

Plato's *Laws*

Book 7

Translated by David Horan

Persons in the dialogue: Athenian Stranger, Cleinias, Megillus

^{788A} **Athenian Stranger:** Now that our children, male and female, have been born, it's only right that their nurture and education should be spoken of next. It is impossible to avoid mentioning this topic at all, yet, when dealing with education it would, apparently, be better to make use of instruction and exhortation, rather than legislation. For, privately, in domestic situations, a lot happens that is trivial and this goes unnoticed by most people. Because of their individual ^{788B} pains, pleasures and desires, which run counter to the intentions of the lawgiver, a huge variety of inconsistent habits arise all too easily among the citizens. This is bad for the cities, because, on the one hand the triviality and frequency of these transgressions makes it inappropriate and unseemly to impose legal penalties, yet, on the other hand, the transgressions subvert the laws that have already been passed, by accustoming the people to acting contrary to the laws ^{788C} in lots of trivial situations. Consequently although we are at a loss as to how to legislate about these matters, we can't remain silent either. I shall try to clarify what I mean by presenting some examples since, at the moment what I am saying sounds somewhat obscure.

Cleinias: Very true.

Ath: Now I presume it was right to say that a correct upbringing must demonstrate an ability to produce bodies and souls that are as beautiful and excellent as possible, in every respect.

Cle: Indeed.

Ath: ^{788D} And in the case of children, having very beautiful bodies, means, I presume, in simple terms that they should grow as straight as they possibly can, from their earliest years.

Cle: Of course.

Ath: What about this? Aren't we aware that in every living organism the first shoots of growth are the greatest, and most extensive, consequently, many people contend that the height increase in human beings is greater, during the first five years than in the following twenty years.

Cle: True.

Ath: Now we know, don't we, that without plenty of appropriate exercise, rapid growth causes lots of physical problems?

Cle: Of course.

Ath: Therefore most exercise is required at the time when most nutriment is being provided to our bodies.

Cle: What's this, stranger? Shall we prescribe most exercise for newborn babes and infants?

Ath: Not just then, but even before then, when they are still being nurtured within their own mothers.

Cle: What do you mean, my friend, are you referring to babies in the womb?

Ath: ^{789B} Yes. It's not surprising that you are unaware of the physical training that is appropriate at that stage of life, but since this is so unusual I would like to explain it to you.

Cle: By all means, do so.

Ath: Well there is more awareness of this sort of training among my own countrymen because some people there are more involved in sport and games than they should be. In fact, among ourselves, not just children but even some older men rear wild birds to fight with one another. Now they are far indeed from believing that the exercises, in which they train such creatures by pitting them against one another, constitute adequate training. Indeed besides these exercises, each owner keeps his bird concealed about his person, smaller ones in their hands, and larger ones under their arm. They go about, walking mile after mile to ensure, not just that their own bodies but the bodies of these creatures too, are in good condition. This much should make it obvious to anyone who is observant ^{789D} enough, that all bodies are benefitted and invigorated when they are moved by any sort of shaking or motion, whether they are moved of their own volition, or by a swaying vehicle, by a ship at sea, from horse-riding, or by any other means of bodily transport. Because of all these, our bodies assimilate the nourishment of food and drink and can become source of health, beauty and general robustness for us.

Now in the light of these arguments, how would we say we should proceed? Would you like us to risk ridicule by explicitly implementing laws whereby pregnant women are to take walks, mould the new-born child like wax while it is still supple, and wrap it in swaddling clothes for the first two years of its life? And should we also use legal penalties to compel the nurses, always to carry the children, somehow or other, to the fields, the temples, or to their relatives, until they are well able to stand upright themselves? And then, should they persist in carrying the new arrivals until they turn three, as a precaution, in case their legs get deformed when they are young, from bearing their full weight? And shall we prescribe that there should be more than one ^{790A} nurse per child and that they should be as strong as possible? And should we specify a penalty for every case of failure to follow these directions? Or is this too extreme? Indeed it would result in far too much of the outcome I just mentioned.

Cle: Which was?

Ath: The enormous ridicule we would attract, and, what's more, we would be unlikely to make much impression upon the feminine and servile characters of the nurses.

Cle: Why then did we think it necessary to mention all this?

Ath: Here's why: the characters of the masters and free men in our cities ^{790B} may perhaps be more receptive to hearing this, and come to the conclusion, rightly, that any notion of a stable body of laws for communal affairs is a vain dream in the absence of correct regulation of private life in our cities. A citizen who recognises this may well adopt the suggestions we have just made, as laws, resort to them to manage the city, nicely, and his own household too, and live in happiness.

Cle: A very likely outcome.

Ath: So let's not move on from this sort of legislation until ^{790C} we have also given a detailed account of the various activities concerned with the souls of the young children, just as we went through corresponding accounts related to their bodies, when we began.

Cle: Very well.

Ath: Well let's adopt this as a common principle applicable to both body and soul: that the nursing and motion of the bodies and souls of the very young, particularly of the youngest infants, when maintained, as best we can, day and night, is beneficial in all cases. Indeed if it were possible, it would be good for them to spend their lives as if they were constantly sailing the seas. ^{790D} But, as matters stand, in the case of our new born infants, we should get as close to this ideal as possible. The following examples provide additional evidence: nurses of small children adopt this procedure and recognise its usefulness and so do the women who treat corybantic conditions. Indeed that's why mothers, who want to lull sleepless children to sleep, don't resort to stillness but, on the contrary, to movement, rocking them continually ^{780E} in their arms, using some sort of melody, rather than silence, as they literally charm the children. The nurses use the combined motion of dance and music, just like the priestess who charms those who are out of their minds, using cures from the Bacchic rites. **Cle:** What, stranger, is the cause of all this?

Ath: That's not particularly difficult to appreciate.

Cle: What is it then?

Ath: Both these disorders presumably involve being frightened, and fright originates in some degenerate state of the soul. However, when someone brings external ^{791A} shaking to bear upon such disorders as these, the externally applied motion overcomes the internal motion, which is fear and frenzy, and once the external motion prevails it produces a manifest tranquillity in the soul, and a relief from the distressing agitation of the heart that had been present in each case. This results in complete satisfaction, bringing sleep to the sleepless, and sanity in place of their frenzied state of mind to the others, who are wide awake, as they are drawn into dancing and music making, aided by the gods to whom they offer propitious sacrifices. And this account, although brief, is a plausible explanation of these matters.

Cle: Very much so.

Ath: Given that these measures have this sort of power, we need to recognise in the case of these people, that every soul experiencing such frights from its earliest years is more likely to develop the habit of being fearful. And we would all agree, I presume, that this constitutes the practice of cowardice rather than courage.

Cle: Of course.

Ath: And we would accept that the opposite course, the pursuit ^{791C} of courage from our very earliest years, consists in being victorious over any frights and fears that assail us.

Cle: Correct.

Ath: According to us then, this one factor, the training of very young children through various movements, contributes enormously to developing one part of the soul's excellence.

Cle: Very much so.

Ath: And indeed absence of discontent would play a significant role in developing a good soul, while discontent would produce a bad soul.

Cle: Inevitably.

Ath: ^{791D} Now in what way may we implant either of these two qualities, from the very outset, at will, in the newborn babes? We need to make an effort to state how, and to what extent, these two qualities are within our control.

Cle: Of course.

Ath: The view held among ourselves is that a soft life produces habits of discontent, bad temper, and a strong tendency to get agitated over trifles, in the young people. Yet, on the other hand, the opposite sort of regime, based on excessive harsh subjugation, renders them unsuited to life in society by turning them into cringing, servile creatures who hate their fellow man.

Cle: ^{791E} But how should the city as a whole set about the task of rearing children who don't yet understand speech, and cannot yet partake of education generally?

Ath: As follows: it is usual for every creature, human beings included, somehow to utter a loud scream as soon as they are born, and indeed human children, in addition to the scream, are more prone to crying than other creatures.

Cle: Yes, indeed.

Ath: Now when the nurses are trying to discover what a child wants, they are guided as to what to give it by these various ^{792A} sounds. When an offering is greeted with silence she concludes that all is well, but when the child cries out and screams she knows there is a problem. So you see that the infants indicate what they love and hate by these cries and screams, a most unfortunate set of signals, and this phase lasts for at least three years, and that is no small part of one's life to spend well or ill.

Cle: You are right about that.

Ath: Now don't you both think that a discontented person, who is not at all gracious, will be morose ^{792B} and, for the most part, more given to moaning than a good person should be?

Cle: Well I think so, anyway.

Ath: Well then, if during those three years we were to try our best, by all possible means, to ensure that our charges experience distress, fear, and any form of pain, to the least possible extent don't you think that the soul of the child we are rearing would then be rendered more cheerful and gracious?

Cle: Of course, stranger, especially if we provide him with lots of pleasures ^{792C} too.

Ath: Now on this point I can no longer go along with Cleinias, wonderful and all as he is. In fact, such a practice is, for us, enormously destructive in every respect, since it is introduced, in every case, at the very start of the child's upbringing. Let's see if I have a point here.

Cle: Explain what you mean, please.

