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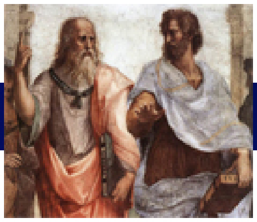

Plato

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1. Life

This great master, the Shakespeare of Greek philosophy, as one may call him, for his fertility, his variety, his humour, his imagination, his poetic grace, was born at Athens in the year 429 B.C. He was of noble family, numbering among his ancestors no less a man than the great lawgiver Solon, and tracing back his descent even further to the legendary Codrus, last king of Athens. At a very early age he seems to have begun to study the philosophers, Heraclitus more particularly, and before he was twenty he had written a tragedy. About that time, however, he met Socrates; and at once giving up all thought of poetic fame he burnt his poem, and devoted himself to the hearing of Socrates. For ten years he was his constant companion.

When Socrates met his death in 399, Plato and other followers of the master fled at first to Megara…, he then entered on a period of extended travel, first to Cyrene and Egypt, thence to Italy and Sicily. In Italy he devoted himself specially to a study of the doctrine of Pythagoras. It is said that at Syracuse he offended the tyrant Dionysius the elder by his freedom of speech, and was delivered up to the Spartans, who were then at war with Athens. Ultimately he was ransomed, and found his way back to Athens, but he is said to have paid a second visit to Sicily when the younger Dionysius became tyrant. He seems to have entertained the hope that he might so influence this young man as to be able to realise through him the dream of his life, a government in accordance with the dictates of philosophy.

His dream, however, was disappointed of fruition, and he returned to Athens, there in the ‘groves of Academus’ a mythic hero of Athens, to spend the rest of his days in converse with his followers, and there at the ripe age of eighty-one he died. From the scene of his labours his philosophy has ever since been known as the Academic philosophy. Unlike Socrates, he was not content to leave only a memory of himself and his conversations. He was unwearied in the redaction and correction of his written dialogues, altering them here and there both in expression and in structure. It is impossible, therefore, to be absolutely certain as to the historical order of composition or publication among his numerous dialogues, but a certain approximate order may be fixed.

2. The Socratic Dialogues

We may take first a certain number of comparatively short dialogues, which are strongly Socratic in the following respects: *first*, they each seek a definition of some particular virtue or quality; *second*, each suggests some relation between it and knowledge; *third*, each leaves the answer somewhat open, treating the matter suggestively rather than dogmatically. These dialogues are *Charmides*, which treats of Temperance (*mens sana in corpore sano*); *Lysis*, which treats of Friendship; *Laches*, Of Courage; *Ion*, Of Poetic Inspiration; *Meno*, Of the teachableness of

Virtue; *Euthyphro*, Of Piety.

The last of these may be regarded as marking a transition to a second series, which are concerned with the trial and death of Socrates. The *Euthyphro* opens with an allusion by Socrates to his approaching trial, and in the *Apology* we have a Platonic version of Socrates' speech in his own defence; in *Crito* we have the story of his noble self-abnegation and civic obedience after his condemnation; in *Phaedo* we have his last conversation with his friends on the subject of Immortality, and the story of his death.

Another series of the dialogues may be formed of those, more or less satirical, in which the ideas and methods of the Sophists are criticised: *Protagoras*, in which Socrates suggests that all virtues are essentially one; *Euthydemus*, in which the assumption and 'airs' of some of the Sophists are made fun of; *Cratylus*, Of the sophistic use of words; *Gorgias*, Of the True and the False, the truly Good and the truly Evil; *Hippias*, Of Voluntary and Involuntary Sin; *Alcibiades*, Of Self-Knowledge; *Menexenus*, a (possibly ironical) set oration after the manner of the Sophists, in praise of Athens.

The whole of this third series are characterised by humour, dramatic interest, variety of personal type among the speakers, keenness rather than depth of philosophic insight. There are many suggestions of profounder thoughts, afterwards worked out more fully; but on the whole these dialogues rather stimulate thought than satisfy it; the great poet-thinker is still playing with his tools.

