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# PLATO

## The Republic

*Translated by*  
DESMOND LEE  
*With an Introduction by*  
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## PART IV GUARDIANS AND AUXILIARIES

### I. The Three Classes and Their Mutual Relations

*The Guardian class is subdivided into Guardians proper, or Rulers, and Auxiliaries. The Rulers exercise supreme authority in the state and are selected by exacting tests (the educational aspect of these is dealt with later, Part VIII). The Auxiliaries (I retain the traditional translation: there is no single term which describes their function completely) discharge Military, Police, and Executive duties under the orders of the Rulers. Everything which the Rulers do is done for the good of the community. Plato sketches a Foundation Myth and stringently requires that children are to be moved from class to class according to merit and capability; he does not give details, which might have been difficult to work out, but there is no reason to doubt his seriousness.*

*Plato has been criticized for his Foundation Myth as if it were a calculated lie. That is partly because the phrase here translated 'magnificent myth' (see 414b) has been conventionally mistranslated 'noble lie'; and this has been used to support the charge that Plato countenances manipulation by propaganda. But the myth is accepted by all three classes, Guardians included. It is meant to replace the national traditions which any community has, which are intended to express the kind of community it is, or wishes to be, its ideals, rather than to state matters of fact. And one of Plato's own criticisms of democracy was that its politicians constantly mislead it, governing by propaganda rather than reason (cf. 488a-d, 493a-d).*

'That, then, is an outline of the way in which we should educate and bring up our Guardians. For we need not go into detail about their choral performances, hunting and field sports, athletic competitions and horse-races. The details follow naturally from what we have said, and should give no particular difficulty.'

'Yes, I dare say they won't be particularly difficult,' he agreed.

'Well,' I continued, 'what comes next? We shall have to decide, I suppose, which of our Guardians are to govern, and which to be governed.'

'I suppose so.'

'Well, it is obvious that the elder must govern, and the younger be governed.'

'That is obvious.'

'And again that those who govern must be the best of them.'

'That's equally obvious.'

'And the best farmers are those who have the greatest skill at farming, are they not?'

'Yes.'

'And so if we want to pick the best Guardians, we must pick those who have the greatest skill in watching over the community.'

'Yes.'

'For that shan't we need men who, besides being intelligent and capable, really care for the community?'

'True.'

'But we care most for what we love.'

'Inevitably.'

'And the deepest affection is based on identity of interest, when we feel that our own good and ill fortune is completely bound up with that of something else.'

'That is so.'

'So we must choose from among our Guardians those who appear to us on observation to be most likely to devote their lives to doing what they judge to be in the interest of the community, and who are never prepared to act against it.'

'They are the men for our purpose.'

'A close watch must be kept on them, then, at all ages, to see

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if they stick to this principle, and do not forget or jettison, under the influence of force or witchcraft,<sup>2</sup> the conviction that they must always do what is best for the community.'

'What do you mean by jettison?' he asked.

413 a 'I will explain,' I said. 'It seems to me that when any belief leaves our minds, the loss is either voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary when the belief is false and we learn better, involuntary whenever the belief is true.'

'I understand what you mean by a voluntary loss, but not by an involuntary one.'

'But why? Surely you agree that men are always unwilling to lose a good thing, but willing enough to be rid of a bad one. And isn't it a bad thing to be deceived about the truth, and a good thing to possess the truth? For I assume that by possessing the truth you mean believing that things are as they really are.'

'Yes, you are quite right,' he conceded, 'and I agree that men are unwilling to lose a belief that is true.'

b 'So when it happens it must be due to theft or witchcraft or force.'

'Now I don't understand again,' he said.

'I'm afraid I'm talking too theatrically,' I answered. 'By "theft" I simply mean the insensible process by which people are persuaded to relinquish their beliefs by argument, or else simply forget them in course of time. Now perhaps you understand.'

'Yes.'

'By "force" I mean what happens when men change their opinions under the influence of pain or suffering.'