Ath: I am saying that the issue before us now is far from trivial. You should consider this too, Megillus, and help us arrive at a decision. Now the position I hold maintains that the right way to live is neither to chase after pleasures nor, again, to entirely ^{792D} avoid all pain, but to embrace the mean, which I described just now as gracious, a condition which belongs to God, as we all rightly declare on the basis of a prophetic utterance. So, I maintain that any of us who are to be like God should pursue this state of the soul, neither giving ourselves over entirely to pleasure, because we realise that we cannot avoid pain, nor are we allowed to tolerate the same behaviour in someone else, old or young, male or female, and least of all, if we can help it, in the newly ^{792E} born, for that's the time when character, on the whole, is chiefly determined through habit. But I would still like to insist, at the risk of sounding frivolous, that all women who are with child, should be shown special care for the duration of their pregnancy to ensure that the expectant mother does not indulge in frequent, excessive, pleasures, or pains either, and cultivates a gracious, kindly and gentle spirit throughout.

Cle: ^{793A} Stranger, there is no need for you to ask Megillus, here, which of us has spoken more correctly, since I myself agree with you that everyone should avoid the life of unadulterated pleasure or pain, and always adopt some mean. What you have said is to the point, and so is my response.

Ath: And correct too, Cleinias, very much so. So, the three of us should apply our minds to the following issue.

Cle: Which is?

Ath: That all the precepts we are now recounting are what most people call “unwritten regulations”, and everything of this sort, taken together, is exactly the same as what they refer to as the “ancestral laws”. ^{793B} And what's more, the argument that occurred to us just now, whereby these precepts should neither be designated as law, nor left unspoken, was quite right. For in all constitutions these act as bonds between all their enactments: those that have already been written down and are in place, and those that will be enacted in future. They really do constitute a body of ancestral regulations, truly ancient, which rightly enacted and practised, shelter the existing laws ^{793C} in total safety. But if they stray outside of the bonds of what's right, into disorder, and the ancient supports collapse, it's as if the supports installed by carpenters in a building were to give way, causing everything to tumble into everything else, one thing lying on top of another, both the supports and the rightly constructed later superstructure. With these principles in mind then, Cleinias, we should bind this city of yours together, totally, while it is still new, doing our best to omit nothing large or small, be they laws, ^{793D} customs, practices or whatever they are called. For, a city is bound together by everything of this sort and neither of these is stable without the other. Accordingly we should not be surprised if the inclusion of lots of seemingly trivial regulations and customs makes our laws quite lengthy.

Cle: Well you are right to point this out, and we shall bear this in mind.

Ath: So, if we could implement these measures precisely, until a boy ^{793E} or girl reaches the age of three, and not treat what has been said casually, these would be of no small advantage to our young charges. But the souls of three year olds, and four, five and even six year olds, would need games, and the gentleness should then give way to punishments which are not demeaning or violent, neither provoking anger in the chastised child, nor spoiling him, through lack of correction.

^{794A} In other words, we should apply the same principles to the free born as we prescribed earlier for slaves.

Now there are certain games that come naturally to children at that age, and they readily work these out for themselves when they get together. So at that stage, the three to six year old, should gather at the village temples, so that all the children of each village come together in the same place. What's more, the nurses are to be responsible for the orderly conduct or misbehaviour of the children, and one woman in each case, one of the twelve ^{794B} who have already been mentioned, is to be put in charge of the nurses themselves, and of each group as a whole, for one year. These are to be appointed by the guardians of the law, while the women who are responsible for overseeing marriages should select the twelve, one from each tribe, the same age as themselves. Once appointed she should pay an official visit to the temple each day, punishing any wrongdoer, male or female, slave or foreigner, assisted by some of the city servants. In the case of a citizen, where there is a dispute ^{794C} over the punishment, she should refer the matter to the city wardens, but where there is no dispute she should punish, even a citizen, herself.

After the age of six the sexes should then be separated, boys being made to associate with boys, girls with girls. Each needs to turn their attention to various courses of instruction, the boys going to teachers of horsemanship, archery, and the use of javelins and slings. The girls too may take instruction in these, if they wish, ^{794D} especially in the use of weapons, although the prevailing view on such matters is, for the most part, misguided.

Cle: What view?

Ath: The view that when it comes to using our hands for various activities, the right and the left are different by nature, whereas, in tasks involving our feet and lower limbs, no such difference is apparent. But due to ignorance on the part of nurses and mothers, each of us has turned out like cripples when it comes to manual ^{794E} activities. For, although the limbs are more or less equally balanced, on each side, we ourselves have made them different through habitual incorrect use. Now in activities of no great importance this doesn't really matter; for instance, it matters little if someone holds the lyre in his left hand and the plectrum in his right. But it borders upon ^{795A} stupidity to use these examples as our models in other situations where there is no need to adopt such a practice. The Scythian practice of using the right hand and the left hand, interchangeably, to draw the bow and to string the arrow, rather than using just one hand for each, illustrates the point. And there are lots of similar examples from chariot-driving and so on, which are enough to show us that those who train the left side to be weaker than the right are training them contrary to nature. Now, as we said, this makes little difference with plectrums made of bone, and other such implements, ^{795B} but it matters a great deal when iron weapons such as bows and arrows, javelins and the like, are to be used in war, and it matters enormously in the clash of weapons with weapons, where there is a huge difference between someone who has learned the skill and someone who has not, someone who has been trained and someone who has not. For instance, a perfectly trained pancratiast, or boxer or wrestler is well able to fight to his left, and he is not handicapped, dragging himself about in disarray, whenever an opponent puts him under pressure by switching ^{795C} sides. So too, in my view, in the case of weapons or anything else, it is only right to accept that someone possessed of two sets of limbs with which to defend himself, or attack others, should do his best to avoid leaving either side to lie idle and untaught. Indeed someone endowed with the physique of a Geryon or a Briareus ought to be able to throw one hundred darts with all of those one hundred hands of his. All this should be looked after by those who are in charge, male and female, the

women acting as supervisors of the games and general upbringing, the men of the courses of instruction, to ensure that all boys and girls turn out sure footed and good with their hands, with none of their natural endowments marred by acquired habits, insofar as this is possible.

The courses of instruction would fall, more or less, under two headings, physical training relating to the body and music for the sake of a good soul. Physical training, in turn, has two aspects ^{795E} dancing and wrestling. In one form of dancing the utterance of the Muse is imitated, preserving both dignity and freedom. Another form aims at fitness, lightness and beauty, ensuring the appropriate flexibility and reach of the limbs and other parts of the body itself, and at bestowing upon each of them a beautiful rhythmic motion of their own, which pervades, and consistently accompanies all kinds of dancing. ^{796A} As far as wrestling is concerned the techniques invented by Antaeus and Cercyon for the sake of useless ambition, or those developed by Epeius or Amycus for boxing, being of no use in the conduct of warfare, don't deserve to be dignified with a mention. But the techniques of stand-up wrestling, to free one's neck, arms or ribs, practiced with ardour and a good physique, for the sake of health and strength, these are useful for all purposes and should not be neglected. So when we come to the appropriate point in our laws, we should direct the teachers ^{796B} to impart all knowledge of this sort generously, and the pupils to receive it graciously. Nor again, should we neglect, in the choral performances, any imitative actions that are appropriate to the particular place: the armed games of the curetes on this island, and of the Sacred Twins in Sparta. And indeed among my own people our Virgin Queen, delighting in the entertainment of the dance, thought it wrong to play the game with empty hands, and right to perform the dance adorned in full battle array. ^{796C} So it would be most fitting then for our boys, and girls too, to copy these out of respect for the grace of the goddess, for their military benefit and for the sake of the festivals. So from the outset, until they are of age for military service, the children should, I suggest, when in processions to any gods, and when involved in parades, always be equipped with horses and armour as they pay their respects to the gods and their ^{796D} offspring, with marches or dances, quick or slow. And their sole purposes, in competitions or preparing for competitions should be these and these alone. For competitions, in peace or war are beneficial to a state and to private households, while other exertions, sports or business related to the body, are not worthy of a free people. Now Megillus and Cleinias, I have more or less described, in detail, the gymnastics that I said, in our initial discussions, needed to be described: there it is in its entirety. If you have anything better to offer, please share it ^{796E} with us.

Cle: Stranger, if we reject this account it won't be easy to come up with anything better to say about gymnastics or competition either.

Ath: We thought earlier that we had dealt comprehensively with the related matter of the gifts of the Muses and of Apollo, and that the only topic remaining was gymnastics. But what still needs to be said to everyone, and that it should be said at the very outset is now obvious. So let's state this, systematically.

Cle: Certainly that's what we should do.

Ath: ^{797A} Listen to me then. You have done so already but the speaker and the listeners too, need to be extremely careful when the proposition is highly unusual and unfamiliar as is the case now. I shall advance my argument with some trepidation; nevertheless I shall summon up my courage and not be put off.

Cle: What is your argument, stranger?