A higher stage is reached in the *Symposium*, which deals at once humorously and profoundly with the subject of Love, human and divine, and its relations to Art and Philosophy, the whole consummated in a speech related by Socrates as having been spoken to him by Diotima, a wise woman of Mantineia….

Closely connected in subject with the *Symposium* is the *Phaedrus*. As Professor Jowett observes: "The two dialogues together contain the whole philosophy of Plato on the nature of love, which in *The Republic* and in the later writings of Plato is only introduced playfully or as a figure of speech. But in the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* love and philosophy join hands, and one is an aspect of the other. The spiritual and emotional is elevated into the ideal, to which in the *Symposium* mankind are described as looking forward, and which in the *Phaedrus*, as well as in the *Phaedo*, they are seeking to recover from a former state of existence."

We are here introduced to one of the most famous conceptions of Plato, that of *Reminiscence*, or Recollection, based upon a theory of the prior existence of the soul. In the *Meno*, already alluded to, Socrates is representing as eliciting from one of Meno's slaves correct answers to questions involving a knowledge or apprehension of certain axioms of the science of mathematics, which, as Socrates learns, the slave had never been taught. Socrates argues that since he was never taught these axioms, and yet actually knows them, he must have known them before his birth, and concludes from this to the immortality of the soul. In the *Phaedo* this same argument is worked out more fully. As we grow up we discover in the exercise of our senses that things are equal in certain respects, unequal in many others; or again, we appropriate to things or acts the qualities, for example, of beauty, goodness, justice, holiness. At the same time we recognise that these are *ideals*, to which in actual experience we never find more than an approximation, for we never discover in any really existing thing or act *absolute* equality, or justice, or goodness. In other words, any act of judgment on our part of actual experiences consists in a measuring of these experiences by standards which we give or apply to them, and which no number of experiences can give to us because they do not possess or exemplify them. We did not consciously possess these notions, or ideals, or *ideas*, as he prefers to call them, at birth; they come into consciousness in connection with or in consequence of the action of the senses; but since the senses could not give these ideas, the process of knowledge must be a process of *Recollection*. Socrates carries the argument a step further. "Then may we not say," he continues, "that if, as we are always repeating, there is an absolute beauty and goodness and other similar ideas or essences, and to this standard, which is now discovered to have existed in our former state, we refer all our sensations, and with this compare them—assuming these ideas to have a prior existence, then our souls must have had a prior existence, but if not, not? There is the same proof that these ideas must have existed before we were born, as that our souls existed before we were born; and if not the ideas, then not the souls."

In the *Phaedrus* this conception of a former existence is embodied in one of the *Myths* in which Plato's imaginative powers are seen at their highest. In it the soul is compared to a charioteer driving two winged steeds, one mortal, the other immortal; the one ever tending towards the earth, the other seeking ever to soar into the sky, where it may behold those blessed visions of loveliness and wisdom and goodness, which are the true nurture of the soul. When the chariots of the gods go forth in mighty and glorious procession, the soul would fain ride forth in their train; but alas! the mortal steed is ever hampering the immortal, and dragging it down.

If the soul yields to this influence and descends to earth, there she takes human form, but in higher or lower degree, according to the measure of her vision of the truth. She may become a philosopher, a king, a trader, an athlete, a prophet, a poet, a husbandman, a sophist, a tyrant. But whatever her lot, according to her manner of life in it, may she rise, or sink still further, even to a beast or plant.

Only those souls take the form of humanity that have had *some* vision of eternal truth. And this vision they retain in a measure, even when clogged in mortal clay. And so the soul of man is ever striving and fluttering after something beyond; and specially is she stirred to aspiration by the sight of bodily loveliness. Then above all comes the test of good and evil in the soul. The nature that has been corrupted would fain rush to brutal joys; but the purer nature looks with reverence and wonder at this beauty, for it is an adumbration of the celestial joys which he still remembers vaguely from the heavenly vision. And thus pure and holy love becomes an opening back to heaven; it is a source of happiness unalloyed on earth; it guides the lovers on upward wings back to the heaven whence they came.