'This too I understand,' he said. 'You are right.'

c 'And I think that you too would call it "witchcraft"<sup>3</sup> when people change their opinions under the spell of pleasure or impulse of panic.'

'Yes, such delusions always seem to act like witchcraft.'

'To go back to what I was saying, then,' I continued, 'we must look for the Guardians who will stick most firmly to the principle that they must always do what they think best for the community. We must watch them closely from their earliest years,

and set them tasks in doing which they are most likely to forget or be led astray from this principle; and we must choose only those who don't forget and are not easily misled. Do you agree?' d

'Yes.'

'And with the same end in view we must see how they stand up to hard work and pain and competitive trials.'

'We must.'

'We must also watch their reactions to the third kind of test, witchcraft. If we want to find out if a colt is nervous we expose him to alarming noises: so we must introduce our Guardians when they are young to fear and, by contrast, give them opportunities for pleasure, proving them far more rigorously than we e prove gold in the furnace. If they bear themselves well and are not easily bewitched, if they show themselves able to maintain in all circumstances both their own integrity and the principles of balance and harmony they learned in their education, then they may be expected to be of the greatest service to the community as well as to themselves. And any Guardian who survives these continuous trials in childhood, youth, and manhood 414 a unscathed, shall be given authority in our state; he shall be honoured during his lifetime and when he is dead shall have the tribute of a public funeral and appropriate memorial. Anyone who fails to survive them we must reject.

'That in brief, and without going into details,' I concluded, 'is the way in which I would select and appoint our Rulers and Guardians.'

'And that's the way I think it should be done,' he replied.

'Strictly speaking, then, it is for them that we should reserve the term Guardian in its fullest sense, their function being to see that friends at home shall not wish, nor foes abroad be able, to harm our state: while the young men whom we have been describing as Guardians should more strictly be called Auxiliaries, their function being to assist the Rulers in the execution of their decisions.'<sup>4</sup>

'I agree,' he said.

'Now I wonder if we could contrive one of those convenient stories we were talking about a few minutes ago,'<sup>5</sup> I asked, 'some magnificent myth that would in itself carry conviction to our b

c whole community, including, if possible, the Guardians themselves?’

‘What sort of story?’

‘Nothing new – a fairy story like those the poets tell and have persuaded people to believe about the sort of thing that often happened “once upon a time”, but never does now and is not likely to: indeed it would need a lot of persuasion to get people to believe it.’

‘You seem to be hesitating to tell us more,’ he said.

‘And when I do you will understand my hesitation,’ I assured him.

‘Never mind,’ he replied, ‘tell us.’

d ‘I will,’ I said, ‘though I don’t know how I’m to find the courage or the words to do so. I shall try to persuade first the Rulers and Soldiers,<sup>6</sup> and then the rest of the community, that the upbringing and education we have given them was all something that happened to them only in a dream. In reality they were fashioned and reared, and their arms and equipment manufactured, in the depths of the earth, and Earth herself, their mother, brought them up, when they were complete, into the light of day; so now they must think of the land in which they live as their mother and protect her if she is attacked, while their fellow-citizens they must regard as brothers born of the same mother earth.’

e ‘No wonder you were ashamed to tell your story,’ he commented. I agreed that it was indeed no wonder, but asked him to listen to the rest of the story.

415 a ‘We shall,’ I said, ‘tell our citizens the following tale:<sup>7</sup>

‘You are, all of you in this community,<sup>8</sup> brothers. But when god fashioned you, he added gold in the composition of those of you who are qualified to be Rulers (which is why their prestige is greatest); he put silver in the Auxiliaries, and iron and bronze in the farmers and other workers. Now since you are all of the same stock, though your children will commonly resemble their parents, occasionally a silver child will be born of golden parents, or a golden child of silver parents, and so on. Therefore the first and most important of god’s commandments to the Rulers is

that in the exercise of their function as Guardians their principal care must be to watch the mixture of metals in the characters of their children. If one of their own children has traces of bronze or iron in its make-up, they must harden their hearts, assign it its proper value, and degrade it to the ranks of the industrial and agricultural class where it properly belongs: similarly, if a child of this class is born with gold or silver in its nature, they will promote it appropriately to be a Guardian or an Auxiliary. And this they must do because there is a prophecy that the State will be ruined when it has Guardians of silver or bronze.’<sup>9</sup>

That is the story. Do you know of any way of making them believe it?’

