and harmonies that accord with what's said. Is this so? Look at it this way: for I am saying, in plain terms, ^{61D} that the things that are said to be bad, are good, for the unjust people, but for the just people they are actually bad, while the good things really are good, for the good people, but for the bad people they are bad. So I repeat my question, are the two of you and myself in agreement, or not?

Cle: Well in some respects I think we are, but in other respects certainly not.

Ath: Suppose someone is possessed of health, wealth and endless tyrannical power and, for the two of you, let me add exceptional ^{661E} strength and courage accompanied by immortality, and that none of the other so called evils befall him. But suppose that all he has within himself is injustice and arrogance. Perhaps you two are not convinced that someone who lives in this way is not really happy but is obviously wretched?

Cle: That's perfectly true; we are unconvinced.

Ath: So be it. What should I say to you next? Well suppose someone is courageous and strong, handsome and wealthy, and does ^{662A} whatever he likes throughout his entire life, don't you agree, that if he is unjust and arrogant, he would, necessarily, be living in a shameful manner? Will you, perhaps, accept this word "shamefully" at least?

Cle: Yes, indeed.

Ath: What about the word "badly"?

Cle: No, that's different.

Ath: What about saying that he lives an unpleasant life that is not profitable to himself?

Cle: How could we possibly agree with that?

Ath: ^{662B} How? Only if God, it seems, were to grant us some degree of concord, my friend, since for the moment at least, there is a fair amount of discord among us. Yes, to me it appears that this is, necessarily, the case; it's even more obvious than the fact that Crete is an island. And as a legislator, I would try to compel the poets and everyone else in the city, to speak in this way. And I would impose perhaps the heaviest of penalties in cases where anyone in the land would say that there are some people ^{662C} who are degenerate and yet live pleasant lives, or who say that some things are profitable or advantageous while others are more just. And there is much else I would persuade my citizens to say, that contradicts the prevailing views of Crete and Sparta, it seems, and indeed of humanity in general.

Come on then, best of men, by Zeus and Apollo, what if we were to ask these very gods who gave you your laws: ^{662D} "Is the most just life, the most pleasant life, or are there two lives, one that happens to be the most pleasant while the other is the most just?" If they were to declare that there are two, we would, if we were questioning them correctly, probably ask them again: "which should we say are the happier people, those who live the most just life or those who live the most pleasant one?" Now if they were to reply "those who live the most pleasant one" their argument would be bizarre. But I don't want to attribute such a response ^{662E} to the gods but rather to our forefathers and lawgivers, so let my former question be put, now, to a forefather and lawgiver, and let him reply that whoever lives the most pleasant life is most blessed. I would then say: "father, did you not want me to live as happily as possible? Yet you were always calling upon me, unceasingly, to live as justly as possible." Now whoever suggests this, be he a forefather or a lawgiver, would, I think, look most odd and be at a loss about how to speak in a manner that is consistent with himself. But if, on the other hand, he declares that the most just life is happiest, anyone who hears this would, I believe, want to know, what the law is praising in the just life: what does the just life contain, that is good and noble, and superior ^{663A} to pleasure? Indeed what good, apart from pleasure, could a just man have? Come on then, is fame and the acclaim of humanity and the gods, pleasant, while the opposite applies to infamy? "Dear legislator", we'll say, "not at all". If we neither do nor suffer injustice, is that

unpleasant even though it is good or noble? And is doing injustice pleasant, even though it is disgraceful and bad?

Cle: No, how could this be so?

Ath: Now, although the argument does not separate pleasant, on the one hand, from just and good ^{663B} and noble, on the other, even if it does nothing else, it still persuades a person to prefer to live a life that is holy and just. And for a legislator, the most disgraceful argument, directly opposed to his purposes, is the one that denies that this is the case. For no one would wish, willingly, to be persuaded to do anything that did not result in more pleasure than pain. But looking at things from afar produces a sort of dizziness in everyone, especially in young children, unless a lawgiver introduces a perspective that is the opposite of this, unless, having banished ^{663C} the darkness, he persuades people, somehow or other, by habits, praise, or arguments, that their notions of justice and injustice are a play of shadows. When seen from the personal viewpoint of an unjust bad person who is opposed to justice, what's unjust appears pleasant and what's just appears most unpleasant. But from the perspective of the just person the view of justice and injustice is the complete opposite, in every way.