3. The Republic

And now we pass to the central and crowning work of Plato, *The Republic*, or *Of Justice*—the longest with one exception, and certainly the greatest of all his works. It combines the humour and irony, the vivid characterisation and lively dialogue of his earlier works, with the larger and more serious view, the more constructive and statesmanlike aims of his later life. The dialogue opens very beautifully. There has been a festal procession at the Piraeus, the harbour of Athens, and Socrates with a companion is wending his way homeward, when he is recalled by other companions, who induce him to visit the house of an aged friend of his, Cephalus, whom he does not visit too often. Him he finds seated in his court, crowned, as the custom was, for the celebration of a family sacrifice, and beholds beaming on his face the peace of a life well spent and reconciled. They talk of the happiness that comes in old age to those who have done good and not evil, and who are not too severely tried in the matter of worldly cares. Life to this good old man seems a very simple matter; duty to God, duty to one's neighbours, each according to what is prescribed and orderly; this is all, and this is sufficient.

Then comes in the questioning Socrates, with his doubts and difficulties as to what is one's duty in special circumstances; and the discussion is taken up, not by the good old man, "who goes away to the sacrifice," but by his son, who can quote the authorities; and by Thrasymachus, the Sophist, who will have nothing to do with authority, but maintains that *interest* is the only real meaning of justice, and that Might is Right. Socrates, by analogy of the arts, shows that Might absolutely without tincture of justice is mere weakness, and that there is honour even among thieves. Yet the exhibition of the 'law working in the members' seems to have its weak side so long as we look to individual men, in whom there are many conflicting influences, and many personal chances and difficulties, which obscure the relation between just action and happiness.

Socrates therefore will have justice 'writ large' in the community as a whole, first pictured in its simpler, and then in its more complex and luxurious forms. The relation of the individual to the community is represented chiefly as one of education and training; and many strange theories—as of the equal training of men and women, and the community of wives, ideas partially drawn from Sparta—are woven into the ideal structure. Then the dialogue rises to a larger view of education, as a preparation of the soul of man, not for a community on earth, but for that heavenly life in the myth of the steeds.

The purely earthly unideal life is represented as a life of men tied neck and heels from birth in a cave, having their backs to the light, and their eyes fixed only on the shadows which are cast upon the wall. These they take for the only realities, and they may acquire much skill in interpreting the shadows. Turn these men suddenly to the true light, and they will be dazzled and blinded. They will feel as though they had lost the realities, and been plunged into dreams. And in pain and sorrow they will be tempted to grope back again to the familiar darkness.

Yet if they hold on in patience, and struggle up the steep till the sun himself breaks on their vision, what pain and dazzling once more, yet at the last what glorious revelation! True, if they revisit their old dwelling-place, they will not see as well as their fellows who are still living contentedly there, knowing nothing other than the shadows. They may even seem to these as dreamers who have lost their senses; and should they try to enlighten these denizens of the cave, they may be persecuted or even put to death. Such are the men who have had a sight of the heavenly verities, when compared with the children of earth and darkness.

Yet the world will never be right till those who have had this vision come back to the things of earth and order them according to the eternal verities; the philosopher must be king if ever the perfect life is to be lived on earth, either by individual or community….For the training of these ideal rulers an ideal education is required, which Plato calls dialectic.

The argument then seems to fall to a lower level. There are various approximations in actual experience to the ideal community, each more or less perfect according to the degree in which the good of the individual is also made the good of all, and the interests of governors and governed are alike. Parallel with each lower form of state is a lower individual nature, the worst of all being that of the tyrant, whose will is his only law, and his own self-indulgence his only motive. In him indeed Might is Right; but his life is the very antithesis of happiness. No, pleasure of any kind can give no law to reason; reason can judge of pleasure, but not *vice versâ*. There is no profit to a man though he gain the whole world, if *himself* be lost; if he become worse; if the better part of him be silenced and grow weaker. And after this 'fitful fever' is over, may there not be a greater bliss beyond? There have been stories told us, visions of another world, where each man is rewarded according to his works. And the book closes with a magnificent Vision of Judgment. It is the story of Er, son of Armenius, who being wounded in battle, after twelve days' trance comes back to life, and tells of the judgment seat, of heavenly bliss and hellish punishments, and of the renewal of life and the new choice given to souls not yet purified wholly of sin. "God is blameless; Man's Soul is immortal; Justice and Truth are the only things eternally good." Such is the final revelation.