‘Not in the first generation,’ he said, ‘but you might succeed with the second and later generations.’

‘Even so it should serve to increase their loyalty to the state and to each other. For I think I understand what you mean.’

## 2. The Rulers’ and Auxiliaries’ Way of Life

*The Rulers and Auxiliaries are to live a life of austere simplicity, without private property or (as will appear more clearly later, in the opening note to Part VI, section 2) family life; for private property was, Plato thought, the chief temptation that led men to sacrifice public to personal interests (cf. 464c). The happiness of both will lie in their service to the community; for it is the happiness of the community as a whole, and not of any particular class, that is the objective.*

‘But let us leave that to popular tradition to decide, and arm our earthborn citizens<sup>5</sup> and conduct them to their city, under the leadership of the Rulers. On arrival the Rulers<sup>10</sup> must pick a site for a camp which will best enable them to control any internal disaffection or to repel any attack by an external enemy, descending like a wolf on the fold. When they have made their camp, they will sacrifice to the appropriate gods, and then arrange sleeping quarters. Do you agree?’

'Yes.'

'And these quarters must provide adequate shelter both in summer and winter, mustn't they?'

'Yes; for I take it you mean them to live there.'

'I do; but as soldiers and not as men of means.'

'What is the difference?'

416 a 'I will try to explain. It would be the most dreadful disgrace for a shepherd to keep sheep-dogs so badly bred and trained, that disobedience or hunger or some bad trait or other led them to worry the sheep and behave more like wolves than dogs.'

'It would of course be dreadful.'

b 'We must therefore take every possible precaution to prevent our Auxiliaries treating our citizens like that because of their superior strength, and behaving more like savage tyrants than partners and friends.'

'We must certainly try to prevent that.'

'And the greatest possible precaution will have been taken, will it not, if they have been properly educated?'

'As in fact they have been,' he said.

c To which I replied, 'We oughtn't to be too positive about that, my dear Glaucon; what we can be positive about is what we have just said, namely that they must be given the right education, whatever that may be, as the surest way to make them behave humanely to each other and the subjects in their charge.'

'That is true.'

'It would therefore be reasonable to say that, besides being so educated, they should be housed and their material needs provided for in a way that will not prevent them being excellent  
d Guardians, yet will not tempt them to prey upon the rest of the community.'

'That is very true.'

'Well then,' I said, 'if they are to have these characteristics, I suggest that they should live and be housed as follows. First, they shall have no private property beyond the barest essentials. Second, none of them shall possess a dwelling-house or store-house to which all have not the right of entry. Next, their food shall be provided by the other citizens as an agreed wage for the

duties they perform as Guardians; it shall be suitable for brave men living under military training and discipline, and in quantity enough to ensure that there is neither a surplus nor a deficit over the year. They shall eat together in messes and live together like soldiers in camp. They must be told that they have no need of mortal and material gold and silver, because they have in their hearts the heavenly gold and silver given them by the gods as a permanent possession, and it would be wicked to pollute the heavenly gold in their possession by mixing it with earthly, for theirs is without impurity, while that in currency among men is a common source of wickedness. They alone, therefore, of all the citizens are forbidden to touch or handle silver or gold; they must not come under the same roof as them, nor wear them as ornaments, nor drink from vessels made of them. Upon this their safety and that of the state depends. If they acquire private property in land, houses, or money, they will become farmers and men of business instead of Guardians, and harsh tyrants instead of partners in their dealings with their fellow citizens, with whom they will live on terms of mutual hatred and suspicion; they will be more afraid of internal revolt than external attack, and be heading fast for destruction that will overwhelm themselves and the whole community.

