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PLATO
FOR PLEASURE



ADAM FOX

*Perhaps it is not surprising that I should have
experienced very great pleasure when I con-
templated my own works as it were en masse.*

PLATO *Laws* 811c

WESTHOUSE

1945

"The works of Plato have generally been in the hands of philosophers and scholars when they ought to have been in the hands of the people." These words with which *Plato for Pleasure* opens largely indicate its purpose, and the title does the rest. It seeks to show that Plato is a popular author, very good to read even if we are not philosophers and know no Greek. Allowing that the Platonic Dialogues are rather strange stuff, the book tries to tell the beginner what to expect and to explain the significance of the chief characteristics and difficulties he will discover. It does not try at all to make a system of philosophy out of Plato's writings, but points to their interest and charm and humour. For that reason these pages may have some appeal also to those already familiar with the subject.

Adam Fox, the author of this book, was educated at Winchester and University College, Oxford. After taking his degree he was a schoolmaster at Lancing, Radley and in South Africa. He took Holy Orders in 1911. In 1929 he was elected a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford. He published a long narrative poem called *Old King Coel* in 1936, and in 1938 he was elected (by accident, he says) Professor of Poetry at Oxford in succession to George Gordon. His tenure of this office expired in 1943. In the meanwhile he had been appointed Canon of Westminster, in 1942, and is still at the Abbey.

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PREFACE

THE main purpose of this book is explained in the introductory chapter. It is for beginners in Plato, though I hope and believe that what is good for beginners may be of interest to others too.

In Appendix I, at the end, is a list of books. These particular books have been included partly because they would be suitable for anyone whose appetite for Plato has been whetted, partly because my own book owes a great deal to them. In particular I have taken small bits of translation from various sources, many of which I cannot now trace in detail, but they are all from works mentioned in this Appendix, and I am grateful for them. I have taken long pieces from Jowett of the kind in which he comes off so well. I owe a debt also to various commentaries (especially, of course, to Adam's *Republic*) which I have not included in the list as being outside its scope. Professor Taylor's list of 28 dialogues I have taken over entirely and have confined myself to them. No list can have more authority than his.

I have quoted a passage of 14 or 15 lines from Bertrand Russell's *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, and I have to express my thanks to him and to Messrs. George Allen and Unwin for the use of it.

The names of the Dialogues are not given on any consistent system. Some of the names are in the Greek form, some in Latin, some in English. I have called them what they usually are called. I hesitated between *Politicus* and *Statesman*, and eventually chose *Statesman*, although there is no accepted abbreviation for it. But that does not much matter, as the abbreviated forms are only useful for giving references, and I have made a practice of not naming the Dialogues in the

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references which I give, because a name catches the mind as well as the eye and interrupts the reading. When it is not clear from the context what Dialogue is being referred to, Appendix II will easily show. I am supposing that the reader will not usually look up the references as he goes along. I have given them generally in order that he may verify what I say at his leisure if he cares to do so.

It is only too likely that I have made many mistakes of fact, and of these I should be very glad to be informed. My views too may be mistaken, but I do not know how to help it, if it is so.

I should like to record the kindness of my cousin, Mrs. Blanche Gosden, in whose hospitable home most of these pages were written.

A. F.

Dean's Yard,
Westminster,
October, 1945.

INTRODUCTORY

THE works of Plato have generally been in the hands of philosophers and scholars when they ought to have been in the hands of the people. That is not to say that the thirty millions in this country who are supposed to be going to the seaside annually in the future ought all to take Plato with them in their pocket. But just as the fifty thousand people or more who know their Dickens fairly well make Dickens a national possession, so if fifty thousand or thereabouts knew the works of Plato fairly well, he too would belong to our public life, he would be constantly quoted or referred to, and most of the population would have some of Plato's notions in their heads even if they did not know where they came from. The Brains Trust has done something to make the name of Plato familiar, and a considerable demand for books about him out of the Public Libraries has sprung up. But so often still in the Press and in public speeches one feels how much better it would be if only the writers and speakers knew something of what Plato thought and of the way he goes about to expound his thinking. People would be more enlightened and the Government would be easier. People would be happier, and politicians too.

So this book is what the French call "a work of vulgarisation." It sets out with the intention of popularising Plato. It means to show that he is very good reading. His philosophy is undoubtedly very grand, but in his Works it is very elusive, and in any case for the time being the philosophers themselves seem not to be much interested in it. There is much in Plato which they find it hard to forgive. In their present rather grim mood they do not care for the way he

has of going up in the air, of being so transcendental, as they call it. They do not like his being so aristocratic as he is. They must find it hard to think of him as a pure philosopher, when he ends his greatest work (the *Republic*) with a long fairy tale about the life of the world to come.

And even if the philosophers were interested, that would not bring him a great number of readers in English, for the Anglo-Saxons are not a philosophical race. But Plato in his Dialogues is such a superb master of literature, and the works are such delightful stuff, that they must be meant primarily to be read and not to be studied. Their entertainment value is very great, and although a considerable part of them cannot be read without thinking, we need not and should not stop to think *much* until we have got to the end of the piece. Then we can stop to think it over or not as we like. The great thing is that as many as possible of those who are capable of any serious reading should read the works for the pleasure of reading. It is to be feared that too many who have had Plato's works in their hands have not had this idea of pleasure in their heads at all. They have aimed all the time at finding out what he thought or seeing what he says about this or that, when, the works being what they are, this is often not possible, nor what he himself intended.

And it is not a very respectful way of treating a great author either. It would not be the proper line of approach to Shakspeare for instance, though he was a great philosopher in his way too. But he was not systematically or primarily a philosopher. No more was Plato, at any rate as we know him, which is almost entirely through his writings. He was first and foremost a genius at writing in a particular literary form, the Dialogue. To all intents and purposes he invented this form, and as sometimes happens with a great original author he has never been surpassed in his own line. He used philosophy as his material, but he has transmuted philosophy into art. The Dialogues are works of art and must please before they can instruct. To invite them to instruct by

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studying them before they have been enjoyed means going about to diminish the enjoyment and to get the instruction with a wrong emphasis. And that would be a pity.

At the same time, of course, writers of genius nearly always have something strange or difficult about them, and Plato as much as any needs some introduction. The reader needs to know at least a little of the world of Athens to which he belonged, of Socrates his great teacher and predecessor (a very queer man), of the cast of his mind, and of the place that mathematics and logic and art and politics had in it, of what things he thought mattered most, and of those tendencies in our own thought which owe most to Plato or which seem most antagonistic to his point of view. This or something like it must be the programme of any introduction to Plato. And the different topics must be so treated as to bring the reader to the point where Plato can begin to speak for himself. What is said must try to create an appetite for the works without satisfying it, not an easy thing to do, because it means showing how Plato must be interesting without giving many substantial extracts from his writings. The great thing to be avoided in writing books about books is that people should come to think they know an author because they have read a book about him. An author can only be known from his own books.

An introduction unfortunately always stands between the reader of it and the author it is about, and must be written moreover by one who has read the author fully and with some attention, and is therefore not in the beginner's situation at all. Nor can the attempt to introduce a great mind ever be quite simple, for great minds are often not simple, and certainly Plato's was not. But at least these pages shall devote themselves to supplying what seems needed to put fifty thousand potential Platonists in a position to find the Dialogues the best reading that ever was.

Yet you cannot read for pleasure long, unless you feel that what you are reading matters. So we will begin by asking

why Plato matters. You would hardly think that he could matter much to us, seeing that he lived a good deal more than 2000 years ago and in a world which was strictly limited to the Mediterranean except for just a glance in the direction of India. How can his problems and his notions, you ask, much concern our world which takes in both sides of the Atlantic with a vigorous incursion into the Pacific, and has resources of travel and production beside which his world looks merely primitive? Yet Plato does matter, and you could put the reason why like this :

The human race has always occupied most of its time eating, working, dancing, breeding, sleeping, and *thinking*, and all this it does by some deep-seated instinct. But it has come to do a great deal more in the course of ages, such as reading and writing, measuring distances and inventing machinery, sitting in council and talking about God. But using the mind or thinking is the great thing, because whatever men do that rises above the level of instinct depends on what they think. And it becomes very important when a lot of them come to think alike. What we call the character of their civilisation depends upon that. And a lot of them coming to think the same depends upon the master minds which appear and teach the world. And of the master minds which have appeared to teach our Western world Plato is amongst the greatest half dozen. All such minds, of course, are noticeable for the originality and variety of the lessons taught and the methods by which they were conveyed into men's minds. Moses, for example, taught morality by mixing it up with very peculiar notions of history and divinity. Augustus Cæsar, besides inspiring Virgil, started spreading over the West a notion of Europe which has immensely affected politics and still affects them to-day. He did it by sheer and mere administrative ability. But amidst all their variety these master minds have one thing in common. They have taught us our ideas about what matters. And Plato's contribution to this work is unique in its range of interests

and unique in being contained in this series of Dialogues which he shaped into a superbly elegant and precise instrument for the representation of men talking *and thinking*. And that is why Plato himself matters. Henry Jackson, the Professor of Greek at Cambridge, once said: "If Socrates is the master of those who teach and Aristotle is the master of those who know, Plato is the master of those who think." He might have explained the distinction by saying that people rarely like thinking, and Plato makes it so pleasurable.

In the Dialogues a great deal of the thinking is inconclusive and some of it is wrong. Some of it is very dry and parts of it have ceased to have much significance. But that this is the way to set about thinking stands perfectly secure. You learn from the pages of Plato how to have a good talk and to some extent how not to spoil good talk. You learn how to go hunting for the truth and how precious truth is and how elusive, and you experience all the sport there is in tracking down the truth. You have something of the same sort of pleasure as the successful detective without his sordid setting. And this pleasure in pursuit of truth is very valuable, because most of us are not well equipped to discover the truth. We have not the right kind of courage or the powers of mind. It is perhaps one of Plato's chief contributions to our social and mental well-being that he persuades us that the search for truth can be in itself a great pleasure, sometimes one might almost say great fun, even if the prey escapes us in the end.

For that reason, if for no other, Plato's works need not be the peculiar treasure of the philosophers. Too much perhaps has been made of distinguishing between what is right and what is wrong in his views, and of attempting to make a system out of his writings, though he said himself that what he taught could not be conveyed in writing (III 341c).^{*} Philo-

^{*} Where in the references to the works of Plato it is not possible to know from the context what Dialogue is being referred to, this can readily be ascertained from Appendix II, p. 159.

sophers may point out a multitude of very interesting things in Plato which others would not notice or could not understand, just as a sociologist could point out hundreds of very interesting things in Dickens. But the proper approach to the widest appreciation of Plato and of Dickens (different as they are) is to approach their writings as works of creative literature. They do not so much describe the world as make a world of their own. Plato had a genius for making up serious conversations such as men hold with each other when they think as they talk. No one has surpassed him in representing just that. And although you naturally ask of a conversation, as of a novel, what is it about, still more you note the way it is conducted, the contact and collision of mind, and the transitions from one question to another and the success or failure in finding the answer. The way all this is managed in Plato must fill anyone who reads him with admiration.

All the same Plato is certainly queer stuff in some ways, as anyone must admit who turns the pages of it. And consequently to the natural interest which most people feel about the life of a great author is added in Plato's case the need to account for his oddities and put them in their right place. It is this twofold purpose, perhaps, which has led so many scholars to write his life or to expound his meaning or to summarise the Dialogues and translate them. The short work which fills these pages will perhaps only differ from most of the others in being less learned and in trying to consider the works of Plato as literature rather than as philosophy in the belief that no one can be a student of Plato's philosophy until he has been a reader of his Dialogues, while many can be delighted readers of the Dialogues who will never be philosophers.

This is not to suggest, however, that Plato can be read without noting what you read, but rather that you may learn how to think and have many nice things to think about after reading some Plato without necessarily thinking about the

meaning of what you have read unless you want to. Now most men avoid serious thinking just as they avoid the long way round from place to place even when they know it is the best way. We take short cuts to almost all our conclusions, and for that reason they are so often wrong. The charm of Plato, apart from his imagination and his language, lies in the fact that he often succeeds in making thinking pleasant. He makes it very simple or seems to, and he gives it a dramatic interest so that we want to go on and find out what the argument is going to do next. And thus by an irresistible skill he makes us almost willing to think about something difficult; he certainly makes us quicker to distinguish sense from nonsense, he gives us greater confidence in our powers of reasoning, and he makes us believe in talking as something which is the proper remedy for all our ignorances and therefore, he would say himself, for all our sins.

Reading Plato then is an experience, and as our convictions are the result of our experience, it might well be that reading Plato would add to or alter our convictions. And so it does. To be a Platonist in one sense of the word means only to know a lot more than most people know about Plato. But in another sense it means to have a particular cast of mind which is always seeing the world about us in a particular way, a rather visionary way which thinks of what most people call real things as just shadows or copies of reality, which thinks of nearly everything as perishing by contrast with the few things that Remain, which thinks of the Many and the One as inextricably mixed up and yet eternally separate. Some very superior minds seem to have this cast without having had much contact with Plato, and some others, as soon as they encounter Plato, recognise in themselves an affinity with him. They are mostly the minds of theologians and poets. But there is often a great deal of Platonism in men of action too, whether they know it or not. Plato will by no means give us all that we need in this world of ours

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to make us poets or men of action, but it would nevertheless be well for the community at large if more of us knew something of Plato's works at first hand and had drawn our own conclusions from them. We should think more closely and then we should act more wisely.

II

THE DIALOGUES

PLATO then is first and foremost an author, someone to be read, a book you notice on the shelf. Of what then do his works consist?

They consist of a large collection of dialogues in Greek, about thirty of them, some as long as a good-sized novel, some of not much more than a few pages. The whole amounts to five full-length volumes in the Oxford Classical Texts. The fifth of these is mostly taken up by one work, the *Laws*, which is about as long as the New Testament, and the longest of Plato's works by a good deal. The first four volumes are a very little shorter than the Old Testament. A few of the minor items in the collection may be imitations and not by Plato himself. And two of the so-called Dialogues are, in fact, speeches and not dialogues—one of these is the famous *Apology* of Socrates, which purports to be the defence he made when he was condemned to death. The other is *Menexenus*, a funeral oration in a very slight framework of dialogue. The collection seems to be complete in the sense that no allusion to Plato's writings has been found which cannot be attached to one of the extant pieces. No doubt his followers devoutly treasured them while he lived and kept them intact when he was dead.

To these Dialogues must be added the collection of *Thirteen Letters* which have come down to us as Plato's from early times. Cicero knew of them, and they were well-known and fully accepted as his in the First Century A.D. But still there is a long break in the chain of evidence, seeing that Plato died in the middle of the Fourth Century B.C. The presump-

tion is that the letters were collected as carefully as the Dialogues, but in modern times until quite recently ancient letters in general have been suspected to be forgeries, and it has always been a question whether Plato really wrote these. It is rather an important question because the letters give almost all we know about his life. If they are not genuine we know very little about him at all. But before considering the life of Plato it will be best to give some idea of the Dialogues. For the life of Plato would not be a specially interesting one, if he had not left behind him these same Dialogues which make people want so much to know what he was like.

The Dialogues may be classified on several systems. Naturally it is important to try to determine the order in which they were written with a view to observing the growth and development of Plato's doctrines, if we can. This order of composition has been established in recent times to the satisfaction of most scholars, and it shows that in the earlier Dialogues the teaching is represented as that of Socrates and Socrates has a leading part in the discussions; and that after a long interval Plato produced the later Dialogues in which Socrates is in the background and Plato is clearly grappling with his own philosophical problems, mainly in logic and metaphysics. In the *Laws*, the last as well as the longest of all the works, Socrates makes no appearance at all.

This division into Socratic and other Dialogues corresponds pretty closely with the division into early and late Dialogues. It also corresponds more or less to the division into easy and difficult Dialogues, though the terms are only relative. None of the Dialogues are quite easy reading, and on the other hand the difficult ones all have their inspired or poetical passages in no way inferior to the earlier ones in liveliness or lucidity. Perhaps the truer distinction is between the delight of the earlier ones and the comparative "dryness" of the later ones. But the steady reader of Plato, like the steady drinker of champagne, will come in time to like his Plato dry.

The order of composition as given by Professor A. E. Taylor (*Plato : The Man and his Work*. Methuen, 1926) is as follows: Earlier Period : *Hippias Major*, *Hippias Minor*, *Ion*, *Menexenus*, *Charmides*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Cratylus*, *Euthydemus*, *Gorgias*, *Meno*, *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Phædo*, *Symposium*, *Protagoras*, *Republic*. Intermediate : *Phædrus*. Later Period : *Theætetus*, *Parmenides*, *Sophistes*, *Statesman*, *Philebus*, *Timæus*, *Critias*, *Laws*, *Epinomis*.

Nobody would press for this precise order as settled beyond dispute, but it may be taken as correct in outline. No radical alteration would, as things now stand, find any wide acceptance or, in fact, any acceptance at all. The list down to the *Republic* shows a steadily increasing power and ends with what must be four of the most stately works that ever were written by one author at one time. A gap of some twenty years separates the *Republic* from the later group, and the *Phædrus* seems to have been written sometime in this otherwise barren interval. Plato was just about forty years of age when he wrote the *Republic* and sixty when he wrote the *Theætetus*. The later works are an extraordinary achievement for a man in the sixties. When he began the *Laws* he may have been as much as 72 years old.

We shall be concerned with these 28 Dialogues and no others (see Appendix III at the end of the book for some details).

The Dialogues can also be classified on quite other lines, that is by reference to their form. If so, they are of two kinds, those which are dramatic in form, giving the names of the speakers as in a play, and those which are in narrative form and represent somebody recounting a dialogue supposed to have occurred previously, it may be a day or two before, it may be long, long ago. Thus the *Parmenides* purports to be narrated by one Cephalus, and he had it at Athens from Antiphon, who had often heard it when he was younger from Pythodorus who had entertained the great philosophers Parmenides and Zeno when they visited Athens about 450 B.C.

This would be fifty years before Cephalus retold it, and that would be some forty years before Plato wrote it down. Of course all this account of its origin is a fiction. Plato composed it out of his head. The way he throws it back into the past is a device, and certainly you might think it rather a clumsy device. But in fact the narrative form is a good deal easier to handle than the dramatic form.

It makes it easier to put in historical and contemporary touches, and Plato was particularly careful about these and took trouble to get them right. He thought, justly enough, that they add to the illusion of reality in this sort of writing. The narrative form also enables you to put in any necessary stage directions and describe the reactions of the speakers to one another apart from what they said. Thus we learn that the blustering Thrasymachus in the *Republic* perspired profusely and actually blushed when he had to make some reluctant admissions in argument (II 350D).

Narration also makes dialogue easier to read out aloud, which is what Plato's Dialogues were mainly meant for. And apart from that it is actually more stirring than the Dramatic form, because most people's imagination, if it can be stimulated, is more powerful than sight, though this is not always recognised. The climax of a Greek tragedy was very often not displayed on the stage, but described by a Messenger, and this is almost invariably the most exciting part of the play. And the same thing is equally true to-day. The scene in Thomas Hardy's *Dynasts* (Pt. III. Act vi. Sc. 4) where the ladies look out of the window and comment on the different regiments marching to the Battle of Waterloo is much more lively than the sight of the soldiers would be, at any rate on the stage. And likewise the narration of what people said, if it is adequate, sustains the interest more easily than the actual conversation. Plato sometimes used the narrative form throughout, particularly in the *Republic*, but usually there is a short prologue, in which someone is requested to report a conversation, as in the *Phædo*, *Protagoras*, *Sympos-*

ium, and *Parmenides*, all four amongst the most admired of the Dialogues. The other earlier Dialogues are mostly in rather lively dramatic form. The later works also, but in them one speaker is apt to predominate so much that the work becomes a kind of address with interjections of the sort which Coleridge is supposed to have given at his Table Talks. Such a procedure may be inspiring or it may be dull. It is dialogue in form but not in spirit. Narration no doubt requires managing but well managed, as it is by Plato, it can have a peculiar charm. But neither is charm wanting from the dramatic Dialogues either. How does Plato achieve it?

In trying to discover how, it is necessary in the first place to realise that it is not by imitation. These conversations are not like even the best conversations in real life, they are much better. They imitate actual conversation only in so far as they deal with questions which thoughtful men of real ability do raise from time to time. But they treat them much more successfully. Conversation, as it actually occurs, is full of misunderstandings, digressions that get nowhere, irrelevancies, awkwardness of expression, afterthoughts, unfinished sentences, corrections, ignorances, mistakes of fact, and errors of statement which have all to be remedied. But in a dialogue properly composed these features, though not entirely excluded, are carefully controlled and used only to increase the entertainment value of the discourse where it is difficult or dull. Only in the *Laws*, which was published posthumously and without Plato's final revisions, do we find the faults of real conversations sometimes faultily retained. In it there are unfinished sentences and some disorder in the arrangement.

But in the finished Dialogues this is not so. Plato everywhere illustrates the truth that art begins where nature leaves off, and it is his particular art to get the reader interested in whatever he pleases. The life-like touches in imitation of the way people really go about an impromptu discussion contribute to this. But the Dialogues, of course, are far

from being impromptu. The order in which the different points are established is carefully contrived towards the main object, whatever that may be, and the side-issues suppressed or perhaps more often postponed. The results arrived at are summarised at convenient intervals, and the audience, that is to say, the reader, is reminded of conclusions already reached when it is necessary that they should be accurately remembered. There is, in fact, much more control than in actual conversation.

The illustrations by which Socrates, or whoever the speaker may be, conveys what sort of things he has in mind are carefully chosen, to explain, but not to mislead, which is what most illustrations chosen at random have a way of doing. They are generally from very familiar objects and persons—the shoe-maker, the cook, the shepherd, the horse, the dog, the oyster, the table, the weaver, the harness-maker, the spindle, and fifty more. On the other hand, as a set-off to this plainness, there are beautiful stories commonly called myths, told like all good stories for the sake of the telling, but also conveying some aspect of life or human nature in the large. There are plenty of poetical images and turns; take just one by way of example, the passage in the *Laws* where Plato says that Man must be God's Toy (II 803c), a thought which also occurred in a grimmer shape to Shakspeare :

As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods,—

They kill us for their sport. (King Lear, IV, i. 38.)

There is also a great deal of humour in the Dialogues, most of it with an ironical twist where the speaker who is having the best of the argument pretends to regret his own ignorance or ineptitude. This irony is based on a real characteristic of Socrates.

All this need demand no more than a great natural talent for writing, and as Plato's writings consist almost entirely of dialogues it is to be supposed that this was the kind of writing that was natural to him and that he would come to do it well. But it might still have been trivial and very little

above the level of mere fiction, if he had been content to keep it so. The greatness of it is in the unfailing achievement of literary elegance with the unfailing presentation of real thinking. The group or pair of talkers are arguing out real knotty problems, and they are being fair about it. They assent to propositions which seem obviously true, and if they are refuted they acknowledge or withdraw; that is to say, they are withdrawn by Plato; in real life they would probably only begin all over again pretty well where they started from; but Plato only allows that when the argument gets in a mess. It is not often that the reader feels that the argument could have gone any other way than Plato makes it go. He has in fact forged an instrument or method of thought which produces logical results much like those of geometry, only it can be applied to other branches of speculation which are much less exact. Its business is to change Opinion into Truth. It is called Dialectic. Its nature will be discussed in a later chapter.

The presence of Dialectic in Plato's writings gives them two literary qualities which may here be noted. The first is a great leisureliness. If the Dialogues are to be real thinking they must not only be concerned with genuine enquiry, they must also avoid taking short cuts and being in a hurry. Irrelevance and digression may be rigorously reduced, but on the other hand "we must go where the argument leads," and not jump at conclusions or take anything for granted. If conversation is to be a means of getting at the truth it must take its time. The speakers must refrain from butting-in. But not to but-in is of course to deliver oneself often enough into the power of a bore or to listen patiently to what one foresees will be futile. Plato faced this difficulty, and perhaps only partially surmounted it. Certainly his attitude towards a supposed truth or any kind of statement is very circumspect. He looks at it from every side, and when he seems to be on the point of coming to some conclusion he often sheers off again and is very ready to introduce some new

objection which rules out what has gone before or to take up some point which was previously passed over without question or to say that something has been taken for granted which in fact needs examination. This sounds tedious and it would be if it were not for Plato's strong dramatic sense. He is just as keenly on the scent of Untruth as of Truth, or even more keenly. And again, when a new objection or a further point is to be introduced, the speakers are made to be so surprised or so concerned that the reader too can't help feeling how novel and important it all is. But the process is certainly at times rather lengthy.

Another characteristic of Plato's conduct of discussion, which has to be at once admired and borne with, is its inconclusiveness. Many of the shorter Dialogues are mere explorations, or less than that, mere reconnaissances. The *Greater Hippias* describes very amusingly a famous teacher failing to say what the Beautiful is, much to his own surprise, but the piece concludes without anyone saying what it is. The *Ion* asks whether a professional reciter of Homer called Ion knows such a lot about Homer that he could give a good lecture on it. He thinks he could himself, and is soon shown that he could not, but we do not learn who could. The First Book of the *Republic* is of the same kind. It shows that Thrasymachus does not know what Justice is, although he is ready with several definitions of it. The other cardinal virtues, Piety, Courage, and Temperance are dealt with on similar lines and at much the same length in the *Euthyphro*, *Laches* and *Charmides*. And there they stop, while the *Republic* goes on with the quest of Justice through another nine Books to such effect that it is almost universally regarded as Plato's greatest work. It seems as though he was able to discuss Justice so much more completely because the bright idea occurred to him that the State or Community is the individual writ large, and therefore, if he could find the place in the State which was occupied by Justice, its king virtue, it would be like putting the individual soul under the microscope and

seeing Justice in it plain. So he proceeded to construct the ideal state. If he had had bright ideas for handling Piety, Courage and Temperance too he might have spent his energies on a positive treatment of each of them in a full-length dialogue. He may have felt that when Justice was put into its place, the other virtues fell naturally into theirs. At any rate he was either compelled to be or chose to be inconclusive about them. Or it may be that the negative treatment of them revealed the starting points of more profitable investigation along other lines. Speaking generally, Plato is often inconclusive, and what is more, when he does come to a conclusion it is sometimes rather an astonishing one, sometimes wrong, sometimes wildly wrong, or so it seems.

The characteristics we have been considering are in varying degrees common to all the Dialogues, namely, the striking representation of men talking, when they are also thinking, unhastily and most often inconclusively. But alongside the similarities we must not forget the differences in Plato's works. Although they consist almost entirely of dialogues designed to establish Truth or more often to overthrow Untruth, they are quite extraordinarily varied in treatment and materials. The *Euthydemus*, for example, is mostly nonsense, and rather irritating nonsense at that. The *Laches* is amusing and quite inconclusive. The *Phædo*, besides containing a beautifully tranquil death-bed scene and an account of Socrates' mental progress from natural science to metaphysics (I 96-100) is all through wonderfully lively and elevated at the same time. The *Symposium* gives the brilliant talk of a brilliant circle with Socrates as its centre. The *Philebus*, though it is about Pleasure, is rather dry. The *Statesman* (i.e., *Politicus*) is rather closely argued and not very richly rewarding until the end, when it expounds the first stages of a positive theory of government based on a close analysis of the virtues of a king. The *Timæus* begins with the famous and stimulating myth of Atlantis or the Western World, which is a very good substitute for what we now call pre-history, but it ends with

an account of the anatomy and function of the human body which is so fantastic that it must seem to us as though it could only be intended to show "the bankruptcy of natural science," and it may be that this was Plato's intention, at least in part. The *Protagoras* is a miscellany. More than most of the Dialogues, it goes wherever the argument leads. It contains incidentally an Introductory Sketch, a Myth, an Essay on Education, a literary discussion of a poet, and a good example of the Socratic method of question and answer pressed home. It ends with Socrates and Protagoras having each persuaded the other to change his mind. Socrates, who had said that Virtue was not teachable, is now inclined to think it is, and Protagoras, who said it was teachable, now thinks it is not.