Ath: I maintain that in all cities there is total ignorance about games in general and how extremely influential they are in relation to the enactment of laws, and in determining whether or not laws endure once they have been enacted. For ^{797B} when there is regulation ensuring that the same children always play the same games, under the same conditions, in the same way, and enjoy the same playthings; this provision also allows the existing regulations, on more serious matters, to be free from disturbance. However when there are variations and innovations in games, and changes are constantly being introduced, and the children's tastes are never the same for long, when they never settle upon a standard of what's seemly or unseemly in the department of their own bodies, or in anything they make use of, they then develop undue respect for anyone who constantly innovates by introducing something new ^{797C} and different from what they are accustomed to, in terms of shape, colour and everything of that sort, and I think we may safely say that no greater harm could befall a city than such a person as this. For he is surreptitiously changing the habits of the young, making them despise what's old, and honour whatever is new. So I say again that nothing does more damage to any city than this maxim or doctrine. Listen and I'll tell you just how detrimental it is.

Cle: ^{797D} Are you referring to criticism of the ancient traditions of our cities?

Ath: Very much so.

Cle: You won't find this particular argument falling on deaf ears with us; we'll do our best to give you a good hearing.

Ath: So I expect.

Cle: Please proceed.

Ath: Come on then, let's surpass ourselves both as listeners and as speakers. The fact is that all change, except when it involves evils, ^{797E} will be found to be extremely precarious, whether it affects the seasons, the winds, our bodily regimen or the tendencies of our souls, and this is not, as we might say, sometimes so and sometimes not so, but always so, except, as I said just now, in the case of evils. Look at human bodies for instance: we see that they become accustomed to all sorts of food, drink and exercises, even though they were disturbed by these at first; then, over time, from these very materials, they grow flesh that is akin to these, ^{798A} and having developed a fondness, familiarity and understanding of this entire regimen in terms of pleasure and health, they live an excellent life. But if someone is ever compelled to change once more to some other reputable regimen, the person is disturbed in the beginning by various diseases, and only gradually recovers as he gets accustomed to the diet once more. Now we should presume that the same thing also applies to people's minds and, at the same time, to the natures of their souls too. For when the laws they have been reared under, are, through some divine good fortune, ^{798B} stable over a long period of time, so that no one remembers or has even heard of them being different from the way they are at the moment, all the soul reveres them, and is afraid to alter anything that has been in place for so long. So the lawgiver should discover, somehow or other, the means whereby his city will secure this advantage. My suggestion is as follows: all lawgivers are of the view that changes in children's games, as we said before, are in themselves, a mere game, and that no great or serious ^{798C} harm comes from them. Consequently, instead of trying to avert them, they go along with them compliantly, and it never occurs to them that children who engage in innovation in their games necessarily become very different people than the previous generation of children. Once they become different they seek a different life, and in their search they develop a desire for

different institutions and laws, and none of them ^{798D} fears the arrival of what we have just called the greatest evil afflicting our cities. Other changes, affecting mere externals, would be less productive of evils, but frequent changes in what is praised or censured in the characters of people, are, I believe, the most influential of all, and should be treated with the utmost caution.

Cle: Of course.

Ath: Well now, do we still believe the previous arguments by which we asserted that rhythms, and music in general, are imitations of the manners of better people, or worse people? ^{798E} Or where do we stand?

Cle: Our opinion on the matter would remain unchanged.

Ath: Should we maintain then, that every possible means must be devised to ensure that our children never develop the desire to come up with alternative imitations, in dance or in song, and that no one ever lures them in that direction with a variety of pleasures?

Cle: Correct.

Ath: ^{799A} Now, for such purposes, can any of us suggest any device better than what the Egyptians use?

Cle: What are you referring to?

Ath: Making all dance and all song sacred, having first regulated the festivals by drawing up an annual list prescribing which festivals are to be celebrated, at what times, dedicated to what particular gods, children of gods, or daimons. After this, certain people must first ordain which hymn is to be sung at the various sacrifices to the gods, and with which dances the sacrifice ^{799B} is to be graced on that occasion. Once these have been ordained, all the citizens, communally, having performed sacrifices to the Fates and to all the other gods should consecrate the relevant hymns to the particular gods and divinities. But if anyone introduces other hymns or dances besides these, to any god, the priests and priestesses, assisted by the guardians of the law, shall be performing a sacred and lawful act in excluding the offender from the festival. And if he is unwilling to accept his exclusion he shall, for the rest of his life, be subject to a charge of impiety by anyone who wishes to pursue the matter.

Cle: And rightly so.

Ath: ^{799C} Well, having embarked upon this argument we should behave in a manner that becomes us.

Cle: What are you referring to?

Ath: No young person, presumably, not to mention the elderly, on seeing or hearing anything strange and not at all familiar, would ever, I imagine, rush to some hasty resolution of the difficulties, on the spot. He would pause, like someone who had arrived at a crossroads as he travelled alone or with others, ^{799D} and didn't really know the right road to take. He would question himself and others in the light of the difficulty, and would not proceed further until he had settled the question of where precisely the road would lead him. And that is exactly what we should do now. For having just come across a strange argument in relation to laws, we need to investigate it thoroughly, I presume, and not, at our age, make pronouncements so glibly on such important matters, insisting, there and then, that we have something illuminating to impart.

Cle: Very true.

Ath: ^{799E} Now although we should allow time for this and only settle the issue after a comprehensive investigation, we do not wish to be prevented, needlessly, from completing the subsequent arrangement of the laws that are now before us, so we should go on to the end of them. For perhaps, God willing, once this exposition, as a whole, reaches a conclusion, it may also proffer an adequate solution to our present difficulty.

Cle: That’s an excellent suggestion, Stranger, let’s do as you say.

Ath: Let’s take it then, as given, we say, that our the hymns have become “measures”,¹ and that’s just what the men of old seem to have called their harp-tunes too, so perhaps ^{800A} these people would not distance themselves entirely from what we are now saying, and one of them, I suspect, had an inspired vision of this whilst asleep, or in a waking dream. So let the following pronouncement be made on this matter: no one, in action or utterance, is to depart from the publicly prescribed tunes, rituals or choral performances of the young, in general, any more than he would depart from any of the other legal measures. Whoever conforms shall suffer no penalty, but whoever disobeys, as we said just now, shall be punished by the lawgivers, the priestesses ^{800B} and the priests. May we now take it that these issues have been settled by our argument?

Cle: We may.

Ath: In what way then could someone legislate on these matters without becoming a total laughing stock? Let’s look at this further issue concerning them. The safest approach is to contrive some aspects, theoretically, first. So I suggest the following: suppose a sacrifice has been conducted and the offerings have been burned in accordance with the law, and some individual, a son or a brother, standing close to the altar and the offerings, ^{800C} were to utter all sorts of outright blasphemies, wouldn’t we expect this outburst to fill his father and other relations with despair, foreboding and ominous apprehensions?

Cle: Indeed.

Ath: Well in our part of the world this is more or less what happens in almost all the cities. Whenever some official conducts a sacrifice in public, along comes not a single chorus, but a host of them, who stand not at a distance from ^{800D} the altars, but sometimes right beside them, pouring out utter blasphemy over the sacred offerings, afflicting the souls of the gathering with their words, rhythms and mournful harmonies, and whoever provokes most tears, there and then, from the sacrificing city, carries off the victory prize. Now we shall cast our vote against such a practice, won’t we? And if our citizens ever actually need to give ear to such doleful strains, on certain days that are not holy or noteworthy, wouldn’t it be better ^{800E} that the choruses be hired in from outside, for the occasion, just like the paid performers, with their doleful Carian music, who escort the dead at funerals. Some such arrangement would presumably be suitable for songs of this sort, and the costumes appropriate for performing these funereal dirges would not consist of garlands and gold embroidery but, to get the topic over with as quickly as I can, the direct opposite. I would just like us to ask ourselves this particular question once again: are we satisfied that the first aspect of hymns, for us, would be this one?

¹ A play on the double sense of νόμος – “law” and “chant” or “tune”: cp.700B, 722D, 734E. (Loeb ed. P.41). Here the word is translated as “measure” in an attempt to reflect the ambiguity.

Cle: Which?

Ath: Reverent delivery; and indeed our ^{801A} hymns in general must be entirely reverent in every respect, or is there no need to repeat the question? May I simply impose this regulation?

Cle: Yes, impose it by all means, indeed this measure would win the vote unanimously.

Ath: Well after reverent delivery, what would the second measure belonging to music be? Is it that there should always be prayers to the gods to whom the sacrifice is being offered?

Cle: Of course.

Ath: Our third measure, I believe, is that the poets, recognising that prayers are requests made of the gods, are to be extremely ^{801B} careful in case they ever, unwittingly, ask for bad as though it were good. In fact making a prayer of this sort would, in my view, be an absurd state of affairs.

Cle: Indeed.

Ath: Now weren't we persuaded by our argument, a moment ago, that wealth in the form of silver or gold should neither settle nor find a home in our city?

Cle: We certainly were.

Ath: So can we say what precise aspect has been highlighted by this argument? Is it that poets in general are not really up to the task ^{801C} of recognising, unequivocally, what's good and what isn't? Of course when a poet falls into this error of praying in the wrong way, either in his words or in the melody, he will make our citizens utter prayers, in matters of the utmost importance, contrary to our directions. And indeed, as we said, it would be hard to find an error more serious than this. So shall we institute this as one of our legal models relating to music?

Cle: What are you instituting? Explain this more clearly, please.