4. The Timaeus

The *Timaeus* is an attempt by Plato, under the guise of a Pythagorean philosopher, to image forth as in a vision or dream the actual framing of the universe, conceived as a realisation of the Eternal Thought or Idea. It will be remembered that in the analysis already given of the process of knowledge in individual men, Plato found that prior to the suggestions of the senses, though not coming into consciousness except in connection with sensation, men had *ideas* that gave them a power of rendering their sensations intelligible. In the *Timaeus* Plato attempts a vision of the universe as though he saw it working itself into actuality on the lines of those ideas. The vision is briefly as follows: There is the Eternal Creator, who desired to make the world because He was good and free from jealousy, and therefore willed that all things should be like Himself; that is, that the formless, chaotic, unrealised void might receive form and order, and become, in short, real as He was. Thus creation is the process by which the Eternal Creator works out His own image, His own ideas, in and through that which is formless, that which has no name, which is nothing but possibility,—dead earth, namely, or *Matter*. And first the world-soul, image of the divine, is formed, on which as on a "diamond network" the manifold structure of things is fashioned—the stars, the seven planets with their sphere-music, the four elements, and all the various creatures, aetherial or fiery, aerial, aqueous, and earthy, with the consummation of them all in microcosm, in the animal world, and specially in man.

One can easily see that this is an attempt by Plato to carry out the reverse process in thought to that which first comes to thinking man. Man has sensations, that is, he comes first upon that which is conceivably last in creation, on the immediate and temporary things or momentary occurrences of earth. In these sensations, as they accumulate into a kind of habitual or unreasoned knowledge or opinion, he discovers elements which have been active to correlate the sensations, which have from the first exercised a governing influence upon the sensations, without which, indeed, no two sensations could be brought together to form anything one could name. These regulative, underlying, permanent elements are Ideas, *i.e.* General Forms or Notions, which, although they may come second as regards time into consciousness, are by reason known to have been there before, because through them alone can the sensations become intelligibly possible, or thinkable, or namable. Thus Plato is led to the conception of an order the reverse of our individual experience, the order of creation, the order of God's thought, which is equivalent to the order of God's working; for God's thought and God's working are inseparable.

Of course Plato, in working out his dream of creation absolutely without any scientific knowledge, the further he travels the more obviously falls into confusion and absurdity; where he touches on some ideas having a certain resemblance to modern scientific discoveries, as the law of gravitation, the circulation of the blood, the quantitative basis of differences of quality, etc., these happy guesses are apt to lead more frequently wrong than right, because they are not kept in check by any experimental tests. But taken as a 'myth,' which is perhaps all that Plato intended, the work offers much that is profoundly interesting….

5. Plato's Metaphysics and Psychology

We now come to a series of highly important dialogues, marked as a whole by a certain diminution in the purely artistic attraction, having less of vivid characterisation, less humour, less dramatic interest, less perfect construction in every way, but, on the other hand, peculiarly interesting as presenting a kind of after-criticism of his own philosophy. In them Plato brings his philosophic conceptions into striking relation with earlier or rival theories such as the Eleatic, the Megarian, the Cyrenaic, and the Cynic, and touches in these connections on many problems of deep and permanent import.

