kind – the restrained, the courageous, the wise and the healthy – is pleasanter than the cowardly, the foolish, the licentious and the unhealthy.

To sum up, the life of physical fitness, and spiritual virtue too, is not only pleasanter than the life of depravity but superior in other ways as well: it makes for beauty, an upright posture, efficiency and a good reputation, so that if a man lives a life like that it will make his whole existence infinitely happier than his opposite number's.

§9. THE FOUNDATION OF THE NEW STATE

The Athenian now passes from preface to law. He deals with the choice of a site for the new state, the selection of the first citizens, the various divisions of land and people, and some of the basic economic rules that will be observed. He takes the opportunity at this early stage in the new state's history to make it quite clear that the legislator will have to modify his plans in the light of prevailing circumstances, and to illustrate the point he takes the institution of property. Complete communism is the ideal, but in the present case limited private property will have to be allowed, and perhaps in other circumstances it might be necessary to go even further. The essential point for us, however, is that this is utopian *political philosophy: the legislator is always to keep an ideal pattern in mind, to which men must conform as closely as they can be made to. The section is largely self-explanatory, but the reader should be warned that some of the details of the division of the land and people are rather difficult to understand: the Athenian's exposition is not as clear as we should like.*

The word 'colony' occurs frequently: it is of course used not in the modern sense of 'subject territory', but in the sense of 'new state formed by citizens who have left their home land' (though the mother city might still retain some degree of control).

The 'Preliminary Analysis' is something of a false start, because the distinction it makes is not in fact developed and utilized until the beginning of §10.

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE STATE

ATHENIAN: At this point we may stop expounding the preface to the laws, it being now complete. After the 'prelude' should come the 'tune',[1] or (more accurately) a sketch of a legal and political framework. Now it is impossible, when

1. A pun: the Greek *nomos* means both 'tune' and 'law'. Cf. p. 185.

dealing with a web or any piece of weaving, to construct the warp and the woof from the same stuff: the warp must be of
735 a superior type of material (strong and firm in character, while the woof is softer and suitably workable). In a rather similar way it will be reasonable to distinguish between the authorities who are going to rule in a city and the citizens whose education has been slighter and less testing. You may assume, you see, that there are two elements in a political system: the installation of individuals in office, and equipping those officials with a code of laws.

THE SELECTION OF THE CITIZENS

But before all that, here are some further points to notice. Anyone who takes charge of a herd of animals – a shepherd or cattle-man or breeder of horses or what have you – will never get down to looking after them without first performing the purge appropriate to his particular animal-community: that is, he will weed out the unhealthy and inferior stock and send it off to other herds, and keep only the thoroughbreds and the healthy animals to look after. He knows that otherwise he would have to waste endless effort on sickly and refractory beasts, degenerate by nature and ruined by incompetent breeding, and that unless he purges the existing stock these faults will spread in any herd to the animals that are still physically and temperamentally healthy and unspoilt. This is not too serious in the case of the lower animals, and we need mention it only by way of illustration, but with human beings it is vitally important for the legislator to ascertain and explain the appropriate measures in each case, not only as regards a purge, but in general. To purge a whole state, for instance, several methods may be employed, some mild, some drastic; and if a legislator were a dictator too he'd be able to purge the state drastically, which is the best way. But if he has to establish a new society and new laws without dictatorial powers, and succeeds in administering no more than the mildest purge, he'll be well content even with this limited achievement. Like drastic medicines, the best purge is a

painful business: it involves chastisement by a combination of 'judgement' and 'punishment',[2] and takes the latter, ultimately, to the point of death or exile. That usually gets rid of the major criminals who are incurable and do the state enormous harm. The milder purge we could adopt is this. When there is a shortage of food, and the underprivileged show themselves ready to follow their leaders in an attack on the property of the privileged, they are to be regarded as a disease that has 736
developed in the body politic, and in the friendliest possible way they should be (as it will tactfully be put) 'transferred to a colony'. Somehow or other everyone who legislates must do this in good time; but our position at the moment is even more unusual. There's no need for us here and now to have resort to a colony or arrange to make a selection of people by a purge. No: it's as though we have a number of streams from several sources, some from springs, some from mountain torrents, all flowing down to unite in one lake. We have to apply ourselves to seeing that the water, as it mingles, is as pure as possible, partly by draining some of it off, partly by diverting it into different channels. Even so, however you organize a society, it looks as if there will always be trouble and risk. True enough: but seeing that we are operating at the moment on a theoretical rather than a practical level, let's suppose we've recruited our citizens and their purity meets with our approval. After all, when we have screened the bad candidates over a suitable period and given them every chance to be converted, we can refuse their application to enter and become citizens of the state; but we should greet the good ones with all possible courtesy and kindness.