No attempt to describe the Dialogues would be complete without some notions of the language they are written in. The Greek which Plato used is substantially the same language as Homer wrote in some hundreds of years before, but most of the words have somewhat altered in form. It is the same kind of difference as there is between the English of Chaucer about 1380 and the English of Dryden about 1680. But prose writing in Greece had had a much shorter history. It had only come from the West Coast of Asia Minor about fifty years before Plato was born. You can find it as it then was in Herodotus. By the time Plato was writing it had altered a good deal, largely through the influence of the orators, and not long after he died it ceased to develop any more and has really not altered much down to the present day.

It is a language which easily forms words and therefore has a large vocabulary, such a store of words in fact that nowadays when we want a new one we go to Greek for it, and our talk is becoming full of Greek words or words made up from Greek. Mythology, for example, is a Greek word, philatelist is a word made up from Greek. It is a language which can express many shades of meaning and has a great many small words and particles to do it with. It is not a very

simple language, though it is a logical one and in certain ways a simple-minded one. It likes to keep in contact with the concrete object rather than with some abstract idea. It avoids technical language or had not yet invented it. Thus there is a short passage of ten words in the *Statesman* (II 269D) which in the Loeb series of Greek and Latin authors is translated "absolute and perpetual immutability." This is a perfectly adequate representation of the meaning, but what the Greek says literally is "the being situated in relation to the same things and thuswise always, and being the same thing." Plato habitually expresses many of our abstract ideas by a twirl of pronouns and prepositions, as in the instance just quoted. Or looking at it the other way round one might ask how one would express in Greek the now frequent expression in philosophy "Subject-Object Relation." One would probably simply say something like "the thing according to the this in that."

Plato is apt to describe what he means at length, where we should use a single word for it. This is usually when he is dealing with some science such as philology or economics or algebra, which we have deeply probed into while he was only on the fringe of it. Where we should say "it follows that there will be specialisation" he says (II 370c): "it follows that everything will be produced in better quality and quantity and more easily when each man does only one thing according to his natural gift and works at it at the right time and sticks to his own job." Plato is quite ready to manufacture a noun or adjective to suit his purpose, but he will only do so in order to apply it to something he has just defined. Such words are usually almost impossible to translate into English, which has not the same facility in coining new words.

Greek has one special advantage over English in keeping up the interest of a dialogue. It consists in the fact that Greek has no proper words for Yes and No. It might be thought that this would be rather a hindrance to conversation,

but in practice it is not. To say Yes in Greek you must repeat one of the words from the question you are answering. "Has the King arrived from Windsor?" "He has arrived" you must answer if you mean Yes, or you might possibly say "From Windsor." If you mean No you must say "He has not arrived" unless the question has a negative in it, in which case you can just repeat the negative. "Hasn't he come yet?" "Not yet." These particular turns of speech knit the dialogue together and make for closer contact between the speakers.

Such descriptions of language as the foregoing are apt to become tedious, but at least they go some way towards accounting for the fact that Plato never has been successfully translated into English, and probably never will be. The writing is in many places too intricate or one might perhaps simply say too tricky. Our language just has not got the resources with which to retain the combination of natural liveliness and exact statement which Plato secured. It is possible that these qualities, which mean so much in the original, might be conveyed by someone who was equally familiar with Plato's Greek and with English as it is spoken by lively Irish tongues. In the dialogue in J. M. Synge's plays there is sometimes the fullness of phrase and the delicate shades of apprehension which English authors ordinarily do not attain to and perhaps avoid on purpose. Synge's English has a certain handiness too, which it shares with the Greek, and in it the Greek way of saying Yes is normal. "Is it himself would be in the house? He would" is very Greekish. But all this is only by way of a suggestion.

Translations we must have anyway, even if they are not satisfactory. Most people cannot read a word of Greek, and as a matter of fact a good deal of Greek is needed to tackle the Dialogues with enough ease to get any of the real effect. Now a translation can usually be had in one of two different forms, simply as an English book, or with the original on the

opposite page. The second kind, the Greek and the English on opposite pages, is most easily accessible to us in the Loeb series, where it runs to some twelve volumes. And here let it be noted that even for the reader who has no opportunity of learning Greek properly, the Greek is worth having. There is a lot to be said for just learning the Greek alphabet (only 24 letters) and occasionally spelling out some peculiar or special word in the original. It is some satisfaction, for example, to find at the very end of the *Sophist* that the word which Professor Fowler in the Loeb has translated "fantastic" (I 268c) is in fact *phantastikon*, that the word for "imitative" is *mimetikon*, and that the word for "dissembling" is *eironikon* (ironic), all these in less than two lines. But the translator who knows that the original is going to face his translation is apt perhaps to keep too close to the Greek. And Jowett in his translation without the Greek (at first in four and later in five volumes) is on the whole freer and more natural and readable. Perhaps the best translation would be freer still. But the man who is qualified by his learning to translate Plato well is often too scholarly and feels too tenderly for the authentic word of the master to sacrifice the exact meaning in order to bring the thing alive. The genius who is to translate Plato into an English classic has not yet appeared.

III

THE LIFE OF PLATO: (i) INFLUENCES

THESE Dialogues of Plato have not been surpassed, on the one hand, for their power as imaginative fiction, and on the other hand for the way in which they convey new and striking thoughts on almost everything that matters seriously. This art and these thoughts are based on observation and reasoning and poetic apprehension of the highest order. They are the product of a single mind and it must have been an extraordinary one. And what sort of person was it that harboured this great mind?

His name was Aristocles, but he came to be called Plato (in Greek Platon), and he has been known by that name ever since. It is a sort of nickname with something of the same significance as "Tubby." But "Tubby" is perhaps too undignified for Plato, whom we might think of rather as "Broad-sides," a man at any rate of broad shoulders and no great stature, or one who had been so as a boy. His family was an aristocratic one. He was said to be descended on his father's side from the old kings of Athens, Thesus and the rest. On his mother's side his great-grandfather's great-grandfather had been a friend of the famous lawgiver Solon. And when Plato was born the family was still distinguished. He gives some account of his relations himself in the *Charmides* and *Timæus*. He was born probably in 429 or 428 B.C., just about the time when the great Pericles died. He lived to be eighty. His outlook in his youth would tend to be that of a well-born English boy who had grown up in the early years of this century, supporting the democracy but apt to under-rate it, and taking the Empire more or less for granted. Like

this English youth he was destined to see his country pass through unexpected trials. And Athens was not to emerge from her trials successfully.

We know fairly well what kind of an education he would have. It would be less bookish than our secondary education is, but he would have learnt a good deal of Homer in much the same fashion as people used to learn the Bible, that is to say by getting it by heart from a written copy, by hearing it read and quoted, and not least from being expected to know it. Besides reading, writing and arithmetic, he would have done some geometry and was probably rather good at it. He would have learnt the elements of music, and to sing and to play a five-stringed lyre. He would have sung dramatic odes and recited poetry with a great deal of action. Besides that he would have been trained in gymnastic, which comprised drill and running, and some dancing rather of the nature of ballet but more formal. He would have practised these activities stark naked and would have thought a lot about keeping fit. If he acquired grace and skill in these bodily exercises he would secure prestige like a boy who is "good at games." In Greek society it was also thought creditable for a boy to be nice looking and wear his clothes properly, and deportment was carefully studied and observed. A modest bearing was considered becoming to youth, but the ordinary Greek word for "youthful" (*neanikos*) did in fact grow to mean "offensive."

From our point of view there was one great gap in Greek education. The Greeks never learnt any foreign language. They regarded themselves as infinitely superior to the non-Greek-speaking world. Their own language was, in their view, the best for saying everything you wanted to say, and they were about right. Still, the fact remains that whatever mental training or insight the knowledge of a second language gives was denied to Greek authors, and Plato among them. His education was distinctly not what we mean by a literary education. In his school, and indeed in his age, there was as

yet no genuine philology or literary criticism. There were great books of comparatively recent date to read, and no doubt Plato read them. But his natural taste when he was young must have been for science and mathematics, and of these there was much more to be had in his time than we are apt to reckon. His training was all on that side except in so far as he was diverted to other interests by Socrates. And it was almost certainly not at school that he learnt to write the superb prose of which he is the acknowledged master.

Another important gap in his education, from our point of view at least, is that he never would have been allowed and he never would have wished to dance with girls. He might have seen them dancing together in bebies; if he had been a Spartan he certainly would have done so. He might have led a chorus of boys in a dance himself, as the dramatist Sophocles was remembered to have done so beautifully many years ago to celebrate the victory of Salamis. But the sexes were strictly segregated, and the girls did not normally receive enough education to make them satisfactory companions for the men. Plato in his writings wished to have this remedied most thoroughly.

On all grounds Plato's education must be reckoned a success. As a young man he seems to have been a poet, which all young men of good education should be and generally are. He qualified for a political career but never entered upon it, like young men who are called to the Bar and never practice. The last half of his life, from about 387 B.C. onwards, he devoted himself to teaching and writing, which suggests sound health, though he suffered from headache; and the Dialogues, whatever else they may be, are a supreme exhibition of a powerful and cultivated mind, well-stocked with information and capable of the most sustained argument with other minds or with itself. On the three sides of Grammar, Gymnastic and the Arts (which the Greeks called "Music"), Plato was a great product of Education.

Two or three things about his early days besides his education need to be taken into account. He must have had impressed upon him often how great the days of Pericles had been. Those days were over and the Peloponnesian War well advanced when Plato first became aware of anything about public life. But Athens was still holding her head high in his boyhood. The tremendous works of art and architecture which adorned the city were still new. The numerous dependent states of the Delian Confederacy still looked to Athens, and for a long time she still expected to win the War. The friends and relations who visited Plato's home would include all the leaders of the Democratic party, personalities by no means identified with Labour, but more like the Whig families in England at the time of the Reform Bill. They were *swells*. And as all this declined and broke up, and politics grew sordid, Plato resigned all thoughts of a political career and turned more and more to philosophy and away from public life. But he still understood its bearings, as a young Churchill or Cecil would be more or less bound to do now, whatever career he selected. It was perhaps because he understood the age so well that he throws many of his great Dialogues back to the better times, and does it so vividly.

Another of the factors to be taken into account is the extensive use of slaves in ancient Greece. It is very uncertain what the whole population of Athens amounted to. It is fairly certain that less than half of them were free. But the distinction was one of status, not of occupation. Slaves might be doing jobs of some importance, and free citizens and their families might be doing almost menial work which one would expect to be confined to slaves. But the political distinction was absolute. Thus the privileged Athenian child such as Plato was would soon realise that there were two kinds of authority to be exercised, the first over the slaves as personal property, the second over the free citizens as a part of the community which had to be lead or coerced by an ascendancy of prestige

or intellect or by some demagogic power wherewith to persuade and bend them. This might account for the combination of tyranny and fear which seems to infect Plato's political views. Of course the slave in domestic service was often something of a family friend. The slave who took Plato to school, his Pædagogus, may have inspired all the sentiment that the old family nurse does with us. But the absence of any notion of the rights of man had a depressing effect on politics, as it always will. Boss rule was never far away. The Greeks called it despotism or tyranny. Plato believed that tyranny invariably supervened upon democracy in course of time.

But if Plato was by birth and fortune somewhat superior and aristocratic we are not to suppose for that reason that he was brought up luxuriously or softly. Attica is not rich in soil or in timber. Some luxuries came from the Levant and from Sicily. Wine was both made and imported. But the Athenian standard of living was far from high, the food not great in quantity and mostly very simple, oil instead of butter, and very little meat, though a fair supply of fish, and after the food, not with it, some wine diluted with water. As in all countries where wine is produced there was very little heavy drinking, though people in high places like Alcibiades sometimes chose to unseat Reason from her throne for fun.

The houses could scarcely be called comfortable. There was very little chance of looking out of windows except into the courtyard round which the house was built. Men, as opposed to women, had not much time for home except to sleep and eat in. A rich man would have a large house, as we can see from the description of Protagoras walking in the courtyard of the wealthy Callias's house (I 314E), but the furniture would be scanty and *hard*, so hard that some people carried their cushions about with them. Still in such matters we are universally content with what we are used to, and the general design of domestic furniture in the ancient

world (as you see it on their vases) remained unchanged for centuries. Plato was not aware that he was uncomfortable or sparsely fed, and he was much shocked by the domestic luxury in Sicily when he first went there.

There was also a considerable cult of hardness in regard to the body—rather scanty clothing, though sensible for the normal climate, cold baths, bare feet if you liked, plenty of hard exercise. And this had an important influence on Plato. In his mind pure thought went with a body purified by a certain amount of strenuous discipline. It was a lesson he had learnt partly from his education and partly from the Pythagoreans, who insisted upon some degree of asceticism, both physical and mental. It was they who brought from the East and introduced to Europe the practice of abstinence and in particular vegetarianism. They also practised that mental discipline which thanks to them we still call “pure” mathematics.

The simplicity and severity of the Athenian mode of life was due to limited resources, and this prevented the economic system from being overdeveloped. A few industries such as mining and shipping were capitalised, but the ordinary crafts and trades were still practised at home and not in factories. This has its effect on a great deal of Plato's writing. Everywhere he draws his illustrations not from nature nor the fine arts, but from what he had seen in shops and workrooms. He must have watched the loom and the skills allied to it with youthful curiosity. He must have been with the captains of the ships he sailed in, observing and questioning. He had noted carefully the work that goes on in the tannery, the kitchen, the dispensary, and at the dyer's. And it must have set him thinking. He has in consequence an inexhaustible store of illustrations with which to expound the art of the teacher, the ruler, the poet, the orator, and the philosopher, and his pages are filled with the varied application of these illustrations and analogies.

When we pass on from considering the influence of Plato's education and environment to particular circumstances that had a determining effect upon his life, one experience on the threshold of his mature life stands out boldly. It is the condemnation and death of Socrates in 399 B.C. Some of the greatest men in the world are "twice-born"—they come to greatness, or perhaps it is that their greatness comes to the surface, when they are converted. And Plato was converted when Socrates died by drinking the hemlock. He was converted from what rank and talents can give to what can only be won by very high and hard thinking. Yet conversion is never a total change. In Plato's case a youthful poet became a writer of imaginative prose, and an intended politician, already disillusioned about politics before Socrates died, became a political philosopher and moralist. To understand how the change came about it is necessary to know something about Socrates.

Socrates was a great unconventional teacher. He did not take up teaching as a profession, he could not help doing it. He took no money for it, and in the formal sense he had no pupils. But he neglected everything, including his family, his clothes, and his occupation, which was that of a sculptor, in order to go up and enter into conversation with anyone who seemed promising, especially the young. He tried to get them to say what they thought about some question of morals or conduct, then he would question them as to what they meant and almost invariably show them that that would not do. You might think that people would not care for this much, but some people were delighted with it. Socrates had a circle of adherents and Plato was amongst them. Many of them were enormously influenced by him, and this influence would be partly by reason of a charm of manner that there was in him amounting almost to fascination, and even more to his amazing zest for this peculiar kind of conversation which acted as a solvent of every view of things that was commonly held.

In several of the Dialogues, Plato has presented Socrates's way with young people, and has exhibited his irony, his patience, his affectionate regard for them, his skill in persuading them to continue to express their opinions until he has turned them inside out. They liked it, but it is easy to imagine that by older people it was not so well received. The older people did not like surrendering their opinions or being discovered not to know what they were talking about or what they meant. They also thought that Socrates was getting at a great many young men who promised to be of some importance and undermining the well-established beliefs on which Athenian society rested. He was always knocking about in the Market Place, he was always in evidence, he was always asking questions. In fact, he was a nuisance and something worse. The Athenians bore with him for a long time. It was not until he was seventy that they had him up. And they had gone through a lot in the meantime, and were looking for a scapegoat for their want of success in war and peace. Amongst those who had let them down most were Alcibiades and Critias, both followers of Socrates. So he was tried on a capital charge for neglecting the gods of the state and for corrupting the young. The exact accusations were not important. It was his influence which was aimed at as bad, and influence is difficult to convert into an indictment. It is not something you can touch or see or assess. But in any case Socrates scorned to answer the charges directly or show how absurd they were, and he made it as difficult as possible to let him off. Even after he was convicted he had a chance of escaping into exile, and many would have been glad for him to take it. But he argued with his friends that this would be inconsistent with his whole position. He seized the opportunity to reinforce his teaching and give a final and striking testimony to his view of life by a martyrdom. It was a part of his pre-eminent wisdom to have perceived that this was the best way to do it.

Socrates was certainly a character. Otherwise the Athenians would not have been much amused by Aristophanes's comedy, *The Clouds*, which is largely devoted to taking him off. He was a man with a very hardy physique. His face was striking because it was so very far from the conventional idea of beauty among the Greeks as we see it in their statues of the gods. He had fought with creditable stubbornness and even with distinction in three of his country's battles. On the one occasion when he presided over a political body he had struck a notable blow for justice. He sometimes stood absolutely still for several hours together rapt in thought. He asserted that a supernatural something sometimes forbade him to act in the way in which he had a mind to act, but that this was only in connection with practical affairs. In the sphere of conduct he was convinced of two things especially, first, that all sin is due to ignorance, because nobody would ever do the worse rather than the better except in ignorance. But there was some irony in this and he knew it. Secondly, he believed that it was better to be wronged than to do wrong, and upon this principle he acted.

It is not altogether easy however to say how far we can get a really historical view of him. We should know a good deal about him if Plato's Dialogues were history, which they certainly are not. The impression they give of him may be very much heightened. Xenophon, a good general and an intelligent country gentleman, has left another account which is much more work-a-day and pedestrian. But Xenophon was rarely capable of rising to any great heights about anything, and he wrote his Memoir of Socrates, commonly called the *Memorabilia*, in order to defend Socrates among matter-of-fact people. Plato is the better authority simply because he understood so much more and was so much nearer the mind of his master. But Plato is careful to throw the Dialogues in which Socrates appears as far back as possible in time as if to say that they are not first-hand reports of what happened. Those that concern the last days and death of Socrates (the

Apology, *Crito*, and *Phædo*) cannot, of course, be thrown back like this, and in the end of the *Phædo* where the death scene is described Plato, contrary to his strict custom, actually introduces his own name in order to say that he was not present.

On the whole it is not easy to resist the impression that in the Dialogues where Socrates is prominent the main trend of the teaching is what he taught, though in many places it may be developed beyond the point to which he brought it, while the manner is likely to be a very lifelike representation. In that case we may safely think of Socrates as a real lover of truth, but with a great liking for paradox, quite independent in his views and in his manner of life, tireless and at times tedious in argument, well trained in the learning of his own age and in revolt against it for being what we should call too materialist, endued with a natural interest in the psychological side of things, and therefore directed with all his powers towards the care and cure of the soul, ultimately and fundamentally a moralist. No doubt if we could hear him engaged in discussion we should say he had a tremendous way with him. We might complain, as some people no doubt did, that he didn't get anywhere.

Plato was about forty years younger than Socrates, and from his youth he must have known him by sight and latterly must have been often in his company. But it was when Socrates was executed that Plato, now twenty-eight years of age, entered into a spiritual discipleship of this great man and friend now parted from him. He developed his lines of thought, and since he had a mind, not more powerful, but more widely cultivated and informed, he presented his problems in a more scientific form and gradually applied a more strictly logical method to them. In the end he went much further. But this progress was made over a period of fifty years. And the stages of it are marked by certain events in Plato's life which throw a good deal of light on his mental history and the course his speculations took. To these events we now turn our attention.

IV

THE LIFE OF PLATO: (ii) EVENTS

IN trying to sketch the events of Plato's life a difficulty confronts us at once. Are we to proceed on the assumption that the *Letters* are genuine or not, since criticism has thrown doubts upon them without coming to a fixed conclusion? But the historian must decide about them. Greek literary criticism can pass on to a new matter; Greek history is at a standstill until this question is settled.

It is to be observed then that the objection to the letters was never really due to the language they are written in or to supposed errors of fact or to want of evidence as to their authorship. The evidence was by no means decisive, but neither was it notably defective, in fact it was as much as might reasonably be expected. The argument that must always weigh most towards rejecting them is that they are so disappointing. Their tone is far from elevated and in fact insistentlly querulous. They present the picture of a man very much mixed up in politics who is neither very wise nor very generous, and in any case quite unsuccessful. They are not written in a striking style for the most part, and they read in many places like special pleading from the pen of a person as ill at ease with himself as with his correspondents. The philosophical element in them contains a philosophy which is hardly that of the Dialogues and certainly lacks their charm.

But, after all, a man often writes his letters and his literary works in a very different frame of mind. Letters, in fact, are not literature unless the writers consciously make them so.

And although the long Seventh and Eighth Letters are intended for more than private reading, Plato was no doubt careful to avoid suggesting a comparison with his imaginative writings. He was writing letters, and it seems that he was not a good letter-writer. The same sort of thing may be seen in Sir Joshua Reynolds. His *Discourses* at the Royal Academy are very elegant writing, while his letters are most uninteresting. They are dull and artless. The difference between Plato and Sir Joshua is one of degree. The *Dialogues* are much finer than the *Discourses*: and Plato's letters are not nearly so dull as Sir Joshua's. But there is the same contrast in each of them between literary pieces and letters. Plato's letters are just uninspired, which makes it rather more probable that they are genuine. A forger who could do so much would have done more. We shall take them to be Plato's except the First, which may be a genuine item but cannot pretend to be his. They have the interest of showing us a Plato who is subject to human weaknesses, a useful corrective when we are reading some of his more rapt and transcendental passages. Plato the artist confronts us in the *Dialogues*, but in the *Letters* we find the figure of the historical Plato, and something of his history.

Supplemented by indications gathered from this source and that, the *Letters* give a fairly detailed account of Plato's visits to Sicily. Of the rest of his life much less is known, but the outline of events from the death of Socrates is something after the following fashion: He travelled and he wrote from 399 to 388 B.C. For the next twenty years he was engaged in founding and establishing the Academy, a kind of school for what we should call University studies. Round about 368 B.C. he took to writing again and continued to write till his death in 348 B.C. at the age of 80. In 367 B.C. he interrupted his life at Athens to visit Syracuse in Sicily, where he had been once before, and he went a third time in 360 B.C.

Although Plato lived and wrote and worked at Athens almost all his time, we do not know much of him there. We

do not even know when he established the Academy. We know a great deal more of his visits to Sicily, simply because our information is derived from the *Letters*, and there was small need in Athens for one Athenian to write a letter to another, at any rate a letter that would be kept. So the letters we have are naturally to friends abroad, and Plato's foreign friends were mainly in Sicily. It will be convenient therefore to give some account of the story they tell, and then return to Athens later.

The death of Socrates not only converted Plato, it also unsettled him, as so often happens in a case of this kind. He found his first outlet in writing the earlier Dialogues, and this put it into his mind to start a school of philosophy. Before doing this he thought it desirable to get into touch with learned men in various parts of the world. Tradition says that he visited Italy, North Africa and Egypt, and some passages in the Dialogues are supposed to show a first-hand knowledge of Egypt (e.g., III 274). It is certain, at any rate, that he visited South Italy and then Sicily when he was about forty, say in 388 B.C., and there began a close friendship with Dion, brother-in-law of the tyrant ruler of Syracuse, Dionysius I. Dion was at this time only twenty years old and made himself Plato's enthusiastic disciple. The effect upon him was strong and permanent. He imbibed Plato's notions with avidity and became a strict moralist and a liberal in politics for the rest of his life. Plato, on his side, regarded Dion as well qualified to take a leading and enlightened part in the government of Dionysius's domains, which extended over almost all Sicily and all the toe and heel of Italy and up the Adriatic along the West Coast of Greece for about 100 miles.

Plato's visit to Sicily was not made, however, with any political purpose in view. The object of his journey, it is thought, was in order to consult leading Pythagoreans in South Italy, since they would be able to tell him about mathematical education and its more recent developments. The voyage would be something of an adventure, and a famous description of

what was meant to be very much the same trip is given in the 27th chapter of Acts when St. Paul was being conveyed from Asia Minor to Italy in a ship which called at several places in Crete and was eventually wrecked on the coast of Malta. This ship had come from Alexandria and carried passengers and crew to the number of 276. As it was probably not more than a 200-tonner the conditions cannot have been very comfortable. Plato, more fortunate than Paul, made the voyage to Syracuse and back three times without mishap. But Paul's ship had taken the double risk of sailing out of season and deserting the coast, which sailors in the ancient world never liked to have long out of sight.

Apart from the pleasure of meeting Dion, Plato cannot be said to have enjoyed himself on his first visit (III 326). He was very much shocked by the heavy eating, drinking and self-indulgence of the Syracusans. He felt that their manner of life was incompatible with any political stability. But he felt also that he had instilled sound notions into the mind of Dion. Reflecting on the matter long after, he thought that his training of Dion was what eventually made for the overthrow of tyranny in Sicily (III 327AB).

Twenty years later he visited Sicily again, but under rather altered circumstances. He was now celebrated as the creator and head of a famous place of education at Athens. Many of his Dialogues and the most attractive of them had been in circulation for 15 or 20 years. Plato, no doubt, spoke with authority. And now he was invited by Dion's nephew, Dionysius II, who had succeeded his father as tyrant of the Middle West, to visit his court and give him instruction in philosophy. Plato was by this time 61 years old. He hesitated to accede to the request. But eventually he thought that the opportunity which the situation offered for putting his political theories into practice ought not to be missed. He thought also that if he refused such a request, backed up as it was by strong pressure from Dion and supported by his philosopher friends of South Italy, he would be letting

down the cause of philosophy itself. Just what the situation was requires a little description.

The West of Sicily at this time was more or less dependent upon Carthage. The greater part of the island, however, together with all Southern Italy, was a new Hellenic world looking mainly to the great Greek cities, Sparta, Corinth and Athens, as founders. In Sicily the principal Greek city was Syracuse, near the South-East corner of the island. The various towns had each their own government, but they were constantly confederated and as constantly quarrelling. The form of government varied from a turbulent democracy to an absolute tyranny. In Syracuse an upstart called Dionysius had contrived to get complete control. It is not necessary here to give in detail the steps by which he first secured and then extended his empire. They are pleasingly described in Grote's *History of Greece* at chapters 81 to 83, though Grote, being less familiar with tyrants than we are, did not always see the significance of what he recorded. Dionysius I seems to have been a blood-thirsty despot of the type which Europe has always fostered and used not quickly to be rid of. He gained his position by the oratory of a demagogue, by the relentless use of exile or execution in order to liquidate his opponents, by devising a single party government, by secret negotiations with external enemies, by procuring to himself a heavily-defended hide-out, by desperate financial expedients.

The first stages of accession to power were followed by genuine military operations directed with great energy and personal courage, and at first with wisdom, by the accumulation of an immense armament on land and at sea, by open defiance of foes at the right moments, by political marriages (two at a time). We read of many evacuated cities and of others razed to the ground (and sometimes apparently pretty fully inhabited and prosperous a short time after). There are massacres, slaughtering of prisoners, personal resentments repulsively satiated, victorious total war and seemingly total defeat. Of the many qualities which Dionysius I displayed,

resilience was perhaps the most persistent. Plato possibly refers to his courage, speed and strength in a letter to Dion (III 320B). Mingled with the crimes of a tyrant who was both an adventurer and a conqueror, there are also the tricks of a tyrant; unexpected acts of generosity, literary aspirations, symptoms of persecution mania, stagy appearances in public, pretended attempts upon his life. Dionysius established himself in 405 B.C. In the early months of 367 B.C. he heard that he had won the first prize for tragedy at a Festival at Athens. He celebrated this wonderful news with a splendid banquet, from which he never recovered. A fever closed his life shortly after and with a reign of thirty-eight years, full of effort, achievement, and vicissitude.