The most remarkable feature in these later dialogues is the disappearance, or even in some cases the apparently hostile criticism, of the doctrine of Ideas, and consequently of Reminiscence as the source of knowledge, and even, apparently, of Personal Immortality, so far as the doctrine of Reminiscence was imagined to guarantee it. This, however, is perhaps to push the change of view too far. We may say that Plato in these dialogues is rather the psychologist than the metaphysician; he is attempting a revised analysis of mental processes. From this point of view it was quite intelligible that he should discover difficulties in his former theory of our mental relation to the external reality, without therefore seeing reason to doubt the existence of that reality. The position is somewhat similar to that of a modern philosopher who attempts to think out the psychological problem of Human Will in relation to Almighty and Over-ruling Providence. One may very clearly see the psychological difficulties, without ceasing to believe either in the one or the other as facts.

Throughout Plato's philosophy, amidst every variation of expression, we may take these three as practically fixed points of belief or of faith, or at least of hope; *first*, that Mind is eternally master of the universe; *second*, that Man in realising what is most truly himself is working in harmony with the Eternal Mind, and is in this way a master of nature, reason governing experience and not being a product of experience; and *thirdly* (as Socrates said before his judges), that at death we go to powers who are wise and good, and to men departed who in their day shared in the divine wisdom and goodness,—that, in short, there is something remaining for the dead, and better for those that have done good than for those that have done evil.

The first of the 'psychological dialogues,' as we have called them, is the *Philebus*. The question here is of the *summum bonum* or chief good. What is it? Is it pleasure? Is it wisdom? Or is it both? In the process of answering these questions Plato lays down rules for true definition, and establishes classifications which had an immense influence on his successor Aristotle, but which need not be further referred to here.

The general gist of the argument is as follows. Pleasure could not be regarded as a sufficient or perfect good if it was entirely emptied of the purely intellectual elements of anticipation and consciousness and memory. This would be no better than the pleasure of an oyster. On the other hand, a purely intellectual existence can hardly be regarded as perfect and sufficient either. The perfect life must be a union of both.

But this union must be an orderly and rational union; in other words, it must be one in which Mind is master and Pleasure servant; the finite, the regular, the universal must govern the indefinite, variable, particular. Thus in the perfect life there are four elements; in the body, earth, water, air, fire; in the soul, the finite, the indefinite, the union of the two, and the cause of that union. If this be so, he argues, may we not by analogy argue for a like four-fold order in the universe? There also we find regulative elements, and indefinite elements, and the union of the two. Must there not also be the Great Cause, even Divine Wisdom, ordering and governing all things?

The second of the psychological series is the *Parmenides*, in which the great Eleatic philosopher, in company with his disciple Zeno, is imagined instructing the youthful Socrates when the two were on a visit to Athens, which may or may not be historical. The most striking portion of this dialogue is the criticism already alluded to of Plato's own theory of Ideas, put into the mouth of Parmenides. Parmenides ascertains from Socrates that he is quite clear about there being Ideas of Justice, Beauty, Goodness, eternally existing, but how about Ideas of such common things as hair, mud, filth, etc.? Socrates is not so sure; to which Parmenides rejoins that as he grows older philosophy will take a surer hold of him, and that he will recognise the same law in small things and in great.

But now as to the nature of these Ideas. What, Parmenides asks, is the relation of these, as eternally existing in the mind of God, to the same ideas as possessed by individual men? Does each individual actually *partake* in the thought of God through the ideas, or are his ideas only *resemblances* of the eternal? If he partakes, then the eternal ideas are not one but many, as many as the persons who possess them. If his ideas only resemble, then there must be some basis of reference by which the resemblance is established, a *tertium quid* or third existence resembling both, and so *ad infinitum*. Socrates is puzzled by this, and suggests that perhaps the Ideas are only notions in our minds. But to this it is replied that there is an end in that case of any reality in our ideas. Unless in some way they have a true and causal relation with something beyond our minds, there is an end of mind altogether, and with mind gone everything goes….

Next follows an extraordinary analysis of the ideas of 'Being' and 'Unity,' remarkable not only for its subtlety, but for the relation which it historically bears to the modern philosophic system of Hegel. "Every affirmation is *ipso facto* a negation;" "the negation of a negation is an affirmation;" these are the psychological (if not metaphysical) facts, on which the analysis of Parmenides and the philosophy of Hegel are both founded.