DISTRIBUTING THE LAND (I)

We should not forget that we are in the same fortunate position as the Heraclids when they founded their colony: we noticed[3] how they avoided vicious and dangerous disputes

2. See p. 191 and note there. 'Judgement' can evidently involve the use of mere 'punishment': see p. 368.
3. See p. 130.

about land and cancellations of debts and distribution of property. When an old-established state is forced to resort to legislation to deal with these problems, it finds that both leaving things as they are and reforming them are somehow equally impossible. The only policy left them is to mouth pious hopes and make a little cautious progress over a long period by advancing a step at a time. (This is the way it can be done. From time to time some of the reformers should be themselves great land-owners and have a large number of debtors; and they should be prepared, in a philanthropic spirit, to share their prosperity with those debtors who are in distress, partly by remitting debts and partly by making land available for distribution. Their policy will be a policy of moderation, dictated by the conviction that poverty is a matter of increased greed rather than diminished wealth. This belief is fundamental to the success of a state, and is the firm base on which you can later build whatever political structure is appropriate to such conditions[4] as we have described. But
737 when these first steps towards reform falter,[5] subsequent constitutional action in any state will be hard going.) Now as we say, such difficulties do not affect us. Nevertheless, it's better to have explained how we could have escaped them if they had. Let's take it, then, that the explanation has been given: the way to escape those difficulties is through a sense of justice combined with an indifference to wealth; there is no other route, broad or narrow, by which we can avoid them. So let's adopt this principle as a prop for our state. Somehow or other we must ensure that the citizens' property does not lead to disputes among them – otherwise, if people have long-standing complaints against each other, anyone with any sense at all will not go any further with organizing them, if he can help it. But when, as with us now, God has given a group of people a new state to found, in which so far there is no

4. I.e. sharing of property, etc. The thought is cloudily expressed. I suppose the Athenian means that if you want a political structure that presupposes a sharing of land, this in turn must presuppose citizens who believe that poverty is a state of mind.

5. I.e. they are not sufficiently inspired by this belief about poverty.

mutual malice – well, to stir up ill-will towards each other because of the way they distribute the land and houses would be so criminally stupid that no man could bring himself to do it.

So what's the correct method of distribution? First, one has to determine what the total number of people ought to be, then agree on the question of the distribution of the citizens and decide the number and size of the subsections into which they ought to be divided; and the land and houses must be divided equally (so far as possible) among these subsections. A suitable total for the number of citizens cannot be fixed without considering the land and the neighbouring states. The land must be extensive enough to support a given number of people in modest comfort, and not a foot more is needed. The inhabitants should be numerous enough to be able to defend themselves when the adjacent peoples attack them, and contribute at any rate some assistance to neighbouring societies when they are wronged. When we have inspected the land and its neighbours, we'll determine these points and give reasons for the action we take; but for the moment let's just give an outline sketch and get on with finishing our legislation.

THE SIZE OF THE POPULATION (1)

Let's assume we have the convenient number of five thousand and forty farmers and protectors of their holdings, and let the land with its houses be divided up into the same number of parts, so that a man and his holding always go together. Divide the total first by two, then by three: you'll see it can be divided by four and five and every number right up to ten. Everyone who legislates should have sufficient appreciation of arithmetic to know what number will be most use in every 738
state, and why. So let's fix on the one which has the largest number of consecutive divisors. Of course, an infinite series of numbers would admit all possible divisions for all possible uses, but our 5040 admits no more than 59 (including 1 to 10 without a break), which will have to suffice for purposes of war and every peacetime activity, all contracts and dealings, and for taxes and grants.

RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL OCCASIONS

Anyone who is legally obliged to understand these mathematical facts should try to deepen his understanding of them even in his spare time. They really are just as I say, and the founder of a state needs to be told of them, for the following reasons. It doesn't matter whether he's founding a new state from scratch or reconstructing an old one that has gone to ruin: in either case, if he has any sense, he will never dream of altering whatever instructions may have been received from Delphi or Dodona or Ammon[6] about the gods and temples that ought to be founded by the various groups in the state, and the gods or spirits after whom the temples should be named. (Alternatively, such details may have been suggested by stories told long ago of visions or divine inspiration, which somehow moved people to institute sacrifices with their rituals – either native or taken from Etruria or Cyprus or some other country – so that on the strength of these reports they consecrated statues, altars, temples and sites of oracles, providing each with its own sacred plot of land.) The legislator must not tamper with any of this in the slightest detail. He must allocate to each division of citizens a god or spirit or perhaps a hero,[7] and when he divides up the territory he must give these priority by setting aside plots of land for them, endowed with all the appropriate resources. Thus when the different divisions gather together at fixed times they will have an opportunity of satisfying their various needs, and the citizens will recognize and greet each other at the sacrifices in mutual friendship – and there can be no greater benefit for a state than that the citizens should be well-known one to another. Where they have no insight into each other's

6. The most celebrated of these oracles was that of Apollo at Delphi, on the southern slopes of Mount Parnassus, north of the gulf of Corinth. Dodona was an oracle of Zeus in Epirus (north-west Greece); Ammon was a deity whose oracle was established at the oasis of Siwa in the Libyan desert.

7. Illustrious men who have become minor deities after death.

characters and are kept in the dark about them, no one will ever enjoy the respect he merits or fill the office he deserves or obtain the legal verdict to which he is entitled. So every citizen of every state should make a particular effort to show that he is straightforward and genuine, not shifty, and try to avoid being hoodwinked by anyone who is.

STATES IDEAL AND REAL: COMMUNITY OF PROPERTY

The next gambit in this game of legislation is as unusual as 739
going 'across the line' in draughts, and may well cause surprise at first hearing.[8] But reflection and experience will soon show that the organization of a state is almost bound to fall short of the ideal. You may, perhaps – if you don't know what it means to be a legislator without dictatorial powers – refuse to countenance such a state; nevertheless the right procedure is to describe not only the ideal society but the second and third best too, and then leave it to anyone in charge of founding a community to make a choice between them. So let's follow this procedure now: let's describe the absolutely ideal society, then the second-best, then the third. On this occasion we ought to leave the choice to Cleinias, but we should not forget anyone else who may at some time be faced with such a choice and wish to adopt for his own purposes customs of his native country which he finds valuable.

You'll find the ideal society and state, and the best code of laws, where the old saying 'friends' property is genuinely shared'[9] is put into practice as widely as possible throughout the entire state. Now I don't know whether in fact this situation – a community of wives, children and all property – exists anywhere today, or will ever exist, but at any rate in such a state the notion of 'private property' will have been

8. The (risky) 'gambit' of the legislator is to recognize that the ideal state is impracticable, given the weakness of human nature.

9. The Athenian slips in the word 'genuinely', thus suggesting that he will apply the proverb in a special way.

by hook or by crook completely eliminated from life. Everything possible will have been done to throw into a sort of common pool even what is by nature 'my own', like eyes and ears and hands, in the sense that to judge by appearances they all see and hear and act in concert. Everybody feels pleasure and pain at the same things, so that they all praise and blame with complete unanimity. To sum up, the laws in force impose the greatest possible unity on the state – and you'll never produce a better or truer criterion of an absolutely perfect law than that. It may be that gods or a number of the children of gods inhabit this kind of state: if so, the life they live there, observing these rules, is a happy one indeed. And so men need look no further for their ideal: they should keep this state in view and try to find the one that most nearly resembles it. This is what we've put our hand to, and if in some way it could be realized, it would come very near immortality and be second only to the ideal. Later, God willing, we'll describe a third best. But for the moment, what description should we give of this second-best state? What's the method by which a state like that is produced?

DISTRIBUTING THE LAND (2)

First of all, the citizens must make a distribution of land and houses; they must not farm in common, which is a practice
740 too demanding for those born and bred and educated as ours are. But the distribution should be made with some such intention as this: each man who receives a portion of land should regard it as the common possession of the entire state. The land is his ancestral home and he must cherish it even more than children cherish their mother; furthermore, Earth is a goddess, and mistress of mortal men. (And the gods and spirits already established in the locality must be treated with the same respect.)