Cle: Apparently so.

Ath: And which of these two judgements is more authoritative in terms of truth, the judgement of the worse soul or of the better one?

Cle: ^{663D} It must be the judgement of the superior one, I presume.

Ath: So it must be the case that the unjust life is not only more shameful and degenerate than the just and holy life but is, in truth, more unpleasant too.

Cle: That, my friends, is quite likely, according to the present argument at least.

Ath: But even if what the argument has just established proved not to be the case, could a lawgiver, who was in any way useful, and who dared tell a lie to the young folk for some good purpose, ever tell a more profitable lie ^{663E} than this, or one with more power to make everyone do what's just in everything, willingly and without compulsion?

Cle: Truth is noble and enduring, stranger, but it seems to be difficult to persuade people.

Ath: So be it, but it proved easy to persuade people of the myth about the Sidonian, incredible though it was, and the same applies to countless other stories.

Cle: Of what sort?

Ath: The story about the teeth being sown in the ground, and armed men growing from them. In fact this is a great example for the lawgiver of persuading ^{664A} the souls of the young folk about anything at all, if one tries. Accordingly, in considering this, all he needs to do is find out what story would, once they believed it, lead to the greatest good for the city. And in this regard, he should seek out any means whatsoever whereby an entire community of this sort, and their discourse, would hold always to this theme, with one and the same voice, as much as they can in their songs, and in their stories. But if anything else occurs to anyone besides this way of looking at these matters, he should feel free to present a contrary argument.

Cle: ^{664B} No, I don't think either of us would be capable of presenting a counter argument, not on these matters at any rate.

Ath: The next point is up to me then. So I say that all the choruses, three in number, should sing to the still young and tender souls of the children, stating all the noble principles we have

recounted, and will indeed recount hereafter. Let's summarise them as follows: when we maintain that the most pleasant life and the best life are said, by the gods, to be the same, we shall be stating the very truth ^{664C} and, at the same time we shall persuade those who need persuading, more effectively than we would by saying anything else.

Cle: We have to agree with what you are saying.

Ath: To begin with, it is only right that the children's chorus, dedicated to the Muses, should come in first to sing such songs, in all seriousness, before the entire city. Second should come the chorus of those who are under thirty, invoking Apollo Paeon as witness of the truth of what is being said, and praying that he be ^{664D} gracious to the young, and convince them. A third chorus, consisting of those who are aged between thirty and sixty, should be next to sing, and that leaves the older group, who are no longer up to the task of singing, to present stories about the same characters, through divine utterance.

Cle: What is this third chorus you refer to, stranger, for we don't really understand, clearly, what you wish to say about these people?

Ath: And yet, most of the argument we have discussed so far was more or less concerned with these.

Cle: ^{664E} We don't understand yet. Please try to explain even more clearly.

Ath: We said if you recall, at the beginning of our discussions, that the nature of all young creatures is fiery, and unable to keep either the body or the voice quiet. The nature is constantly making disordered sounds and leaping about. We also said that none of the other creatures ever develop any sense of order in body or voice; human nature alone has this ability. The order ^{665A} associated with movement is called rhythm, and in the case of the human voice, the blending together of high and low pitched sounds is called harmony, and the two of these, combined, is called a choral performance. And we said that the gods, out of pity for us, gave us two fellow chorus members and chorus leaders, Apollo and the Muses, and also, you may recall, a third, Dionysos.

Cle: How could we fail to remember?