We may pass more rapidly by the succeeding dialogues of the series: the *Theaetetus*, which is a close and powerful investigation of the nature of knowledge on familiar Platonic lines; the *Sophist*, which is an analysis of fallacious reasoning; and the *Statesman*, which, under the guise of a dialectical search for the true ruler of men, represents once more Plato's ideal of government, and contrasts this with the ignorance and charlatanism of actual politics.

In relation to subsequent psychology, and more particularly to the logical system of Aristotle, these dialogues are extremely important. We may indeed say that the systematic logic of Aristotle, as contained in the *Organon*, is little more than an abstract or digest of the logical theses of these dialogues. Definition and division, the nature and principle of classification, the theory of predication, the processes of induction and deduction, the classification and criticism of fallacies,—all these are to be found in them. The only addition really made by Aristotle was the systematic theory of the syllogism.

The *Laws*, the longest of Plato's works, seems to have been composed by him in the latest years of his long life, and was probably not published till after his death. It bears traces of its later origin in the less artful juncture of its parts, in the absence of humour, in the greater overloading of details, in the less graphic and appropriate characterisation of the speakers. These speakers are three—an Athenian, a Cretan, and a Spartan. A new colony is to be led forth from Crete, and the Cretan takes advice of the others as to the ordering of the new commonwealth. We are no longer, as in *The Republic*, in an ideal world, a city coming down from, or set in, the heavens. There is no longer a perfect community; nor are philosophers to be its kings. Laws more or less similar to those of Sparta fill about half the book. But the old spirit of obedience and self-sacrifice and community is not forgotten; and on all men and women, noble and humble alike, the duty is cast, to bear in common the common burden of life.

Thus, somewhat in sadness and decay, yet with a dignity and moral grandeur not unworthy of his life's high argument, the great procession of the Ideal Philosopher's dialogues closes.

6. The Search for Universals

If we attempt now, by way of appendix to this very inadequate summary of the dialogues, to give in brief review some account of the main doctrines of Plato, as they may be gathered from a general view of them, we are at once met by difficulties many and serious. In the case of a genius such as Plato's, at once ironical, dramatic, and allegorical, we cannot be absolutely certain that in any given passage Plato is expressing, at all events adequately and completely, his own personal views, even at the particular stage of his own mental development then represented. And when we add to this that in a long life of unceasing intellectual development, Plato inevitably grew out of much that once satisfied him, and attained not infrequently to new points of view even of doctrines or conceptions which remained essentially unchanged, a Platonic dogma in the strict sense must clearly not be expected. One may, however, attempt in rough outline to summarise the main *tendencies* of his thought, without professing to represent its settled and authenticated results.

We may begin by an important summary of Plato's philosophy given by Aristotle (*Met*. A. 6): "In immediate succession to the Pythagorean and Eleatic philosophies came the work of Plato. In many respects his views coincided with these; in some respects, however, he is independent of the Italians. For in early youth he became a student of Cratylus and of the school of Heraclitus, and accepted from them the view that the objects of sense are in eternal flux, and that of these, therefore, there can be no absolute knowledge. Then came Socrates, who busied himself only with questions of morals, and not at all with the world of physics. But in his ethical inquiries his search was ever for universals, and he was the first to set his mind to the discovery of definitions. Plato following him in this, came to the conclusion that these universals could not belong to the things of sense, which were ever changing, but to some other kind of existences. Thus he came to conceive of universals as forms or *ideas* of real existences, by reference to which, and in consequence of analogies to which, the things of sense in every case received their names, and became thinkable objects."