Ath: The poet is to compose nothing contrary to what the city holds to be lawful and just, noble ^{801D} and good. He is not allowed to display his compositions before any private citizens until they have first been shown to, and approved by, the judges appointed to consider these matters, and by the guardians of the laws. And these people have effectively been appointed by us already when we selected lawgivers concerned with music, and our supervisor of education. Well then, to repeat my question, shall we lay this down as a third model or aspect of our law? What do you think?

Cle: Do so, indeed.

Ath: ^{801E} After these issues are settled, the right thing to do would be to sing hymns and praises to the gods, combined with prayers, and then, in like manner, prayers and praises to the daimons and the heroes, as appropriate to each.

Cle: Of course.

Ath: And after this there could be no objections to an immediate law whereby, praises may be properly sung for any citizens approaching life's end, who have noble achievements to show for their hard work, physical or mental, and who have been obedient to the laws.

Cle: How could anyone object?

Ath: ^{802A} As for those who are still alive, it is not safe to honour them with praises and hymns until their entire life has run its course and has attained a noble end. Then all these honours may be allowed to men and to women, without distinction, who have been conspicuous for their goodness. As for the songs and the dances, these should be organised as follows: among the works of the ancients there are many beautiful traditional musical compositions, and the same may be said of dances too, for our bodies. And we are free to select from these whatever is appropriate and suitable for the constitution ^{802B} we are establishing. To make the selection, scrutineers of these poems and dances are to be chosen who, are more than fifty years of age. Whatever works of the ancients are deemed satisfactory should be accepted, while those deemed deficient, or totally unsuitable, are to be either rejected out of hand, or revised and corrected, as the case may be. For this we shall employ the services of the musical and poetical folk, making use of their ability as composers, without surrendering to their tastes ^{802C} and preferences, with rare exceptions. Rather, by interpreting the wishes of the lawgiver, we shall institute dancing, singing, and choral performance in general, as much in accord with those overall intentions as possible.

Any disordered musical activity is improved a thousand fold once it is regulated, even without the addition of the honey sweet muse. Pleasure is a common feature of all kinds of music. For someone who has lived his life from his earliest childhood until the age of maturity and good sense in the presence of a sober and measured style of music, hates the opposite style when he hears it ^{802D} and declares it to be unworthy of a free people. But someone who is brought up on popular sweet music regards the opposite style as cold and joyless. And so, as I said just now, neither the pleasure nor the joylessness has prevailed in either case, but the styles differ insofar as one makes those who are brought up on it, better, while the other makes them worse.

Cle: You have expressed that very well.

Ath: It would be necessary, in addition, to make a rough division, ^{802E} distinguishing between songs suited to females and those suited to males, and it would be important to set them to appropriate harmonies and rhythms. Indeed it would be terrible for the overall harmony and the rhythms too, to be discordant, because the songs are not assigned what is suitable and appropriate in each case. So it will be necessary to legislate on these matters, at least in general terms. Now although it is possible to assign the required harmony and rhythm to both kinds of songs, what songs are assigned to the female should be determined by the actual distinction between the natures of the sexes. Whatever is exalted and inclines towards courage should be pronounced manly, while anything that tends more towards order and sound-mindedness should, by our tradition of language and of law, be regarded as more feminine. This then is the arrangement. ^{803A} After this, we shall speak of teaching and passing on these subjects; the manner in which this is to be done in each case, to whom, and when. I seem to be behaving much like a shipbuilder who begins his design by laying down the keel, and sketching the vessel in general outline. I am trying to set various lives before you in various terms, based upon the manner of people's souls, actually laying down ^{803B} their keels, to give proper consideration to this important question: how may we best navigate this journey of life? By what manner or means of living is this to be done? Now human affairs are not worthy of extreme seriousness, but be serious we must; more's the pity. Yet, since we are here in this world, if we were somehow or other to be serious in an appropriate way, that would probably be the right measure for us. But what precisely do I mean? Someone would probably challenge me with that question, and rightly so.

Cle: ^{803C} Indeed so.

Ath: I maintain that we should take what's serious seriously, and not be serious about what's trivial. God is naturally worthy of the utmost beneficent seriousness, while humans, as I said before, have been constructed as a plaything of God, and that really is what's best about us. Every man and woman then should live their lives accordingly, adopting this way of living, by playing the game as beautifully as they can, in total contrast to their present attitude.

Cle: ^{803D} How so?

Ath: Nowadays they are of the view, it seems, that anything serious should be undertaken with play as the objective. And so they believe that the serious business of warfare should be properly undertaken for the sake of peace. But the fact is that in warfare there never has been any play, nor indeed any education worth mentioning, nor is there now, nor will there ever be, and this, I maintain is the most serious issue for us. So, each of us should spend our lives, for the most part, in peace and excellence. What then is the right way to do this? ^{803E} Our lives are to be lived playing certain games which involve performing sacrifices, singing hymns, and dancing, so as to be able to secure the favour of the gods, and indeed repel our enemies and defeat them in battle. By what sorts of singing and dancing may both these objectives be attained? This has already been answered in broad outline and the path has, in a sense, been opened up for us to tread, confident that the poet was right to say:

^{804A} Telemachos, some of it you yourself will see in your own heart,
and some the divinity will put in your mind. I do not
think you could have been born and reared without the gods' will.²

So our charges too should be of the same mind as the poet; they must accept that what has been said is sufficient, and that in the case of sacrifices and dances, ^{804B} God and the spirit will make suggestions as to the particular gods to whom they are to offer their games, in propitiation. And so they will live out their lives in accord with the sort of nature they possess, being, for the most part, puppets, occasionally getting a glimpse of the truth.

Megillus: You are belittling the human race, mightily, stranger.

Ath: Don't be surprised, Megillus, just forgive me. I was intent upon God just now, and I said what I said in the light of that experience. So, if you prefer, let's allow that this human race of ours is not commonplace, but deserves ^{804C} to be taken seriously.

To continue with the original subject: we spoke of buildings for public gymnasias and schools, three of them in the centre of the city, and indeed three training grounds and open spaces for horses outside the city on the periphery, fitted out for instructing and training the young in archery and long range warfare in general. And if it turns out that these were not described in sufficient detail earlier, let's incorporate them now into our argument and laws. In all these places there are to be teachers in residence, for each subject, foreigners, attracted ^{804D} by the pay, to teach any subjects that are concerned with warfare, or indeed with music, to those who attend. And it is not that the children are to attend if their father so wishes and be exempt from the education if he doesn't. No, if possible, every "man and boy", as they say, being children of the city more so than of their parents, has to be educated. And indeed, in the case of females, my law would mandate the very same provision as for ^{804E} males; the training of males and females should be identical. And in stating this argument, I have no reservations about horsemanship and gymnastics being appropriate

² Odyssey, III. 26-28, Lattimore

for men but not for women. In fact I have been convinced of this by hearing time old stories, and nowadays I know that there are thousands and thousands, so to speak, of women living around the Black Sea, Sarmatian ^{805A} women they are called, who have been directed to get involved, to the same extent as the men, not only in horsemanship but in archery and the use of weapons generally, and they train to the very same extent. Besides I have a particular viewpoint on these issues, as follows: if it really is possible to arrange matters in this way, then the current practice in our parts of the world is the height of folly; it is sheer folly that all men and women don't conspire, with all their might, to engage in the same pursuits. As matters stand almost every city turns out, more or less, to be only half what it might be, based upon the same ^{805B} expenditure and effort. And that surely constitutes an astonishing error on the part of the lawgiver.

Cle: So it seems stranger; nevertheless much of what is now being suggested runs counter to our customary civic practices. Nevertheless you said that the argument should be allowed to run its course and we should draw conclusions only when it is over. That suggestion was most reasonable and I must rebuke myself for saying what I have just said. So proceed ^{805C} with the argument as you think best.

Ath: Well, Cleinias, what seems best to me, is what I said previously; if current practices did not provide sufficient evidence that these proposals can actually be implemented, perhaps it might have been possible to contradict the proposition. But now someone who won't accept this law of ours must pursue a different course, and our injunction will not be nullified by these arguments: the female sex must share, as much as possible, ^{805D} with the male sex both in education and in everything else. And indeed this, somehow, is the way in which we need to think about these issues. Suppose that women do not participate in common with men in every aspect of their lives, won't we need to make some different arrangements for them?

Cle: Yes, we would need to do that.

Ath: If we had to pick some arrangement that is currently established somewhere, in preference to this common participation that we are now imposing on them, which arrangement would we choose? Would it be the system used by the Thracians and many other peoples ^{805E} whereby their women folk tend the land, mind the oxen and sheep, perform menial tasks, and are not much different from slaves? Or should we do as all of us do in our region? Among ourselves nowadays our practice on these issues is as follows: we accumulate all of our wealth under one roof, so called, and to the women we hand over the management of provisions, and responsibility for weaving, and wool-working ^{806A} in general. Or should we propose the middle ground, Megillus: the Spartan approach? Are the young girls to be involved in gymnastics and music too, while the women, although excused from wool-working, weave for themselves a busy life that is not at all commonplace or paltry, reaching a middle ground consisting of service, management of provisions, and child-rearing, without having any involvement in warfare? So if some necessity ever arises to do battle on behalf of the city and its children, are they to be unable to use a bow, skilfully, as the Amazons ^{806B} do, or use any other kind of projectile either? Could they even imitate the goddess by picking up a shield and spear, taking a noble stand against the devastation of their native land, and be able, at very least, to strike fear into their enemies by being seen in battle formation? Based upon their manner of living, they could never attempt to imitate the Sarmatian Amazons, at all; alongside your women, those women ^{806C} would look like men. So if anyone wishes to sing the praises of your lawgivers, let him do so; for my part I can only say what I have just said: the lawgiver is to be fully committed, and not half do the job by allowing the female sex

a luxurious, profligate and disorderly lifestyle, while paying close attention to the male sex, thus endowing the city, with just half of a completely happy life, rather than the whole thing.