Ath: Well we have described the chorus ^{665B} of Apollo and of the Muses, so the third chorus, the remaining one, must be called the chorus of Dionysos.

Cle: How so? Please explain. A chorus of old men, dedicated to Dionysos, sounds most unusual on first hearing. Are men who are over thirty or over fifty or even as old as sixty, really going to be involved in a chorus dedicated to Dionysos?

Ath: That's perfectly true. An argument is needed here, I believe, to show that if this were to happen, it would be a reasonable development.

Cle: Indeed.

Ath: Now are we in agreement about the previous matters?

Cle: ^{665C} Specifically?

Ath: About the need for every man and child, free born or slave, female or male and indeed the whole city, to sing, to themselves, unceasingly, the very charms we have described, changing them this way and that to provide all sorts of variety, so that the singers develop an insatiable desire for the songs and take pleasure in them.

Cle: How could anyone disagree? Yes this is what should be done.

Ath: ^{665D} Where then should the very best people in our city sing their magnificent and exalted songs so as to do the most good? These are the people who are more persuasive than anyone else in the city because of their age and level of understanding. Shall we be so foolish as to set this group aside when they are masters of the most exalted and beneficial songs?

Cle: No, setting them aside is out of the question based on what is now being said.

Ath: Everyone, I believe, as he gets older becomes reluctant to sing songs, ^{665E} and takes less and less delight in doing so, and when compelled to do so, is embarrassed, and the older and more sound-minded he becomes the more embarrassed he becomes. Isn't this so?

Cle: It is so indeed.

Ath: Wouldn't he be even more embarrassed to stand before people of all sorts, in the theatre, and sing? And if old people like this were compelled to sing, thin and fasting, just like chorus members training their voices for a competition, they would, presumably take no pleasure in the task, and sing, in embarrassment and without any enthusiasm?

Cle: ^{666A} Yes, that's inevitable.

Ath: How then shall we encourage them to be enthusiastic about singing? Shouldn't we first pass a law that children may not partake of wine at all until they are eighteen years old, explaining that fire must not be poured upon the fire that is already in their body or their soul, before they turn their hand to life's labours. Here we are being cautious about the excitable disposition of the young. But after this, they may partake of wine, in measure, until they are thirty, ^{666B} but drinking too much and getting drunk are totally prohibited to the young man.

As he approaches forty years of age, he may enjoy the common meals and call upon the gods, and he should invoke Dionysos, in particular, at the ritual for the older men, which is also their recreation. The god gave this to humanity as a healing draught to cure the crabbedness of old age, so that we may grow young again, and our soul, by forgetting its dispiritedness, may become softer rather than harder ^{666C} in character, and become more malleable, just like iron when placed in the fire. Firstly wouldn't each of them, when this is the state of their soul, be willing to sing, or chant, as we have often called it, more eagerly and with less embarrassment, not in front of lots of strangers, but before a select group of friends?

Cle: Yes, much more.

Ath: So, as a means of getting them involved in our singing, this approach would not be entirely objectionable.

Cle: ^{666D} No, not at all.

Ath: What sort of sound will the men send forth? Or is it obvious that there must be some music appropriate to them?

Cle: There must be.

Ath: So what music would be appropriate to divine men? Would it be the music of the choruses?

Cle: Well stranger, we in Crete and these Spartans, would be incapable of singing any other song besides the one we learned, and became familiar with in the choruses.

Ath: That's reasonable enough since you have not actually attained the most ^{666E} exalted level of singing. Indeed you have the civic constitution of a military camp but you have never settled in cities, and you keep your young people in a flock, like a collection of grazing colts. None of you takes his own animal, and drags it away from the grazing herd, as it gets wildly distressed. You don't appoint a private horse trainer to train him by rubbing him down and taming him, and giving him everything that is appropriate for his upbringing, so that he may be not just a ^{667A} good soldier but able to manage a city or a town: someone who, as we said at the outset, is more of a warrior than Tyrtaeus' warriors, because he respects courage, always and everywhere, in private individuals and in entire cities, not as the foremost excellence, but as fourth in the scale of excellence.