From this it followed to Plato that in so far as the senses took an illusive appearance of themselves giving the knowledge which really was supplied by reason as the organ of ideas, in the same degree the body which is the instrument of sense can only be a source of illusion and a hindrance to knowledge. The wise man, therefore, will seek to free himself from the bonds of the body, and die while he lives by philosophic contemplation, free as far as possible from the disturbing influence of the senses. This process of *rational* realisation Plato called Dialectic. The objects contemplated by the reason, brought into consciousness on the occurrence of sensible perception, but never caused by these, were not mere notions in the mind of the individual thinker, nor were they mere properties of individual things; this would be to make an end of science on the one hand, of reality on the other. Nor had they existence in any mere place, not even beyond the heavens. Their home was Mind, not this mind or that, but Mind Universal, which is God.

In these 'thoughts of God' was the root or essence which gave reality to the things of sense; they were the Unity which realised itself in multiplicity. It is because things partake of the Idea that we give them a name. The thing as such is seen, not known; the idea as such is known, not seen.

The whole conception of Plato in this connection is based on the assumption that there is such a thing as knowledge. If all things are ever in change, then knowledge is impossible; but conversely, if there is } such a thing as knowledge, then there must be a continuing object of knowledge; and beauty, goodness, reality are then no dreams. The process of apprehension of these 'thoughts of God,' these eternal objects of knowledge, whether occasioned by sensation or not, is essentially a process of self-inquiry, or, as he in one stage called it, of Reminiscence. The process is the same in essence, whether going on in thought or expressed in speech; it is a process of *naming*. Not that names ever resemble realities fully; they are only approximations, limited by the conditions of human error and human convention. There is nevertheless an intercommunion between ideas and things. We must neither go entirely with those who affirm the one (the Eleatics), nor with those who affirm the many (the Heracliteans), but accept both. There is a union in all that exists both of That Which *Is*, and of that concerning which all we can say is that it is *Other* than what is. This 'Other,' through union with what is, attains to being of a kind; while on the other hand, What Is by union with the 'Other' attains to variety, and thus more fully realises itself.

That which Plato here calls ‘What Is’ he elsewhere calls ‘The Limiting or Defining’; the ‘Other’ he calls ‘The Unlimited or Undefined.’ Each has a function in the divine process. The thoughts of God attain realisation in the world of things which change and pass, through the infusion {166} of themselves in, or the superimposing of themselves upon, that which is Nothing apart from them,—the mere negation of what is, and yet necessary as the ‘Other’ or correlative of what is. Thus we get, in fact, *four* forms of existence: there is the Idea or Limiting (apart); there is the Negative or Unlimited (apart), there is the Union of the two (represented in language by subject and predicate), which as a whole is this frame of things as we know it; and fourthly, there is the *Cause* of the Union, which is God. And God is cause not only as the beginning of all things, but also as the measure and law of their perfection, and the end towards which they go. He is the Good, and the cause of Good, and the consummation and realisation of Good.

This absolute Being, this perfect Good, we cannot see, blinded as we are, like men that have been dwelling in a cave, by excess of light. We must, therefore, look on Him indirectly, as on an image of Him, in our own souls and in the world, in so far as in either we discern, by reason, that which is rational and good.

Thus God is not only the cause and the end of all good, He is also the cause and the end of all knowledge. Even as the sun is not only the most glorious of all visible objects, but is also the cause of the life and beauty of all other things, and the provider of the light whereby we see them, so also is it for the eye of the soul. God is its light, God is the most glorious object of its contemplation, God we behold imaged forth in all the objects which the soul by reason contemplates.

The ideas whereof the ‘Other’ (or, as he again calls it, the ‘Great and Small’ or ‘More and Less,’ meaning that which is unnamable, or wholly neutral in character, and which may therefore be represented equally by contradictory attributes) by participation becomes a resemblance, Plato compared to the ‘Numbers’ of the Pythagoreans. Hence, Aristotle remarks (*Met*. A. 6), Plato found in the ideas the originative or formative Cause of things, that which made them what they were or could be called,—their *Essence*; in the ‘Great and Small’ he found the opposite principle or *Matter* (Raw Material) of things.

In this way the antithesis of Mind and Matter, whether on the great scale in creation or on the small in rational perception, is not an antithesis of unrelated opposition. Each is correlative of the other, so to speak as the male and the female; the one is generative, formative, active, positive; the other is capable of being impregnated, receptive, passive, negative; but neither can realise itself apart from the other.