THE SIZE OF THE POPULATION (2)

Additional measures must be taken to make sure that these arrangements are permanent: the number of hearths estab-

lished by the initial distribution must always remain the same; it must neither increase nor decrease. The best way for every state to ensure this will be as follows: the recipient of a holding should always leave from among his children only *one* heir to inherit his establishment. This will be his favourite son, who will succeed him and give due worship to the ancestors (who rank as gods) of the family and state; these must be taken to include not only those who have already passed on, but also those who are still alive. As for the other children, in cases where there are more than one, the head of the family should marry off the females in accordance with the law we shall establish later; the males he must present for adoption to those citizens who have no children of their own – priority to be given to personal preferences as far as possible. But some people may have no preferences, or other families too may have surplus offspring, male or female; or, to take the opposite problem, they may have too few, because of the onset of sterility. All these cases will be investigated by the highest and most distinguished official we shall appoint. He will decide what is to be done with the surpluses or deficiencies, and will do his best to discover a device to keep the number of households down to 5040. There are many devices available: if too many children are being born, there are measures to check propagation; on the other hand, a high birth-rate can be encouraged and stimulated by conferring marks of distinction or disgrace, and the young can be admonished by words of warning from their elders. This approach should do the trick, and if in the last resort we are in complete despair about variations from our number of 5040 households, and the mutal love of wives and husbands produces an excessive flow of citizens that drives us to distraction, we have that old expedient at hand, which we have often mentioned before. We can send out colonies of people that seem suitable, with mutual goodwill between the emigrants and their mother-city. By contrast, we may be flooded with a wave of diseases or by the ravages of wars, so that bereave- 741
ments depress the citizens far below the appointed number. In this event we ought not to import citizens who have been

brought up by a bastard education, if we can help it; but not even God, they say, can grapple with necessity.

HOLDINGS ARE INALIENABLE

So let's pretend our thesis can talk and gives us this advice: 'My dear sirs, don't ignore the facts and be careless enough to undervalue the concepts of likeness, equality, identity and agreement, either in mathematics or in any other useful and productive science. In particular, your first task now is to keep to the said number as long as you live; you must respect the upper limits of the total property which you originally distributed as being reasonable, and not buy and sell your holdings among yourselves. The lot by which they were distributed is a god, so there will be no support for you there, or from the legislator either. And there are two warnings the law has for the disobedient: (A) You may choose or decline to take part in the distribution, but if you do take part you must observe the following conditions: (i) you must acknowledge that the land is sacred to all the gods; (ii) after priests and priestesses have offered prayers for that intention at the first, second and third sacrifices,

1. anyone buying or selling his allotted land or house *must suffer* the penalty appropriate to the crime.

You are to inscribe the details on pieces of cypress-wood and put these written records on permanent deposit in the temples. (B) You must appoint the official who seems to have the sharpest eyes to superintend the observance of the rule, so that the various contraventions may be brought to your notice and the disobedient punished by the law and the god[10] alike. What a boon this rule is to all the states that observe it, given the appropriate arrangements, no wicked men – as the saying goes – will ever understand; such knowledge is the fruit of experience and virtuous habits.[11] Such arrangements, you see, involve very little by way of profit-making, and there is

10. Presumably the one mentioned above on this page.
11. Cf. pp. 197–8.

no need or opportunity for anyone to engage in any of the vulgar branches of commerce (you know how a gentleman's character is coarsened by manual labour, which is generally admitted to be degrading), and no one will presume to rake in money from occupations such as that.'

THE POSSESSION OF MONEY

All these considerations suggest a further law that runs like this: no private person shall be allowed to possess any gold or silver, but only coinage for day-to-day dealings which one 742
can hardly avoid having with workmen and all other indispensable people of that kind (we have to pay wages to slaves and foreigners who work for money). For these purposes, we agree, they must possess coinage, legal tender among themselves, but valueless to the rest of mankind. The common Greek coinage is to be used for expeditions and visits to the outside world, such as when a man has to be sent abroad as an ambassador or to convey some official message; to meet these occasions the state must always have a supply of Greek coinage. If a private individual should ever need to go abroad, he should first obtain leave of the authorities, and if he returns home with some surplus foreign money in his pocket he must deposit it with the state and take local money to the same value in exchange.

2. If he is found keeping it for himself, *it must* be confiscated by the state.

3. If anyone who knows of its concealment fails to report it, *he must* be liable to a curse and a reproach (and so must the importer), and in addition be fined in a sum not less than that of the foreign currency brought in.