Cle: I don't know, stranger, whether or not you are, somehow, disparaging our lawgivers yet again.

Ath: My good man, if I am doing this at all, I am not doing it intentionally but, if you please, let's follow the argument, wherever it may lead. For if we have music that is more exalted than the music of the choruses or the popular ^{667B} theatres, we should try to make this available to these men who, we say, are ashamed of that music, and are eager for involvement with this most exalted music.

Cle: Certainly.

Ath: Isn't it the case first and foremost, with anything accompanied by some grace, that what is most significant is either the grace, just by itself, or else a certain correctness, or, thirdly, the benefit? For instance, food, drink and nutriment, in general, have an associated grace which we call pleasure. As for their correctness ^{667C} and benefit, we consistently refer to the healthiness of whatever is consumed, and this very healthiness is what's most correct about them.

Cle: Yes, certainly.

Ath: And there is indeed a grace that accompanies learning, namely pleasure, but what produces its correctness, benefit, goodness and nobility, is the truth.

Cle: Quite so.

Ath: What about skills that involve imitation and which produce likenesses? ^{667D} If they succeed in producing a likeness, may we rightly refer to the associated pleasure, as grace?

Cle: Yes.

Ath: But the extent and the degree of equality with the original is what would, presumably, constitute the correctness of such likenesses, generally speaking, rather than the pleasure.

Cle: That's right.

Ath: In that case, using the criterion of pleasure, the only thing that we may judge correctly is something that is produced ^{667E} in order to provide neither benefit nor truth, nor likeness, nor indeed to do any harm, something that would exist only for the sake of that which accompanies these other factors, the grace, which when none of these other factors accompany it, is best called pleasure.

Cle: You are referring only to harmless pleasure.

Ath: Yes, and I am saying that this very pleasure is indeed amusement, whenever it does no harm or good worth mentioning seriously.

Cle: Very true.

Ath: In that case, based on what we are now saying, we would maintain that it is entirely inappropriate to judge any imitation, or indeed, its equality, by the criterion of pleasure or by untrue opinion. ^{668A} What's equal or symmetrical is not equal or symmetrical because it seems so to someone, or because it doesn't please someone, but most of all because of the truth, and least of all because of any other consideration.

Cle: Entirely so.

Ath: Now, don't we maintain that all music is based upon likeness and imitation?

Cle: Indeed.

Ath: So whenever someone asserts that music is to be judged by the criterion of pleasure, this argument should be rejected, and if this music does somehow exist, we should not take it at all seriously ^{668B} in our search. We should seek, rather, the music that contains the likeness to the imitation of the beautiful.

Cle: Very true.

Ath: And those seeking the most exalted song and music should not, it seems, seek what's pleasant but what's correct, for correctness of imitation, according to us, consists in reproducing the original, in quantity and in quality.

Cle: Of course.

Ath: And indeed, everyone would agree on this, at least, that in the case of music, everything that is produced involves imitation and representation. ^{668C} Wouldn't the composers, the audience, and the actors all agree on this at any rate?

Cle: Very much so.

Ath: Then anyone who is to avoid falling into error in a particular case should, it seems, recognise what precisely each of the compositions is. For if he does not recognise its being, what precisely the composition intends, and what it is a likeness of, he will hardly discern the correctness or error of the intention.

Cle: Hardly indeed.

Ath: ^{668D} And would someone who does not recognise correctness ever be able to discern goodness or badness? But I am not expressing myself very clearly; perhaps it would be clear if I put it as follows.

Cle: How?

Ath: Well, what if someone was ignorant about the things that are being imitated in these cases, and did not know, precisely, what body each of them has? Could he ever recognise the correctness of the finished representation? For example, could he tell whether it has the correct number and placement ^{668E} of bodily parts, capturing how many there are, and how they are situated next to one another, in their proper arrangement, including their colours and shapes, or whether all these have been fashioned in a confused manner. Do you think anyone could ever decide on this without knowing what precisely the creature being imitated actually is?