Meg: What are we to do, Cleinias? Shall we allow the stranger to denigrate Sparta, in our presence, in this way?

Cle: ^{806D} Yes: having granted him freedom of speech we must allow him free rein until such time as we have gone through the laws in sufficient detail.

Meg: You're right.

Ath: What sort of life then would people have if all their needs were met, in due measure, all skilled labour had been handed over to others, and their farms had been entrusted to slaves, ^{806E} yielding a return sufficient for people who live orderly lives. What if communal meals were arranged with men eating apart, while members of their household dined close by, including female children and their mothers? Suppose supervisors male and female were appointed to break up the gatherings on each occasion, having kept the conduct of the meals under observation, ensuring that everyone went on their way, in due course and order, after the supervisor and the others had poured a libation to the gods to whom that day and night happened to be sacred. For people living under such arrangements, what necessary work is there? What work is really appropriate? Is each of them to spend their life like a fatted beast? No, that I maintain is neither just nor fair; nor could someone living in this way fail to get what is due to him, and what's due to an idle ^{807B} creature, fattening itself in indolence is, generally, to fall prey to some other creature, one that has been worn thin by vigorous hard work. Now if we sought to implement these measures, as now described, properly, in detail, they would probably never see the light of day as long as there are private wives, children and dwellings, and everything of this sort is arranged on a private basis for each and every one of us. But if ^{807C} instead, we could implement the second best arrangements, the ones we are describing, that would be most reasonable. And yet we maintain that for people living in this way, the task entrusted to them is far from trivial or commonplace; a just law has assigned them the most important task of all.

Consider a life that affords no leisure for any other activities at all, the life of someone intent upon victory in the Olympic or Pythian games for instance. Well the life that is concerned with the overall care of both body and soul in terms of excellence, the one that may truly ^{807D} be called a life, is twice, indeed more than twice as busy. Indeed no other tasks should act as a distraction, impeding the provision of the appropriate exercise and nutriment to the body, or indeed of the necessary instruction and habituation to the soul. All day and all night is scarcely enough for someone engaged in this task to derive full and complete benefit from these pursuits. And this being the case, all these free people should have a regulated lifestyle all of the time, beginning, ^{807E} more or less, at dawn on one day and continuing, without any interruption, until dawn and sunrise on the next. Now any lawgiver who makes lots of detailed trivial pronouncements about private domestic arrangements would be a sorry sight, especially when these are concerned with how long people should remain awake at night if they are to be accomplished and attentive guardians of the entire city. Indeed, for any of our citizens to spend the whole of any night in slumber, and not be seen wide awake ^{808A} by his entire household because he got up first, should be regarded by everyone as disgraceful and unworthy of a free people, whether such behaviour is dictated by law or by custom. And indeed, for the lady of the house to be awakened by some attendants rather than, herself, wakening everyone else first, should be proclaimed a disgrace among the servants themselves, male and female, young and old, and even, if possible, by the very

building itself. A good proportion of civic and household affairs should be dealt with whilst awake during the night hours, by those in authority in the city, and by masters and mistresses in private households. For a lot of sleep is not naturally suitable either for our bodies or for our souls, or indeed, when dealing with all these affairs. No one who is asleep is good for anything, any more than a dead person. But those of us who care most for being alive and using our minds, remain awake ^{808C} as much as we can, making sure that we get only as much sleep as is needed for our health, and that is not much, once the habit has been well established. When the rulers in cities are awake during the night hours they strike fear into evil doers, be they external enemies or fellow citizens, yet they are admired and respected by the just, soundminded people, and are a source of benefit to themselves and to the city in its entirety.

In addition to all the benefits we have listed, spending the night in this way will also equip the souls of everyone ^{808D} who resides in these cities with some courage. And when day breaks once again, at dawn, the children make their way to their teachers, for children should not be allowed to live without someone in charge of them, nor slaves without masters, any more than sheep or any other beast should be without herdsmen. Of all beasts the young child is the most difficult to take in hand, since the fact that he, in particular, possesses a fount of intelligence that is, as yet, uncontrolled makes him a scheming, shrewd and extremely unruly creature. That's why a child needs to be reined in by lots of ^{808E} bridles, as it were; firstly, when he is away from his nurse and his mother, by attendants to deal with his childish immaturity; then by teachers of any subjects at all, and by instruction that befits a free people. And yet, he must also be treated as a slave who may be punished by any free man who comes across the child himself or his attendant or teacher, engaging in any transgression. What's more, if the person who comes across them fails to inflict a just punishment he is, first and foremost, to be held in the utmost contempt. Then the guardian of the laws who has been put in charge of the children shall keep a close eye on this person who came across the transgression we are referring to, and did not impose the required punishment, or did so in an improper manner. This guardian of ours should be extremely vigilant, pay particular attention to the rearing of the children, and guide their development by constantly turning them towards what's good and lawful.

As for the guardian himself, how might this law of ours provide him with adequate instruction? As matters stand it has not, so far, said anything that is sufficiently clear: ^{809B} some issues have been dealt with, others not. But, in the case of this man, the law should do its best to omit nothing, and expound a full account, so that he in turn may expound this to others and look after them. The types of choral performances, by which we mean songs and dances, which should be selected, corrected, and consecrated have already been dealt with. But, O most excellent overseer of children, ^{809C} we have not described the kinds of written compositions, devoid of metre, to be used by your charges, and the manner in which they should be used. Now you already have an account of what they should learn and study in relation to warfare. Then there are letters, and the lyre, and also calculation, of which, we said, there should be as much as each person needs to learn for the purposes of warfare, household management and the administration of the city. For the same reasons they should also learn whatever is useful concerning the orbits of the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon and stars, and any provisions that any city needs to make with reference to these. ^{809D} What I am referring to is the arrangement of the days into cycles of months, and the months into each recurring year, so that seasons, sacrifices, and festivals are each celebrated in accord with the natural order, because they have each been assigned their own appropriate place. These keep the city alive and alert, bestow honours upon its gods and render the people more intelligent about

these matters. These issues have not, so far, been adequately explained to you by the lawgiver. ^{809E} So, pay attention to what is to be said next.

Now, in the first place, we are saying that you have not had adequate instruction about the written word. What is our objection? As follows: it has not yet been explained to you, whether someone who is to be a reasonable citizen is to go into the subject in detail or set it aside entirely, and the same consideration applies to playing the lyre. Well, we are now saying that these studies should not be set aside. For a ten year old, three years on writing is more or less enough, and if he takes up the lyre at the age of thirteen, ^{810A} three years is a good measure of time to spend on it. And neither the child himself nor his father may be permitted to prolong or curtail the time spent on these subjects out of love or distaste for them, and go against the law by so doing. Whoever does not comply is to be deprived of the educational honours which we shall describe shortly.

You should first understand ^{810B} what precisely the young people should learn in those years, and again, what the teachers should teach. And we should not insist upon high achievement, in terms of speed or beauty, in students whose development is naturally slower during the specified time periods. For the purpose of instruction in written compositions, not set to music, some having metre, others devoid of rhythmical subdivisions, consisting, in fact, of the spoken word alone, bereft of rhythm and harmony, for this purpose we have been left writings ^{810C} that are fraught with danger, by some of the numerous authors of this kind. So, most excellent guardians of the laws, what are you do to with these? And what exact directions for using them would the lawgiver give you if he is to proceed aright? I think this will challenge him mightily.

Cle: What exactly do you mean stranger? You are, apparently, describing your own personal perplexity.

Ath: Your suspicion is correct, Cleinias, and indeed, since the two of you are my partners in this discussion of laws, I need to explain where the difficulties seem to lie and where they do not.

Cle: ^{810D} Well then, what point are you making now, and what is bothering you?

Ath: I'll tell you then, although it is not at all easy to speak in opposition to tens of thousands of voices.

Cle: What's this? Do you think that what we have said already about laws goes against majority opinion, merely on a few insignificant matters?

Ath: Very true, in fact you seem to be telling me, as I see it, that although the same course is anathema to the majority, it is, perhaps, acceptable to just as many others, and even if there are fewer ^{810E} of them they are every bit as good as the majority. You are now encouraging me to take my chances with these few, not to give up, but proceed courageously along the legislative course prescribed by our present arguments.

Cle: Indeed.