When a man marries or gives in marriage, no dowry whatsoever must be given or received. Money must not be deposited with anybody whom one does not trust. There must be no lending at interest, because it will be quite in order for the borrower to refuse absolutely to return both interest and principal.

The best way to appreciate that these are the best policies for a state to follow is to examine them in the light of the fundamental aim. Now we maintain that the aim of a statesman who knows what he's about is not in fact the one which most people say the good legislator should have. They'd say that if he knows what he's doing his laws should make the state as huge and as rich as possible; he should give the citizens gold mines and silver mines, and enable them to control as many people as possible by land and sea. And they'd add, too, that to be a satisfactory legislator he must want to see the state as good and as happy as possible. But some of these demands are practical politics, and some are not, and the legislator will confine himself to what can be done, without bothering his head with wishful thinking about impossibilities. I mean, it's pretty well inevitable that happiness and virtue should come hand in hand (and this is the situation the legislator will want to see), but virtue and great wealth are quite incompatible, at any rate great wealth as generally understood (most people would think of the extreme case of a millionaire, who will of course be a rogue into the bargain).
743 In view of all this, I'll never concede to them that the rich man can become really happy without being virtuous as well: to be extremely virtuous and exceptionally rich at the same time is absolutely out of the question. 'Why?' it may be asked.[12] 'Because,' we shall reply, 'the profit from using just *and* unjust methods is more than twice as much as that from just methods alone, and a man who refuses to spend his money either honestly or dishonestly spends only half the sum laid out by honest people who are prepared to spend on honest purposes too.[13] So anyone who follows the opposite policy[14]

12. The answer to this question is confusing and extraordinarily elaborate, but in essence it seems to be only an appeal to the 'facts'. Great wealth is the result either of unjust gains or at best parsimony; honesty leads to modest wealth or a competence; and poverty is likely to be the result of extravagance. Thus anything but the mean seems incompatible with virtue.

13. I.e. as well as on 'neutral' objects.

14. I.e. of spending on good objects and confining his receipts to those obtainable by honest methods.

will never become richer than the man who gets twice as much profit from half the expenditure. The former is a good man; the latter is not actually a rogue so long as he uses his money sparingly, but on some occasions[15] he is an absolute villain; thus, as we have said, he is *never* good. Ill-gotten and well-gotten gains plus expenditure that is neither just nor unjust, when a man is also sparing with his money, add up to wealth; the absolute rogue, who is generally a spendthrift, is quite impoverished. The man who spends his money for honest ends and uses only just methods to come by it, will not easily become particularly rich or particularly poor. Our thesis is therefore correct: the very rich are not good; and if they are not good, they are not happy either.'

The whole point of our legislation was to allow the citizens to live supremely happy lives in the greatest possible mutual friendship. However, they will never be friends if injuries and lawsuits arise among them on a grand scale, but only if they are trivial and rare. That is why we maintain that neither gold nor silver should exist in the state, and there should not be much money made out of menial trades and charging interest, nor from prostitutes;[16] the citizens' wealth should be limited to the products of farming, and even here a man should not be able to make so much that he can't help forgetting the real reason why money was invented (I mean for the care of the soul and body, which without physical and cultural education respectively will never develop into anything worth mentioning). That's what has made us say more than once[17] that the pursuit of money should come last in the scale of value. Every man directs his efforts to three things in all, and if his efforts are directed with a correct sense of priorities he will give money the third and lowest place, and his soul the highest, with his body coming somewhere between the two. In particular, if this scale of values prevails in the society we're now describing, then it has been equipped with a good code of laws. But if any of the laws subsequently passed is found

15. I.e. when he *makes* money (by dishonest means).

16. Literally, 'shocking fatted beasts', presumably a euphemism.

17. E.g. pp. 55 and 149.

744 giving pride of place to health in the state rather than the virtue of self-control, or to wealth rather than health and habits of restraint, then quite obviously its priorities will be wrong. So the legislator must repeatedly try to get this sort of thing straight in his own mind by asking 'What do I want to achieve?' and 'Am I achieving it, or am I off target?' If he does that, perhaps he'll complete his legislation by his own efforts and leave nothing to be done by others. There's no other way he could possibly succeed.