Cle: How could he?

Ath: What if we were to recognise that what has been drawn or manufactured is a human being, and that the artist's skill has captured all of its parts, colours ^{669A} and shapes? Is it necessarily the case that someone who recognises this also recognises, quite readily, whether the product is beautiful or is deficient in beauty in some particular way?

Cle: Well in that case, stranger, we would all, in a sense, recognise the beauties of the various animals.

Ath: Correct. So, in the case of each image, in painting, in music or in any form at all, mustn't anyone who is to be an intelligent judge, be able, firstly, ^{669B} to recognise what it is, then how correctly, and thirdly, how well any of the images has been fashioned, in language, melody and rhythm?

Cle: So it seems, anyway.

Ath: Now let's not omit mention of the difficulty that is involved in music. Indeed since there is more talk about music than there is about the other images, it requires much more caution than any of the other images. For someone who falls into error here could do enormous harm by favouring degenerate behaviour, ^{669C} and the error is very hard to notice because our poets are lesser poets than the Muses themselves. For the Muses would never fall into error to such an extent as to compose words for men, and give them the colour or melody that belongs to women. Nor indeed would they frame a melody and bearing that belongs to free men, and harmonise it with rhythms that belong to slaves and to men devoid of freedom, nor would they decide upon a rhythm and a bearing that is free, and then assign it a melody or words that are opposed to the rhythm. Nor would they ever combine the sounds of beasts, humans, ^{669D} mechanical devices, and noises of all sorts, into a unity, as though they were imitating one thing. But human poets who blend such sounds together with great relish, and jumble them up without rhythm or reason, would provide great amusement to people who, as Orpheus says, "are ripe for delight", when they see these all jumbled up. But the poets go further and divorce rhythm and bearing from melody, put ^{669E} bare words to a metre, and leave melody and rhythm without any language, by making use of the harp and the flute on their own. It is very difficult then, to recognise, without words, what the rhythm and harmony signify, or what imitations, worth mentioning, they resemble. So we need to understand, that this sort of thing is crude in the extreme as it is based on such a passion for speed, dexterity, and animal sounds, that it uses the flute and the harp ^{670A} in the absence of dance or song. But using either instrument on its own is the mark of a thoroughly uncultured trickster.

That's where the theory of all this stands, but in our case we are not considering how our over thirty year olds and those who are over fifty should not practice music, but how exactly they should do so. At this stage then, our argument is indicating that those over fifty year olds whose role will involve singing, should receive a better education ^{670B} than they get from choral music. For they need to be well aware, themselves, of rhythms and harmonies and recognise them: how else could someone recognise the correctness of the melodies, and know which is suited to the Dorian mode and which is not, or whether the rhythm that the poet assigned to this has been correctly assigned or not?

Cle: No, it's obvious that he could not do so at all.

Ath: Indeed the general populace are being ridiculous when they believe they are up to the task of recognising what constitutes good rhythm and harmony and what doesn't, when they have only been drilled ^{670C} in singing along, and marching in step, and don't realise that they are engaging in these activities in total ignorance. Whereas, in fact, every melody that has what's

appropriate to it, is constituted correctly, and if it has what is inappropriate to it, it is constituted improperly.

Cle: That's quite inevitable.

Ath: What about someone who does not recognise what exactly the melody has? Will he ever recognise, as we were asking, whether it has been correctly constituted, in any case?

Cle: No, how could he?