Ath: I shan't give up then. Now I am saying that we have countless poets who compose in hexameters, in trimeters, and in all the metrical forms you could mention, some whose intention is serious, others intent upon raising a laugh. The tens of thousands of voices maintain that properly educated young people should be brought up on these verses and saturated in them, thus turning them into highly learned folk ^{811A} who have heard a lot, having committed entire poems to memory. There are others who select highlights from all the poets' works, compile whole extracts, and

maintain that these must be studied and committed to memory if our young charge is to be good and wise, because of this extensive experience and learning. Are you telling me then to be frank with these people and point out the rights and wrongs of what they are saying?

Cle: Of course.

Ath: Well then, is there a single statement I can make ^{811B} about all of these poets that will suffice? I think that something along the following lines may be enough, something on which most people will agree with me: each of these poets has said much that is good and much that isn't. If this is the case, then I maintain that, for children, extensive learning is fraught with danger.

Cle: So what advice would you give to the guardian of the laws?

Ath: About what?

Cle: About the guideline he is to refer to as to what all the young folk are allowed ^{811C} or not allowed to learn. Tell us and hold nothing back.

Ath: Good man, Cleinias, I suspect that I have, somehow, been fortunate.

Cle: In what respect?

Ath: Insofar as I am not entirely at a loss for a standard. In fact as I look back now at the discussions we have conducted from dawn up to this point, not, I believe, without some inspiration from the gods, these seem to me to have been delivered, from start to finish, like some poem. Indeed as I surveyed our own arguments, gathered together as it were, it is surely no surprise that I experienced ^{811D} great delight. In fact, of all the many discourses I have learned or listened to, in poetry, or in a flood of words like ours, these, to me, are evidently the most measured, and especially appropriate for young people to hear. So I don't think I would be able to propose a better standard than this to an educator and guardian of the laws, or do better than encourage him to instruct those who teach children, ^{811E} to teach them these discourses. And if, in his enquiries, he should somehow come across poetical compositions that are related to or similar to these, in the form of prose writings or simple unwritten works, akin to these discourses, he is not to let them go at all, but get them written down. Firstly he is to compel the teachers themselves to learn and to praise these, and any of the teachers who don't like them are not to be employed as colleagues, while those who go along with his praise are to be employed and entrusted with the instructing and educating the young. ^{812A} And so, with this, let my story about the written word and the teachers thereof be concluded.

Cle: Well, stranger, looking at our initial intention, I don't think we have gone outside of the bounds of the discussions we intended. But it is hard to say for certain whether we are still adopting the correct approach or not.

Ath: That, dear Cleinias, as we have said on many occasions, is likely to become clearer, of itself, once we come to the end of our entire exposition concerning laws.

Cle: ^{812B} You're right.

Ath: Well then, after the teacher of the written word, shouldn't we deal next with the harp teacher?

Cle: Indeed.

Ath: Well then, in the case of harp teachers, I think we shall assign them their appropriate roles as instructors and as educators in such subjects generally, if we bring our previous discussions to mind.

Cle: Discussions about what?

Ath: We said, I believe, that the sixty year old singers of the chorus of Dionysus have to be exceptionally perceptive in relation both to the rhythms, ^{812C} and to the constructions of the harmonies, in melodic imitations, which may be good or bad in terms of how they affect the soul. Thus ensuring that there is someone who can distinguish between the likenesses associated with a good imitation and those of a bad one, reject the latter, give pride of place to the former, and sing these to the young folk to charm their souls, encouraging each of them to hold fast to the acquisition of excellence which they should understand by means of the imitations.

Cle: Very true.

Ath: ^{812D} To this end the harp teacher and the student should make use of its sounds for the sake of the distinctness of its strings, by matching the notes of the instrument to those of the voice. But when the harp exhibits contrast and variation, so that one tune comes from the strings, another from the composer of the melody, especially when lots of notes are sounded ^{812E} with very few, fast tempo with slow, high pitch with low, and likewise when all sorts of variations in rhythm are incorporated into the notes of the harp; all such devices are to be avoided if our pupils are to derive benefit from music in the short space of three years. For this clash of opposites with one another makes learning difficult, but it is most important that our young people learn easily. Indeed the compulsory subjects we are assigning to them are neither few nor trivial, but the progress of our discussion will reveal these in due course. So our educator is to look after these matters for us, in this way. As for the musical compositions themselves, and the words that the choral instructors should teach, and what these should be like, all this ^{813A} we have already described in detail. We stated that they should each be consecrated and assigned to the appropriate festival, thus benefitting the cities by providing them with propitious pleasure.

Cle: True you have explained this.

Ath: True indeed. And our chosen supervisor of music is to assume responsibility for this, and may good fortune attend him. Our contribution ^{813B} will be to add to what has already been said about dance and physical training in general. Just as in the case of musical instruction, we contributed what was missing, so we should also do the very same in the case of physical training. For the children, male and female, must indeed learn to dance and to train their bodies, isn't this so?

Cle: Yes.

Ath: The boys and the girls should have dancing teachers, male and female, so that this exercise may be of service to them.

Cle: They should.

Ath: Then let us call ^{813C} once again upon the person who will have most duties to perform, the one in charge of our children, who, being responsible for both musical and physical training, will be very busy indeed.

Cle: How will he be able, at his age, to be responsible for so much?

Ath: Easily enough, my friend. For in exercising this responsibility, the law has given him and will always give him, the support of any of the citizens, male or female, whom he wishes to enlist. And he will know the people he needs, and will resolve to make no error in selecting them because he has the intelligence ^{813D} to recognise and respect the importance of his own role, and come to the realisation that when the young have been, and continue to be, well brought up, everything holds to a steady course for us but, if not, the consequences should not even be spoken of, and we are not to speak of them now, in the case of our new city, out of respect for those who are highly superstitious. On these matters too, concerning dancing, and movement related to bodily exercises in general, we have said a great deal already. Indeed we are instituting gymnasia and the various bodily exercises related to warfare; archery, throwing missiles, ^{813E} skirmishing, all sorts of armour fighting, tactical manoeuvres, various marches of armies, and encampments, and the subjects involved in cavalry training. For there should be public instructors in all these, earning a wage from the city, and their pupils should be the boys and men of the city. And the girls, and women too must be knowledgeable about all these matters, having practised dancing and fighting in armour while still young, and in womanhood, having taken part in manoeuvres, ^{814A} drills, and the placing and taking up of arms. If nothing else, this will ensure that if it ever proves necessary for our entire fighting force to leave the city, on military campaign, those who are left guarding the children and the city at large will, at least, be up to the task. Or if, on the other hand, and this is nothing unusual, some external enemy, Greek or barbarian, were to invade with huge power and might, and there had to be a battle for the city itself, it would presumably be a vile disgrace to the state ^{814B} if the women had been so badly brought up that they were not prepared to do as birds do, and fight for their young against the strongest of beasts, in the face of death and all sorts of dangers; if, instead, they made straight for refuge in the temples, crowding all the shrines and altars, pouring upon human beings the reputation for being the most cowardly creatures of all.

Cle: No, by Zeus, stranger. If this were to happen in the city, apart from the harm ^{814C} it would do, it would be most unseemly.

Ath: Should we enact a law to this effect; that to the extent indicated, at least, women are not to neglect military matters, but all citizens, male and female, are to attend to them.

Cle: Well, I agree with you, at any rate.

Ath: Now, as for wrestling, much has been said but I would maintain that we have not yet dealt with its most important aspect, nor is it easy to do so without a physical demonstration to illustrate what is being said. So we shall only make a decision on this when ^{814D} word follows deed, and makes something about the various issues we have spoken of, quite clear: that of all movements, the sort of wresting we are referring to is very closely related to military combat, and indeed, the wrestling should be pursued for the sake of the combat and not the other way around.

Cle: You are right about that anyway.

Ath: Let that be enough said for now on the efficacy of wrestling. Movement of the entire body, ^{814E} other than in wrestling, may for the most part, properly be described as dancing. We should think of this as having two forms; one being the dignified representation of the movement of beautiful bodies, the other being the base representation of the motion of ugly bodies. And again, the base and the serious movements have two further subdivisions. One form of the serious

movement occurs in warfare. and in the strenuous exertions of beautiful bodies and a courageous soul, the other is the motion of a moderate soul in success, amidst measured pleasures, and this would naturally be called the dance of ^{815A} peace. The warlike kind, which is quite different from the peaceful one, may properly be referred to as Pyrrhic. This imitates various means of avoiding blows and missiles, by ducking, yielding, jumping upwards and by crouching, and their opposites too, motions that involve postures of attack, attempting to imitate the shooting of arrows and darts and the inflicting of all sorts of blows. In these dances the upright and well braced posture, when imitating the good bodies and souls, ^{815B} preserving, for the most part, the straightness of the limbs of the body, is the sort of imitation we accept as correct, while imitations of the opposite of these are wrong. In the case of the peace dance, the following question needs to be considered in each case: does the performer, in his dances, succeed or fail in persistently adopting the noble dancing, in a manner appropriate to people with good laws?