THE FOUR PROPERTY-CLASSES

So when a man has drawn his lot, he must take over his holding on the terms stated.[18] It would have been an advantage if no one entering the colony had had any more property than anyone else; but that's out of the question, and some people will arrive with relatively large fortunes, others with relatively little. So for a number of reasons, and especially because the state offers equality[19] of opportunity, there must be graded property-classes, to ensure that offices and taxes and grants may be arranged on the basis of what a man is worth. It's not only his personal virtues or his ancestors' that should be considered, or his physical strength or good looks: what he's made of his wealth or poverty should also be taken into account. In short, the citizens must be esteemed and given office, so far as possible, on exactly equal terms of 'proportional inequality',[19] so as to avoid ill-feeling. For these reasons four permanent property-classes must be established, graded according to wealth: the 'first', 'second', 'third', and 'fourth' classes, or whatever other names are employed. A man will either keep his original classification, or, when he has grown richer or poorer than he was before, transfer to the appropriate class.

In view of all this, the next law I'd pass would be along the following lines. (We maintain that if a state is to avoid the greatest plague of all – I mean civil war, though civil disintegration would be a better term – extreme poverty and

18. See p. 210. 19. These words are elucidated on pp. 229–30.

wealth must not be allowed to arise in any section of the citizen-body, because both lead to both these disasters. That is why the legislator must now announce the acceptable limits of wealth and poverty.) The lower limit of poverty must be the value of the holding (which is to be permanent: no official nor anyone else who has ambitions to be thought virtuous will ever overlook the diminution of any man's holding). The legislator will use the holding as his unit of measure and allow a man to possess twice, thrice, and up to four times its value. If anyone acquires more than this, by finding treasure-trove or by gift or by a good stroke of business or some other similar lucky chance which presents 745 him with more than he's allowed, he should hand over the surplus to the state and its patron deities, thereby escaping punishment and getting a good name for himself.

4. If a man breaks this law,
anyone who wishes may lay information and be rewarded with half the amount involved, the other half being given to the gods; and besides this the guilty person must pay a fine equivalent to the surplus out of his own pocket.

The total property of each citizen over and above his holding of land should be recorded in a public register kept in the custody of officials legally appointed for that duty, so that lawsuits on all subjects – in so far as they affect property – may go smoothly because the facts are clear.

ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS OF THE STATE

After this, the legislator's first job is to locate the city as precisely as possible in the centre of the country, provided that the site he chooses is a convenient one for a city in all other respects too (these are details which can be understood and specified easily enough). Next he must divide the country into twelve sections. But first he ought to reserve a sacred area for Hestia, Zeus and Athena[20] (calling it the 'acropolis'),

20. Hestia was the goddess of the hearth. Zeus and Athena have various functions (see the index): here they appear in their role as chief deities and patrons of the state: cf. p. 461.

and enclose its boundaries; he will then divide the city itself and the whole country into twelve sections by lines radiating from this central point.[21] The twelve sections should be made equal in the sense that a section should be smaller if the soil is good, bigger if it is poor. The legislator must then mark out five thousand and forty holdings, and further divide each into two parts; he should then make an individual holding consist of two such parts coupled so that each has a partner near the centre or the boundary of the state as the case may be. (A part near the city and a part next to the boundary should form one holding, the second nearest the city with the second from the boundary should form another, and so on.) He must apply to the two parts the rule I've just mentioned about the relative quality of the soil, making them equal by varying their size. He should also divide the population into twelve sections, and arrange to distribute among them as equally as possible all wealth over and above the actual holdings[22] (a comprehensive list will be compiled). Finally, they must allocate the sections as twelve 'holdings' for the twelve gods, consecrate each section to the particular god which it has drawn by lot, name it after him, and call it a 'tribe'. Again, they must divide the city into twelve sections in the same way as they divided the rest of the country; and each man should be allotted two houses, one near the centre of the state, one near the boundary.[23] That will finish off the job of getting the state founded.

THEORY TO BE MODIFIED BY FACTS

But there's a lesson here that we must take to heart. This blueprint as a whole is never likely to find such favourable circumstances that every single detail will turn out precisely

21. The sacred area is at the centre of the city, which is itself at the centre of the state. I slightly expand this and a few other sentences in this paragraph in the interests of clarity.