Dionysius had once met Plato, for Dion took the great philosopher to see the great tyrant in 388 B.C. The meeting was not a success. Dionysius soon found he had no use for Plato, and is actually said to have put him up for sale in the market place, where he was sold into slavery and redeemed by his friends, and with some difficulty conveyed back to Athens. The story sounds fantastic, but Dionysius, like other despots, sometimes delighted to be fanciful. The incident does not seem to have spoiled the good relations that existed between Dionysius and Dion. Although Dion, under the influence of Plato and the Pythagoreans, led a very strict and simple life, which made him unpopular with the courtiers, his ideals made him quite unselfseeking and won him the respect of Dionysius. He acted in important positions as general and ambassador, and was allowed to speak his mind freely to the tyrant, a privilege which no one else had granted to him. And when Dionysius died and was succeeded by his son, Dionysius II, now about 28 years of age, it was natural that Dion should enjoy the confidence of the new tyrant and exercise something of a regency. He saw the chance of moulding the young man's character and turning him into a philosopher-king after the pattern of Plato's *Republic*. For this reason he persuaded Dionysius to invite

Plato to Syracuse, and for this reason Plato came (III. 328).

The young man was good-natured and easily led. As is perhaps apt to happen with the son of a self-made magnate, he was an agreeable but rather weak person, under-educated through idleness, given to somewhat juvenile pursuits such as carpentry, yet undoubtedly possessed of some capacity for higher studies (III 314D, 338D). His temperament suggested thin soil on rocky ground. Whatever seed was planted, a crop sprang up at once, and then withered for want of depth. So it was when Plato came in 367 B.C. and started him off with instruction in geometry. Dionysius II must begin by passing the "Matric," which his father had not done. According to Plutarch's life of Dion (XIII 2), all the palace in Ortygia had the floors sanded and the court all drawing geometrical figures in the sand and endeavouring to follow Plato's instructions. But the rage quite naturally did not last long. The young prince was anxious to get on to something more practical or something more profound, something which seemed to have more relevance to his desire to give the people of Syracuse a constitution and so pass on to them by just government some of the blessings of philosophy. That his intentions were good was not in dispute, but he did not see himself that geometry was taking him far along the road to their fulfilment. Plato, on the other hand, was against any smatterings of knowledge. If none but a geometrician could enter his Academy, certainly none but a geometrician could ascend a throne. He knew what philosophy was, and he was not prepared to make any concessions. Dionysius was not fit to touch philosophy yet.

The truth is that Plato had been head of a famous School for twenty years, and that had had its effect. And so now, instead of making the most of the opportunity to co-operate with Dion in guiding Dionysius along the path of liberalism, he diagnosed the young man's waning interest as a fault in the soul which must be thoroughly taken in hand and eradicated by a course of dialectical ethics before anything practical

could be effected. Dionysius did not take to this. He thought Plato was obstructing rather than promoting his schemes for a more constitutional government (III 315D, 319); and, worse still, he interpreted the whole business as an attempt on the part of Dion to put him in a position of tutelage or even to supersede him. The opponents of Dion and Plato at Syracuse, and they were not a few, encouraged these suspicions, and in a very short time, less than four months after Plato's arrival, Dionysius, by a trick, led Dion on board a ship which immediately conveyed him to Italy. Dion found himself in exile.

Plato was now in an awkward, not to say a perilous, position. His treatment at the hands of the elder Dionysius must have recurred to his mind. He was very far from popular, and at first some violence seems to have been threatened. But in fact the young tyrant, having got rid of Dion, reckoned that he could now afford to make much of Plato and have him all to himself. He took him into the fortress, which served as his palace, and although he refused to probe further into the mysteries of philosophy he did all he could to make a good impression on Plato and to win his esteem. At least that is what Plato says. And we may easily believe that in the fortress of Ortygia, Dionysius knew that Plato was a prisoner and could not therefore be dangerous as a friend. Plato, for his part, felt bound to protest against Dion's exile and to urge his recall. But he made no impression upon Dionysius. At length he obtained his own release because Dionysius became pre-occupied with a war, and he returned to Athens. He was to revisit Syracuse again when favourable conditions once more prevailed, and on the understanding that Dion was to be recalled at the same time (III 317A).

Plato did revisit Syracuse early in 361 B.C. In the five years' interval since he had returned to Athens he seems to have kept up with both Dionysius and Dion. He certainly corresponded with Dionysius if Letter Thirteen is genuine, and it seems so. Dion he is likely to have seen in Athens, because

the exile spent part of his time in Corinth and visited Athens from there. Two motives concurred to persuade the otherwise reluctant Plato to make this third voyage to Sicily, a voyage which was to prove no more satisfactory than the other two. In the first place it was reported by the local philosophers that Dionysius was again interested in philosophy and had made good progress in philosophical studies. This revived in Plato's mind the idea that Dionysius, who was still in his early thirties, might yet prove capable of being trained into a philosopher-king of some sort. Secondly, Dionysius himself urged him to come and settle Dion's affairs in the way most advantageous to Dion, observing that otherwise they would be settled in a way not satisfactory to Dion or to anybody else (III 339c).

On this occasion Plato had the gratification of travelling on a large warship specially sent to fetch him. On board went a group of Sicilian notables, including the philosopher Archedemus (III 339A). But this auspicious beginning was falsified by the event. On arrival Plato got to work at once. He understood that Dionysius had even got so far as to write a treatise of some sort on first principles (III 341B). Plato was quite sure it was all wrong, and proceeded to give Dionysius a great lecture on the scope and difficulty of philosophy and the severity of the studies it entailed, not without a hint at the mystical elements in it. He regarded this as a sure test of monarchs of their serious intention to persevere (III 340B, 341A). Unfortunately, Dionysius responded by professing to understand something about philosophy. This was quite the wrong answer, and he got no more instruction from Plato. He had failed to pass the monarch's test. But in regard to Dion's affairs the prince was more on his own ground than the philosopher. He paid no heed to Plato's frequent representations. Hitherto (III 347B) Dion had been receiving the income from his large property of 1,000 talents (say half a million sterling), but now Dionysius proposed to keep half of it for Dion's son, on the ground that he was

his trustee (III 345c). Next he proposed that Dion's share should be put into the hands of trustees in Greece, of whom Plato was to be one, and that the income should be paid out to Dion at their discretion. The idea was that Dion would then not be able to use his great resources to damage Dionysius in any way. Plato said that they must wait to hear what Dion had to say about that, but before Dion's answer arrived Dionysius sold the whole property without any warning, and after that he and Plato never exchanged a word on the matter any more. Plato was obviously no good at business, at any rate in competition with Dionysius. It was not his stuff. On the other hand, it was these transactions which finally revealed Dionysius to him as being no philosopher.

Before all this was ended, Plato had already seen that the one thing was to leave Syracuse and return to Athens. He had thoughts of this before the end of the summer, but was persuaded by Dionysius to stay until the next sailing season some nine months later. Meanwhile, he lodged in the palace garden and was virtually in confinement (III 347A). But as the prince and he grew less and less cordial, he was transferred to the house of Archedemus the philosopher, which must have been much more congenial. But next Dionysius accused him of consorting with Dion's friends and he was transferred again, apparently to the barracks where Dionysius's personal guards were quartered (III 350A). To them he was an object of dislike and so in some danger of his life. In this miserable plight he sent to Italy to Archytas and other Pythagorean friends, and they managed to despatch a thirty-oared ship to take him to Taranto, where they were. Dionysius did not oppose this and in fact provided Plato's journey-money. We may believe that by this time they were equally glad to be rid of one another. From Taranto Plato continued his journey to the Peloponnese in time for the Olympic Games of August 360 B.C. Dion happened to be attending the Games. Plato reported his ill-success to him and then withdrew altogether from participation in Sicilian affairs. He was heartily

sick of Sicily and of the very name of Dionysius, no doubt.

It scarcely belongs to a chapter on Plato in Sicily to pursue the history of Dion. Yet curiosity perhaps enquires what became of Plato's great friend. He broke at once with Dionysius, and came with an expeditionary force to depose him and seize Syracuse for himself, still intending to grant a constitution to it and the other Greek cities of Sicily. And after extraordinary fluctuations of fortune he established himself in Syracuse, while Dionysius fled into exile at Locri in South Italy. But Dion had to contend with a whole series of adversaries, not only Dionysius, but Nysius a Neapolitan, Heracleides a Syracusan, Gæsyclus a Spartan (who behaved very well), and Kallippus an Athenian. He might have triumphed but he could not be conciliatory. He was certainly not gifted with what we should call a feeling for Parliament and political life. It must be remembered, too, that his notions were derived from Plato, and that Plato, while he hated despotism, also totally distrusted democracy. Plato nevertheless had taken Dion to task for his unbending manner and unwillingness to conciliate (III 321B). Anyway, the impression steadily gained ground in Syracuse that Dion intended no reforms and was just such another despot as the two Dionysii had been. He made some serious mistakes. After freely pardoning Heracleides when he might well have had him executed, he had had him secretly murdered when it was most unwise, and this brought to a head the disappointment which the Syracusans had begun to feel on account of his oppressions. At the last Kallippus, his former friend, got up a conspiracy against him, and he was assassinated in his own house by a band of ruffians from Zante. The year is supposed to have been 354 B.C.

Plato's misadventures in Sicily seem to play a large part in his life, because it is the only part we know in detail. It was by no means the most important part. The most important part of his life and the greater part was spent in writing his Dialogues and teaching in the Academy. Never-

theless, he gained a valuable experience in Sicily. He learnt the difference between determining what is the ideally best thing to do and actually doing the best you can. That those who are destined to rule should be given a thorough and soul-searching training in philosophy would be the ideally best thing to do, but to influence them for good because you were yourself a philosopher must often be all you could actually do. After Sicily the *Republic* must have seemed something of a dream, and Plato spent his last years in trying to sketch out in the *Laws* not what ought to be but what possibly might be under favourable circumstances. In this later work Plato says that the preambles to the different laws, explaining why they matter and what they are aiming at, are the important thing to get right (II 723). And it is noticeable that during his last visit to Dionysius his active contribution to politics, so he tells us (III 316A), was very small. He only interested himself in a quiet way in some lesser questions, but particularly in the preambles to some laws. It may be that Sicily was partly responsible for the writing of the *Laws* and for the promised *Philosopher* (I 254B) remaining unwritten.

But the story of Plato in Sicily also reveals some sides of his character which would otherwise have been hidden. He is seen to be wanting in insight into character or at least into the more sordid sides of human nature, somewhat wanting in bonhomie in which Socrates must have excelled, taking not only an exalted but a somewhat pedantic view of philosophy, and insisting on the real thing, like a real professor, which is of course what in fact he was. He is apt to be querulous, and tries to be just without often blaming himself. He is seen to be not sufficiently anxious to persuade except upon his own terms. He has not the trick of success.

If we look for something to explain all this, we perhaps find it in the fact that he had been very *grand* all his life, and the faults that we have to note in him are perhaps those of grandeur in decline. There is perhaps also a more circumstantial reason for it all. It is curious that after an

interval of so long as 20 years spent teaching in the Academy he took once more to writing Dialogues, less lively perhaps than the old ones, but certainly not demanding less from their author or indicating any serious diminution of power. It is possible, though this is only conjecture, that he was growing deaf, and that the work with his pupils was becoming no longer practicable. If so, that might account for a certain irritability in him and a certain want of touch in dealing with other people. It would also account for the way in which genuine conversation gradually dies out of the dialogues and they become largely monologues. And, speaking generally, the way in which deafness cuts one off from society might account for the large amount of writing which Plato managed to get done in his old age.

But the visits to Sicily also show Plato's invincible enthusiasm for philosophy, the whole of philosophy, and nothing but philosophy. In the *Letters* when he describes his difficulties he is full of grievances, some of which seem petty, but he seizes the opportunity more than once of going off into a digression on his views and teaching, and in these he becomes wholly absorbed and forgetful of his immediate purpose until he recollects himself to say how little he has been understood. He was not good at acting with others or at deciding with others. He was supreme at thinking with others or by himself. But this he proved not in Sicily but at Athens.

V

THE LIFE OF PLATO (iii) THE ACADEMY

OF Plato as a young Athenian of distinction and of his education and environment something has been said already. Of his life's work in Athens not much is known in the way of definite fact. His earlier and more Socratic dialogues would have given him a literary fame of the first order by themselves. Apart from foreign travel they occupied all his time, as far as is known, until he was about forty, and they would have been a sufficient occupation. But either because he had now covered all the ground of what Socrates was wont to discuss, or because he perceived that he had not really been able to convey Socrates's teaching and that written dialogue was powerless to do it, or because he felt that he had reached the stage where he had something to teach himself, he gave up writing dialogues and set about to found the Academy.

This institution, one of the most famous in the world, was not the first attempt to give education beyond the standard of a High School. A number of distinguished men, commonly referred to as the Sophists, had already done that. But it was the first attempt to give such education not with a view to fitting young men for their careers but with a view to making knowledge an end in itself. This in Plato's judgment might or might not fit a man to be successful in after life, but it certainly would open to him the possibility of living "the best life," and nothing else could. Knowledge and virtue had been inextricably mixed in the mind of Socrates, and so they were in the mind of Plato. And Plato believed much more than Socrates in organised knowledge. Wise

men before their time had tried with a certain success to organise the knowledge of the material world. But Plato meant to do more. If there was an art of conduct, as he certainly thought there was, then there was something to be found out and known about it, and about the soul, too, as being the part of us most directly concerned with conduct. This knowledge also could be organised.

Like all pioneers in education Plato, no doubt, made a small beginning and scarcely knew what it was to come to. But what he did settle at the start was the outline of the curriculum. Mathematics, especially Geometry, as the foundation of everything, Astronomy, the elements of Music, Logic, Politics, including something of Law, Morals, and that science of Reality which Aristotle soon taught the world to call Metaphysics. And with the "Classics" as the alternative to Mathematics, this has remained very much the University curriculum down to very recent times. Plato would have rejoiced to add Philology, Economics, Geography, and Geology to his list. He would have been less certain about Medicine and History. He would have rejected the study of Language and Literature as being concerned too much with the written word. For in spite of his own wonderful gifts as a writer he did not believe in writing as a medium of instruction. He said that his own philosophy could never be written down (III 314c). He said that books were like certain public speakers, unable to answer or ask questions (I 329A). He said that writing things down was bad for the memory (III 275A), that writings were apt to fall into the hands of the wrong people (III 275E, 314B), that to use oral discussion was much nobler than to write down one's knowledge of the just and good and beautiful, because the words in writing could not give themselves any assistance in an argument nor adequately teach the truth (III 276CE). The right view, he said, was that what is clear and complete and worthy of being taken seriously is the oral instruction given by the teacher, first the word he has in himself, and then its off-

spring, the v
(III 278A).

suls of others

The Academy must be pictured therefore as a place of constant discussion interspersed with demonstrations and tutorial supervision—what we might call pupil-room. But there were no public lectures as part of the regular course. The tradition is that Plato only gave one public lecture and that when he was an old man. The subject of it was Truth. It was eagerly looked forward to, created great interest, and was taken down by some at least of the hearers including Aristotle. It was thought very difficult to understand. It must have been just such an occasion as that in 1933 when the late Professor A. E. Housman appeared after an interval of 20 years to lecture in the Senate House at Cambridge on the *Name and Nature of Poetry*. The Senate House was full and some of the audience had come from Oxford and other distant places. It was a show day. But, of course, in the twenty years Housman had been giving his vastly learned lectures on Latin poets to the select few. And Plato too had, no doubt, done the same sort of thing in his own line. But these lectures were not transferred to the written page. We know Plato from his writings, but we can only know by inference what he taught personally in the Academy. He had a staff to assist him. The students were all learners but some stayed on as teachers much as some undergraduates stay on as Tutors and Fellows of Colleges at Oxford and Cambridge. Aristotle was at Athens for twenty years.

The Academy was so called because its activities were at first conducted in a small public park called *Academeia* in the North Western suburbs of Athens adjoining *Colonus*. There was a gymnasium, or as we should now call it, a Sports Club attached to the park, and here Plato would find the nucleus of his followers. The charm of *Colonus* is known to us from one of the most celebrated odes in the whole of Greek Tragedy, occurring in the *Œdipus at Colonos* of Sophocles at lines 668-692. There “gleaming *Colonus*” is called “the

best habitation in the world. The nightingale constantly sings. The laurel, olive, and vine grow in the dense green glades. The narcissus and the golden crocus bloom there. And the brook Cephissus flows forth from never failing sleepless springs." Allowing something for the poet's lyric rapture the place must still have been most charming. Sophocles's audience (of twenty thousand or so) must most of them have been to the place and could check the language from their own knowledge.

Such surroundings would have attracted Plato. He describes something similar in setting the scene in the *Phædrus* (III 229, 230). But after a time he took a house in the vicinity and this became the famous Academy. It is as though Mr. Bertrand Russell had started teaching and disseminating his learning and his view of things in Regent's Park and after a time, when the work took shape, had bought a house in Park Crescent. But to make the parallel complete the climate in Regent's Park would have to be better. And one wonders if Mr. Russell's Academy would last 900 years. It might. Plato's Academy did so, but was moved into the city to be more central (like Bloomsbury) in the year 86 B.C. It was finally suppressed by the Emperor Justinian in 529 A.D. It was still in possession of Plato's original garden, and there is no need to suppose it anything else than faithful to Platonism. Although different schools of interpretation came and went the master mind presided there. And when the end came much of what was permanent in the teaching survived because it had been absorbed into Christianity, though it must be allowed that it had been somewhat transformed in the process. By the Sixth Century Christianity was more alive than any brand of Neo-Platonism could be. The name of the Academy survived in a thousand and more educational institutions, few of which could even faintly rival the original.

In Plato's own lifetime the Academy was already famous. Many students, and not all of them young, came to learn from the great teacher. It was probably difficult to get ac-

cepted, and the company must often have seemed brilliant. But it was not merely brilliant, it was also serious. It was a School of Philosophy, and not a School of Manners or even of Statesmanship, though there was a good deal of what for want of a proper word we call Sociology, the science of human associations. Œcology would be a better word, if the animals did not seem to have made that their own peculiar property. Some of the students were famous for learning, but on the whole the old Academicals did not distinguish themselves in public life. It was a serious count against Socrates that two such rascally politicians as Alcibiades and Critias had been his intimate followers. The same kind of thing could not be counted against Plato.

Eminent visitors came to the Academy to see for themselves, and this would contribute towards broadening the education. In the opening pages of the *Protagoras* Plato has conveyed in a very lively way the interest and excitement produced by the visit to Athens of the eminent sophist from Abdera after whom the Dialogue is called. He tells how he was received by the wealthy Callias into his house, and we find him there walking up and down in the courtyard followed in careful order by a numerous audience. We read how one Hippocrates was wild to make an early start to join the party and he thought it necessary to go with some important person like Socrates in order to get in. And how right he was. Even shortly after sunrise the porter was announcing the House Full, and Socrates and Hippocrates were only admitted after some altercation. Similar scenes can hardly have been avoided at times in the Academy. But the Academy was more spacious than a private house.

If the character of Plato's Dialogues and the sort of development to be perceived in them is any indication of the course of Plato's mental history, then it is probable that the work done in the Academy became more profound and more difficult as the year went on. No doubt many who entered as students fell away, saying they could not understand it

all, and it is part of the real value of Plato's method that it never cares to make itself immune from criticism. Aristotle criticises it abundantly, and many must have done so from the start. But Plato's mind had a distinctive and a natural prestige well able to encounter and survive criticism. The headship of the Academy passed at his death to his nephew Speusippus, perhaps a piece of nepotism, for the best philosophers there, Aristotle and Xenocrates, both left Athens shortly after Speusippus became Scholarch as it was called. In a few years Speusippus was succeeded by Xenocrates, though it is said that Aristotle would have been appointed if he had not been abroad. He was soon to found a rival institution at Athens in the Lyceum, itself a rival Gymnasium.

Before the end of his life Plato must have withdrawn to a large extent from active teaching to concentrate again on writing, this time not to expound Socrates but his own doctrines, hammered into shape by years of oral exposition, yet not without Socrates in mind as the sole begetter of all his thoughts. It is lamentable that no one has left us any authentic picture of the old Plato in Athens. The story goes that on his deathbed he was still trying to improve the opening words of the *Republic*. True or not, the survival of this anecdote is a testimony to the detailed perfection of his style, and possibly a faint reminiscence of the pains it cost him to attain to that perfection.

VI

WHAT IS PLATO LIKE?

THIS chapter is by way of being an Interlude. Seeing that an English translation cannot convey the original of the Dialogues in respect of its charm and elegance and ease, it looks as if those who do not know Greek must be content with the substance in a not very readable or natural form. If the translation is adequate it may be Plato all right, but it will not be *like* Plato. It will be much harder work to read and harder to understand. It is possible, however, to some extent, to show what Plato is like by an indirect method. From time to time English authors, writing original prose or even verse, writing sometimes with Plato in mind and sometimes in almost perfect ignorance of him, have written in a way which recalls his writing, and a collection of such passages may be able to give a notion of what he is like, even though they give no notion of any actual passage in the Dialogues. The procedure will be something of the same sort as that which Plato himself adopted in trying to describe the soul in the *Phædrus* (III 246A): "To describe what kind of thing it actually is would need a long discourse wholly godlike in every way, but to describe what it resembles needs a shorter discourse on the human level; let us speak, therefore, in this latter way." Translation will never be "godlike in every way," in other words, it lacks inspiration. Let us not try to reproduce Plato as he is, but fall back on other men's words.

The Dialogues very often open with a delightful little narrative or conversation embodying the description either of some place or incident by way of assembling the speakers and giving the piece a setting. The many original dialogues which have been written in more or less conscious imitation of Plato

nearly always reproduce this characteristic, at times with some artificiality. But Dryden has brought it off in the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (actually a dialogue) with a beautiful piece of English prose, Platonesque in the actual charm of the story told and the way in which in the telling of it the right words fall into the right place. It is an incident arising out of the sea battle between the English and the Dutch off Harwich on June 3, 1665.

"It was that memorable day, in the first summer of the late war, when our navy engaged the Dutch; a day wherein the two most mighty and best appointed fleets which any age had ever seen, disputed the command of the greater half of the globe, the commerce of nations, and the riches of the universe; while these vast floating bodies, on either side, moved against each other in parallel lines, and our countrymen, under the happy conduct of his royal highness, went breaking, by little and little, into the line of the enemies; the noise of the cannon from both navies reached our ears about the city (of London), so that all men being alarmed with it, and in a dreadful suspense of the event, which they knew was then deciding, every one went following the sound as his fancy led him; and leaving the town almost empty, some took towards the park, some cross the river, others down it; all seeking the noise in the depth of silence.

"Among the rest, it was the fortune of Eugenius, Crites, Lisideius, and Neander, to be in company together; three of them persons whom their wit and quality have made known to all the town; and whom I have chosen to hide under these borrowed names, that they may not suffer by so ill a relation as I am going to make of their discourse.

"Taking them a barge, which a servant of Lisideius had provided for them, they made haste to shoot the bridge, and left behind them that great fall of waters which hindered them from hearing what they desired; after which, having disengaged themselves from many vessels which rode at anchor in the Thames, and almost blocked up the passage towards

Greenwich, they ordered the waterman to let fall their oars more gently, and then, every one favouring his own curiosity with a strict silence, it was not long ere they perceived the air to break about them like the noise of distant thunder, or of swallows in a chimney; those little undulations of sound, though almost vanishing before they reached them, yet still seeming to retain somewhat of their first horror which they had betwixt the fleets. After they had attentively listened till such time as the sound by little and little went from them, Eugenius, lifting up his head and taking notice of it, was the first who congratulated to the rest that happy omen of our nation's victory; adding that we had but this desire in confirmation of it, that we might hear no more of that noise, which was now leaving the English coast.

"When the rest had concurred in the same opinion, Crites, a person of a sharp judgment, and somewhat too delicate a taste in wit, which the world have mistaken in him for ill-nature, said, smiling to us, that if the concernment of this battle had not been so exceedingly great, he could scarce have wished the victory at the price he knew he must pay for it, in the being subject to the reading and hearing of so many ill verses as he was sure would be made on that subject."

And so the four of them fall into discussing poetry and in particular serious drama in verse. For its tone and absolute rightness the passage may stand with the opening pages of the *Phædrus*, *Symposium*, *Theætetus*, *Charmides*, *Protagoras*, and other passages at or near the beginning of the Dialogues. It is like them without being an imitation of any in particular.

The second and longest passage in the collection comes from a rather surprising source, a book of evangelical piety for children written in 1854 by Miss Maria Louisa Charlesworth. It is called *Ministering Children* and was famous in its time. Something like a quarter of a million copies must have been sold, and very properly, for it is an extremely well-written book. It does not seem likely that Miss Charlesworth knew Greek, but it looks as though she must have read some Plato,

she has caught so very well something of his manner. This passage, which is the beginning of Chapter Twelve, tells how the squire's son, Herbert Clifford, designed to give a present to a youth in the village called Jem. It is astonishing to find collected here the conviction of error, the attempt at a definition, and the irony which are all so characteristic of the *Dialogues*. And by way of detail the mention of the shepherd's dog and the first definition of charity as "doing for the poor" could hardly be improved upon for likeness to Plato.

"Papa," said Herbert one day at dinner, as the year was closing in, "I have long made up my mind to give Jem some valuable present this Christmas, and to-day I have hit on the right thing. It will cost three pounds, but I can manage it, because I have had the thought so long in my mind that I have been saving up my money for it; and now I am so delighted to have found the very thing! Can you guess, papa?"

"I am almost afraid to try," said Mr. Clifford, smiling, "for sometimes your right thing and mine do not recognise each other at first sight, and I may disappoint you."

"Do try, papa, this is not charity you know, so there is not the same fear. And you must think it a capital thing, for Jem is not the easiest person to find out a right sort of present for—is he, papa?"

"No, perhaps not," replied Mr. Clifford, "because his wants do not extend beyond life's necessities, and his own honest hands provide those."

"Yes, papa, and my present is something to do with life's necessities—something to do with Jem's work! Now, papa, can you guess?"

"Something to do with Jem's work and to cost three pounds!" said Mr. Clifford, in a tone of reflection. "I confess I am puzzled; I did not think Jem made use of such costly assistance in his simple labour."

"No, papa, it's something quite new to Jem. Such a thing

as he has never had, or thought of having. I am full of the surprise it will be to him."

"Is it a watch?" asked Mr. Clifford, doubtfully.

"No, not a watch. I could not get anything of a watch for three pounds, could I, papa? Jem's watch is in the sky; he always keeps time by the sun, without any trouble of winding up."

"Is it some implement of husbandry?" asked Mr. Clifford.

"No, papa, Jem is a shepherd, only Mr. Smith sometimes puts him to other work when he wants him."

"Is it a shepherd's dog of some superior excellence?"

"No, papa, Jem has hard work to keep his old mother and little niece; he could not keep a dog; though to be sure, that is a good idea."

"Then I confess I must give it up," said Mr. Clifford.

"Are you sure you cannot guess, papa?"

"Yes, I give up in despair."

"Well, then, papa, I have seen the most perfect collection of all sorts of carpenters' tools in a box for three pounds, everything you could possibly want! Won't it be just the present to give to one who does everything for himself?"

"Is Jem a carpenter then?"

"No, papa, he is a shepherd, but he does everything for himself, so that there must often be carpenter's work wanted."

"I think you will certainly make him a little work in keeping his tools bright, for I am afraid his use of them will not be likely to do it!"

"Then you do not think it would be a nice present for him, papa?"