So we have in the first place, to make a distinction between controversial dancing and the uncontroversial kind. ^{815C} What then is this distinction and how may we distinguish one kind from the other? Any bacchic dances, or those of that ilk, which, as they say, mimic so called Nymphs, Pans, Sileni and Satyrs, in a drunken state, which are performed during certain purifications or initiations, all constitute a class of dancing that defies easy definition as a peace dance or a war dance, nor is its purpose easy to define. I think that the most correct way to distinguish this dance is to insist ^{815D} that it is distinct from the warlike and the peaceful kinds, declare this dance to be uncivilised, leave it aside, and return once more to the warlike and peaceful dances which are, undeniably, ours. Whatever belongs to the non-warlike Muse, dances in which people revere the gods and their offspring, constitute a single general class, involving a sense of wellbeing. This may be divided into two parts, ^{815E} one imitates people escaping from hardships and dangers and coming out well; this is more pleasurable. The other is milder in its pleasures, and it involves goods that they already possess, being preserved or increased. And in these situations, presumably, a person moves more violently when the pleasures are greater and less violently when they are less. Again, someone who is better behaved and better trained ^{816A} for courage, moves less violently, while the coward, and someone untrained for restraint, exhibits more violent and erratic changes in his movements. In general, when the voice is being used, whether in song or in speech, no one is able to keep the body totally still. And so, because there is imitation, in gesture, of whatever is spoken, this has produced the art of dancing, in its entirety. In all these situations some of us move in harmony with the utterances, others do not. ^{816B} Now many of our other traditional names should be given well deserved praise for their excellence, and their accord with nature. One of these is the name given to the dances of people who are doing well, and are themselves measured in their use of pleasure. See how right the man was, and how musical too, whoever he was, who with good reason named all these dances “harmonious”, and established two kinds of noble dances; one warlike, called “pyrrhic”, the other one peaceful, called “harmonious”. He gave a suitable ^{816C} and fitting name to both. These the lawgiver should explain in general terms, while the legal guardian should scrutinise them, and having completed his investigation, combine dance with music in general, and allocate to the various sacrificial festivals whatever is appropriate to each, thus consecrating them all in due order. Thereafter there should be no change in anything involving dance or song. And so the same city and body of citizens ^{816D} should live well and live happily, being as like unto one another as possible by enjoying the same pleasures in the same way.

So that concludes the matter of beautiful bodies and noble souls engaged in choral performances of the kind we have prescribed. But we also need to look at, and take note of, ill-formed bodies

and ill-formed notions, and those who engage in laughable clownish activity in speech, song or dance, using imitations of all these for comic effect. For it is not possible to understand the serious without considering the comic, or to understand anything that has an opposite,^{816E} in the absence of its own opposite, if we propose to develop our intelligence. Nor indeed is it possible to engage in both, if we really intend to share even in a modicum of excellence. No, the very reason why we need to understand these is to ensure that we never do or say ridiculous things out of ignorance, when we shouldn't. But such mimicry is to be turned over to slaves and foreign hirelings and it should never be taken seriously. Nor should any free born man or woman ever be seen engaging in its study, and there should always be something novel about these imitative performances. So much then for the laughable entertainment which we generally call comedy.^{817A} It may be settled in this way by law and by reason.

As for the so-called serious compositions of the tragic poets, suppose some of them were to approach us and question us as follows: "Strangers, may we or may we not, visit your city and its territory, and may we bring our poetry along with us, or how have you decided to deal with such matters?" How might we respond to these divine men in the right way on these issues?^{817B} I suggest the following: "Visitors, best of men, we ourselves are authors of a tragedy, the most beautiful and excellent one we are capable of. Indeed our entire civic arrangement has been constructed as an imitation of the most beautiful and excellent life, which, at least according to us, really is the truest tragedy. So you are poets and we are poets too, of the same sort, rival authors and rival actors in the most beautiful drama, which true law alone naturally produces; that's^{817C} what we believe. Do not presume then that we shall ever allow you so easily to set up your stage in our midst, in our market place, bringing in your honey voiced actors to drown out our sound, or trust you to speak publicly to our women and children and the general population, speaking on the same topics we speak on, without saying the same things as ourselves but, for the most part, the complete opposite. In fact we would be completely mad, more or less, and so would any city that would allow you to do what is now being suggested, before the officials had decided whether or not your works are fit to be spoken and deserve a hearing among us. Well then, ye children sprung from the soft Muses, once you have, in the first place, exhibited your own verses to the officials, alongside ours, then, provided your pronouncements turn out to be every bit as good as ours or even better, we shall grant you a public chorus, but if not, we could never do so.

^{817E} So, if you agree, in the case of choral performance in general, and instruction in these matters, let these customs be prescribed to accompany the laws, one set of arrangements for slaves, a different set for their masters.

Cle: How could we disagree at this stage, at least?

Ath: For a free people there are three subjects still remaining: calculation and whatever involves number – one subject, measurement of length, area and volume is the second one, while the third deals with the orbit of the planets, and their natural^{818A} motion relative to one another. It is not necessary for a lot of people to apply themselves to all these subjects in all their detail – only a few should do so, and we shall say who these people are, as we come to the end; that's the appropriate place. It would be appropriate for the multitude to learn as much of these subjects as is necessary, and it would be a disgrace, properly speaking, for most people not to know that much at least. But for everyone to study them in detail would neither be easy, nor at all practicable. Yet what is necessary in them cannot be cast aside, and it seems^{818B} that whoever first devised the proverb about God had these in view when he said that "not even God would ever be seen doing battle

against necessity”, referring, I believe, to necessities that are divine. Since, if the reference is to human necessities, which is what most people have in mind when they say this sort of thing, then this is, by far, one of the silliest of all sayings.

Cle: What, stranger, are the necessities in these subjects, that are not of this human sort; the divine ones?

Ath: In my opinion they are those which, if they neither enacted nor learned them at all, ^{816C} no god would be a god to humanity, nor would any daimon or hero be capable of exercising any serious care of us humans. They would fall far short of the status even of a godly human, if they were completely unable to tell one from two, or two from three or distinguish odd from even, or didn’t know how to count at all and were unable to demarcate night and day, having no familiarity ^{818D} with the orbits of the sun and the moon and the other stars. So all these studies are necessary for anyone who intends to attain any knowledge whatsoever of the most exalted of subjects, and it is utter folly to think otherwise. The particular aspects of these that should be studied, the extent and timing of this, what goes with what, which may be studied in isolation, and all combinations of these, this is what needs to be understood first. We may then proceed, guided by these subjects, to learn the others. For necessity has settled matters in this way, and against this, we maintain, ^{818E} none of the gods now does battle, nor will they ever do so.

Cle: It seems, at the moment, stranger, when you put it like that, that this has been expressed correctly and that what you are saying is in accord with nature.

Ath: This is indeed the case, Cleinias, yet although we have prearranged matters in this way, it is difficult, just now, to enact any laws. But we might, if you agree, enact laws, in greater detail, on some other occasion.

Cle: You seem to us, stranger, to be concerned about the customary lack of experience in these subjects among ourselves. But your fear is ill-founded, so try to explain yourself without any reservation on those grounds.

Ath: ^{819A} Although I have concerns on the grounds you mention, I am even more fearful of those who apply themselves to these particular subjects but do so in the wrong way. Complete and total inexperience is never a threat nor is it an enormous evil, but vast experience and learning, accompanied by bad training is much more damaging.

Cle: True.

Ath: So I maintain that free people ^{819B} should learn as much of these various subjects as vast hordes of children in Egypt learn when they are being taught to write. For, beginning with calculation, lessons have been devised for mere children; combining amusement and pleasure with learning they make distributions of some apples or garlands, allocating the same fixed number to larger or smaller groups, or they arrange byes and pairings for boxers and wrestlers who take their turn, in sequence, as natural circumstances dictate. And indeed they devise games in which saucers of gold, bronze and silver and other such ^{819C} materials are mixed, or, in other cases, whole sets of these are distributed. By fitting the applications of the rules of arithmetic into a game, as I said, they are of benefit to the students in terms of the arranging, leading and marching of armies, and in household affairs too, and so they produce people who are, generally, more useful to themselves and more alert. After this, in the case of measurements of distance, area, and volume they dispel

the natural but laughable and shameful ignorance about all these matters, that is so widely prevalent.

Cle: What do you mean? What sort of ignorance?

Ath: Dear Cleinias, when I heard, only recently, of our general predicament in relation to these matters, I was astonished, and it seemed to me more like the predicament not of humans but of lowly creatures like pigs, and I was ashamed not only for myself but ^{819E} for the entire Greek world.

Cle: About what? Tell us what you mean, Stranger.

Ath: I am telling you, but I will make the point clearer by using questions: tell me, briefly, do you know what length is?

Cle: Of course.

Ath: What about area?

Cle: Absolutely.

Ath: Do you realise that these are two distinct things and that volume is a third?

Cle: Certainly.

Ath: Now do you think that all these can be measured against one another?

Cle: Yes.

Ath: I mean that length can naturally be measured against length, area against area, ^{820A} and the same applies to volume.

Cle: Very much so.

Ath: But what if this is neither very much so nor moderately so, but so in some cases and not so in others, and you believe that it is so in all cases? How, then, would you rate your understanding of these matters?

Cle: I'd rate it badly, of course.

Ath: Now what about length and area with respect to volume, or length and area with respect to one another, aren't we Greeks all of the view that they can, somehow or other, be measured against one another?

Cle: ^{820B} Entirely so.