Ath: Well it seems we are now discovering, once again, that these singers of ours whom we are encouraging and, in a sense, ^{670D} compelling, of their own free will, to sing, need to have been educated to the following extent: they each need to be capable of following the steps of the rhythms, and the chords of the melodies, so that they may be able to select those that are appropriate and suitable for men of their age and character to sing. They would sing in this way, and as they sang they would enjoy innocent pleasures, themselves, there and then, and would provide leadership ^{670E} to the younger generation in the proper appreciation of good character. Having been educated thus far, they would have access to a more rigorous education than what is made available to the general population, and indeed, to the poets themselves. Indeed it is not imperative that a poet recognises whether the imitation is beautiful or not beautiful, which was our third principle earlier, although it is well nigh essential that he knows harmony and rhythm. But our elders need to know all three principles in order to decide what imitation is most exalted and what lies in second place, or they would never ^{671A} be up to the task of charming our young folk towards excellence.

The argument intended, from the very outset, to demonstrate that our defence of the chorus of Dionysos was a noble undertaking, and it has now said so, as best it can, so let's consider whether it has actually succeeded. Now a gathering of this nature inevitably keeps on getting more and more boisterous, I presume, as the drinking proceeds, and we said initially that this is an unavoidable outcome in the cases we are now describing.

Cle: ^{671B} Unavoidable.

Ath: Now didn't we say that when this happens, the souls of the drinkers, being heated like a piece of iron, become softer and younger. So, just as they were in their younger days, they are easily led ^{671C} by someone with the ability and the knowledge to train them and shape them. And the one who shapes them now is the one who shaped them then: this is the good lawgiver who should give laws for the drinking party that are capable of making someone, willingly, do the exact opposite, when he is so confident and bold, so improperly devoid of shame, so resistant to orderly behaviour and so reluctant to observe, in turn, silence and speech, drinking and music. The laws should be able also to send forth, along with justice, that most exalted ^{671D} and divine fear which we call reverence and shame, to do battle against the ignoble courage.

Cle: Quite so.

Ath: There should be legal guardians of these laws who work alongside them, as calm, sober generals set over men who are not sober, since doing battle against drunkenness, without such men, is more daunting than fighting your enemies without calm commanders. And what's more, anyone who is unable, willingly, to obey these officers ^{671E} of Dionysos, the over sixty year olds, shall incur as much disgrace, and more, than those who disobey Ares' commanders on the battlefield.

Cle: And rightly so.

Ath: Now, if there was this sort of drunkenness and this sort of entertainment wouldn't such drinking companions be benefitted, and part from one another better friends than they were previously, rather than parting as enemies, as they do ^{672A} nowadays? Wouldn't all their dealings with one another be conducted in accordance with the laws, following these whenever the sober men give the lead to those who are not sober?

Cle: That's right, provided the party is as you are describing it.

Ath: Then let's not criticise the gift of Dionysos in this unqualified way any longer, saying that it is bad for the city and should be rejected. In fact one could elaborate on this to an even greater extent, yet I am reluctant to describe to most people the greatest good that it bestows because people misunderstand and misinterpret what's said.

Cle: ^{672B} What sort of benefit are you referring to?

Cle: There is a report and a tradition in circulation whereby this god, Dionysos, was robbed of his soul's understanding by his stepmother, Hera, and because of this he introduced revelry and frenzied dancing to get his revenge, and that's the very reason why he gave us the gift of wine too. Now I leave such stories to those who think it safe to relate them about the gods, but this much I do know: ^{672C} no living creature is ever born with the intelligence, or as much intelligence, as it should possess, when it reaches maturity. During the stage of life in which it has not yet acquired its proper intelligence, it is totally mad, makes disordered noises, and as soon as it can stand up it jumps about in a disordered manner too. And we should remind ourselves that the origins of both music and gymnastics, according to us, lie in such behaviour.

Cle: We remember, of course.

Ath: Didn't we also say that this was the origin of the awareness ^{672D} of rhythm and harmony instilled in us humans, and that the gods responsible for this were Apollo, the Muses, and Dionysos?

Cle: Of course.

Ath: And indeed, according to everyone else's account, wine, it seems, was given to humanity out of revenge, to make us mad, whereas our own account maintains, on the contrary, that it is a remedy, given so that we may acquire reverence of soul, and health and strength of body.