"No, I cannot say I do. I think, when you give your friend a present, it is a pity to give him a trouble. I have no doubt you would find Jem quite as independent of carpenters' tools as of carpenters' aid, in his mending and making."

"Can you think of anything then, papa?" asked Herbert, in a tone whose gladness was gone.

"Why not give him a good winter great-coat? I should say that would be far better."

"No, papa, I don't want my first present to Jem to be clothing, I don't want it to be like charity. I want him to see I have thought about how best to please him!"

"And do you think that charity admits no thought of how best to please?"

"No, papa, I don't think that, only I don't want my present to Jem to look like charity."

"What then do you suppose charity to be? Let us have your explanation of the word."

"O papa, everybody knows what charity is! Though I am pretty sure nobody knows what a mess they may make of it till they try at it; for it's ten to one if they hit it right when they do try!"

"But what do you explain this same charity to mean?"

"Well, papa, one cannot always explain what everybody knows, but, of course, it's doing for the poor."

"Very true, my boy, only remember there is no one on earth so rich as not to need this heaven-born charity."

"What do you mean, papa? You don't want charity."

"Yes, dear Herbert, I do; and so do you! To be poor in money is but one point of poverty, just as to be rich in money is but one point of riches."

"What, then, are you poor in, papa?"

"I am so poor that there is no one I have any intercourse with who may not make me richer!"

"What do you mean, papa?"

"I mean that my earthly comfort depends more upon that spirit of love, or charity, in those with whom I am associated, than upon anything else; and this is true of all. One of the chief reasons of the happiness of Heaven is, that there every thought and feeling, every word and action, is governed by CHARITY! And the nearer you come to the practise of this spirit of love on Earth, the nearer you come to the spirit of Heaven!"

"But then, papa, if I could think of anything to please Jem more than a coat, I might give it to him and yet not go against charity?"

"Yes, certainly, whatever most proves your thoughtful interest in others, and care for them is the best and brightest exercise of charity!"

How very unlike one of the Dialogues, and yet how very like. Herbert has all the bright seriousness of Plato's youths just because he is a youth, but you can hardly think that Mr. Clifford had not read Plato. And probably he had, or, to be more exact, Miss Charlesworth's father had done so and absorbed the manner to some purpose.

The two extracts which are to follow are taken from Keats's Letters. It would be possible to get very Platonic passages from Shelley, but they would be too directly derived from Plato to serve the end in view very well. Shelley was familiar with the Dialogues and he translated the *Symposium* and *Ion* himself. He often reproduces Plato. Keats on the other hand, though strongly attracted by all he knew of ancient Greece, did not, in fact, know much of it. He had a natural affinity with it, and what came naturally into his imagination was sometimes tinged with Platonism. The following is from the very long letter to his brother and sister, written between February and May, 1819. It is the letter which contains the *Ode to Psyche*, *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, and other pieces. The passage in question conveys something of Plato when he is expounding a psychological doctrine of some sort, especially if it is not altogether clear to himself, as this is not clear to Keats. It has Plato's interests and Plato's imagination.

"Call the world if you please 'the vale of Soul-making.' Then you will find out the use of the world (I am speaking now in the highest terms of human nature, admitting it to be immortal which I will here take for granted for the purpose of showing a thought which has struck me concerning it). I say 'Soul-making'—Soul as distinguished from an Intelli-

gence. There may be intelligences or sparks of the divinity in millions—but they are not Souls till they acquire identities, till each one is personally itself. Intelligences are atoms of perception—they know and they see and they are pure, in short, they are God. How then are Souls to be made? How then are these sparks which are God to have identity given them—so as ever to possess a bliss peculiar to each one's individual existence? How but by the medium of a world like this? This point I sincerely wish to consider because I think it is a grander system of salvation than the christian religion—or rather it is a system of Spirit creation. This is effected by three grand materials acting the one upon the other for a series of years. These three materials are the *Intelligence*—the *human heart* (as distinguished from intelligence or mind) and the *World* or *Elemental space* suited for the proper action of *Mind and Heart* on each other for the purpose of forming the *Soul* or *Intelligence destined to possess the sense of Identity*. I can scarcely express what I but dimly perceive—and yet I think I perceive it—that you may judge the more clearly I will put it in the most homely form possible. I will call the *World* a School instituted for the purpose of teaching little children to read. I will call the *human heart* the *horn book* read in that School—and I will call the *Child able to read*, the *Soul* made from that *School* and its *horn book*. Do you not see how necessary a World of pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a Soul? A Place where the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways. Not merely is the Heart a Horn book, it is the Mind's Bible, it is the Mind's experience, it is the text from which the Mind or Intelligence sucks its identity. As various as the Lives of Men are—so various become their Souls, and thus does God make individual Beings, Souls, Identical Souls of the sparks of his own essence."

This is much below Plato's best and it is not his doctrine of the Soul. But it deals with things he often deals with; it uses analogy as he uses it; it introduces divinity as he in-

troduces it, and it expresses itself in a parenthetical style without sacrificing lucidity, which is what Plato also often contrives to do, especially in the *Laws*.

Another of Keats's Letters contains a myth, or rather an Allegory, which is quite of the Platonic kind, only told more concisely. It is the letter of May 3, 1818, and he is here trying to describe how far he and Wordsworth have got in their exploration of human life.

"I will return to Wordsworth. . . . And to be more explicit and to show you how tall I stand by the giant, I will put down a simile of human life as far as I now perceive it; that is, to the point to which I say we both have arrived at. Well—I compare human life to a large Mansion of many apartments, two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me. The first we step into we call the Infant, or Thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think. We remain there a long while, and notwithstanding the doors of the second Chamber remain wide open, showing a bright appearance, we care not to hasten to it; but are at length imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle within us—we no sooner get into the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden-Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight. However, among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man—of convincing one's nerves that the world is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness, and Oppression—whereby the Chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darkened, and at the same time, on all sides of it, many doors are set open—but all dark—all leading to dark passages. We see not the balance of good and evil; we are in a mist, we are now in that state, we feel the 'Burden of the Mystery.' "

There is a pessimism here which is very rarely found in

Plato, but there is a certain likeness to Plato's celebrated allegory of the Cave in the *Republic* (II 514), and Keats may owe something to the Cave. The mixture of psychology and imagery is very Platonic.

Where Plato in a dialogue is reproducing a logical argument, he often presses it beyond the point where logical argument can operate effectively, into speculations which have at least the appearance of being futile. Yet he would justify himself by saying that one must go where the argument leads, and not to exhaust it is perhaps to miss some avenue to truth. In such exaggerated argumentation, however, it is hard to know whether Plato is being unusually serious or not serious at all, and this would probably be true of any writer who was adopting the same course. The following passage from Bertrand Russell's *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (George Allen and Unwin, 1919, p. 136), has this equivocal quality. Is it serious or not? At any rate it would lend itself very well to being transformed into a dialogue in the Platonic manner. The passage in question is about putting things into classes, and in particular about "the supposed class of all imaginable objects":

"The comprehensive class we are considering, which is to embrace everything, must embrace itself as one of its members. In other words, if there is such a thing as 'everything,' then 'everything' is something, and is a member of the class 'everything.' But normally a class is not a member of itself. Mankind, for example, is not a man. Form now the assemblage of all classes which are not members of themselves. This is a class: is it a member of itself or not? If it is, it is one of those classes that are not members of themselves, *i.e.*, it is not a member of itself. If it is not, it is not one of those classes that are not members of themselves, *i.e.*, it is a member of itself. Thus of the two hypotheses—that it is, and that it is not, a member of itself—each implies its contradictory. This is a contradiction.

“ There is no difficulty in manufacturing similar contradictions *ad lib.*”

It is not necessary for all of us to try and get to the bottom of this, and no more is it necessary for all of us to get to the bottom of the most closely argued passages in Plato, but some—perhaps a good many—may enjoy the attempt. Those who like this passage from Mr. Russell may possibly like the latter part of the *Parmenides* too, otherwise probably not. The *Parmenides*, by the way, is carefully and clearly analysed in Burnet's *Greek Philosophy from Thales to Plato*, pp. 255-271, and at greater length with a full translation by F. M. Cornford, *Plato and Parmenides*, 1939.

A final passage from Hooker shall close this small collection of parallels. To match the more exalted and ornamental parts of Plato one turns naturally to the Elizabethans, because in that period of our literature we find most fully the grand tone and the ornate style in combination without forcing or affectation. And this is also decidedly characteristic of Plato. He generally works up to it gradually, but a very short passage from *Epinomis* (II 982E) will show what he works up to, for he speaks there of “ the nature of the stars, most beautiful to look at, but also dancing a progress and a figure more beautiful and stately than any other band of dancers, enough to satisfy all living things with what they need.” This is an illustration almost by way of caricature, Plato, assuming it to be Plato, has out-Platoed himself. But still he does soar, and something after the way that Hooker does in the last words of the *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book I.

“ Thus we see how even one and the self-same thing is under divers considerations conveyed through many laws; and that to measure by any one kind of law all the actions of men were to confound the admirable order, wherein God hath disposed all laws, each as in nature, so in degree, distinct from other.

“ Wherefore that here we may briefly end : of Law there can

be no less acknowledged, than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world: all things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power: both Angels and men and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy."

Plato did not, as a matter of fact, think very highly of the majesty of the law as it exists in communities of men. But Hooker's language has also in mind the laws which regulate the movements of the celestial sphere, and about these Plato never tires of using similar language and expressing the same exultation. Hooker's material in the *Ecclesiastical Polity* is somewhat scholastic and Aristotelian, but his temperament is much more that of Plato.

VII

CHARACTERISTICS

ALL great writers have passages which you could tell at once were theirs because in them they are so very much themselves. But since these passages bear their peculiar stamp they will obviously be such as are not usually to be found in other authors and they therefore need some getting used to. And it is easier to get used to anything if you know beforehand what to expect. Some discussion will consequently be useful of the notions which are most frequent or most masterful in the Dialogues. But these notions are of two kinds. Some need to be noticed because they run through so much of Plato's thought and writing that they are always to be reckoned with, yet he himself often takes them for granted. Others need some explanation because Plato was at pains to explain them and did not always succeed in making them plain even to himself. In the first class the principal items are Dialectic, Mathematics, Myths and God. In the second class are Ideas and Art and Love. The first class may be called plain Characteristics, the second class may be called Difficulties.

A. DIALECTIC

Dialectic is the adjective from the noun dialogue, but not all dialogue can be described as dialectic. Dialectic is the word used for the kind of dialogue which aims at discovering the truth by stating and criticising opinions. It is not merely designed to procure facts like the examination of the newly-arrested at the Police Court. There must be two sides to the question just as there must be two persons to a

dialogue. On the other hand it is not designed to see who can win. That would be mere eristic or competition. Dialectic must aim at truth, and aim at it through oral criticism by the method of question and answer. In the practice of this art Socrates was one of the first and greatest performers, and Plato on the foundation which Socrates laid extended the range and method of the art and also achieved the very difficult task of transferring it to paper. Socrates had only talked. Plato talked and wrote. And as we are concerned with Plato rather than Socrates, it will be well to base our notion of dialectic not on what Plato makes Socrates say in his *Apology*, where we presumably get nearest to the true Socrates, but in what he makes Socrates say that Protagoras said in a passage where he is trying to represent Protagoras in the most favourable light. The passage is the one in the *Theatetus* in which Socrates is made to describe how he thinks Protagoras would maintain his celebrated proposition that Man is the Measure of All Things. Having expounded this in a little discourse, Protagoras (according to Socrates as pictured by Plato) proceeds as follows (I 167D-168B):

"It is on such grounds that my contention stands secure. And if you can argue against it from the fundamental position, oppose it point by point. But if you prefer to oppose it by means of questions, then do it by means of questions. For a sensible person, so far from deprecating that method, goes for it all he can. But proceed like this. Don't be unfair. It's most illogical for anyone who says he thinks a great deal of morality to go on being continually unfair in argument. And being unfair is the sort of thing when anyone carries on without making a distinction between trying to score points and having a real discussion. In the former a man may bring in jokes and tricks as much as he likes, but in the latter he is serious and puts the other man right, only pointing out to him the mistakes he fell into, either through his own fault or in connection with previous conversations.

"If you do this, those you are discussing with will blame themselves and not you when they are confounded or at a loss, and they will follow you closely and cleave to you, but they will hate themselves and have recourse to philosophy in order to be rid of themselves as they were. But if like most people you do the opposite to this, just the opposite will happen to you, and you will find that your followers instead of being philosophers will hate the whole business. So if you adopt my suggestion, you will join with us in no cross or combative spirit, but with a conciliatory disposition, and undertake a genuine enquiry into our meaning when we say that everything is altering, and that for individuals and communities alike everything actually is what it seems."

Whatever else Dialectic means for Plato then, it means polite conversation, and certainly the way in which Plato makes Socrates talk to his young men is the model of what such talk should be. Of course, there are many passages scattered over the Dialogues in which conceited or overbearing people boast and bluster. The First Book of the *Republic* affords a good specimen in Thrasymachus, and Hippias is another. But these passages are written with the object of showing how a philosophical discussion should *not* be conducted. For the most part the tone is admirable. As someone remarks to Socrates (I 217D) "dialogue is easier than uninterrupted speech if the person you are talking with is easy to manage and not quarrelsome." The questions are fairly answered. The art of dialectic largely consists, in fact, in so framing the questions that by general consent only one answer is possible. Socrates, too, is represented as tireless in seeing objections to any conclusion which is reached, and this is probably true to life, for the later dialogues are much more dogmatic, and in them Socrates is much more in the background. Plato, in his later years, unlike Socrates, but like most men as they get older, grew more impatient of objections, in proportion as he grew more sure of his convictions, but then he also grew correspondingly less dialectical.

The true dialectic is sceptical, ardent, and has endless leisure. In the *Theætetus* where at several points the investigation has to start all over again from the beginning owing to some fallacy discovered in the argument, Plato makes the speakers observe from time to time that they are not in a hurry so they need not leave any assumption to chance. The effect in *Theætetus* and many of the Dialogues is to provoke a certain impatience nowadays, but this is partly due to the fact that a good deal of what Plato discusses, thanks to the lead he has given himself, is now no longer in dispute. For example, he is always enumerating and distinguishing the senses, whereas we should now be content to assume that there are five, those of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. Thus we should probably dispense with the following analysis (I 185A):

Socr.: Now about sound and about colour, do you in the first place take precisely this view of them, namely, that they both exist?

Thaet.: Yes, I do.

S.: And then that each is different from the other, and the same as itself?

Th.: Yes. And then?

S.: That both are two and each is one?

Th.: I agree to that also.

S.: And then that you are able to look and determine whether the two are unlike or like one another?

Th.: Yes, perhaps.

To us this seems hardly necessary. We know that hearing and seeing occur in an accepted list of the senses and therefore that sound and colour exist and are different, and are two separate items in a list of five, and as we can distinguish them in the list we can say that they are unlike and not like up to a point. But it was Greek dialectic which first set us on the road to all this.

It is hard indeed to realise the great originality of what

Socrates and Plato between them have contributed to the art of thinking, because their teaching has been so well digested that much of it is taken for granted. When men engage in what they call a sensible discussion, that amounts to saying that they have adopted Plato's way of going about it. They thrash it out, as they say, which means starting with a provisional statement—hypothesis is its right name—and considering what this entails by way of consequence, first if it is true, and secondly, if it is not true, then trying to put it in a class of statements that fall under some more general truth, adjusting and correcting it as required, considering all objections, producing instances and analogies, and above all, and in the midst of all, being fair. The normal method of procedure is by question and answer, but a man can go through the process all by himself if need be, and he may exhibit it beautifully, if he cares to, in a lecture.

An alternative method is to be seen in the Law Courts, unless indeed it is an adaptation of the same method to a particular purpose. At any rate it is of the essence of the matter in court that both sides of the question should be argued. The want of excitement in the English Courts of Law often surprises foreigners. Plato would have admired it very much.

By way of contrast what happens where dialectic is not employed to discover or maintain the truth is most conveniently seen by us in the New Testament. Most people can get hold of a New Testament, and if they will read in it St. Paul's argument for a resurrection of the body after death in I Corinthians 15, they will there find what is in the main a very undialectical way of maintaining a proposition. It is not an ineffective way, but it is not dialectical, it is poetical and prophetic. It is largely an appeal to immediate apprehension and not to reason. Some part of it has even the form of poetry. There is room for this, and often enough, in fact, Plato finds room for it. The scope of reason does not cover the whole field of thought. Nevertheless dialectic, as reason's

best way of setting to work, has won the day. We are not obliged to be convinced by anything else.

It would be interesting if we were able to confront St. Paul with Socrates. Paul says in one place (Rom. 7 1.2): "Know ye not brethren, how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband, so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband." Socrates would have been on Paul like a knife for saying this. He would have objected that the case alleged by Paul, so far from proving that the law hath dominion over a man so long as he liveth, which is what he had asserted, only proves that it has dominion over a woman until a particular man is dead, quite a different proposition. Paul would have answered that he was asserting and illustrating the general principle that the law ceases to operate as soon as a man or woman is dead. "Death closes all accounts." Whereupon Socrates would remind him very politely that in a work ascribed to him it says that a will is of force after men are dead; it is of no force at all while the testator is alive (Heb. 9 17). Paul might say that a will was not a law, and would be asked to define law and would soon be reduced to a fine muddle. But he would complain that Socrates had asked all the wrong questions, and it would be a just complaint. For Socratic questioning is only admissible where it is agreed to use the dialectical method, and Paul's method is a different one.

In the use of dialectic there are several distinguishable lines of procedure. One of these is famous under its Greek name of Elenchus. What is distinctive about it is its effect upon the person who is subjected to the process. It is the same effect as that of a successful cross-examination. It convicts the person under examination of some sort of error. It gets him into a corner. He does not know where to turn next, a situation which the Greeks called *aporia*, or resourcelessness. The process is described in the *Sophist*. It purports to be the

process of casting out of a man an opinion he has of his being knowledgeable about something and therefore not needing to be taught. As Grote puts it neatly enough, "The teacher began by unteaching and the learner by unlearning" (*Plato*, ch. 38, near the beginning). Persuasion will not do it. And so "they question a man about the things of which he thinks he has something to say when in fact he has nothing but nonsense to say. They soon reveal that his opinions are like those of people who have lost their way, and by talking with him they collect these opinions together and compare them one with another and by this means show that they contradict one another about the same things viewed from the same standpoint and judged by the same standards. And when the people they are talking to see this they are annoyed with themselves and docile towards the others, and so they are liberated from the high opinions they so roughly maintained about themselves. And this process of liberation is very pleasant to listen to and has a lasting effect on the person it happens to. . . . And those who thus purify them of their wrong opinions think they will have no advantage from any teaching that is given them until someone has applied this Elenchus to them and brought them to a sense of shame by removing the opinions which block the way to their being taught. Then they are seen to be purified and thinking they only know what they do know and not more . . . For this reason we must assert that the Elenchus is the greatest and most effective of purifications." (I 230B-D.).

Unteaching and unlearning indeed! That men often cannot make any progress in wisdom until they have been purged somehow of false opinions and prejudices is certainly true to experience. That they accept the purgation as readily as Plato here makes out is perhaps less true, and he does himself sometimes represent people as considerably nettled when they have been driven into a corner in an argument. We are told by Xenophon that some people who came to Socrates were put off and never came again (*Mem.* IV 2.40). But the

point must be kept steadily in mind that dialectic properly applied is always fair and good tempered. It should have about it undoubtedly the feeling of barristers briefed on opposite sides of a case as they leave the Court, or members of Parliament on opposite sides of the House after the House has adjourned.

A second line of procedure which Plato's Dialectic adopts and operates is called Division. As the Elenchus is perhaps more characteristic of Socrates than of Plato, so Division, it seems, is more characteristic of Plato than of Socrates. It is seen mostly in the later and more purely logical Dialogues. In the *Sophist* which has just been quoted, an illustration of the method of Division is given at the outset as though it was not very familiar. Let us try and define Angling, says the stranger from Elea, an Eleatic philosopher (218E). Angling is an art; it is an acquisitive and not a productive art; the acquisition is by force and not by voluntary exchange; the force employed is by way of hunting and not by way of fighting; the hunting is hunting of a living thing and not of a lifeless thing (as e.g., in diving for pearls); the living things that the angler hunts are aquatic animals and not land animals; of these aquatic animals the angler hunts fish and not water-fowl; he catches fish not by enclosing them in nets and so forth, but by striking them; he strikes the fish not downwards with a spear in the body but by a blow about the head and mouth and pulling them upwards (I 221AB). Thus the art of Angling is defined as acquisitive hunting by force of living aquatic animals called fish by striking them with a blow about the head and mouth and pulling them up.

The same method of Division is then applied to the Sophist and after a long search including a digression (I 235D-264C) which is itself longer than the main argument, it is asserted by Division, first of all that he (I 226A) is "nothing else than the money-making class of the competitive contradictory, argumentative, bellicose, contesting, acquisitive art," and then more profoundly the name of Sophist is said to signify

(I 268c) "something imitative in the dissembling part of the art of expressing opinions in opposition to the people you are arguing with, distinguished as that part of causing surprise which is not miraculous but human and belongs to the particular part of copying which is called imaginative." This, like some other parts of Plato, is meant to be taken with a pinch of salt, but it does tell you a good deal about sophists, and it suggests two things at least about Division. First, it suggests that the method of Division as a means of arriving at a Definition may be mishandled, but secondly, it also suggests that Division is a preliminary attempt at defining by genus and species, that is, by class and kind. That is, in fact, what it was. It remained for Aristotle to see its true significance and put it into the shape which a good Definition still retains. For example, a planet is a celestial body revolving round a fixed star, that is to say, it belongs to the class of celestial bodies, but it is distinguished from other celestial bodies by being the kind that revolves round a fixed star. It is hardly necessary to show how some such definition could be reached by Division, as A planet is an object; it is an object in the sky and not on the earth; and so forth.

Of the more formal parts of Logic such as Induction and Deduction, Syllogism, or Experiment, Plato's thinking is full, just because all thinking is full of it. But Logic in his time had not yet been put into shape. He often uses a Syllogism as we all do—The Athenians are children, Alcibiades is an Athenian, therefore Alcibiades is a child—but he did not know the rules of the syllogism any more than a new poet knows how his lines scan. Much less did he know of the grave doubts now entertained as to the validity or usefulness of the syllogism. His difficulties were all concerned with words as names, and this led him on beyond Dialectic. It led him to the verge of a Theory of Ideas, but to follow him there would be to go outside the subject of this section which may now conclude by repeating that, in spite of its being in some ways elementary because new, Plato's notion

of conversation designed at getting at the truth is still the model of what such conversations should be, fair, polite, leisurely, unprejudiced, keen-witted, tending wherever the argument leads, not necessarily or even often conclusive, but not easily discouraged or baffled. That actual discussion in real life could be so full of resource as Plato's written Dialogues are is more than could be hoped for. And for that reason they are particularly to be admired as exhibitions of Dialectic.

B. MATHEMATICS

Mathematics is a Greek word in an English dress, and it means things that are connected with the act of learning. The Greeks gave the name to what we still call mathematics because you had to have lessons in the various branches of it before you could talk about it. In the case of a great many other things to talk about them or listen while others talk is the best way to study them, or so men think. But you could not learn much mathematics that way. You must be shown how to operate the various processes, you must have lessons and "do sums."

Plato, as we have seen, was educated to some extent in mathematics, and he came, under the influence of the Pythagoreans and of Zeno, to connect it with philosophy, and to think it a special source of wisdom and illumination. He was not himself an outstanding mathematician, but he was what has been described as well up-to-date. And he had thought a lot about figures in general and about some special problems in particular, such as "doubling the cube." It was said that he had had written up outside the Academy "Let no one enter who has no geometry," which was as much as to say that geometry was a "compulsory subject" for matriculation at the Academy. Ordinarily the subjects required from a student entering on advanced studies would be Reading, Writing, Homer, Practical Arithmetic (called

Logistic), and a working knowledge of Plainsong. But Geometry was necessary at the Academy because the students were going to be directed away from literature and applied mathematics to the philosophy of mathematics which would entail a progressive course in Arithmetic (the science of Number), Geometry, Solid Geometry (a special branch by itself), Astronomy, and Music, called Harmony, although there was nothing of what we call harmony in it.

Now all these subjects were to be approached from the side of pure mathematics. Astronomy, for example, was almost entirely concerned with spherical geometry. Algebra was not excluded, but for want of any satisfactory symbols such as our x and y its problems were not distinct from arithmetic and geometry, and some parts of it which we find easy were very difficult. And arithmetic was not at all easy, because the Greeks used different sets of symbols for various sets of numbers and had no symbol for 0 at all. Eventually they used all the letters of the alphabet for different numbers, but this was probably after Plato's time. In any case the tens and the hundreds and the thousands had all to be sorted out before even quite simple operations of multiplication and division could be attempted.

Nevertheless a great deal was achieved. Most of what Euclid collected into his first Six Books was well known in Plato's time. Those problems were at least explored which arise out of trying to find a value for $\sqrt{2}$, or, to put it in the Greek way, to find a number which multiplied by itself would come as near as possible to 2. There was a good deal of scientific work on figures both arithmetical and geometrical, less progress in music and acoustics, and in astronomy not a sufficiently clear approach to the notion of the earth going round the sun to get a true view of the heavens, though some elaborate calculations were made as to the relative size and speed of the planets.

Plato thought all this tremendously important as being the best progress towards truth that the mind could make. He

noted with the Pythagoreans that everything seemed to have number as one of its characteristics, and he sometimes wondered whether in the real world everything would drop away except number. He, and not he alone, ventured to speculate whether the Good and the One might not be the same. Three aspects of number specially directed his thoughts along these lines. First, he saw that geometry dealt with diagrams which represented permanent relations in space, and that, although no diagram was ever actually correct, it stood for a diagram never drawn by the hand or seen by the eye, which was perfectly exact and indestructible. Here was an Idea which all could handle, and one which children do in fact easily grasp. Secondly, he believed that if there was anything that obviously owed its existence to mathematics it was the heavens; and if the heavens, then surely everything else as well, if only we could see other things as plainly. The abstract character of his astronomy helped him here, which took for granted that anyone could see what there was to see in the sky, and that therefore calculation and not observation was the astronomer's chief business. He has often been reproached for the unscientific view which he expresses in the *Republic* (II 529c), where Glauco asks Socrates what he meant by saying that astronomy ought to be learnt on a system quite different from the existing one, and Socrates explains what he means by saying that "the heavens tapestried with stars are admittedly the most beautiful and exact of visible things, but much inferior to the mathematical elements of motion which they exhibit," and after amplifying this he concludes by saying (II 530b): "We shall pursue astronomy like geometry by the use of problems, but we shall leave the things in the sky alone, if we really intend to get hold of astronomy." Very "pure" astronomy this!

A third aspect of mathematics which made it seem so specially significant to Plato is one familiar to any schoolboy who has made any progress in the subject. It is that whenever a mathematical truth is discovered we feel that it was there

all the time waiting to be found out. Plato had a rather strange explanation for this. He believed that when we find out a mathematical truth, we really *remember* it. It is given us before life began, and we pull it out from our stock of inborn ideas. This is the Platonic doctrine of *Anamnesis* or Recollection, and he expounds it in the *Meno* by jogging a young slave's memory by questions till the boy realises that a given square is half the size of the square described on its diagonal. It is true that at least one of the questions which the boy is asked looks rather like a leading question, still the boy seems to discover this truth in the end, and a very great truth it is. But Plato, in referring this back to *Anamnesis*, did not notice, or else refused to take into account that after birth and almost from the cradle, children are constantly learning geometry, though they don't call it that. A child soon knows that to get from one corner of a field to the opposite corner it is much shorter to walk across the field than round the sides. This is geometry, and so is a lot more that children come to realise. And it was on this material that Plato was really building when he made Socrates cross-question Meno's slave (II 82B).