Ath: But if this is not possible in any way at all, but we Greeks, as I said, are of the view that it is possible, are we not justified, out of shame on behalf of us all, in saying to them: "Oh most excellent Greeks, this is one of those matters of which we said that ignorance constitutes disgrace, although there is nothing particularly wonderful in knowledge of such necessary matters either."

Cle: Of course.

Ath: And besides these, there are other matters related to these ^{820C} in which, again, many errors akin to these errors arise, for us.

Cle: Such as?

Ath: Issues concerning the nature of the inter-relationship of things that are measurable against one another and things that are not. In fact, we need to be able to distinguish between these or else be very lowly creatures indeed. People should be constantly setting problems like this for one another, competing in activities that are valuable to them, a much more refined pastime for old men than draughts.

Cle: ^{820D} Perhaps. After all there is not a great deal of difference between draughts and these subjects.

Ath: Well, Cleinias, I maintain that the young folk should learn these subjects. Indeed they are neither harmful nor difficult, and when learned through the medium of play they will benefit the city and do it no harm. Yet, if anyone says otherwise we should listen to him.

Cle: Of course.

Ath: Well then, if this turns out to be how matters stand with these subjects, we should obviously include them in our scheme, but if this is not the case they should be excluded.

Cle: ^{820E} Obviously indeed.

Ath: In that case, for now, stranger, let these be included among the subjects that need to be learned, so that there may be no gaps in our laws. But let them lie there like so many pledges that can be revoked from the rest of the constitution, in case we who have given them, or you who are receiving them, come to disapprove of them.

Cle: A fair pledge.

Ath: Next we should consider teaching astronomy to young people, and whether we approve of this or not.

Cle: Proceed.

Ath: There is a major surprise in relation to these matters; a totally intolerable one.

Cle: ^{821A} What is it?

Ath: We maintain, nowadays, that the greatest god and the entire cosmos should not be subject to enquiry, nor should we busy ourselves in seeking out their causes, because to do so is an unholy act. But it does seem that the very opposite course of action to this is the correct course.

Cle: What do you mean?

Ath: What I am saying is unconventional and may be thought inappropriate to men of our advanced years. However once a person believes a particular teaching to be exalted, true, beneficial to the city, and favoured completely ^{821B} by God, it is no longer at all possible for him to refrain from speaking about it.

Cle: Quite likely, but what teaching, concerning the stars, shall we find, that matches your description?

Ath: Good friends, nowadays, in a sense, all Greeks are telling a lie about the great gods, the sun and the moon.

Cle: What lie is this?

Ath: By calling these, and some other heavenly bodies along with them, planets (or wanderers), we are saying that they never hold to the same course.

Cle: ^{821C} Yes, by Zeus, stranger, that is true. Indeed in my own lifetime I myself have often observed that the morning star and evening star and certain others never traverse the same course but wander in all sorts of ways, while the sun and the moon, of course, behave in a way that's familiar to us all.

Ath: That's the very reason, Megillus and Cleinias, why I am now maintaining, in relation to the gods of the heaven, that our citizens ^{821D} and our young should learn at least enough about all these matters to avoid blasphemy in this regard and speak always with reverence, both when performing sacrifices and when uttering solemn prayers.

Cle: That's true, provided, firstly, that it is possible for whatever you are speaking of to be learned, and secondly, that anything we are now expressing incorrectly about them will be expressed correctly once we have learned this subject. If this is so, then I agree with you that something like this, something of such importance, must be learned. So you should attempt to explain, comprehensively, that this is indeed how matters stand, while we follow along with you and learn.

Ath: ^{821E} Well what I am speaking of is not easy to learn, nor again, is it enormously difficult, nor does it involve some huge time period. Here's my evidence; although I had not heard about these matters in my early years, or long ago, I would, nevertheless, be able to explain them to you both in a relatively short time, whereas, if they were complicated I, at my age, would never be able to explain them to men of your age.

Cle: True, but what exactly is this teaching which, according to you, is surprising, ^{822A} yet so appropriate for the young, and unknown to us? Please explain this much about it, at least, as clearly as you can.

Ath: Try I must. For this assertion, best of men, that the moon and the sun and the other stars are wandering planets, in any sense, is incorrect; the exact opposite is the case. Each of them always traverses one and the same circular course, not many, even though each appears to follow many. What's more, the quickest of them is believed, incorrectly, to be the slowest and the slowest to be the quickest. ^{822B} Now if this is the natural state of affairs, but we believe otherwise, it's as if we were forming such views about horses, racing in the Olympic Games, or about men running long distances, declaring the slowest to be quickest and the quickest to be slowest, and singing our celebratory odes to the loser rather than the winner. I imagine such odes would be misplaced and not very well received by the competitors, who are, after all, mere humans. Yet, nowadays when we fall into the very same errors about the gods, can we not appreciate that what was incorrect and comical in that example, would in this present case, be no laughing matter at all. It is surely not pleasing to the gods that we are continually perpetuating a lie about them.

Cle: Very true, if this is indeed how matters stand.

Ath: Well then, if we can demonstrate that this is how matters stand then everything of this sort should be learned, thus far at least, but if this cannot be demonstrated then we should leave them aside. Is this our agreement?

Cle: ^{822D} It certainly is.

Ath: Well at this stage we may declare that our regulations concerning the subjects of education are concluded. So we should now apply our minds, in like manner, to hunting and any other activities of this sort. In fact, the responsibility of a lawgiver seems to involve more than instituting laws and leaving it at that. There is something else, besides the laws, something that naturally lies somewhere between admonition and laws, something that has come up frequently ^{822E} in our discussions, for instance in connection with the nurture of very young children. For, we are not saying that these matters cannot be formulated, but in formulating them, it would be outright folly to imagine that we are enacting laws. So when the laws and the overall constitution have been written down like this, any praise of a citizen for pre-eminent excellence is deficient when it maintains that a citizen is good, merely because he is an exceptional servant of the laws who obeys them to the utmost. The praise would be more comprehensive if it said that the best citizen is the one who spends his life, through and through, in obedience to anything the lawgiver has written, by way of legislation, praise ^{823A} or censure. This statement in praise of a citizen is the most correct one, and so, the real lawgiver should not only write down the laws but he should also intertwine with the details of his laws, his views on what is good and what's bad, and the pre-eminent citizen should uphold these, no less than those that are enforced by legal penalties.

But if we were to introduce our present topic as a sort of witness, that might make our meaning ^{823B} clearer. Indeed hunting is a very comprehensive topic, encompassed, more or less, by a single name. Hunting of water creatures is multifarious, and so is the hunting of birds, and there are a whole variety of ways of hunting land creatures, not only beasts but humans too, and this form of hunting deserves our attention. It operates in warfare and in hunting based upon friendship, which is sometimes praise worthy, sometimes the opposite. Capturing by kidnappers or armies is also a form of hunting. ^{823C} Now the lawgiver, when enacting laws about hunting, cannot avoid pointing these things out, nor can he set down legal regulations and directions applicable to every situation, with penalties as a deterrent. What then should be done about such matters? The lawgiver should praise or censure the various aspects of hunting, with a view to the endeavours of the young and their activities, while the young, for their part, should listen and obey, uninfluenced by the pleasure or the pain that is involved. They should comply more with whatever it is that the lawgiver praises, ^{823D} and be more respectful of that, than of any particular legal penalties, instituted as a deterrent. After these preliminary remarks, a measured praise and censure of hunting should follow, praising the sort that makes the souls of the young better and censuring the form that does the opposite.

Next we should speak to the young people, addressing to them a prayer: friends, we pray that no desire or passion for hunting by sea may ever overtake you, nor for angling either, nor for the hunting of water creatures in general, ^{823E} nor for lazy hunting, using baskets that work on your behalf whether you are awake or asleep. May you never be overtaken by a longing for piracy, the pursuit of your fellow man on the high seas, which would turn you into wild and lawless hunters. As for thieving in the countryside or in the city, may the thought never so much as cross your minds. And may none of you young ^{824A} folk be seized by the seductive passion for bird hunting, which is so unbecoming of a free people. What's left for our competitors then is only the hunting and pursuit of land animals. One form of this, night hunting, is for idle men who take it in turns to sleep, and it deserves no praise. It involves just as much rest as exertion, and the wildness and strength of the quarry is overpowered by nets and snares rather than the triumph of a soul that loves hard work. The only kind of hunting left for everyone, and the best kind, is the hunting of four-footed beasts using horses, hounds and their own limbs, where the hunters, those that cultivate

a divine courage, overcome all the creatures themselves, with their own running, striking and shooting.

The discourse we have gone through would constitute our praise and our censure of all these matters. The law would be as follows: no one is to prevent those truly sacred hunters from hunting wherever and however they wish. But no one is ever to allow the night hunter, who puts his faith in nets and snares, to hunt anywhere at all. The bird hunter is not to be hindered in the open countryside or on the mountains, but anyone who comes across him on cultivated land or sacred open countryside is to drive him away. The fisherman is allowed to catch fish anywhere except in harbours, sacred rivers, pools and lakes, except that he may not make the water turbid with plant juices.

And now, at this stage, we may declare that all our regulations concerning education have been completed.

Cle: Well you may say so.

End Book 7