Cle: Your recollection of the argument is excellent, stranger.

Ath: ^{672E} Let's say, then, that one half of choral performance has been dealt with, fully. Shall we deal with the other half, as seems best, or shall we leave it?

Cle: What are you referring to? What are the two divisions you are making?

Ath: Choral performance as a whole, was, for us, the process of education as a whole, and rhythm and harmony was the part of this that relates to the voice.

Cle: Yes.

Ath: But although the part that relates to the movement of the body and the part that relates to the movement of the voice have rhythm in common, bearing is unique to the body's motion, while melody ^{673A} is unique to the motion of the voice.

Cle: Very true.

Ath: Now those aspects of the education of the voice towards excellence, which actually reach the soul, we have, for some reason, called music.

Cle: And rightly so.

Ath: But the movements of the body, in creatures at play, we called dance. And when movement of this sort is conducive to the excellence of the body, we should refer to this skilled discipline of the body when used for such a purpose, as gymnastics.

Cle: Correct.

Ath: ^{673B} As for music, we said a moment ago that this half of choral performance had been described and dealt with fully, and we may say so again now. But what about the other half: what should be done about it and how?

Cle: My good man, you are conversing with Cretans and Spartans, and we have described music in detail, but we are leaving out gymnastics. So what sort of answer do you expect from either of us in reply to your question?

Ath: I would say that you have responded in pretty plain terms to my question, by asking your question. ^{673C} Yes, I understand that although it is now a question, as I said, it is also an instruction to deal with the subject of gymnastics, fully.

Cle: You have understood very well and you should act accordingly.

Ath: So I should. Indeed there is no great difficulty in speaking to the two of you on matters you both know so well, for you are far more experienced in this art than in the other one.

Cle: True enough.

Ath: Well the origin of this playfulness is the habitual leaping that is natural ^{673D} to all creatures, but the human being, as we said, having acquired an awareness of rhythm, developed and brought forth dance. And since melody brings to mind and awakens rhythm, the two, combined together, brought forth choral performance and play.

Cle: Very true.

Ath: And we maintain that we have already dealt with one part of this and we shall try to deal with the other part next.

Cle: Yes, indeed.

Ath: Well, if it is acceptable to you two, let's put ^{673E} the finishing touch to our discussion of the use of drunkenness, first.

Cle: What do you mean? What sort of finishing touch?

Ath: What if some city makes serious use of the practice we are referring to, in a lawful and orderly manner, practising it in order to cultivate sound-mindedness? Suppose, in like manner, that it does not do away with the other pleasures, on the same principle, because it is aiming at mastery over them. Then, this approach of ours should be applied to all these.

But what if, on the other hand, this is regarded as entertainment, and anyone who likes is allowed to drink, whenever he likes, with whomsoever he pleases, ^{674A} while engaging in any sort of behaviour at all? Then I could not cast my vote to allow this city, or this man, ever to have recourse to drunkenness, and I would go even further than the practice of the Cretans and Spartans, and propose the law of the Carthaginians, that no soldier may ever taste liquor whilst on campaign, he should, rather, become a water drinker for the entire duration. In the city too, no slave, male or female should ever taste thereof, nor should a magistrate during his year ^{674B} in office, nor should steersmen, or jurors ever taste wine at all, whilst on duty, nor should any

councillor who is attending a council meeting of any importance. In the daytime, no one should taste it at all except as part of a training regime or to treat a disease. Nor at night either, whenever a man or a woman intends to conceive a child. And one could mention very many other situations in which those in possession of reason, and correct law, should not drink wine.^{674C} And so, according to the argument, no city should need lots of vineyards, and although agricultural production, in general, and the entire lifestyle, would be regulated, the production of wine in particular, would be more moderate and modest than anything else.

So, dear strangers, let this, if you agree, be our finishing touch to the argument concerning wine.

Cle: Well said: we agree.

End Book 2