In the simpler handling of mathematical material, whether as fact or as illustration, Plato is often very interesting. But he can be very obscure and very tiresome. The terms he has available are usually much more cumbrous than ours and less exact, and it is often difficult to know just what he did mean. In places it is hard to resist the suspicion that he was not very clear himself. And in some places he seems just to be fooling, and in some places to be combining mathematics with rather mystical notions which are no doubt Pythagorean. The most famous of all these passages occurs near the beginning of Book VIII of the *Republic*, described by Professor Adam as "notoriously the most difficult passage in his writings." Here Plato uses arithmetic to calculate periods of time not less mysterious than the Book of Daniel. He seems to say that the world goes through a great Cycle

and all things return to whence they started in 12,960,000 days.

A great deal of care and time and ink has been spent in elucidating the more celebrated enigmas of this sort, but except for the specialist they are perhaps no more worth stopping over than the astronomical passages in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. They have a certain quaintness and some suggestion of the mysterious or of the unalterable, occasionally a touch of beauty, and that is perhaps all they were meant for. Numbers can be very ornamental in literature.

But this does not mean that mathematics in general can be neglected if Plato is to be read with good effect. Theon, the father of Hypatia, wrote a mathematical handbook for the students of Plato's works nearly 1,600 years ago. Something of the kind will always be in place. It is important, at any rate, to bear in mind that he was a qualified mathematician, and we may say a devout one. He is the reputed author of a saying to the effect that God always geometrizes. And he lived in a world in which the study of mathematics was far past the elementary stage.

C. MYTHS

THEY say that Curiosity is the child of Fear, but if so, Curiosity has long forgotten her parentage and won her independence. There is in most of us a deep desire to fill up the gaps in our knowledge of the things that come into our minds, to know how something works, to know why something happened, to know what something feels like, and generally to make the whole world full of Cause and Effect. Philosophers, indeed, want to see the whole thing as one great Cause and Effect, and they believe it can be done. That is their faith, and they think it will overcome the world.

This great Curiosity diffused over many lands is a special mark of our own times, and there has been none like it

since the age of Parmenides and Plato. To satisfy it we engage in research, and so did the Greeks. Only we happen to have done it with much greater success. And that seems rather unfair, seeing that it was Aristotle, Plato's pupil, who to no small extent put us in the way of it. But he and his immediate successors, though they found the way, missed it again and never entered into their inheritance. They used the method of experiment and practised reasoning by induction, but they did not keep a firm enough grip up on it. It is said that if Greek mathematicians had discovered the calculus, the Greeks would have invented our machines. They did, in fact, discover the fundamental principles of the calculus, but they did not know what to do with it, or perhaps it would be truer to say that their economic situation did not lead them on to exploit it. At any rate, Greek science came to a stop. It did not reveal to them the vast beauties and the overwhelming horrors which Nature had yielded to modern investigation.

Even now, however, there are still great gaps in our knowledge of many things about which we are curious. Like Plato, we do not know how to account for the existence of this universe of ours, and we do not know what will become of it or of us in the end. But where knowledge fails us or remains yet to be discovered, there is another way of satisfying or rather of stifling Curiosity. It is to invent a fairy tale or myth to take the place of knowledge, when something keeps attracting our attention which we don't really know about. This is the universal expedient. Almost all primitive people, for example, have some tale to explain the existence of the Moon. Plenty of stories exist in this country to explain some place-name or account for some prehistoric monument. Rather more than a century ago physicists talked and wrote much of *phlogiston* by way of explaining the properties of light. There was no such thing as phlogiston. It was the beginning of a myth, and the myth has not survived, because something more like the truth has superseded it.

At the present day probably the most famous of all myths is the story of the Creation of the world with which the Bible begins. We are all inclined to look back into the past, if only because the past is the sole guide we have as to what is likely in the future. And as we investigate the past we cast our minds back further and further, and Curiosity begins to demand rather insistently what the Beginning was like. Astronomy has something to tell us about this which is at least very far behind history and pre-history, too. But what astronomy tells us has two deficiencies: it is neither final, nor is it easily imagined. So some such story as that of the Six Days of Creation still has its uses, because it allows the imagination to do the work of reason and fill up what would otherwise be an uncomfortable gap in our thinking. It is not altogether satisfying, however, and it would be less satisfying still if it were not such an extraordinarily good story in itself, on so sublime a scale and so majestically told.

Plato very often has recourse to the same expedient, and his Myths are among the best known and most admired parts of the Dialogues. They occur mainly in the longer works, and to some extent they perform the function of relief, like the comic relief in Shakspeare's plays. This is not to say that they are in the least comic, but just as comedy is the proper relief from tragedy, so a piece of imagination is the proper relief from the exercise of pure reason. But the Myths are much more than this. They fill up the gaps in the treatment of a topic where knowledge is not to be had. In *Timæus*, for example (III 24E), the story of Atlantis accounts for the origin and character of the civilised world. The myth near the beginning of the *Protagoras* (I 320c) has something of the same purpose, but its approach to the matter is from an entirely different direction. In the *Republic* (II 414c), the myth of the Earth-born explains and justifies the origins of Class Distinctions in human society. In the *Phædrus* (III 246A), the myth of the Charioteer filled in a gap in psychology which is now filled by the notion of the disintegrated per-

sonality. The long and elaborate story of Er, the son of Armenius, with which the *Republic* ends (II 614B), and the similar one in the *Phædo* (I 107c-114c), are intended to supplement the imperfect justice meted out to human beings in this life with a judgment-day and a fresh chance in a new cycle of the ages. They have been used to interpret the numerous pictures of judgment in the New Testament, and have given not a little to many writers upon human destiny and happiness.

The best known book specially devoted to a study of this element in the Dialogues is *The Myths of Plato* by J. A. Stewart. It translates the myths and offers a considerable commentary on them, but the exposition is in places rather difficult. In order to read and enjoy them it is perhaps not necessary to do more than to know what they are for. In the *Republic*, Plato gives one reason for myth which is fairly comprehensive (II 382D): "in the myth-telling of which we were speaking just now, owing to our not knowing how the truth stands about ancient times, we make falsehood serve a purpose by rendering it as like the truth as possible." Not a very scientific view of history perhaps, but it shows that myth is not the same as parable. We use parables or allegories when we know what we want to say but have not the language to say it in. But myth is a different thing: it is essentially *news*, news of the past or future, though very likely news from nowhere. It can, of course, approximate to parable sometimes in a greater or less degree. The myth of the Charioteer, as Socrates explains, is introduced, because it will be shorter and less difficult than trying to describe "the form of the soul as it really is" (III 246A).

Plato often says what a particular myth is for when he introduces it. Nearly always it is to describe *convincingly* what in fact is only matter of opinion. More than once he makes the teller of the myth say he takes it to be true, though others may not. The illusion of truth at least must be secured, where truth itself is not to be had. When Protagoras

tells his myth, however (I 320c), Plato makes him say that he will give a myth instead of a systematic exposition because it will be more agreeable. This, as the dialogue suggests, is mere showing off and a misuse of myth, for the myth in *Protagoras* tells of the gift to men of fire by Prometheus and of justice by Zeus, and for the particular purpose he had in view Protagoras might have sketched in historical fashion the growth of civilisation and the foundations of justice. At least he could have had a good try, as Socrates did in the *Republic*.

And if myth is capable of misuse, then no doubt there are rules for using it rightly. And the characteristics of a good myth seems to be that (i) it must be a good story in itself; (ii) it must fill a gap in knowledge and allay curiosity; (iii) it must do what could not be better done by a more direct method; (iv) it must have details which are clearly invented—for these give life-liveliness and satisfy the imagination, but they also secure ultimately that the myth is not to be taken for history, because they will be more than a historian could know for certain; and (v) a proper myth will perhaps contain an element of wonder like a fairy-story.

The Greek word mythology means "the telling of a myth," and it has been introduced into English to mean the telling of a particular kind of myth, namely, stories about the gods, meaning in the main the gods of ancient Greece and Rome. Plato himself uses the word so, and he rather carefully makes Socrates say that he thinks rationalising these stories is waste of time and he accepts the customary beliefs about them (III 230A). But he talks about God as well as about the gods, and passages occur in the Dialogues fairly frequently which raise the question whether he looked upon God himself as in some sense a myth, and a convenient notion for filling up what would otherwise be a recurring gap in our knowledge. Zeus and Prometheus and the rest may be and are introduced by him to account for particular things; does God come in to account for things in general?

It is a difficult question to answer. Plato is certainly fond of calling remarkable gifts of mind or strength or virtue divine. "Divine" was a fashionable word to express admiration or great pleasure in his time, as it is in some of our circles. But he also speaks of God very often in a surprisingly unselfconscious way as someone or something to be taken into account in explaining things. But is this God a Being or a Myth? It is a question which people are always asking in one form or another. The conviction that he exists may be deep down in us by way of something like instinct. But up to a point God must be mythical. The story of his existence is indeed a brilliant myth, in so far as it has succeeded in satisfying curiosity over a large field of ignorance. And it has a very striking history. It comes from Babylon, or at any rate that is how it came to us. The Jews, by a special gift which they call prophecy, asserted that the myth was true. The first Christians thought that a resurrection from the dead had shown it was true. The Schoolmen of the early Middle Ages tried to prove that it was true. But Plato had already had a try at the same thing in the *Laws*, Book X, and what he says is the origin of all subsequent attempts at a proof. It is generally thought that the proofs are not valid. But, leaving proof on one side, it might be that God is a myth, and yet a myth which, when you have constructed it, has something in its own nature which makes it necessary to believe that He exists. This, if it were so, would be some form of what they call the Ontological Proof of the Existence of God, and it is a line which Plato seems to come near to taking. But the significance of that depends upon what he meant by God, and what he meant by God is a question which belongs not to Myth, but to a separate enquiry.

D. GOD AND THE GODS

THE Greek word for God or a god is *theos*, and it is a word which Plato often uses. It occurs in almost all the Dialogues and in many different connections. Under the pressure of Christianity the notion of God has been defined and restricted for us in a way which was not thought of in Plato's time. In ancient Greece there was a popular religion with a great many gods, but religion was a matter of traditional rites and superhuman personalities of whom traditional tales were told, and you believed as much or as little of the tales as you liked. The Greek religion had nothing about it of what is called dogma or dogmatic theology. It did not demand assent to any authorised body of truths. When a Greek spoke of Theology (which is a Greek word, of course), he meant more what we call Mythology. He sometimes came near what we call Theology when he was speaking of Philosophy. For Plato then, since he was not limited by articles of belief, God was in some ways a more useful word than it is for us, in some ways less useful.

When he speaks of the gods, he mainly has in view the particular Hellenic divinities, Zeus, Apollo, Athené and the rest, who are familiar in Homer and the Greek Tragedians and frequently represented in Greek sculpture. They had distinctive characters, activities, and histories. The more splendid of them were classed together as the Olympian gods, because their abode was supposed to have been on the snow-capped Mount Olympus in the North of Greece. But there were also a host of minor gods and goddesses attached to particular places or responsible for particular occurrences. A god was supposed to be responsible for all unexplained and supernatural events, and if such an event was recurrent at regular intervals or in the same place, a local cult would probably arise which might become widespread. Of these the most famous was the oracle of Apollo at Delphi, said to owe its origin to the fact that some sort of gas exuded

from the cliffs, which caused those who breathed it to babble. Young girls, and subsequently old women, were appointed as ministers of Apollo to breathe the gas and babble, and the priests interpreted their babblings as they thought fit. But a cult might remain purely local. The god might have a name or he might not. He might have some mythology attached to him, or he might be quite unknown, as was the god whose altar St. Paul saw at Athens with the inscription *To an unknown God*, the supposed cause of some accident, or it may be of some miracle, on the site where the altar was (Acts xvii, 23).

This popular and historical religion survived until it was ousted by Christianity, but the great thinkers of Greece were naturally not satisfied with it. They philosophised it usually along the lines of atheism or of pantheism or of a refusal to think God knowable, the lines along which philosophers always have and always will usually proceed. But Plato is not a pure philosopher and he never purified his writings of the notion of God nor seemed to wish to. Generally speaking, God is introduced into the Dialogues in a life-like way, that is to say, He is spoken of much as the speakers really would have spoken of Him. This is certainly true of the conventional language. The ordinary oaths, "by Zeus," "by Hera," meaning nothing in particular except emphasis, are freely and naturally used. The word "divine" has its higher use in Plato when applied to poets, prophets, visions, fate, nature, and chance. He is even ready to call men "gods" if they are inspired or poetical. He calls a visiting philosopher "a god of refutation" where someone has suggested that the right word is "fiend" (I 216B).

Socrates is meant by Plato to be pious as well as speculative, and is represented with a habit of piety in speech, and he ended or is made by Plato to end his *Apology* with the thought that he must go away to die and the others to live, "but which of us goes about the better business is not known except to God." It is not easy to say whether this is a way

of committing himself to God or amounts to no more than a conventional "God only knows." Socrates is said to have been in fact dutiful in the outward observances of religion. Plato himself likes to attach his dialogues to a festival. The great talk recorded in the *Republic* was on the evening of the feast of Bendis, a new Thracian divinity, and the *Timæus* was told in honour of a goddess (III 21A).

All the same, Plato's theology is certainly philosophical and in actual fact Christianity in so far as it has been given a philosophical shape owes a very great deal to Plato. His starting point seems to be this. Moving things impart motion to stationary things and set them in motion. The whole world is, in fact, a kind of dance of such occurrences. But this cannot be accounted for unless in the last resort there is something which not only moves other things but sets itself in motion. What is this? Plato answers that its name is soul (*psyché*) and its description is self-movement (II 896). And this he is willing also to call god. He seems inclined to do this in the *Cratylus* on the strength of a fanciful derivation of *theos* from *theo*, the Greek word for "I run" (I 397D), but it was also made easy for him by the fact that it was quite natural for a Greek to call the sun and the moon and the planets "gods," and they seemed to be the great examples of self-moved bodies. Their motion seemed to be of a very perfect kind, circular, mathematical, and remote, though not, of course, so remote as we now know it to be. With this notion of God as alive and self-moved and therefore *soul*, it was easy to combine another, very widespread in ancient times and by no means extinct to-day, namely, that the heavenly bodies control the destinies of the world and of men. And when Plato tried to think how this could be, he fixed upon a God who must exist and must be the cause of the Good and in fact of the Best Possible Good. God is "the supremely good soul that takes forethought for the universe and guides it along its path" (II 897C, transl. Taylor). Greek thinkers before Plato had proclaimed the moral good-

ness of God. That truth is plain enough in Sophocles, for instance. But Professor Adam thinks "the inference that God, because He is good, is never the cause of evil, is probably due to Plato" (J. Adam's *Republic*, Vol. II, p. 115). And it was this conviction that led Plato to call so rigorously for the expurgation from educational literature of all discreditable stories about the gods. They would start such a completely wrong idea about God.

Seeing that Plato got so far as to say that God is the supremely good soul, it seems to us to-day as if he might have got further. He might have asked whether the cause of the Good must not necessarily be the cause of everything. But the tendencies of thought in his day did not lead him to question whether there could be more than one god. He took it for granted that there could be, or rather the problem did not present itself to him in that way. He did not apply his dialectic to the issue between polytheism and monotheism, or no doubt he would have been a monotheist. But in fact he was content to say that Evil also was the product of "soul," though of course not the product of the good Soul. He did not even allow that God was the creator of the world. That was left to "the Demiurge" or Artificer, because Soul was not directly concerned with the production of matter, but only with giving it motion and life. Nor did he raise any of the problems about God which centre round the word "personality." The notion of personality in some of its aspects is not absent from his writings, but it had not developed so far as to have either name or definition.

In fact, while he sees that there must be a sovereign good called God, he is willing to allow the name of god to many subsidiary powers. He talks about God and about the gods without any difficulty or sense of inconsistency. This, of course, is what men ordinarily do. The word "Lord" by which we commonly call God is used for many lords besides the high God, but we keep the various uses of the word, theological and otherwise, quite distinct in our minds, just as

we keep the words of different languages distinct, and so does Plato. The whole world is full of gods, he can say, but he does also passionately assert that there is a God, who is real, who is one, who is supremely good, and who is that indeed than which nothing can be better. That God is "the Idea of the Good" he would sometimes think a proper thing to say, and sometimes not. Three things about the gods he categorically denies: (a) that they do not exist; (b) that they exist but are indifferent to the affairs of men; (c) that they can be bribed by prayers or offerings to confer benefits (II 888c). In his old age he became willing to have people persecuted and punished for maintaining these heresies, a sad thought, even though heresies they be (II 907E).

Summing up, then, we must take notice that in reading Plato's Works we meet, first, with the gods of popular religion and common talk, secondly, with the gods who are represented by the heavenly bodies and by the causes of many arts and accidents, and are themselves subject to "Necessity," and thirdly with the supreme Good, who guides the world along the best possible path. And all these notions of God merge and emerge in and out of many varying speculations.

VIII

DIFFICULTIES

A. IDEAS

OF the matters which Plato discusses in a way peculiar to himself two are particularly famous, Platonic Friendship and the Platonic Ideas. The first of these we can put on one side for the moment, if only because what *we* mean by Platonic Friendship is a long way from anything which ever crossed Plato's mind. He would never have dreamt of the possibility of a man feeling an affectionate regard for a woman without the sex factor entering in, nor would he have thought it in the least desirable even supposing it could be achieved.

With the Ideas it is different. Plato often fell to writing about the Forms or Models or Ideas that lay behind or within or alongside of particular objects, when he was by way of explaining what you mean by saying that something is *real*. The word he uses is *eidos*. It is not, in fact, the same word as *idea*, though that also is a Greek word. But *eidos* has come to be represented in English by *idea*, and as long as we regard *idea* in the English as a technical expression it will serve well enough. We must put aside the ordinary everyday use of the word where it means what is possibly unreal or untrue ("I have an idea his name was Peter"), because the Platonic Ideas are very real indeed in their own way.

To say that Plato had a Theory of Ideas is to say too much. It would be truer to say that he indulged in speculations about Ideas which occupy some of the least negligible sections of the Dialogues, and have a place in very many of them from the *Hippias Major* (III 289D) to the *Timæus*

(III 51D). Even our best philosophers do not altogether understand what these speculations signify, but every attentive reader needs to have some notion of what they are all about. They depend upon two difficulties of language which Plato felt, and most other Greek thinkers felt with him, Socrates amongst them. And these difficulties were both based on mistaken assumptions. It was assumed that if a thing had a name, it must be a real thing. It was also assumed that if it was true to say that *A is B*, or a swan *is* white, or my pen *is* lost, then *A* or a swan or my pen must exist. The two difficulties that arise out of these assumptions are fairly obvious. First, how comes it that many different things have the same name, since that seems to imply that Table, for example, is one (name) and many (things). And the One and the Many can hardly be the same. Secondly, if by asserting that *A is B*, I assert that *A* exists, do I also assert that *A* exists if I say *A is not B* or simply *A is not*? Now these difficulties do not arise when logic has got properly to work on language, but in Plato's time logic was in its childhood, and so for him and his contemporaries these were real difficulties. Plato proposed to solve them by means of the Ideas.

His simplest explanation is given in the *Republic* (Book X), where he is trying to explain the place of Art in our experience; and the exposition is simple, because it is assumed that the readers are already used to the Ideas (II 596A) and the business here is to apply them to the elucidation of the nature of works of art. "We have been accustomed," Socrates says, "to suppose the existence of what one may call Ideas, one apiece for each collection of things to which we give the same name. For example, there are many beds and tables, but of the Ideas connected with these pieces of furniture there are only two, one Idea of a Bed and one of a Table. The craftsman, when he makes beds and tables, has his eye on the Idea, but, of course, no craftsman actually manufactures the Idea. He does not manufacture what we

may call Bed in general, but a particular bed (II 597A). Therefore we may say that he does not construct the real thing, but only something like it. And this something is an indistinct and shadowy thing in comparison with reality or truth." What does this amount to? It amounts to saying that since there are many objects, none of them exactly alike but all called beds, this is only possible because they all reproduce in a greater or less degree the Idea of Bed which is all Bed, the whole of Bed, and nothing but Bed. Plato sometimes says that the Idea of Bed is related to the particular bed as a pattern to a copy; sometimes he says that the Idea is present in the particular bed; and sometimes he says that the particular bed has a share in the Idea (II 476A).

This is the Form or Idea in its barest presentation. It becomes much richer and more significant when we know, as plenty of passages in Plato tell us, that the Ideas are not merely Ideas of things, but of qualities and virtues such as the Beautiful, the Just, and supreme over all, the Idea of the Good (II 508E). There must, in fact, be many of these Ideas, composing a world of their own, and this world of Ideas is the *real* world. As it is not the world we see and touch, Plato says it is in heaven, because it is easy to believe that in heaven there must be vast stores of things unseen.

This all sounds rather fantastic. Are not the Ideas pure supposition, and supposition which is quite unverifiable? Is not all this as much as to call the real unreal and the unreal real? It may be so. Yet at least it solves Plato's difficulties up to a point, perhaps only by introducing new ones. But it does seem to suggest a way in which the One is related to the Many. And it does show in what sense I might say that Bed or Table exists, in fact, that Bed or Table is, and in what sense on the other hand I can say that this particular bed is small or that particular table is green. It also throws some light on the problem of philosophy as a whole in the shape in which Plato inherited it, a shape nicely outlined by

Grote in a passage where he contrasts the substance of things and the perception that we have of them:

"The philosophers of the Eleatic school—first Xenophanes and after him Parmenides—took a distinct path of their own. To find that which was real, and which lay as it were concealed behind or under the delusive phenomena of sense, they had recourse to mental abstractions. They supposed a Substance or Something not perceivable by sense, but only cogitable or conceivable by reason; a One and All, continuous and finite, which was not only real and self-existent, but was the only reality—eternal, immovable and unchangeable, and the only matter knowable. The phenomena of sense, which began and ended one after another (they thought), were essentially delusive, uncertain, contradictory among themselves, and open to endless diversity of opinion." (Grote, *History of Greece*, ch. lxvii.)

If the Ideas are permanent and the particular objects that proceed from them are transitory, that would explain away this double and doubtful aspect of what is real and what seems real.

Nevertheless, these explanations will fail more often than not to satisfy the mind. And Plato himself has given a powerful criticism of them in the first part of the *Parmenides*. There the youthful Socrates is represented as maintaining the existence of Ideas, and Parmenides is pressing him as to the implications of this. First of all it is established that there must be an Idea of everything (III 130). Of course there are Ideas of Likeness, and the Beautiful, and the Good, even of Fire and Water, but are there Ideas of Hair and Mud and Dirt? Socrates says he does not think there are, but is afraid he is falling into nonsense by saying so, and Parmenides in the politest possible way says that is so and passes on to the next point. Suppose there are Ideas, how do particular things have a share in them? For example, there are things which are called great because they partake of Greatness. Now each of these things has a share in the Idea of Greatness.

Therefore the Idea of Greatness is divided, and different things have a portion of absolute Greatness which is less than absolute Greatness. Then you need a new Idea of Greatness to cover all the varying ideas of Greatness, and you will have to go on supplying new Ideas of Greatness to cover all the new cases *ad infinitum*. But further, the Idea and the particular thing that shares in it cannot be like, otherwise one would need a new Idea of Likeness to account for this (III 133). The passage from Bertrand Russell quoted on page 68 throws some light on such difficulties as this. The situation seems really to be that if the Idea is not distributed among the particular things it does nothing to account for them, and if it is distributed it ceases to be the Idea, which must again be sought elsewhere.

In the course of this part of the discussion Socrates has said (III 132B) that it may be that each of the Ideas is a Thought and exists nowhere else than in our souls. This is a great remark and really hits the truth, but it is objected by Parmenides that in that case everything that partakes of an Idea must think, in fact, that "all things think." The point is not pursued any further, but in what Socrates has said lies the germ of the true defence of the Ideas.

The argument, however, proceeds to a further point. It is that if absolute Ideas exist they cannot exist in us or they would not be absolute and independent but related to us. But, in fact, they are only related to one another and not to the notions in our minds. So we do not partake of absolute knowledge, and therefore the Ideas of the Beautiful and the Good and so forth are unknown to us (III 134B). The most likely person to have the knowledge of Ideas is God. But in that case God cannot have a knowledge of human things, because the Ideas and human things are not related. And therefore the gods cannot rule us and are not our masters. Socrates remarks very naturally that it is an amazing argument which deprives God of knowledge.

This is a bare summary of what Plato wrote himself. And Aristotle is a consistent critic of the Ideas along a rather different line. He allowed that particular Things exhibited Form and that an Idea underlay the Things that shared a common Form. But he denied altogether that the Idea could ever be separated from the particular Things. It existed in them. This does away with Plato's transcendentalism, his tendency, that is, to suppose another and superior world more real than ours. Possibly both Plato and Aristotle would have been glad to employ the modern notion expressed in the words Subject-Object relation. Both of them would have allowed that wherever there is knowledge, there is He who knows and That which is known, and these two are inseparable, in fact, different aspects of the same event. You cannot take That which is known and stow it away somewhere or it ceases at once to be That which is known.

The truth is, the Ideas won't work. They must either be "in heaven" all by themselves, or else must cease to be Ideas. And they are in fact important not because they explain anything much but because they give shape to a certain striking and not altogether rare turn of mind, the turn of mind which makes a man feel the vague and unsubstantial character of this world about us and yet its power to signify or reveal a permanent world, a *real* world of which the world about us is both the shadow and the assurance. Men with a certain rather distinguished turn of mind are always feeling what Wordsworth felt:

Blank misgivings of a creature

Moving about in worlds not realised

and then

A Presence which is not to be put by,
and a Theory of Ideas is one way of giving these feelings shape. Religion and Poetry often attempt the same thing, and as often as not fall into pure Platonism.

This happens in two ways. First there are what may be called traditional Platonists who have been told about Plato

and have studied him and have absorbed his view of things. Coleridge and Spenser and Shelley are such traditional Platonists. Plato taught Shelley to write in *Adonais* :

The One remains, the many change and pass;

Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly

and taught Spenser to write in *An Hymn of Heavenly Beauty* :

Ah, then my hungry soul! which long hast fed

On idle fancies of thy foolish thought,

And with false beauties' flattering bait misled,

Hast after vain deceitful shadows sought,

Which all are fled, and now have left thee nought.

Ah! look at last up to that Sovereign Light,

From whose pure beams all perfect beauty springs,

That kindleth love in every godly sprite,

Even the love of God.

But there is also the other kind, the Personal Platonists, who without having learnt from Plato are nevertheless capable of bits of pure Platonism, because that is the natural turn of their minds. St. Paul is such a one and Wordsworth another. Paul had little Dialectic, but he had great Ideas. It would hardly be possible to be more Platonic than he is in II Cor. iv, 18, v, 1 : " We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle (he means our bodies) were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." It is interesting to note that this passage, with its full-fledged Platonism, is derived from a passage in the Old Testament which is Platonic in embryo, the place where the design for the tabernacle, the Jews' first house of God, is being described and they are told more than once to see to it that they make all things according to the pattern showed them in the mount (Exodus xxv, 40, Hebrews viii, 5).

Another very Platonic passage from St. Paul is at Romans i, 20. It is really the same thought in reverse. "The invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen since the creation of the world, being perceived through the created things." It is thoroughly Platonic, too, to speak of God as "the king of the ages, the incorruptible, invisible, only God" (I Timothy i, 17). And in Ephesians iii, 14, Paul speaks of God as "the Father from whom every fatherhood in heaven and earth is named," or, as Armitage Robinson says, "the Father of whom all other fathers are derivations or types."