'For all these reasons we should provide for the housing and other material needs of the Guardians in the way I have described. So shall we legislate accordingly?'

'Let us do so by all means,' answered Glaucon.

'But look here, Socrates,' interrupted Adeimantus, 'how would you answer the objection that you aren't making your Guardians particularly happy? It's their own fault, of course, because the state is in their control, but they don't seem to get any good out of it. Other rulers possess lands and build themselves fine large houses and furnish them magnificently; they offer their own private sacrifices to the gods, they entertain visitors, and acquire the gold and silver you were just talking about, and everything else which is commonly thought to make a man happy. But one might almost describe your Guardians as a set of hired mercenaries quartered in the city with nothing to do but perpetual guard-duty.'

'Yes,' I replied, 'and what is more, they do it for their keep only, and get no pay over and above it like other men, so that they can't go for a holiday abroad on their own if they want to; they have nothing to spend on women or on all those other things on which those who are commonly reckoned well off spend their money. And there are a whole lot of other charges you have omitted.'

'Let us take them as read then,' he said.

b 'And you want to know how we should reply?'

'Yes.'

'I think,' I said, 'that we shall find our reply if we stick to the path we have been pursuing, and say that, though it would not in fact be in the least surprising if our Guardians were very happy indeed, our purpose in founding our state was not to promote the particular happiness of a single class, but, so far as possible, of the whole community. Our idea was that we were most likely to find justice in such a community, and similarly c injustice in a really badly run community, and in light of our findings be able to decide the question we are trying to answer. We are therefore at the moment trying to construct what we think is a happy community by securing the happiness not of a select minority, but of the whole. The opposite kind of community we will examine presently.<sup>11</sup> Now if we were painting a statue, and were met with the criticism that we were not using the most beautiful colours for the most beautiful parts of the body – for we had not coloured the eyes, the body's most precious feature, purple, but black – we could, I think, reasonably reply as follows: "It is absurd to expect us to represent the beauty of the eye in a way which does not make it look like an eye at all, and the same is true of the other parts of the body; you should look rather to see whether we have made the whole beautiful by giving each part its proper colour. So, in the present case," we might go on, "don't make us give our Guardians the kind of happiness that will make them anything but Guardians." e We could perfectly well clothe our farmers in robes of state and put crowns on their heads and tell them to cultivate the land at their pleasure, and we could make our potters lie on couches round the fire, and let them drink and enjoy themselves, putting

their wheel at their side for them to make pots only as they felt inclined; indeed, we could try to make the whole community happy by giving everyone else similarly blissful conditions. But you must not tell us to do so; for the result of such advice will be that our farmers are no longer farmers nor our potters potters, and that all the classes that make up our community lose their proper character. In other cases this does not matter much – the community suffers nothing very terrible if its cobblers are bad and become degenerate and pretentious; but if the Guardians of the laws and state, who alone have the opportunity to bring it good government and prosperity, become a mere sham, then clearly it is completely ruined. 421 a

'So if we are making genuine Guardians, who will be the last to harm the community, while our critic prefers idlers<sup>12</sup> happily enjoying themselves in something more like a fun-fair than a city, then he is not thinking of a community at all. We must therefore decide whether our object in setting up the Guardian class is to make it as happy as we can, or whether happiness is a thing we should look for in the community as a whole. If it is, our Guardians and Auxiliaries must be compelled to act according to and be persuaded, as indeed must everyone else, that it is their business to perfect themselves in their own particular job; then our state will be built on the right basis, and, as it grows, we can leave each class to enjoy the share of happiness its nature permits.' b

'That,' he said, 'seems to put it very fairly.'