22. I.e. so that each section has about the same number of rich and poor men.

23. Cf. p. 256.

according to plan. It presupposes men who won't turn up 746
their noses at living in such a community, and who will tolerate a moderate and fixed level of wealth throughout their lives, and the supervision of the size of each individual's family as we've suggested.[24] Will people really put up with being deprived of gold and other things which, for reasons we went into just now, the legislator is obviously going to add to his list of forbidden articles? What about this description of a city and countryside with houses at the centre and in all directions round about? He might have been relating a dream, or modelling a state and its citizens out of wax. The ideal impresses well enough, but the legislator must reconsider it as follows (this being, then, a *reprise* of his address to us):[25] 'My friends, in these talks we're having, don't think it has escaped me either that the point of view you are urging has some truth in it. But I believe that in every project for future action, when you are displaying the ideal plan that ought to be put into effect, the most satisfactory procedure is to spare no detail of absolute truth and beauty. But if you find that one of these details is impossible in practice, you ought to put it on one side and not attempt it: you should see which of the remaining alternatives comes closest to it and is most nearly akin to your policy, and arrange to have that done instead. But you must let the legislator finish describing what he really wants to do, and only then join him in considering which of his proposals for legislation are feasible, and which are too difficult. You see, even the maker of the most trivial object must make it internally consistent if he is going to get any sort of reputation.'[26]

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF MATHEMATICS

Now that we've decided to divide the citizens into twelve sections, we should try to realize (after all, it's clear enough) the enormous number of divisors the subdivisions of each

24. See p. 209. 25. See pp. 207–8.

26. That is, the legislator must not mix ideal and second-best in the same programme.

section have, and reflect how these in turn can be further subdivided and subdivided again until you get to 5040.[27] This is the mathematical framework which will yield you your brotherhoods, local administrative units,[28] villages, your military companies and marching-columns, as well as units of coinage, liquid and dry measures, and weights. The law must regulate all these details so that the proper proportions and correspondences are observed. And not only that: the legislator should not be afraid of appearing to give undue attention to detail. He must be bold enough to give instructions that the citizens are not to be allowed to possess any equipment that is not of standard size. He'll assume it's a general
747 rule that numerical division in all its variety can be usefully applied to every field of conduct. It may be limited to the complexities of arithmetic itself, or extended to the subtleties of plane and solid geometry; it's also relevant to sound, and to motion (straight up or down or revolution in a circle). The legislator should take all this into account and instruct all his citizens to do their best never to operate outside that framework. For domestic and public purposes, and all professional skills, no single branch of a child's education has such an enormous range of applications as mathematics; but its greatest advantage is that it wakes up the sleepy ignoramus and makes him quick to understand, retentive and sharp-witted; and thanks to this miraculous science he does better than his natural abilities would have allowed. These subjects will form a splendidly appropriate curriculum, *if* by further laws and customs you can expel the spirit of pettiness and greed from the souls of those who are to master them and profit from them. But if you fail, you'll find that without noticing it you've produced a 'twister' instead of a man of learning – just what can be seen to have happened in the case

27. 5040= 12 × 420. 420 (a 'section') has many divisors (including all numbers from 1 to 8), and several (e.g. 12, 15, 20) can be conveniently subdivided. Division of all the 12 sections, if carried far enough, will ultimately give you 5040.

28. The brotherhoods and units ('phratries' and 'demes') would be subdivisions of the tribes (a tribe = 420 citizens).

of the Egyptians and Phoenicians, and many other races whose approach to wealth and life in general shows a narrow-minded outlook. (It may have been an incompetent legislator who was to blame for this state of affairs, or some stroke of bad luck, or even some natural influence that had the same effect.)

INFLUENCES OF CLIMATE

And that's another point about the choice of sites, Cleinias and Megillus, that we mustn't forget. Some localities are more likely than others to produce comparatively good (or bad) characters, and we must take care to lay down laws that do not fly in the face of such influences. Some sites are suitable or unsuitable because of varying winds or periods of heat, others because of the quality of the water; in some cases the very food grown in the soil can nourish or poison not only the body but the soul as well. But best of all will be the places where the breeze of heaven blows, where spirits hold possession of the land and greet with favour (or disfavour) the various people who come and settle there. The sensible legislator will ponder these influences as carefully as a man can, and then try to lay down laws that will take account of them. This is what you must do too, Cleinias. You're going to settle a territory, so here's the first thing you have to attend to.

CLEINIAS: Well said, sir. I must follow your advice.