The case of Wordsworth is more difficult. His deeply Platonic cast of mind is expressed so often and so unselfconsciously, and in so many separate touches, that it is difficult to take it out of its context and yet preserve it. And there is furthermore the possibility that Wordsworth may actually have imbibed some Platonism from Coleridge, though there is not much reason to think that he ever studied the Dialogues at all seriously at first-hand himself. But such a passage as the following might be due to Coleridge:

immutably survive

For our support, the measures and the forms,
Which an abstract intelligence supplies;
Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not.

(*Excursion iv*, 73-76.)

But Wordsworth has his own doctrine of Forms—it is a favourite word of his—and that doctrine is not in the least Plato's doctrine of Ideas. He also has very definitely a doctrine of Recollection which is not at all unlike Plato's, though not the same. It seems to be independent of Plato's writings; at least one can trace no sure debt to him. The *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* is an exposition of Wordsworth's doctrine of Recollection and a fine piece of personal Platonism. So also is the apostrophe addressed to the "Prime

self-existing cause and end of all" which follows the passage from the *Excursion* just quoted above. "There endure," Wordsworth says:

"For apprehension those transcendent truths
Of the pure intellect, that stand as laws
(Submission constituting strength and power)
Even to thy Being's infinite majesty!
This universe shall pass away—a work
Glorious, because the shadow of thy might,
A step, or link, for intercourse with thee."

(*Excursion iv*, 96-102.)

It means intercourse with the Prime self-existing cause and end of all. To Wordsworth it was natural to link his experiences of the world around him with an intellectual world which was the work of pure thought and related to the world of the senses as substance is to shadow. In some ways, too, Wordsworth was much in advance of Plato, though he had nothing like his wide range of speculation. But Plato never came so far in morals as Wordsworth did when he wrote in the *Excursion* (Bk. x. ll 1012-1016):

Life, I repeat, is energy of love
Divine or human, exercised in pain,
In strife, in tribulation, and ordained,
If so approved and sanctified, to pass
Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy.

We shall often find Plato more intelligible if we remember that in spite of his great powers of mind and his genius for literature, he was in several important respects a beginner compared to the thinkers of our own day, a beginner in mathematics, logic and ethics, for instance, greatly illuminated, it is true, and assuredly enjoying "beginner's luck," but also with some of a beginner's limitations.

B. ART

IT looks as if Plato must have had peculiar powers of sight, both physical and mental. The Dialogues give the impression of being the work of a man who got a particular pleasure from looking at things and people. Seeing meant more to him than hearing, one would suppose. For although the Dialogues are so full of speech, the speech seems to be often entirely for the sake of the thought, whereas the images and scenes are transcribed for their own sake as much as for the argument's sake, as if Plato treasured the sights he saw more than the sounds he heard. And this may well have been so. If, as has been suggested above (p. 52), he grew deaf, it may be that he had abnormal powers of sight at the expense of his powers of hearing. He makes Socrates say in the *Republic* that sight is the most precious or costly of the senses because, besides the eyes to see and the object to be seen, a third thing is necessary, namely, light (II 507c). He seems to feel that this gives honour to seeing. And in the *Timæus* (III 45b), the eyes are the first created of the bodily organs as being the most important. In the *Phædrus* sight is spoken of in a much more elevated way as the keenest of the bodily senses, and the one with which men perceive beauty and become lovers, and that by a power of recollection, because in a former existence they have been initiated and have had a vision in a pure light of complete, simple, tranquil, and happy things (III 250c). This is a highly exalted passage. But Plato was also interested in the material process involved in the act of seeing, and describes it in detail in *Theætetus* (I 156de) and in *Timæus* (III 45c), but without enough physiological knowledge.

Undoubtedly his experience of the outside world through the eye was intense and individual. And that being so, a reader might look with special expectations to see what he has to say about the arts. The reader will almost certainly be disappointed. Plato's natural interest in art seems, generally

speaking, to be less than his interest in the crafts. As we have already seen (p. 35), he had evidently watched the artisans in Athens at their work with great attention, and makes use of what he has seen in a hundred ways, often providing a little picture or vignette of some good workman he had noticed. And the opportunities for making such observations were frequent in Athens. The Athenian had many things he could look at with the absorbed interest which we can now ordinarily find only at the watch-maker's shop-window or where they are repairing clothes. The fine arts seem decidedly to have left less impression on him. His Dialogues do not suggest any very strong æsthetic experience from them, and when he mentions works of art they are apt to be the curiosities of art (e.g., III 215A). It is given to very few minds to be sensitive to contact with all the arts, and those minds are perhaps not the best minds. The best minds are mostly specialised. Plato must have had a great feeling for the artistic side of literature, and his pleasure in art was perhaps mainly confined to literature. Even in literature, however, he displays in the Dialogues, if they represent his own opinions, a curious Puritanism and what seem a rather crude notion about Art and Imitation.

Imitation indeed is the fundamental notion with which he approaches all art, and this is due to his being interested in the arts largely from a particular point of view. It may be that he takes the pleasure of them for granted. But the first thing which objects of art seem to raise in his mind is whether they are *real*. They seem somehow to be imitations of something else, or at any rate the makers of them seem to be imitating something. It is easy (though wrong) to say this about pictures or statues, but Plato says it doggedly about literature and music also. If in Homer old Nestor makes a speech, this is an imitation of a long winded old gentleman making a speech after the manner in which it is done in real life. If music produces sound, they are sounds which imitate the sounds of nature. And on the whole Plato always seems

to think that the imitations are inferior to the originals. He does not much think that the business of Art is to select and order the somewhat formless and disordered way in which Nature presents the objects that make up the natural scene or the noises of animals and storms and waterfalls.

This is due to a habit of mind which is just the opposite to ours. We habitually look to art and invention to make progress and reach a new level in the representation of reality, and to give permanence to what is otherwise too fleeting and formless to hold together. The portrait painter, for example, catches the pretty lady at her prettiest and keeps her there. And no doubt Plato would have assented to all this as a function of art. But his natural tendency was to look back or up into heaven, as he called it, and find there the realities of which the many works of art are copies, realities, in fact, whose very existence alone makes the copying possible. This is certainly not to make the best of art, though it is to use the products of art as potential material for solving some of the problems of philosophy.

In regard to music, however, Plato was prepared to go a good deal further than this. And here the eye had its contribution to make no less than the ear. His strongest impressions of music were undoubtedly in connection with dancing, and dancing in chorus was developed in ancient Greece so as to create a far more impressive effect than is ever secured by our over-exuberant tradition. Still, even to-day many people profess to find a great æsthetic satisfaction in ballet, and we may say roughly that Plato did so too. He accepted the traditional view that Music was the chief of the Arts, the *More par excellence* in action. He attributed to it not unnaturally a harmonising effect, but the harmony he had in mind was not singing or playing in parts, as with us, but being in time and using a noble mode. Greek music is even now not very well understood, but there were many more modes than the major and minor, and each had its particular effect upon the soul. One was martial, another was lan-

guishing, another was lugubrious, and so forth. And this led Plato with his Socratic interest in the soul to attach great importance to the moral aspect of Art. The soul, like music, was intended to be harmonious. It could be brought into tune, it could discard the enfeebling modes. And this moralising led Plato astray. He too often considered whether some artistic activity was an imitation of the Good, and he sometimes tried to determine this from its effect upon those whom practised it or had the experience of it.

This approach to Music was not a very profitable one. And unfortunately he transferred it from Music to Literature. Of painting he has much less to say, because it was so obviously a form of close imitation, and we might as well go back to the model and determine the Good or Bad of that. Furthermore, if we are to consider works of art largely for their effect upon the soul, Music (together with Gymnastic, that is to say, Dancing) and Literature are vastly more important, since they are accepted instruments of education and school subjects. Drawing was only educational when it was geometrical drawing, and in the long run tended to become, in school at any rate, a brand of Mathematics, and then both Music and Mathematics eventually soared into Astronomy, and all three led on to Philosophy.

Literature, however, lay rather apart. Its direct usefulness in education was greater, and the range of its imitations more extensive, almost as extensive indeed as life itself, except when life took to philosophy and thought took to abstractions. In respect of form, at least if it took the form of verse, it had its obvious contact with music. In respect of matter it was somewhat akin to painting. Plato probably thought of it as superior to painting in its powers of description. And it certainly looks as if Homer and Greek Tragedy and the works of Plato himself are superior as artistic achievements to even the best of Greek painting and sculpture. But neither in the case of literature or of these other arts did it occur to Plato that they were artistic *creations*, that they

were new and better than what they derived from, and that they exist in a world of their own. It would appear as though he actually thought his own Dialogues were mostly imitations of people talking in the age of Pericles. That is one reason why he takes some trouble to reproduce the circumstances of the time and even the very year to which he attaches a Dialogue. He is not easily caught out in such details. But it would be interesting to know what he would have thought if anybody had suggested to him that the Dialogues were self-subsisting realities, and that their existence need not be accounted for by any such explanations as he used in order to account for tables and chairs, as also for poems and for all good and beautiful things.

His views on literature are worth looking at a little more in detail. Plato cannot have been indifferent to literature or he would not have written so well himself. But he was a prose writer, and prose was still a comparatively new thing. Much of it was no more literature than most scientific papers are to-day. Two great historians, Herodotus and Thucydides, had already appeared, but were not yet appreciated in the way they are now. They were *Logographoi*, or recorders, and the name had something depreciatory in it. And the rest of prose consisted of speeches written to be got by heart and spoken in the law-courts by prosecutor or defendant, since lawyers did not then appear to represent their clients.

Only poetry had as yet the standing of an art, and it was an art which Plato had practised as a young man and then laid by. He looks at it from a very detached point of view, without much respect and sometimes almost with alarm. The choric ode he admits if it hymns the gods in terms suited to their majesty, mainly because there is in such compositions rhythm both gymnastic and musical, which must do good to the soul (II 412A). Almost every other kind of poetry he thinks incompatible with the good of the community unless it is very carefully censored and selected. Large sections of Homer, because they imitate what is wrong in conduct or

divinity, he objected to as bad for morale and useless or worse than useless for education. And he objected even more to tragedy because the characters to which the actors attach their imitations are under the influence of passion and therefore sinning against Temperance. Still more he objected to comedy because of its low buffoonery. In the *Laws* he makes the authorities invite players of every sort to submit their plays to the magistrates to see if they concur in their sentiment with the sentiments and laws of the constitution, since the constitution itself is the work of poets and is nothing less than the finest of all dramas, "the dramatisation of a noble and perfect life" (II 817B, trans. A. E. Taylor). Plato does not seem to think that even tragedy will often pass the test.

This Puritanism, expressing itself in a censorship and in an official anthology of permitted verse, sponsored by the Minister of Education (II 811), seems very illiberal and odd to us, but it represents apparently Plato's final opinion and is not inconsistent with his earlier teaching. It becomes rather more explicable, though hardly more defensible, when some other odd notions of his are put alongside it. One of these is an extraordinary Conservatism. New poetry, he alleges, always brings change with it, and as a good political constitution once devised should be unalterable, we cannot allow new poetry to exercise its disintegrating influence. What binds one generation to the next is that the same poetry should be known by heart and passed on by the parents to the children from one generation to another. There is something in this. No doubt the long-standing custom now in abeyance of expecting everyone to know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments in the vulgar tongue and having them hung up conspicuously in every church tended to stabilise conduct and made for solidarity. And an Index of books which may not be read aims at the same object from the opposite direction. But Plato did not seem to feel at all that if something was gained, much was also lost that way. The truth is that he thought poorly of literature, although perhaps he loved it.

For prose, in fact, he could do no more in the *Laws* than make the Athenian who does most of the talking, presumably himself, offer the ironical suggestion that the *Laws* itself might be taken as the standard of what was admissible (II 811E). In poetry there would not be much beyond choric odes of unimpeachable sentiment, and if any new odes were to be composed they must be composed by men over fifty years of age. Literature must be content to be the handmaid of Morals. It was much too unreal to exist for its own sake.

This unreality of Art is what lies at the root of Plato's misgivings. All things come into existence, he says, either by nature, by chance, or by art. Nature and chance (II 889) give birth to the whole heavens and all they contain, and then to all animals and plants. Art, the subsequent and late-born product of these causes, has since given birth to certain toys with little real substance in them, copies as shadowy as the arts themselves. If there are arts which really produce anything of genuine worth, they are those which lend their aid to nature (i.e. the applied arts) like medicine, agriculture, gymnastic." (Trans. adapted from Taylor.)

Adopted towards Literature, this attitude brings with it the surprising view implicit in the *Ion* that the poet must be an expert in everything that he describes. *Ion* is a professional reciter who can recite all Homer and he therefore fancies he can give a good lecture, as indeed he very well might have done. But Socrates points to different parts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* where not a poet or a reciter would be required as a lecturer, but someone quite different. In one passage (*Il.* xi 639) a physician would be required to interpret the lines; in another (*Il.* xxiv 80) a fisherman, in another (*Od.* xx 351) a seer. The *Ion* with true Platonic inconclusiveness does not give the true answer to these contentions, which is that the poet must be expert in words, not in medicine or fishing or the occult, of which he needs only what common knowledge and his own sensibility can provide.

But if Plato seems on the whole to mistake the character

and purpose of the arts, this does not prevent him from contributing very valuable and delightful remarks upon them by the way. He discusses Beauty and the Beautiful in many passages and in whole Dialogues, and Art is bound to come in there. We must take into account that he made no clear distinction between Fine Art and applied skills, that he never got away from the conception of Art as Imitation, and that there was a strong streak of Puritanism in him. If we accept these elements of his thinking we can be greatly stimulated, and particularly in trying to discover what Beauty is. But in this quest Plato was apt not to have Art so much as Love in mind.

VIII

C. LOVE

LOVE is commonly thought of by us as one of two things, either as love of the brethren, that is philanthropy, or as what we call "falling in love." Both have the nature of virtue and of duty. But while philanthropy is active and entails something to be done, love between the sexes is passive in the sense that it is something that happens to you and at its best an experience of rapture. That is why we call it passionate. It is due to Christian influence that both these things are now called love. But among the ancient Greeks it was not so. Eros, the great god of Love, was the god of the passionate rapturous kind of love, and that kind alone was thought worthy of the name.

It is said that love between married people was not reckoned with in Greece because the women were too stupid. But, if true at all, this was only true among the better educated and wealthier sections of society. There perhaps never was a nation in the world above the level of savagery where it is not usual among the ordinary work-a-day people for a young man to

cast his eyes upon some young girl and wish to make a home with her, and find in that as much rapture as he was capable of, and bear her off, and live happily, or at any rate tolerably, ever after. But among the more comfortable and luxurious where husband and wife are not so dependant upon each other for their well-being there have always been variations or perversions of this best kind of love-making. And in ancient Greece, and perhaps especially in Athens and Sparta, both intelligent and fashionable men found more pleasure in one another's society than in the society of their women folk, and had come to take it for granted that men might feel a passionate regard for young men and youths, and talk about it.

This is very tiresome for the readers of Plato to-day. The Greeks, at any rate the best of them, including Socrates and Plato, knew quite as well as we do the solid grounds for disapproving of this kind of thing altogether, but although they condemned it if it abandoned a proper self-control, they did not condemn it altogether. They did not think it so utterly sterile as it appears to modern sentiment. They thought there was an educating value in a youth being with an older friend, if they both behaved particularly well, more bravely and more wisely, for the sake of one another. And so there is; for such a contact approximates to the relation between teacher and pupil, which is perhaps the easiest and only comfortable relation between the young and the old, easier and more natural than between employer and employee, between master and apprentice, between scoutmaster and scout, between priest and penitent, even easier on the whole than between father and son.

But the Greeks accepted a more romantic view. They did not pretend to conceal their admiration for their young friends' beauty as well as for their manners or their wit. Other people did not hesitate to identify these pairs of romantic friends as lovers, or to chaff them or criticise them for their intimacy. The admirer was noted as being in a transport of

pleasure or misery, and his boy friend as being petulant or indifferent or possibly at times affectionate.

The consequence of all this is that in the Dialogues there is an element of what we should call vastly silly talk and more about love and lovers. The admirers and the admired are equally undesirable by our standards, and offensive to good taste in literature. But it cannot be helped. Hardly any of us can like it, but we must try not to mind it much. In places it is certainly delicately done, but it bothers several of the Dialogues, and particularly the *Phædrus* and *Symposium*, which are in other respects two of the great ones. In the *Phædrus* it goes unredeemed, but in the *Symposium*, in some ways the most splendid of all, the true doctrine of Love emerges and is very noble. The diners at the banquet from which it takes its name of *Symposium* agree to praise Love in turns in honour of Agathon, whose tragedy had won the prize at the great dramatic festival two days before. The speeches are varied and brilliant, but Socrates raises the whole matter to its highest possible level in a speech, supposed to be reporting the utterance of a prophetess and culminating in two tremendous sentences, to which Jowett's translation does something like justice. Diotima the prophetess is here instructing Socrates in "the greater and more hidden mysteries of love" (III 209E) :

"He who would proceed rightly in this matter should begin in youth to turn to beautiful forms; and first, if his instructor guide him rightly, he should learn to love one such form only—out of that he should create fair thoughts; and soon he will himself perceive that the beauty of one form is truly related to the beauty of another; and then if beauty in general is his pursuit, how foolish would he be not to recognise that the beauty in every form is one and the same! And when he perceives this he will abate his violent love of the one, which he will despise and deem a small thing, and will become a lover of all beautiful forms; this will lead him on to consider that the beauty of the mind is more honourable

than the beauty of the outward form. So that if a virtuous soul have but a little comeliness, he will be content to love and tend him, and will search out and bring to the birth thoughts which may improve the young, until his beloved is compelled to contemplate and see the beauty of institutions and laws, and understand that all is of one kindred, and that personal beauty is only a trifle; and after laws and institutions he will lead him on to the sciences, that he may see their beauty, being not like a servant in love with the beauty of one youth or man or institution, but looking at the abundance of beauty and drawing towards the star of beauty, and creating and beholding many fair and noble thoughts and notions in boundless love of wisdom: until at length he grows and waxes strong, and at last the vision is revealed to him of a single science, which is the science of beauty everywhere. To this I will proceed; please to give me your very best attention.

“ For he who has been instructed thus far in the things of love, and who has learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession, when he comes towards the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty--and this, Socrates, is that final cause of all our former toils, which in the first place is everlasting—not growing and decaying, or waxing and waning; in the next place not fair in one point of view and foul in another, or at one time and in one relation or at one place fair, at another time or in another relation or at another place foul, as if fair to some and foul to others, or in the likeness of a face or hands or any other part of the bodily frame, or in any form of speech or knowledge, nor existing in any other being; as for example, an animal, whether in earth or heaven, but beauty only, absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting, which without diminution and without increase, or any change, is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things. He who under the influence of true love rising upward from these begins to see that beauty is not far from the end. And the true order of going or being led by another to the things of love, is to use

the beauties of earth as steps along which he mounts upwards for the sake of that other beauty, going from one to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair actions, and from fair actions to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is. Do you not see that in that communion only, beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities; for he has hold not of an image but of a reality, and bringing forth and educating true virtue to become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal men may. Would that be an ignoble life?" (III 210A-211D : 212A).

Aleciades who has burst in upon Agathon's party in a rather drunken state concludes the *Symposium* very suitably with the praise of Socrates as a lover, a soldier and a dialectician. He confesses that he has been absolutely hypnotised by him. The dialogue contains all the way through from start to finish wonderful things about love which is mostly spoken of as a kind of transcendent friendship and affinity. It evidently was or had been for Plato the great experience of Beauty, a true rapture and a true illumination. He attached a great deal of importance to affinities and accounted for pairs of all sorts in nature, in mathematics, and in politics by a principle of mutual love bringing them and keeping them together. If he had been familiar with what we call gravitation he would have called it Love. He would have been quite seriously delighted to think that it is Love that makes the world go round. It is all the more a pity from our point of view that he did not think of Love more nearly as we do.

IX

POLITICS

CONSIDERING that Plato, although his birth and upbringing would naturally have led him into political life, definitely turned away from this and went in for being a philosopher, it may seem a little surprising that his two longest works, the *Republic* and the *Laws* are both essentially political treatises on a grand scale, and one of them, the *Republic*, is the piece on which his reputation largely hangs. Furthermore another of his works, the *Statesman*, though shorter, deals, as its name suggests, with politics, and is one into which he put a great deal of care and thought. As has already been suggested (p. 24) this seems to be partly due to accident or rather to good fortune. Designing to write some short Socratic dialogues on the cardinal virtues he began an attempt in dialogue form at defining justice, and presently fell upon the happy notion of constructing an ideal state in order to see in it justice writ large. Thus the *Republic* came into existence, and Plato found himself committed to very extensive political speculations. These speculations he tried out more or less in Sicily. Then meditating on his failure and feeling the need for a closer and more rigid examination of public life he proposed to himself a trilogy, a set of three dialogues on the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, and the *Philosopher* (I 217A). Only the first two were actually written, but he began, and before he died had almost completed his longest work, the *Laws*, to show what it was possible to achieve in practice by way of good government if the people could be got into the right frame of mind. To secure this condition propaganda would be necessary, and for this purpose the various laws

were to be introduced with preambles proœmia II 887A) expressing their purpose and importance. This he had attempted on a small scale for some actual legislation in Sicily (see p. 51). Thus it may be said that theorising had led to the writing of the *Republic* and practical politics to the *Laws*, and less directly to the *Statesman*.

The *Republic* and the *Laws* compared with most of the Dialogues are not difficult to understand in the main, and the different parts where they occur are in the nature of digressions from the main lines of argument. The real difficulty with these two dialogues is not to understand them but to avoid being misled by them. Our notions of the state are so largely derived from ancient Greek authors that in their political writings they seem to be treading familiar ground. Monarchy, aristocracy, oligarchy, tyranny, democracy are all Greek words, and when we find them in Plato or Aristotle we are apt to take it that they have in mind much the same sort of thing as we have. But if we are thinking, as we well may be, of the reigns of Charles I or George II or George III or Henry VIII or Queen Victoria, we are introducing a great deal that Plato could not possibly have had in mind. The state for him is very unlike the United Kingdom or France, and still less like Russia or the United States. The problems that confront men living in communities are to some extent the same, whatever the community is like, but the way of going about to solve them in London and in ancient Athens is extraordinarily different. In some ways the Greek City State was more like a glorified English Public School than like England as a whole.

In reading the *Republic* or the *Laws* therefore it is useful to have some things in mind more constantly than would be needed if one was reading Macaulay or G. M. Trevelyan or Bryce's *American Commonwealth*. And first of all perhaps it is useful to observe that neither Plato nor Aristotle were historians. The English authors just named above are all three of them historians, and political writing apart from

history can hardly hope to be very convincing now, unless men are ready to be convinced by tendentious ideological treatises. History, though too easily distorted, has on the whole won our confidence. But in ancient Greece there was not the same possibility of unearthing the past nor the same belief in the usefulness of doing it. Herodotus and Thucydides often make a magnificent use of what they could find out. They often come by conjecture upon what a well-trained modern historian would take five years to establish, but they learnt most from the contemporary state and not from the state as it had been. Plato is in the same position; or even worse off, for there is not much reason to think that he had come to appreciate Herodotus and Thucydides at their full worth. Possibly no one had in his time. He was keen on "modern science," but not keen on "modern authors" particularly. In many ways this is a great gain. It makes his political writings more creative and less purely critical. On the other hand his speculations are not checked with enough vigour by the experience of the past, though he does sometimes make his characters appeal to it (II 707B).

This is seen in the way in which he takes some things for granted—two things in particular. First he takes it for granted that the City State, with its boundaries hardly a good day's walk from the City itself, is the only kind of community in which a good life can be lived: the sprawling Eastern empires have nothing to be said for them. Secondly, the pressing problem of government is to know what is the best thing to order the people to do and not, as most of us moderns think, to get them to do what has been ordered. Each of these points merits consideration.

As to the size of the State this might be determined on theoretical grounds as it is in fact in the *Republic* (II 423B). The community needs to produce the necessities of life and a reasonable amount of the comforts, amenities, and luxuries. If anything is to be imported, things to export must also be produced. There is bound to be a good deal of varied labour

and craftsmanship to be provided, but can there be any limit to the variety of products or to the degree of specialisation by which they are produced? We should probably say that it is not possible, or, if possible, not desirable to fix a limit, but Plato would say the opposite for several reasons; partly because in fact the Greek-speaking communities were all limited to something which was certainly less than half a million souls, partly because it was a frequent practice to limit the foundation of a new city to a fixed number, and partly because a city of (say) a million inhabitants would seem to be a community no longer, but a mere aggregation. Plato and not a few of his contemporaries knew that the City State was largely the effect of the geography of Greece, with its many mountains and small plains between, but they did not seem to reflect that in some parts of the world which they knew of the geography was entirely different, and therefore the community and way of life appropriate to it might have to be organised on very different lines. To some extent it was that they were not interested in foreign notions of government any more than they were in foreign languages. And then again they knew well enough that the small Greek states had defeated the hordes of Persia in a long war at the beginning of the 5th century B.C., and they drew the conclusion that quality and not quantity was to be the aim in the organisation of the state. And this could only be if every individual were closely affected by the community he lived in. And again they were no doubt strongly influenced by a feeling which was based on experience rather than on reason as to what was "the right number" for a state if it was to be a unit; just as we feel that a school might quite well have a thousand pupils, or in a densely populated area even two thousand, but five thousand would be too many, and yet we could hardly say at all convincingly why. It is just more than we do have in one school, and half-a-million was more than they did have in a City-State.

The objections which the Greeks had in theory to a large

country like Persia or Egypt are not so plainly expressed in Plato as one would expect. But briefly they were tyrannies or unconstitutional monarchies, in which the ruler could not know what was good for his over-numerous subjects and therefore ruled by fancy and not with the idea of the Good in view, while the subjects or citizens could take no more interest in public affairs than what could be signified by obedience to the imperial rescripts. And that being so, they could not live the Good Life.

In contrast to this it was possible in a Greek city such as Athens to have a democracy where the government was the business of every citizen individually, or where, even if there was a tyrant, at least he might find out what was good for the community and promote that good. In Plato's time the cities of the mainland had in fact long passed through and beyond the stage of tyranny. The tyrants of Syracuse were a revival and a piece of political backwardness. Three things however must be understood about the Greek city, which make it something more than a city but less than a nation in our modern sense.

First, it was not just an important town. It had the countryside all round it providing or partially providing subsistence for the people, and this countryside was inhabited by citizens, who could walk to town to buy and sell or to take part in the legal and legislative business of the state. The whole area of Attica, which is what the land is called of which Athens was the capital, is about one-fifth the size of Yorkshire. This made it a relatively large state of some 1200 square miles.

Secondly, the state from the political point of view consisted of the free male adults over twenty years of age, and it has been calculated that these would comprise only one in nine of the whole population. If there were 40,000 of them which there may have been, then there were at least 120,000 other free persons, mostly women and children, and there were rather more foreign settlers and slaves than the whole

free population. This makes 350,000 in all Athens, so the democracy was far from implying anything like universal suffrage. On the other hand of the 40,000 a surprising number not only served on juries and voted in assemblies and elected officials, but themselves acted in some official capacity sooner or later, partly by chance, for the Greeks thought it a proper element of democracy that some offices should be filled by lot. It was certainly a way of suggesting that one citizen was as good as another.