### 3. Final Provisions for Unity

*The Guardians must see that in the Third Class, which is alone allowed to possess property, extremes of wealth and poverty are excluded. Their military training will ensure success in war, but they must maintain unity by not allowing the state to grow too large, and by ensuring that the measures for promotion and demotion from one class to another are carried out. Above all they must maintain the educational system unchanged; for on education everything else depends, and it is an illusion to*

*imagine that mere legislation without it can effect anything of consequence.*

*Religious arrangements are to be left to the Oracle at Delphi, 'which was normally consulted before the foundation of a new city'.<sup>13</sup>*

'I wonder,' I asked, 'whether you will think a closely related view of mine as reasonable?'

'What exactly is it?'

d 'That there are two things that can ruin and corrupt the rest of our workers.'

'What are they?'

'Wealth and poverty,' I said.

'And how do they do it?'

'Well, do you think that a potter who has become rich will want to ply his trade any longer?'

'No.'

'He will become more idle and careless than he was, won't he?'

'Much more.'

'And so a worse potter.'

'Yes, much worse.'

e 'And again, if he is prevented by poverty from providing himself with tools and other necessities of his trade the quality of his work will deteriorate, and his sons and anyone else studying the trade under him will not be taught it so well.'

'Inevitably.'

'Both poverty and wealth, therefore, have a bad effect on the quality of the work and on the workman himself.'

'So it appears.'

'So we have found two further things,' I said, 'which our Guardians must at all costs prevent from slipping unobserved into our state.'

'What are they?'

422 a 'Wealth and poverty,' I answered. 'One produces luxury and idleness and a desire for novelty, the other meanness and bad workmanship and the desire for revolution as well.'

'I agree,' he replied. 'But here's another question. How do

you think our state will be able to fight a war, Socrates, if it has no wealth, especially if it is compelled to fight against an enemy that is both large and wealthy?'

'Obviously it would be more difficult to fight a single enemy of this sort than two,' I said.

'What do you mean?' he asked.

'In the first place,' I said, 'if they have to fight, our Guardians will fight as trained soldiers against their rich antagonists.'

'Yes, I grant that.'

'But come, Adeimantus,' I said, 'don't you think that one boxer in perfect training is easily a match for two men who are not boxers, but rich and fat?'

'Not if they both set on him at once, perhaps.'

'Not even if he is able to retreat a little, and then turn on the leader and hit him, and repeat the process often in the hot sun? Surely in this way he could get the better of more than two?'

'Yes, of course: there would be nothing surprising in that.'

'And don't you agree that rich men are likely to have more knowledge and experience of boxing than of war?'

'Yes.'

'Well then, it would appear that our trained soldiers should easily be a match for two or three times their number.'

'I will grant that,' he said; 'I think you are right.'

'So suppose we send envoys to one of the two states to say, truly enough, "Unlike you we have no use for silver or gold, which are forbidden us, though not to you. If therefore you will fight on our side you shall have all the other state has." Do you think that any state hearing these terms will prefer to fight against our tough and wiry watchdogs, rather than with them and against fat and tender sheep?'

'I should think not. But don't you think that our state might be in some danger because of its lack of wealth, if the others pooled all their resources?' he asked. To which I replied: 'You're lucky to be able to think of any community as worth the name of "state" which differs from the one we are building.'

'But what should I call the others?' he asked.

'We ought to find some grander name for them,' I replied. 'Each of them is, as the proverb says, not so much a single state



423 a as a collection of states. For it always contains at least two states, the rich and the poor, at enmity with each other; each of these in turn has many subdivisions, and it is a complete mistake to treat them all as a unity. Treat them as a plurality, offer to hand over the property or the power or the persons of one section to another, and you will have allies in plenty and very few enemies. As long as your state maintains the discipline we have laid down, it will remain supreme, I don't mean in common estimation, but in real truth, even though it has only a thousand defenders. You won't easily find a single state so great anywhere b among the Greeks or barbarians, though you'll find many, many times its size, that are thought much greater. Or do you disagree?

'No, certainly not.'

'I suggest, therefore,' I said, 'that our Rulers might use this as the best standard for determining the size of our state and the amount of territory it needs and beyond which it should not expand.'