This relation of ‘Being’ with that which is ‘Other than Being’ is Creation, wherein we can conceive of the world as coming to be, yet not in Time. And in the same way Plato speaks of a third form, besides the Idea and that which receives it, namely, ‘Formless Space, the mother of all things.’ As Kant might have formulated it, Time and Space are not prior to creation, they are forms under which creation becomes thinkable.

The ‘Other’ or Negative element, Plato more or less vaguely connected with the evil that is in the world. This evil we can never expect to perish utterly from the world; it must ever be here as the antithesis of the good. But with the gods it dwells not; here in this mortal nature, and in this region of mingling, it must of necessity still be found. The wise man will therefore seek to die to the evil, and while yet in this world of mortality, to think immortal things, and so as far as may be flee from the evil. Thereby shall he liken himself to the divine. For it is a likening to the divine to be just and holy and true.

This, then, is the *summum bonum*, the end of life. For as the excellence or end of any organ or instrument consists in that perfection of its parts, whereby each separately and the whole together work well towards the fulfilling of that which it is designed to accomplish, so the excellence of man must consist in a perfect ordering of all his parts to the perfect working of his whole organism as a rational being. The faculties of man are three: the Desire of the body, the Passion of the heart, the Thought of the soul; the perfect working of all three, Temperance, Courage, Wisdom, and consequently the perfect working of the whole man, is Righteousness. From this springs that ordered tranquillity which is at once true happiness and perfect virtue.

7. Platonic Education

Yet since individual men are not self-sufficient, but have separate capacities, and a need of union for mutual help and comfort, the perfect realisation of this virtue can only be in a perfect civic community. And corresponding with the three parts of the man there will be three orders in the community: the Workers and Traders, the Soldiers, and the Ruling or Guardian class. When all these perform their proper functions in perfect harmony, then is the perfection of the whole realised, in Civic Excellence or Justice.

To this end a careful civic education is necessary, *first*, because to *know* what is for the general good is difficult, for we have to learn not only in general but in detail that even the individual good can be secured only through the general; and *second*, because few, if any, are capable of seeking the general good, even if they know it, without the guidance of discipline and the restraints of law. Thus, with a view to its own perfection, and the good of all its members, Education is the chief work of the State.

It will be remembered that in Plato's division of the soul of man there are three faculties, Desire, Passion, Reason; in the division of the soul's perfection three corresponding virtues, Temperance, Courage, Wisdom; and in the division of the state three corresponding orders, Traders, Soldiers, Guardians. So in Education there are three stages. First, *Music* (including all manner of artistic and refining influences), whose function it is so to attemper the desires of the heart that all animalism and sensualism may be eliminated, and only the love and longing for that which is lovely and of good report may remain. Second, *Gymnastic*, whose function it is through ordered labour and suffering so to subdue and rationalise the passionate part of the soul, that it may become the willing and obedient servant of that which is just and true. And third, *Mathematics*, by which the rational element of the soul may be trained to realise itself, being weaned, by the ordered apprehension of the 'diamond net' of laws which underlie all the phenomena of nature, away from the mere surface appearances of things, the accidental, individual, momentary,—to the deep-seated realities, which are necessary, universal, eternal.

And just as there was a perfectness of the soul transcending all particular virtues, whether of Temperance or Courage or Wisdom, namely, that absolute Rightness or Righteousness which gathered them all into itself, so at the end of these three stages of education there is a higher mood of thought, wherein the soul, purified, chastened, enlightened, in communing with itself through *Dialectic* (the Socratic art of questioning transfigured) communes also with the Divine, and in thinking out its own deepest thoughts, thinks out the thoughts of the great Creator Himself, becomes one with Him, finds its final realisation through absorption into Him, and in His light sees light.

John Marshall. *A Short History of Greek Philosophy*. Chapters 14-17 London: Percival and Co., 1891.

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