Thirdly, there were many confederations and leagues of cities changing with kaleidoscopic frequency and ease, but there was no tendency to combine cities under a single government. In early times villages had united, and Sparta was such an amalgamation of old villages. And once or twice it had looked as if a real unification might take place. Dionysius I was tyrant of a great many cities, but this only meant that in a war these cities would all fight on the same side or at least would have difficulty in avoiding it. The great Philip of Macedon effected much more than that at the very end of Plato's life. And at the beginning of his life the so-called Athenian Empire had comprised a confederacy of two hundred allies banded together to secure the Greek world against Persia. Had Persia continued for long to be as threatening as in 480 B.C. the Greeks might have formed themselves into a single state (see Herodotus viii 144). They thought about it but in the end Athens provided a sufficient navy to repel the Persians, and the other cities and islands paid for it. Numerous commercial treaties also bound the allies together, but they remained independent sovereign states. This was perhaps not particularly fortunate for them, but it was very fortunate for us. If Athens had had the governing of all these communities to attend to, it would most likely have become sterile in art and science and philosophy. As it was, of the philosophers only Plato and Socrates were natives.

One feature of a comparatively small and largely self-sufficing

community is that in many respects the conditions under which it works and is governed are fixed. In a country such as Britain, where the population has been increasing rapidly for about 200 years and the industrial system has been changing all the time, conservatism is out of place, and the never ending adjustment is fatiguing and at times unsettling, however stimulating it may be. But in Athens the population was more or less fixed and the conditions of trade and industry astonishingly stable. It is perhaps not too much to say that through the Fifth and Fourth Centuries B.C. what we call "inventions" were unknown. Consequently if good laws could be framed and accepted they looked as if they might last for ever. And if the citizens were organised on the basis of a certain fixed population, that organisation would not soon need adjustment. It was worth trying for the very best arrangement instead of improvising something for each immediate crisis. The population of Athens and of the other states did in fact rise or fall perceptibly over each half century, but in the absence of statistics this took a long time to notice. The methods of production were less variable; Plato takes the trades and professions for granted. In the *Laws* he fixes the number of free families in the city which is being founded at 5040, because this number is divisible without remainder by 59 different whole numbers including all the natural numbers from 1 to 10 (II 738A). This is partly because he likes playing about with numbers, and partly because arithmetic really was difficult with all those letters for numbers. But it shows at any rate that about five thousand families was a suitable number, and whatever the number was it was a great advantage to have it fixed.

And now after having considered the size, or rather the smallness of the state that Plato had in mind, it is necessary to consider how he thought it could best be governed, and what kind of constitution would suit it best. And it is to be noted at once that, although Athens was a democracy and

nearly all the other Greek cities too, Plato is himself an ardent supporter of monarchy. In the *Republic* he desires that the state should be ruled by a Philosopher-King without any code of laws. In the *Statesman* he is still looking for a King, but he allows good laws as a second-best expedient (II 297E). In the *Laws* he places the supreme power in the hands of a Nocturnal Council, thus putting the Kingship into commission. The constitution of the State is determined by laws which the experts have imposed upon the citizens, but the Council is to see that the Constitution works.

What does this mean? It means obviously that Plato was not a believer in Democracy. The last thing he did was to trust the people. He had seen too much of the seamy side of Demos, the decline of the Periclean age, the Revolutions of 411 and 404, the arbitrary rule of the Thirty, and the precarious Democracy which succeeded the extinction of the Athenian Empire. But this was only the negative side of his political convictions. He did actively believe that men properly trained and with adequate knowledge ought to be at the head of affairs. He had it from Socrates that government was an art, and if so, only those who understood the art and had been apprenticed to it should be the rulers. It was the greatest of arts (II 817B), and therefore required the most strenuous training. In the best-governed state the best men having had the best training would rule the rest, and the best training meant being trained in philosophy. All this seemed to Plato to be only common sense.

Furthermore, if the Ruler was really wise, he would not need to be supported by laws. Laws would in fact cramp the full use of his gifts (II 295). They only apply in a very rough and ready way to particular cases (II 294B), whereas a wise man could apply his wisdom to each case on its merits, and in deciding the greater issues many wise men could confer together. It was necessary therefore to train a ruling class or group or gang, call it what you like, and to fit them for the work of government. That is why education

occupies so much space in the *Republic*. But it is to be remembered that it is the education of the Rulers that is being provided for. So deeply aristocratic was Plato's tendency in politics, both instinctively and intellectually, that he seemed to forget that the Ruled must be educated too, at least to the extent of knowing what was to be expected of them, and that this education is largely effected by having Laws. No doubt he took for granted that every state would have a large body of customs, and people soon get to know what is the customary thing to do. But the custom might be bad, and to be directed by a wise and well-trained man must be better, in fact the Best.

This is a crude and much simplified way of setting forth the elaborate political schemes which Plato constructed in the *Republic* and the *Laws*. But it is true to the point of view. And closely surveyed it certainly has a strong resemblance to Fascism. It displays that Mediterranean tendency towards Cæsarism which has sometimes blessed but more often ruined the countries of Southern Europe from Spain to Turkey. Its essential characteristics are a belief in leaving things to the expert, an admission that the expert has the right to boss the others, and an expectation that the others will think this tolerable or at least will tolerate it. One must not judge this view by the Fascism of Mussolini, because there the bosses were not experts. But it is worth observing that it is almost precisely opposed to the view that prevails in England, and for that matter in most English-speaking communities. The contrast is useful and deserves a little drawing out.

For in this country experts are employed within a certain limited field of their own, but are almost invariably controlled by those who are non-expert or even inexpert in the same field. This is noticeable in the choice of Ministers of the Crown. It would not be impossible to appoint an ex-teacher to be Minister of Education, but it would not be much fancied. Let the civil servants in his department pro-

vide the technical side of the business—and many of them need not know a great deal about it either. It is enough if the Minister is interested. He need not be well-informed, though he will probably make himself so as things go along. It was said of a certain First Lord of the Admiralty some years ago that he owed the appointment to the fact of his having rowed in the Cambridge VIII. It would have been nearer the mark to say that he was well-qualified by his ignorance of naval warfare. Take another field. The Bishops are a familiar institution. Everybody likes them to cut something of a figure, and their opinion is often solicited on topics of the day, but their directions on Faith and Morals are somewhat casually heeded. The Royal Academicians too are notables, but the nation to a large extent goes elsewhere for its principles of Art. In Britain we scarcely know how to make use of Academies. The positive importance attached to amateur opinions is also striking. People are free to say almost anything they like and in consequence they write to the papers, often in a very cautious tone, about matters which they have not seriously considered at all—and they often hit the nail on the head uncommonly hard.

Speaking generally it is this deep-seated belief in amateurism that has been the strength, if at times also the weakness of this country. It means sometimes doing things rather badly, but it sometimes means doing them supremely well because each is doing his own bit of the job in his own way, and it often achieves a lot because the amateur, as distinguished from the professional, does not confine himself to doing what will pay. Our statesmen, our teachers, our painters, our historians, and plenty of others have most of them something of the amateur about them, and in consequence there is a peculiar tone, one might almost say a charm, and also a tolerance about our Houses of Parliament, our schools, our Tate Gallery, and our history books which you do not find elsewhere.

Now Fascism is just not this, and no more is Plato's notion of a well-run state. He took it for granted that the Rulers would order the others about "out of their heads." His complaint was that they had had no training which would enable them to do it well and give good orders. And if Democracy on Athenian lines was persisted in, it was impossible that they should be trained to do it, he said. With juries consisting of hundreds of people brought together more or less by chance and a citizen Assembly of thousands, how could the judicial and parliamentary work of the state be wisely done? In actual fact the work would not be done at all unless it was directed by smaller groups of counsellors and magistrates. And that being so it would be better to have the counsellors and magistrates properly educated and leave the business in their hands. The ignorance and the fickleness and the narrowness of the rank and file of the people who could know very little of what they were discussing would be rendered harmless. They would do what the experts told them. In fact they must be made to do it. And in many matters where co-ordination was necessary and where conflicting claims had to be reconciled, a single authority would say what had to be done, better still, if it might be so, a single wise ruler, a philosopher-king.

It was a plain objection to this plan that training and education cannot do so much. A philosopher-king would be turned out so infrequently, and the ruling class would rarely be up to its task of "ever dispensing perfect justice with intelligence and art." (II 297B). Still it was Plato's ideal, something to which every state would approximate as far as it could, if it was seriously to seek the Good of the Citizens. But there was a plainer and really much more fundamental objection which Plato did not feel. It was that, men being what they are, the ordinary citizen, the common man, was going to be ordered about by the Rulers, and apart from the difficulty of doing this if there is any opposition, the common man doesn't like being ordered about,

even if his obedience promotes a high efficiency and his own comfort. He would sooner live in a moderate muddle and follow his fancy.

Of course this is not rational, which is just why Plato did not take it into account. His outlook is highly intellectual, and in this particular matter so was that of Socrates before him. Their assumption was that if only people knew what was for their good, they would go for it as a matter of course. But the people are in fact more reckless, more self-willed, and it is perhaps necessary to add, more humorous than that. And paradoxical though it is, history shows that nations and tribes have always demanded for themselves as a part of their Good nothing less than the opportunity to ruin themselves. If we ask how this can possibly be, the answer is perhaps that such liberty is necessary to the improvement of mankind. The intellectual State would be a stagnant State. Progress depends largely upon Instinct.

This is certainly very true of Plato's Commonwealth, whether the ideal one of the *Republic*, or the supposedly realisable one of the *Laws*. The Ideal Republic is laid up in heaven and is therefore beyond all progress and in need of no change. If progress is a dream, as many now suppose it to be, we need not trouble ourselves much about it. Yet if there is to be no progress, change for its own sake may be the surest symptom of life. But Plato would say that when we have devised the best constitution there is no room for change. And if, as he thought earlier on, the Laws could never be very good, then the Best Ruler must guide the state. If, as he thought later, some code of laws was desirable, as a concession, to give some sort of shape to the Body Politic, then we must search for the Best Laws. These once found could not be altered for the better, and there could be no motive for altering them for the worse. There could be no reason for altering them at all. So Plato is at one and the same time a highly enlightened politician and decidedly

not a Progressive. It is for the first of these qualities that men will always read his political writings, and for the second that they will often be impatient with him, with the kind of impatience which may be seen lurking in many of the footnotes in Zimmern's *Greek Commonwealth*.

The *Laws* is a work full of interesting passages and original suggestions, and it has a great deal of influence upon education, politics and theology. But in some ways it is rather a pathetic book. If the great Plato, having reached his three score years and ten, was forced to conclude that this was the best you could do about the problem of government, and was on the whole fairly well satisfied with it, all one can say is that his political thinking did not achieve very much in spite of his clearly expressed wish to be practical in politics.

The Constitution for a new Cretan Colony which the Athenian Stranger is devising in the *Laws* is not, when all is said and done, much unlike a fairly efficient English Boarding School except that it is larger. And that after all is hardly good enough, when the Colony consists not of boys only, but in the main of grown-up men and women. The artificial prestige given to the different Board or teams, the XII, the V, the XXXVII remind us rather of the XI, the VIII, the First Hundred, and so forth at school. The flogging, the precise limitation of privilege, the organised sneaking, are all very adolescent. Other features of the Colony are merely illiberal. There is slavery, there is a close regulation of property and marriage, a close censorship of poetry, drama, and music. There is something of an inquisition and a persecution for unacceptable opinions. There is a lot of fatherly instruction. Book X begins with a delightfully old-fashioned talk about youthful agnosticism and grown-up orthodoxy. It is significant that Plato thinks of rulers as like dogs, like helmsmen, and like doctors in various passages of his writings, as though the people needed rounding-up or manœuvring this way or that, or as though they were indeed sick and all prevailing forms of government diseased.

But of course there is another side to it. The Rulers in Plato's commonwealth are certainly not going to have an easy time of it. Apart from the rigorous training of mind and body they are to live rather an isolated not to say icy sort of life, and be wholly at the call of Duty. Their best reward was the consciousness of having practised their own particular art well and the cold comfort of a State Funeral, for which Plato amuses himself by devising a most elaborate ceremony (II 947). One would hardly think this quite enough. It is true that in our own country the children of the ruling class, until it recently expired, had been sent away from home at the early age of eight years or thereabouts to schools which were indescribably uncomfortable. This had been the general practice for about two centuries. It has been said, and not without some truth, that boys were sent to Eton to learn to endure injury, insult, and injustice without complaint. But it must be acknowledged that it was in preparation for a better life than Plato seems to offer to the Rulers in the *Laws*. It was a grim prospect for them. If self-sacrifice can achieve great things, great things might be expected.

But we must admit without reserve that the educated classes in the State as proposed in the *Laws* would have been well educated, the women certainly far better than they ever actually were in Athens. In the *Republic* the education presented is for adults or at any rate what we call University education. In the *Laws* it is mostly Secondary and Elementary and even Infant and Nursery School education, and a great deal of it shows a close observation of children's ways and is full of sound suggestions. It is comprehensive in the way that it attends to all sides of a child's life, physical and mental. The schools should have been agreeable to be at, and the boys and girls full of accomplishments and possessed of good taste, as far as taste can be taught and learnt (II 659). But they would be young aristocrats, not only from being highly select and of superior attainments, but from having gathered that it was their destiny to rule, and incidentally that on moral grounds

it is good to practise agriculture, and to avoid the trades and crafts. And what is all this but to exalt the landed gentry at the expense of the middle class. It is hard to deny that Plato had a great belief in young gentlemen. His briefest description of a Ruler is of a young man, temperate, with an aptitude for learning and a good memory, brave, with big ideas. And even so he must have luck on his side, at least to the extent of being "fortunate enough to fall in with some admirable law-giver" (II 710c). A fine young man he would be indeed, but all too rare! We must fall back on the second best, a limited monarchy, and be lucky if we can get that, Plato himself seems to suspect.

It may be said that even if the Rulers in the *Laws* are not of the people, at any rate they are appointed by the people, that is by the fraction of them who are called the Citizens. And it is true that Plato goes into very elaborate details as to the method of election. But he does not emphasise this part of the procedure, and it is hardly too much to say that he does not believe in it. As Ernest Barker says in his *Greek Political Theory*, "the popular assembly remains something of a shadow" (p. 341), "the normal Greek institutions of assembly and council, officials and law-courts which appeared in the earlier books begin [in Bk. xii] to fade away" (p. 342). There was certainly no question of turning the Government out or of expressing the Will of the People. The more important officials held office for 20 years, and retired from the various Boards they were on in small groups, so that the Board was perpetual and its members mostly of long standing. And they had been drawn originally from the upper classes, and they were old.

In view of all that has been said it might be thought the *Laws* is a book to be put on the shelf and left there. But for several reasons this is not so.

The first and least important reason is one already indicated, namely that it gives us an insight into Fascism. The clear air and the (up to a point) clear thinking of Mediterranean lands

tend to tidiness and logic in action. The wisest men adopt the wisest courses. Where you are ignorant, the least you can do is to follow where the wise men lead. The professional must know better than the amateur. The authorities are in authority, they know what is best, incidentally they have the whip hand. All these in a sense are platitudes. But they presuppose infallibility somewhere, they need a perpetual propaganda, and they demand faith or else partisanship. They require bolstering up with fear or force at times, at times with punishment, at times with the removal of opponents, and naturally the wise men know best when those times are. They require also that the rank and file should not think much, for that creates a tension. But to consent to such a system is really to throw up the sponge in politics because of the tension, and not to try any more. That the ordinary citizen, let alone the women, foreigners, and slaves should exercise their will and strive to have their way and think of the Government as *their* Government and be *themselves* is not a part of Plato's reckoning. To see all this plainly described is useful.

But a second and better reason for studying the *Laws* is the great variety of topics which it deals with incidentally with great originality and often with great beauty. It has passages not deficient in the poetry which Plato knew so well how to infuse into thought, and although without the liveliness and vigour of the great dialogues of the earlier period, it has nevertheless its paradoxes and fancies, its keenly observed descriptions and its sober and mature wisdom, which on a fair calculation of gain and loss make it as profitable and entertaining as any piece in the whole collection.

In his writings on politics Plato has been more influential than in any other sphere, certainly not because he was better at political philosophy than at ethics or metaphysics, but because more people are concerned with politics, and he makes so many admirable approaches to its problems by the way. He also elevates politics far above the palace or the market

place. He failed at last because he was a political pessimist, being by temperament a puritan, an aristocrat, and a theologian, a triple impediment to that confidence in the crowd which alone makes politics hopeful. But happily it also made it impossible for him to write dully or just competently on Politics as Aristotle could and sometimes did. He had about human society in particular that melancholy which seems to be the normal motive of artistic creation. And the *Republic* and the *Statesman* and the *Laws* are three great works of art. Ernest Barker on the last page of his book remarks that you may come across working men who have read and learned to love the *Republic*, and he adds the comment that "Plato, perhaps, would have been incredulous that such things could be: 'it is impossible for the masses to be philosophical' (*Republic* 494A)." But one feasible explanation of such things actually being might perhaps be found, if the *Republic* is indeed not primarily a philosophical treatise, but a literary masterpiece, a work of art.

X

THE EUTHYPHRO TRANSLATED

THE purpose of this book is to create an appetite for Plato, and the book is finished. But in case the reader, having got so far, wishes to read some Plato, yet feels no leaning to any particular Dialogue or has none of the Dialogues by him, the *Euthyphro* in Jowett's translation is printed here.

For several reasons the *Euthyphro* has been chosen, though some others would have served almost as well. But it has an historical claim in that it came first in the printed edition of Stephanus, perhaps because it is the first of the set of four dialogues which deal directly with the trial and death of Socrates. It also comes first in Burnet's Oxford Text. It has the advantage, at any rate, of dealing with Socrates at close quarters. It exhibits his point of view and his method. It illustrates very well the description of him in the *Laches* "ceaselessly dragging somebody round and round in argument" (II 187E). It is characteristically inconclusive, slightly drawn out, and with one rather difficult passage, which is awkward to translate and dealing with rather too fine a point (round about 10c).

A short summary may be useful :

2A-4E. Euthyphro on grounds of piety is prosecuting his own father for murdering a slave. Socrates, who is about to be tried for impiety, asks Euthyphro what piety is, as it will be useful for him to know.

5A-6E. First definition of Piety. *Piety is prosecuting anyone who is guilty of murder, sacrilege, or any other similar crime.*

6E-9C. Second definition of Piety. *Piety is that which is dear to the gods, and Impiety is that which is not dear to them.*

9D-11B. Third definition of Piety, as suggested by Socrates. *What all the gods hate is impious, and what they love pious or holy.* Euthyphro accepts this, but Socrates shows him that it will not do because the gods love a thing because it is pious, it is not pious because they love it.

11B-12D. Short interlude about Deadalus, leading on to the question: What part of Justice is Piety?

12D-14B. The investigation of this question leads to the Fourth definition of Piety. Euthyphro says it is *Learning how to please the gods in word and deed, by prayers and sacrifices.*

14B-16A. Socrates shows that this is only another way of saying that what is loved of the gods is holy, so the enquiry as to What is Piety must begin all over again. At this point Euthyphro walks off.

EUTHYPHRO

PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE

SOCRATES

EUTHYPHRO

SCENE : *The Porch of the King Archon.*

Euthyphro. Why have you left the Lyceum, Socrates? and what are you doing in the porch of the King Archon? Surely you cannot be engaged in an action before the king, as I am.

Socrates. Not in an action, Euthyphro; impeachment is the word which the Athenians use.

Euth. What! I suppose that some one has been prosecuting you, for I cannot believe that you are the prosecutor of another.

Soc. Certainly not.

Euth. Then some one else has been prosecuting you?

Soc. Yes.

Euth. And who is he?

Soc. A young man who is little known, Euthyphro; and I hardly know him: his name is Meletus, and he is of the deme of Pitthis. Perhaps you may remember his appearance; he has a beak, and long straight hair, and a beard which is ill grown.

Euth. No, I do not remember him, Socrates. And what is the charge which he brings against you?

Soc. What is the charge? Well, a very serious charge, which shows a good deal of character in the young man, and for which he is certainly not to be despised. He says he knows how the youth are corrupted and who are their corruptors. I fancy that he must be a wise man, and seeing that I am anything but a wise man, he has found me out, and is going to accuse me of corrupting his young friends. And of this our mother the state is to be the judge. Of all our political men he is the only one who seems to me to begin in the right way; with the cultivation of virtue in youth; he is a good husbandman, and takes care of the shoots first, and clears away us who are the destroyers of them. That is the first step; he will afterwards attend to the elder branches; and if he goes on as he has begun, he will be a very great public benefactor.

Euth. I hope that he may; but I rather fear, Socrates, that the reverse will turn out to be the truth. My opinion is that in attacking you he is simply aiming a blow at the state in a sacred place. But in what way does he say that you corrupt the young?

Soc. He brings a wonderful accusation against me, which at first hearing excites surprise: he says that I am a poet or maker of gods, and that I make new gods and deny the existence of old ones; this is the ground of his indictment.

Euth. I understand, Socrates; he means to attack you about the familiar sign which occasionally, as you say, comes to you.

He thinks that you are a neologian, and he is going to have you up before the court for this. He knows that such a charge is readily received, for the world is always jealous of novelties in religion. And I know that when I myself speak in the assembly about divine things, and foretell the future to them they laugh at me as a madman; and yet every word that I say is true. But they are jealous of all of us. I suppose that we must be brave and not mind them.

Soc. Their laughter, friend Euthyphro, is not a matter of much consequence. For a man may be thought wise; but the Athenians, I suspect, do not care much about this, until he begins to make other men wise; and then for some reason or other, perhaps, as you say, from jealousy, they are angry.

Euth. I have no desire to try conclusions with them about this.

Soc. I dare say that you don't make yourself common, and are not apt to impart your wisdom. But I have a benevolent habit of pouring out myself to everybody, and would even pay for a listener, and I am afraid that the Athenians know this; and therefore, as I was saying, if the Athenians would only laugh at me as you say that they laugh at you, the time might pass gaily enough in the court; but perhaps they may be in earnest, and then what the end will be you soothsayers only can predict.

Euth. I dare say that the affair will end in nothing, Socrates, and that you will win your cause; and I think that I shall win mine.

Soc. And what is your suit? and are you the pursuer or defendant, Euthyphro?

Euth. I am pursuer.

Soc. Of whom?

Euth. You will think me mad when I tell you whom I am pursuing.

Soc. Why, has the fugitive wings?

Euth. Nay, he is not very volatile at his time of life.

Soc. Who is he?

Euth. My father.

Soc. Your father! good heavens, you don't mean that?

Euth. Yes.

Soc. And of what is he accused?

Euth. Murder, Socrates.

Soc. By the powers, Euthyphro! how little does the common herd know of the nature of right and truth. A man must be an extraordinary man and have made great strides in wisdom, before he could have seen his way to this.

Euth. Indeed, Socrates, he must have made great strides.

Soc. I suppose that the man whom your father murdered was one of your relatives; if he had been a stranger you would never have thought of prosecuting him.

Euth. I am amused, Socrates, at your making a distinction between one who is a relation and one who is not a relation; for surely the pollution is the same in either case, if you knowingly associate with the murderer when you ought to clear yourself by proceeding against him. The real question is whether the murdered man has been justly slain. If justly, then your duty is to let the matter alone; but if unjustly, then even if the murderer is under the same roof with you and eats at the same table, proceed against him. Now the man who is dead was a poor dependant of mine who worked for us as a field labourer at Naxos, and one day in a fit of drunken passion he got into a quarrel with one of our domestic servants and slew him. My father bound him hand and foot and threw him into a ditch, and then sent to Athens to ask of a diviner what he should do with him. Meantime he had no care or thought of him, being under the impression that he was a murderer; and that even if he did die there would be no great harm. And this was just what happened. For such was the effect of cold and hunger and chains upon him, that before the messenger returned from the diviner, he was dead. And my father and family are angry with me for taking the part of the murderer and prosecuting my father. They say that he did not kill him, and if he did, the dead

man was but a murderer, and I ought not to take any notice, for that a son is impious who prosecutes a father. That shows, Socrates, how little they know of the opinions of the gods about piety and impiety.

Soc. Good heavens, Euthyphro! and have you such a precise knowledge of piety and impiety, and of divine things in general, that, supposing the circumstances to be as you state, you are not afraid that you too may be doing an impious thing in bringing an action against your father?

Euth. The best of Euthyphro, and that which distinguishes him, Socrates, from other men, is his exact knowledge of all these matters. What should I be good for without that?

Soc. Rare friend! I think that I cannot do better than be your disciple, before the trial with Meletus comes on. Then I shall challenge him, and say that I have always had a great interest in religious questions, and now, as he charges me with rash imaginations and innovations in religion, I have become your disciple. Now you, Meletus, as I shall say to him, acknowledge Euthyphro to be a great theologian, and sound in his opinions; and if you think that of him you ought to think the same of me, and not have me into court; you should begin by indicting him who is my teacher, and who is the real corruptor, not of the young, but of the old; that is to say, of myself whom he instructs, and of his old father whom he admonishes and chastises. And if Meletus refuses to listen to me, but will go on, and will not shift the indictment from me to you, I cannot do better than say in the court that I challenged him in this way.

Euth. Yes, Socrates; and if he attempts to indict me I am mistaken if I don't find a flaw in him; the court shall have a great deal more to say to him than to me.

Soc. I know that, dear friend; and that is the reason why I desire to be your disciple. For I observe that no one, not even Meletus, appears to notice you; but his sharp eyes have found me out at once, and he has indicted me for impiety. And therefore, I adjure you to tell me the nature of piety

and impiety, which you said that you knew so well, and of murder, and the rest of them. What are they? Is not piety in every action always the same? and impiety, again, is not that always the opposite of piety, and also the same with itself, having, as impiety, one notion which includes whatever is impious?

Euth. To be sure, Socrates.

Soc. And what is piety, and what is impiety?

Euth. Piety is doing as I am doing; that is to say, prosecuting any one who is guilty of murder, sacrilege, or of any other similar crime—whether he be your father or mother, or some other person, that makes no difference—and not prosecuting them is impiety. And please to consider, Socrates, what a notable proof I will give you of the truth of what I am saying, which I have already given to others:—of the truth, I mean, of the principle that the impious, whoever he may be, ought not to go unpunished. For do not men regard Zeus as the best and most righteous of the gods?—and even they admit that he bound his father (Cronos) because he wickedly devoured his sons, and that he too had punished his own father (Uranus) for a similar reason, in a nameless manner. And yet when I proceed against my father, they are angry with me. This is their inconsistent way of talking when the gods are concerned, and when I am concerned.

Soc. May not this be the reason, Euthyphro, why I am charged with impiety—that I cannot away with these stories about the gods? and therefore I suppose that people think me wrong. But, as you who are well informed about them approve of them, I cannot do better than assent to your superior wisdom. For what else can I say, confessing as I do, that I know nothing of them. I wish you would tell me whether you really believe that they are true?

Euth. Yes, Socrates; and things more wonderful still, of which the world is in ignorance.

Soc. And do you really believe that the gods fought with one another, and had dire quarrels, battles, and the like, as

the poets say, and as you may see represented in the works of great artists? The temples are full of them; and notably the robe of Athene, which is carried up to the Acropolis at the great Panathenæa, is embroidered with them. Are all these tales of the gods true, Euthyphro?

Euth. Yes, Socrates; and, as I was saying, I can tell you, if you would like to hear them, many other things about the gods which would quite amaze you.

Soc. I dare say; and you shall tell me them at some other time when I have leisure. But just at present I would rather hear from you a more precise answer, which you have not as yet given, my friend, to the question, What is "piety." In reply, you only say that piety is, Doing as you do, charging your father with murder?

Euth. And that is true, Socrates.

Soc. I dare say, Euthyphro, but there are many other pious acts.

Euth. There are.

Soc. Remember that I did not ask you to give me two or three examples of piety, but to explain the general idea which makes all pious things to be pious. Do you not recollect that there was one idea which made the impious impious, and the pious pious?

Euth. I remember.

Soc. Tell me what this is, and then I shall have a standard to which I may look, and by which I may measure the nature of actions, whether yours or any one's else, and say that this action is pious, and that impious?