'What standard?'

'The state should, I think,' I replied, 'be allowed to grow so long as growth is compatible with unity, but no further.'

c 'A very fair limit,' he said.

'So we can add to the instructions we shall give our Guardians one to the effect that they are to avoid at all costs either making the state too small or relying on apparent size, but keep it adequate in scale and a unity.'

'A nice easy job for them!' he remarked ironically.

d 'And here's an easier one,' I continued in the same vein; we mentioned it before when we said that if any child of a Guardian is a poor specimen, it must be degraded to the other classes, while any child in the other classes who is worth it must be promoted to the rank of Guardian. By this it was implied that all the other citizens ought individually to devote their full energy to the one particular job for which they are naturally suited. In that way the integrity and unity both of the individual and of the state will be preserved'.<sup>14</sup>

'Yes, a still easier job!' he replied.

'But seriously, Adeimantus,' I said, 'we aren't asking a great

deal of them, as might be supposed; it will all be quite easy, provided they take care of the really "big thing", as the proverb has it, though "sufficient condition" would be a better expression.'

'And what is that?'

'The system of education and upbringing. If they are well educated, and become reasonable men, they can easily see to all we have asked them to, and indeed a good many things we have for the moment omitted, such as the position of women, marriage, and the production of children, all of which ought so far as possible to be dealt with on the proverbial basis of "all things in common between friends".'<sup>15</sup>

'Yes, they can deal with all these problems.'

'And once we have given our system<sup>16</sup> a good start,' I pointed out, 'the process of improvement<sup>17</sup> will be cumulative. By maintaining a sound system of education and upbringing you produce citizens of good character; and citizens of sound character, with the advantage of a good education, produce in turn children better than themselves and better able to produce still better children in their turn, as can be seen with animals.'

'That is likely enough.'

'In a word therefore, those in charge of our state must stick to the system of education and see that no deterioration creeps in; they must maintain it as a first priority and avoid at all costs any innovation in the established physical or academic curriculum. When they hear someone saying that men pay most attention

to the latest song on the singer's lips,<sup>18</sup>

they must be afraid that people will think that the poet means not new songs, but a new *kind* of song, and that that is what he is recommending. But such innovation should not be recommended, nor should the poet be so understood. You should hesitate to change the style of your literature, because you risk everything if you do; the music and literature<sup>19</sup> of a country cannot be altered without major political and social changes – we have Damon's word for it and I believe him.'

'And you can set me down as a believer too,' said Adeimantus.

d 'And so it is here, in education, that our Guardians must build their main defences.'<sup>20</sup>

'It is in education that disorder<sup>21</sup> can most easily creep in unobserved,' he replied.

'Yes,' I agreed, 'because people treat it as child's-play,<sup>22</sup> and think no harm can come of it.'

'It only does harm,' he said, 'because it gradually makes itself at home and quietly undermines morals and manners; from them it issues with greater force and invades business dealings e generally, and then, Socrates, spreads into the laws and constitution with complete lack of restraint, until it has upset the whole of private and public life.'

'Is it really as bad as that?' I said.

'Yes, I think it is.'

'Then doesn't it follow, as we said to begin with, that the amusements in which our children take part must be better regulated; because once they and the children become disorderly, it becomes impossible to produce serious citizens with a respect for order?'

425 a 'Yes, it follows.'

'But if children play on the right lines from the beginning and learn orderly habits from their education, these produce quite the opposite results, following and fostering their growth and correcting any previous flaws there may have been in the society.'

'True enough.'

'And people so brought up discover rules which seem quite trivial, but which their predecessors had entirely neglected.'

b 'What sort of rules?'

'For example, that the young should observe a proper silence in the presence of their elders, give up their seats to them and stand, and look after their parents; besides the whole business of one's dress and bearing, keeping one's hair and clothes and shoes tidy, and so on. Do you agree?'

'Yes.'

'But I think it would be silly to legislate for such things. Written regulations won't either produce them or maintain them.'

'No, they won't.'

'No, Adeimantus,' I said; 'for it's the direction given by education that is likely to determine all that follows – like calls to like, doesn't it?'<sup>23</sup>

'Yes, of course.'

'And we should expect the final consequence to be a grand result that is good or the opposite.'

'Inevitably,' he agreed.

'And that,' I concluded, 'is why I should not try to legislate for such minor matters.'

'And you are quite right,' he said.

'Then what about business transactions? For example, contracts made in the market and contracts for manufacture, questions of slander and assault, the lodging of legal actions and empanelling of juries, exaction and payment of market or harbour dues, and the general business of regulating business and police and harbour-charges and other similar affairs. Are we to venture on legislation in these fields?'

'Good men need no orders,' he said. 'They will find out easily enough what legislation is in general necessary.'

'They will,' I agreed, 'if god enables them to preserve the laws we have already described.'

'Otherwise,' he said, 'they will spend their whole time making and correcting detailed regulations of the sort you've described, always expecting to achieve perfection.'<sup>24</sup>

'You mean,' said I, 'that they will lead lives like invalids who lack the restraint to give up a vicious way of life.'

'Exactly.'

'And a very attractive life they lead! For all their cures and medicines have no effect – except to make their ailments worse and more complicated – yet they live in hope that every new medicine they are recommended will restore them to health.'

'Exactly,' he said; 'that's just what happens to that sort of invalid.'

'Then,' I replied, 'is not another attractive trait their way of detesting anyone who tells them the truth – that until they put an end to their eating and drinking and womanizing and idleness, they will get no good out of drugs or cautery or

operations, or out of spells or charms or anything else of the kind?'<sup>25</sup>

'Not so very amusing,' he said; 'there's nothing attractive in resenting good advice.'

'It looks as if you don't approve of this sort of people.'

'I certainly don't.'

'And you won't approve if a whole city follows the course we have described, I suppose. For I think you will agree that this is what cities are doing which mismanage their affairs but forbid on pain of death any alteration in the established constitution; they will honour as a great and profoundly wise man anyone who leaves them to their mismanagement, but flatters them agreeably and gives them pleasure by running their errands, or is clever at anticipating and fulfilling their wishes.'

'I agree that that's what they're doing,' he said, 'and I don't approve in the least.'

'And what about those who are willing and eager to apply the flattery? Aren't you surprised at their boldness and irresponsibility?'

'Yes, except when they are deceived by popular applause into thinking that they really are statesmen.'

'Oh come,' I said, 'won't you forgive them? Surely a man who doesn't know how to use a foot-rule can hardly avoid thinking himself a six-footer if lots of people like himself tell him he is?'

'Hardly.'

'Then don't be hard on them. They are really very amusing. They legislate for all the affairs we described, and then improve on their own legislation, under the impression that they can put an end to breaches of contract and all the other things I was talking about, and not knowing that the operation's about as hopeful as cutting off a Hydra's head.'

427 a 'Yet that's all they're doing,' he said.

'I shouldn't have thought, therefore,' I concluded, 'that a real legislator ought to bother about making laws and institutions of this sort either in a bad state or a good one: in one because they are no use and nothing comes of them, in the other because they are partly obvious and partly the automatic result of earlier training.'

'Then what have we left to do in the way of legislation?' he asked. I replied that there was nothing indeed for us to do ourselves. 'But,' I said, 'there remain for Apollo and the Delphic oracle laws of the highest importance and value to make.'

'What about?' he asked.

'The founding of temples and the institution of sacrifices, and other services to the gods and spirits and heroes, besides the arrangements for the burial of the dead and the rites we must pay to the powers of the other world to secure their goodwill. We know nothing about all these things ourselves, and when we found our state we won't entrust them, if we have any sense, to anyone but their traditional interpreter. And it is Apollo who by tradition is the interpreter of such matters to all men, delivering his interpretation from his seat at the earth's centre.'

'You are right; we must act accordingly.'