Euth. I will tell you, if you like.

Soc. I should very much like.

Euth. Piety, then, is that which is dear to the gods, and impiety is that which is not dear to them.

Soc. Very good, Euthyphro; you have now given me just the sort of answer which I wanted. But whether it is true or not I cannot as yet tell, although I make no doubt that you will prove the truth of your words.

Euth. Of course.

Soc. Come, then, and let us examine what we are saying. That thing or person which is dear to the gods is pious, and that thing or person which is hateful to the gods is impious. Was not that said?

Euth. Yes, that was said.

Soc. And that seems to have been very well said too?

Euth. Yes, Socrates, I think that; it was certainly said.

Soc. And further, Euthyphro, the gods were admitted to have enmities and hatreds and differences—that was also said?

Euth. Yes, that was said.

Soc. And what sort of difference creates enmity and anger? Suppose for example that you and I, my good friend, differ about a number; do differences of this sort make us enemies and set us at variance with one another? Do we not go at once to calculation, and end them by a sum?

Euth. True.

Soc. Or suppose that we differ about magnitudes, do we not quickly put an end to that difference by measuring?

Euth. That is true.

Soc. And we end a controversy about heavy and light by resorting to a weighing-machine?

Euth. To be sure.

Soc. But what differences are those which, because they cannot be thus decided, make us angry and set us at enmity with one another? I dare say the answer does not occur to you at the moment, and therefore I will suggest that this happens when the matters of difference are the just and unjust, good and evil, honourable and dishonourable. Are not these the points about which, when differing, and unable satisfactorily to decide our differences, we quarrel, when we do quarrel, as you and I and all men experience?

Euth. Yes, Socrates, that is the nature of the differences about which we quarrel.

Soc. And the quarrels of the gods, noble Euthyphro, when they occur, are of a like nature?

Euth. They are.

Soc. They have differences of opinion, as you say, about good and evil, just and unjust, honourable and dishonourable; there would have been no quarrels among them, if there had been no such differences—would there now?

Euth. You are quite right.

Soc. Does not every man love that which he deems noble and just and good, and hate the opposite of them?

Euth. Very true.

Soc. But then, as you say, people regard the same things, some as just and others as unjust; and they dispute about this, and there arise wars and fightings among them.

Euth. Yes, that is true.

Soc. Then the same things, as appears, are hated by the gods and loved by the gods, and are both hateful and dear to them?

Euth. True.

Soc. Then upon this view the same things, Euthyphro, will be pious and also impious?

Euth. That, I suppose, is true.

Soc. Then, my friend, I remark with surprise that you have not answered what I asked. For I certainly did not ask what was that which is at once pious and impious: and that which is loved by the gods appears also to be hated by them. And therefore, Euthyphro, in thus chastising your father you may very likely be doing what is agreeable to Zeus but disagreeable to Cronos or Uranus, and what is acceptable to Hephaestus but unacceptable to Here, and there may be other gods who have similar differences of opinion.

Euth. But I believe, Socrates, that all the gods would be agreed as to the propriety of punishing a murderer: there would be no difference of opinion about that.

Soc. Well, but speaking of men, Euthyphro, did you ever hear any one arguing that a murderer or any sort of evil-doer ought to be let off?

Euth. I should rather say that they are always arguing this,

especially in courts of law: they commit all sorts of crimes, and there is nothing that they will not do or say in order to escape punishment.

Soc. But do they admit their guilt, Euthyphro, and yet say that they ought not to be punished?

Euth. No; they do not.

Soc. Then there are some things which they do not venture to say and do : for they do not venture to argue that the guilty are to be unpunished, but they deny their guilt, do they not?

Euth. Yes.

Soc. Then they do not argue that the evil-doer should not be punished, but they argue about the fact of who the evil-doer is, and what he did and when?

Euth. True.

Soc. And the gods are in the same case, if as you imply they quarrel about just and unjust, and some of them say that they wrong one another, and others of them deny this. For surely neither God nor man will ever venture to say that the doer of evil is not to be punished:—you don't mean to tell me that?

Euth. That is true, Socrates, in the main.

Soc. But they join issue about particulars; and this applies not only to men but to the gods; if they dispute at all they dispute about some act which is called in question, and which some affirm to be just, others to be unjust. Is not that true?

Euth. Quite true.

Soc. Well, then, my dear friend Euthyphro, do tell me, for my better instruction and information, what proof have you that in the opinion of all the gods a servant who is guilty of murder, and is put in chains by the master of the dead man, and dies because he is put in chains before his corrector can learn from the interpreters what he ought to do with him, dies unjustly; and that on behalf of such a one a son ought to proceed against his father and accuse him of murder. How would you show that all the gods absolutely agree in

approving of his act? Prove to me that, and I will applaud your wisdom as long as you live.

Euth. That would not be an easy task, although I could make the matter very clear indeed to you.

Soc. I understand; you mean to say that I am not so quick of apprehension as the judges: for to them you will be sure to prove that the act is unjust, and hateful to the gods.

Euth. Yes indeed, Socrates; at least if they will listen to me.

Soc. But they will be sure to listen if they find that you are a good speaker. There was a notion that came into my mind while you were speaking; I said to myself: "Well, and what if Euthyphro does prove to me that all the gods regarded the death of the serf as unjust, how do I know anything more of the nature of piety and impiety? for granting that this action may be hateful to the gods, still these distinctions have no bearing on the definition of piety and impiety, for that which is hateful to the gods has been shown to be also pleasing and dear to them." And therefore, Euthyphro, I don't ask you to prove this; I will suppose, if you like, that all the gods condemn and abominate such an action. But I will amend the definition so far as to say that what all the gods hate is impious, and what they love pious or holy; and what some of them love and others hate is both or neither. Shall this be our definition of piety and impiety?

Euth. Why not, Socrates?

Soc. Why not ! certainly, as far as I am concerned, Euthyphro. But whether this admission will greatly assist you in the task of instructing me as you promised, is a matter for you to consider.

Euth. Yes, I should say that what all the gods love is pious and holy, and the opposite which they all hate, impious.

Soc. Ought we to inquire into the truth of this, Euthyphro, or simply to accept the mere statement on our own authority and that of others?

Euth. We should inquire; and I believe that the statement will stand the test of inquiry.

Soc. That, my good friend, we shall know better in a little while. The point which I should first wish to understand is whether the pious or holy is beloved by the gods because it is holy, or holy because it is beloved of the gods.

Euth. I don't understand your meaning, Socrates.

Soc. I will endeavour to explain: we speak of carrying and we speak of being carried, of leading and being led, seeing and being seen. And here is a difference, the nature of which you understand.

Euth. I think that I understand.

Soc. And is not that which is beloved distinct from that which loves?

Euth. Certainly.

Soc. Well; and now tell me, is that which is carried in this state of carrying because it is carried, or for some other reason?

Euth. No; that is the reason.

Soc. And the same is true of that which is led and of that which is seen?

Euth. True.

Soc. And a thing is not seen because it is visible, but conversely, visible because it is seen; nor is a thing in the state of being led because it is led, or in the state of being carried because it is carried, but the converse of this. And now I think, Euthyphro, that my meaning will be intelligible; and my meaning is, that any state of action or passion implies previous action or passion. It does not become because it is becoming, but it is becoming because it becomes; neither does it suffer because it is in a state of suffering, but it is in a state of suffering because it suffers. Do you admit that?

Euth. Yes.

Soc. Is not that which is loved in some state either of becoming or suffering?

Euth. Yes.

Soc. And the same holds as in the previous instances; the state of being loved follows that act of being loved, and not the act the state.

Euth. That is certain.

Soc. And what do you say of piety, Euthyphro: is not piety, according to your definition, loved by all the gods?

Euth. Yes.

Soc. Because it is pious or holy, or for some other reason?

Euth. No, that is the reason.

Soc. It is loved because it is holy, not holy because it is loved?

Euth. Yes.

Soc. And that which is in a state to be loved of the gods, and is dear to them, is in a state to be loved of them because it is loved of them?

Euth. Certainly.

Soc. Then that which is loved of God, Euthyphro, is not holy, nor is that which is holy loved of God, as you affirm; but they are two different things.

Euth. How do you mean, Socrates?

Soc. I mean to say that the holy has been acknowledged by us to be loved of God because it is holy, not to be holy because it is loved.

Euth. Yes.

Soc. But that which is dear to the gods is dear to them because it is loved by them, not loved by them because it is dear to them.

Euth. True.

Soc. But, friend Euthyphro, if that which is holy is the same as that which is dear to God, and that which is holy is loved as being holy, then that which is dear to God would have been loved as being dear to God; but if that which is dear to God is dear to him because loved by him, then that which is holy would have been holy because loved by him. But now you see that the reverse is the case, and that they are quite different from one another. For one is of a kind to be

loved because it is loved, and the other is loved because it is of a kind to be loved. Thus you appear to me, Euthyphro, when I ask you what is the essence of holiness, to offer an attribute only, and not the essence—the attribute of being loved by all the gods. But you still refuse to explain to me the nature of piety. And therefore, if you please, I will ask you not to hide your treasure, but to tell me once more what piety or holiness really is, whether dear to the gods or not (for that is a matter about which we will not quarrel). And what is impiety?

Euth. I really do not know, Socrates, how to say what I mean. For somehow or other our arguments, on whatever ground we rest them, seem to turn round and walk away.

Soc. Your words, Euthyphro, are like the handiwork of my ancestor Daedalus; and if I were the sayer or propounder of them, you might say that this comes of my being his relation; and that this is the reason why my arguments walk away and won't remain fixed where they are placed. But now, as the notions are your own, you must find some other gibe, for they certainly, as you yourself allow, show an inclination to be on the move.

Euth. Nay, Socrates, I shall still say that you are the Daedalus who sets arguments in motion; not I, certainly, make them move or go round, for they would never have stirred, as far as I am concerned.

Soc. Then I must be a greater than Daedalus; for whereas he only made his own inventions to move, I move those of other people as well. And the beauty of it is, that I would rather not. For I would give the wisdom of Daedalus, and the wealth of Tantalus, to be able to detain them and keep them fixed. But enough of this. As I perceive that you are indolent, I will myself endeavour to show you how you might instruct me in the nature of piety; and I hope that you will not grudge your labour. Tell me, then,—Is not that which is pious necessarily just?

Euth. Yes.

Soc. And is, then, all which is just pious? or, is that which is pious all just, but that which is just only in part and not all pious?

Euth. I don't understand you, Socrates.

Soc. And yet I know that you are as much wiser than I am, as you are younger. But, as I was saying, revered friend, the abundance of your wisdom makes you indolent. Please to exert yourself, for there is no real difficulty in understanding me. What I mean I may explain by an illustration of what I do not mean. The poet (Stasinus) sings—

“Of Zeus, the author and creator of all these things,
You will not tell: for where there is fear there is
also reverence.”

And I disagree with this poet. Shall I tell you in what I disagree?

Euth. By all means.

Soc. I should not say that where there is fear there is also reverence; for I am sure that many persons fear poverty and disease, and the like evils, but I do not perceive that they reverence the objects of their fear.

Euth. Very true.

Soc. But where reverence is, there is fear; for he who has a feeling of reverence and shame about the commission of any action, fears and is afraid of an ill reputation.

Euth. No doubt.

Soc. Then we are wrong in saying that where there is fear there is also reverence; and we should say, where there is reverence there is also fear. But there is not always reverence where there is fear; for fear is a more extended notion, and reverence is a part of fear, just as the odd is a part of number, and number is a more extended notion than the odd. I suppose that you follow me now?

Euth. Quite well.

Soc. That was the sort of question which I meant to raise when asking whether the just is the pious, or the pious the just; and whether there may not be justice where there is not

always piety; for justice is the more extended notion of which piety is only a part. Do you agree in that?

Euth. Yes; that, I think, is correct.

Soc. Then, now, if piety is a part of justice, I suppose that we inquire what part? If you had pursued the inquiry in the previous cases; for instance, if you had asked me what is an even number, and what part of number the even is, I should have had no difficulty in replying, a number which represents a figure having two equal sides. Do you agree?

Euth. Yes.

Soc. In like manner, I want you to tell me what part of justice is piety or holiness; that I may be able to tell Meletus not to do me injustice, or indict me for impiety; as I am now adequately instructed by you in the nature of piety or holiness, and their opposites.

Euth. Piety or holiness, Socrates, appears to me to be that part of justice which attends to the gods, as there is the other part of justice which attends to men.

Soc. That is good, Euthyphro; yet still there is a little point about which I should like to have further information. What is the meaning of "attention"? For attention can hardly be used in the same sense when applied to the gods as when applied to other things. For instance, horses are said to require attention, and not every person is able to attend to them, but only a person skilled in horsemanship. Is not that true?

Euth. Quite true.

Soc. I should suppose that the art of horsemanship is the art of attending to horses?

Euth. Yes.

Soc. Nor is every one qualified to attend to dogs, but only the huntsman.

Euth. True.

Soc. And I should also conceive that the art of the huntsman is the art of attending to dogs.

Euth. Yes.

Soc. As the art of the oxherd is the art of attending to oxen?

Euth. Very true.

Soc. And as holiness or piety is the art of attending to the gods?—that would be your meaning, Euthyphro?

Euth. Yes.

Soc. And is not attention always designed for the good or benefit of that to which the attention is given? As in the case of horses, you may observe that when attended to by the horseman's art they are benefited and improved, are they not?

Euth. True.

Soc. As the dogs are benefited by the huntsman's art, and the oxen by the art of the oxherd, and all other things are tended or attended for their good and not for their hurt?

Euth. Certainly, not for their hurt.

Soc. But for their good?

Euth. Of course.

Soc. And does piety or holiness, which has been defined as the art of attending to the gods, benefit or improve them? Would you say that when you do a holy act you make any of the gods better?

Euth. No, no; that is certainly not my meaning.

Soc. Indeed, Euthyphro, I did not suppose that this was your meaning; far otherwise. And that was the reason why I asked you the nature of this attention, because I thought that this was not your meaning.

Euth. You do me justice, Socrates; for that is not my meaning.

Soc. Good: but I must still ask what is this attention to the gods which is called piety?

Euth. It is such, Socrates, as servants show to their masters.

Soc. I understand—a sort of ministration to the gods.

Euth. Exactly.

Soc. Medicine is also a sort of ministration or service, tending to the attainment of some object—would you not say health?

Euth. Yes.

Soc. Again, there is an art which ministers to the ship-builder with a view to the attainment of some result?

Euth. Yes, Socrates, with a view to the building of a ship.

Soc. As there is an art which ministers to the house-builder with a view to the building of a house?

Euth. Yes.

Soc. And now tell me, my good friend, about this art which ministers to the gods: what work does that help to accomplish? For you must surely know if, as you say, you are of all men living the one who is best instructed in religion.

Euth. And that is true, Socrates.

Soc. Tell me then, oh tell me—what is that fair work which the gods do by the help of us as their ministers?

Euth. Many and fair, Socrates, are the works which they do.

Soc. Why, my friend, and so are those of a general. But the chief of them is easily told. Would you not say that victory in war is the chief of them?

Euth. Certainly.

Soc. Many and fair, too, are the works of the husbandman, if I am not mistaken; but his chief work is the production of food from the earth?

Euth. Exactly.

Soc. And of the many and fair things which the gods do, which is the chief and principal one?

Euth. I have told you already, Socrates, that to learn all these things accurately will be very tiresome. Let me simply say that piety is learning how to please the gods in word and deed, by prayers and sacrifices. That is piety, which is the salvation of families and states, just as the impious, which is displeasing to the gods, is their ruin and destruction.

Soc. I think that you could have answered in much fewer words the chief question which I asked, Euthyphro, if you had chosen. But I see plainly that you are not disposed to instruct me: else why, when we had reached the point, did you

turn aside? Had you only answered me I should have learned of you by this time the nature of piety. Now, as the asker of a question is necessarily dependent on the answerer, whither he leads I must follow; and can only ask again, what is the pious, and what is piety? Do you mean that they are a sort of science of praying and sacrificing?

Euth. Yes, I do.

Soc. And sacrificing is giving to the gods, and prayer is asking of the gods?

Euth. Yes, Socrates.

Soc. Upon this view, then, piety is a science of asking and giving?

Euth. You understand me capitally, Socrates.

Soc. Yes, my friend; the reason^f is that I am a votary of your science, and give my mind to it, and therefore nothing which you say will be thrown away upon me. Please then to tell me, what is the nature of this service to the gods? Do you mean that we prefer requests and give gifts to them?

Euth. Yes, I do.

Soc. Is not the right way of asking to ask of them what we want?

Euth. Certainly.

Soc. And the right way of giving is to give to them in return what they want of us. There would be no meaning in an art which gives to any one that which he does not want.

Euth. Very true, Socrates.

Soc. Then piety, Euthyphro, is an art which gods and men have of doing business with one another?

Euth. That is an expression which you may use, if you like.

Soc. But I have no particular liking for anything but the truth. I wish, however, that you would tell me what benefit accrues to the gods from our gifts. That they are the givers of every good to us is clear; but how we can give any good thing to them in return is far from being equally clear. If they give everything and we give nothing, that must be an

affair of business in which we have very greatly the advantage of them.

Euth. And do you imagine, Socrates, that any benefit accrues to the gods from what they receive of us?

Soc. But if not, Euthyphro, what sort of gifts do we confer upon the gods?

Euth. What should we confer upon them, but tributes of honour; and, as I was just now saying, what is pleasing to them?

Soc. Piety, then, is pleasing to the gods, but not beneficial or dear to them?

Euth. I should say that nothing could be dearer.

Soc. Then once more the assertion is repeated that piety is dear to the gods?

Euth. No doubt.

Soc. And when you say this, can you wonder at your words not standing firm, but walking away? Will you accuse me of being the Daedalus who makes them walk away, not perceiving that there is another and far greater artist than Daedalus who makes them go round in a circle; and that is yourself: for the argument, as you will perceive, comes round to the same point. I think that you must remember our saying that the holy or pious was not the same as that which is loved of the gods. Do you remember that?

Euth. I do.

Soc. And do you not see that what is loved of the gods is holy, and that this is the same as what is dear to them?

Euth. True.

Soc. Then either we were wrong in that admission; or, if we were right then, we are wrong now.

Euth. I suppose that is the case.

Soc. Then we must begin again and ask, What is piety? That is an inquiry which I shall never be weary of pursuing as far as in me lies; and I entreat you not to scorn me, but to apply your mind to the utmost, and tell me the truth. For, if any man knows, you are he; and therefore I shall

detain you, like Proteus, until you tell. For if you had not certainly known the nature of piety and impiety, I am confident that you would never, on behalf of a serf, have charged your aged father with murder. You would not have run such a risk of doing wrong in the sight of the gods, and you would have had too much respect for the opinions of men. I am sure, therefore, that you know the nature of piety and impiety. Speak out then, my dear Euthyphro, and do not hide your knowledge.

Euth. Another time, Socrates; for I am in a hurry, and must go now.

Soc. Alas ! my companion, and will you leave me in despair? I was hoping that you would instruct me in the nature of piety and impiety, so that I might have cleared myself of Meletus and his indictment. Then I might have proved to him that I had been converted by Euthyphro, and had done with rash innovations and speculations, in which I had indulged through ignorance, and was about to lead a better life.

JOUTH'S TRANSLATION OF THE
EUPHYPHRO

APPENDIX I

BOOKS

[An asterisk (*) indicates a book suitable for those who do not know Greek]

I. THE GREEK TEXT BY ITSELF is best had in the Oxford Classical Texts, edited by John Burnet in five volumes. A volume on India Paper, when it can be got, makes a pretty book, 8vo.

II. THE GREEK TEXT WITH TRANSLATION facing it may be had in the Loeb series, 12 volumes small 8vo. Some of the translation is not very elegant, and in places not easy to understand without reference to the Greek. But they are handy little books and very useful.

III. THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY ITSELF of nearly all the Dialogues was made by Benjamin Jowett with some assistance from others. The original edition (1872) was in 4 vols.; subsequent and current editions, containing some further matter, in 5 vols., large 8vo. This is a very readable and in places a brilliant translation, sometimes not very close to the Greek. There are useful introductions and summaries preceding each Dialogue. This work is very good for general purposes. It does not contain *Hippias Major*. Published by the Clarendon Press, Oxford.

A nice little book for the pocket is *Select Passages from the Introductions to Plato* by Benjamin Jowett, edited by Lewis Campbell. Published by John Murray, 1895.

There are many translations of particular Dialogues, amongst which the following are specially to be noted:

- P. B. Shelley: *Symposium* and *Ion*. Included in the Everyman series, *Five Dialogues of Plato*, edited by A. D. Lindsay, 1910.
- F. Birrell and Shane Leslie: *Symposium*. Nonsuch Press, 1924.
- A. E. Taylor: *Timæus* and *Critias*, 1929.
Parmenides, 1934.
The Laws, 1934. A very readable and scholarly translation of a work not naturally very readable in places.
- A. D. Lindsay: *Republic*, 1908.
- J. L. Davies and D. J. Vaughan: *Republic* (in the Golden Treasury Series). Perhaps the best known of all Plato translations in English, and a good one, though by no means the best. It is for this translation that Bernard Bosanquet wrote **A Companion to Plato's Republic*, 1895, and to use the two together is probably the best way for those who have no Greek to begin the detailed study of a particular Dialogue.
- Patrick Duncan: *Phædo*, 1928. By the late Governor-General of the Union of South Africa.
- J. Wright: *Phædrus*, *Lysis*, *Protagoras*. Golden Treasury Series.
- J. Harwood: *Letters* (under the title *The Platonic Epistles*). Cambridge University Press, 1932.
- L. A. Post: *Letters* (under title *Thirteen Epistles*). Oxford, 1925.

The best of the recent translations, if supplemented by others in order to complete the whole of Plato's genuine works and put together in a uniform set of 5 or 6 volumes, would probably supersede Jowett and be superior to it. There have been many translations both by the eminent and by the obscure, and none perhaps without some good things in them. For those who like anthologies there is a pleasing volume of **Select Passages chosen and translated by R. W. Livingstone*.

IV. BOOKS ABOUT PLATO.

The most comprehensive and authoritative are :

A. E. Taylor: *Plato the Man and his Work*. Methuen, 1926.

J. Burnet: *Greek Philosophy from Thales to Plato*. Oxford, 1914.

A delightful book and easier to read than these two is **Plato and the other Companions of Socrates*, by George Grote.

Other general works are:

G. C. Field: *Plato and his Contemporaries*. Methuen, 1930.

Much less striking than those already mentioned, but a good sound review of the subject as a whole. It has, however, extraordinarily few references to particular passages in the Dialogues.

Walter Pater: *Plato and Platonism*. This book is still very fresh for those who like Pater's style.

W. Jaeger: *Paideia*. Vols. II and III, 1944, 1945. Translated by Gilbert Highet (Blackwell). A thorough survey, but perhaps over-elaborate and tending to stand between the reader and Plato's Works.

There are many small books, of which D. G. Ritchie's *Plato*, 1902, T. T. Clark, is a good one.

*Also *Socrates*, by A. E. Taylor, Peter Davies, 1932.

Of books of rather wider scope but very useful for the "background" and setting of Plato's life and writings are:

*George Grote: *History of Greece*, usually in 10 or 12 vols., a long, leisurely book, very pleasant to read.

More up-to-date, but most unreadable, is J. B. Bury's *History of Greece*, Macmillan, 1900. It is useful as a book of reference.

*A. E. Zimmern: *Greek Commonwealth*. Oxford, 1911.

Ernest Barker: *Greek Political Thought*. Methuen, 1918.

*T. G. Tucker: *Life in Ancient Athens*. Macmillan, 1907.

V. SPECIAL TOPICS.

(a) Composition of the Dialogues:

Wincenty Lutoslawski: *Origin and Growth of Plato's Logic*.

1897. This is the most accessible work in which to see how the order of composition of the Dialogues is determined. It is based on work begun by Lewis Campbell. Though the application of the method is overdone, the result is in general widely accepted.

(b) Myths:

J. A. Stewart: *The Myths of Plato*. Oxford, 1905. Translations with a full commentary, which is sometimes difficult.

(c) Mathematics:

Any real study needs a handbook. Theon wrote one in the 4th century A.D. The classic work in English is by Sir Thomas Heath. *History of Greek Mathematics*. Vol. I., *Thales to Euclid*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1921. Useful and interesting is *Greek Mathematics*, 2 vols., in the Loeb series, edited by Ivor Thomas, M.P.

(d) Ideas:

W. F. R. Hardie: *A Study in Plato*. Oxford, 1922. This is a recent work and not too long. The literature on the subject is enormous.

(e) Education:

*K. J. Freeman: *The Schools of Hellas*. Macmillan, 1907.

VI. LEXICON.

To find out the passages where a word occurs in Plato's Works (in Greek), Ast's *Lexicon Platonicum* (1835-38) may be referred to, but it is by no means a complete concordance. The Index to Jowett in the 5 vols. edition is very full and useful.

For a strong and not very temperate criticism of Plato and all his Works, *The Platonic Legend* by Warner Fite (1934) is worth looking at. Professor Fite is at Princeton University, New Jersey, U.S.A.

APPENDIX II

THE DIALOGUES ACCORDING TO THE PAGES OF THE EDITION OF STEPHANUS (1556)

IT is customary to print in the margin of the text of Plato the pagination of Stephanus's Edition, and each page is usually divided into five sections by the letters A, B, C, D, E. This edition was in three volumes, and many of the page numbers in consequence appear more than once. In order to make a precise reference, therefore, it is generally necessary to give either the name of the Dialogue or the number of the Volume. The following is the order in which the 29 pieces accepted by A. E. Taylor occur in Stephanus:

VOL. PAGES			VOL. PAGES		
I.	2-16	<i>Euthyphro</i>	II.	153-176	<i>Charmides</i>
	17-42	<i>Apology</i>		178-201	<i>Laches</i>
	43-54	<i>Crito</i>		203-223	<i>Lysis</i>
	57-118	<i>Phædo</i>		234-249	<i>Menexenus</i>
	142-210	<i>Theætetus</i>		257-311	<i>Statesman</i>
	216-268	<i>Sophist</i>		327-621	<i>Republic</i>
	271-307	<i>Euthydemus</i>		624-969	<i>Laws</i>
	309-362	<i>Protagoras</i>		973-992	<i>Epinomis</i>
	363-376	<i>Hippias Minor</i>	III.	17-105	<i>Timæus</i>
383-440	<i>Cratylus</i>			106-121	<i>Critias</i>
447-527	<i>Gorgias</i>			126-166	<i>Parmenides</i>
530-542	<i>Ion</i>			172-223	<i>Symposium</i>
				227-279	<i>Phædrus</i>
II.	11-67	<i>Philebus</i>		281-304	<i>Hippias Major</i>
	70-100	<i>Meno</i>	and	309-363	<i>Letters</i>

The following seven Dialogues which appear in Stephanus as genuine are rejected by Taylor:

Theages, Lovers, Alcibiades I, Alcibiades II, Hipparchus, Minos, Clitophon. Also the *Definitions*.

The following are printed by Stephanus in an Appendix of spurious works; they were considered spurious from very ancient times:

On the Just, On Virtue, Demodocus, Sisyphus, Eryxias, Axiochus.

The text of every piece named above is printed in Burnet's Oxford Text.

APPENDIX III

Column 1 gives the names of the 28 Dialogues accepted by Taylor.

Column 2 indicates their form : D = Dialogue; O = Oration; R = Reported Dialogue.

Column 3 indicates roughly the date of composition.

Column 4 indicates, where conjecture is possible, the approximate year in which the scene is laid.

Column 5 gives the references to the pagination of Stephanus's Edition in 3 volumes.

Column 6 gives in the briefest form the subject of each Dialogue.

1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Hippias Major	D		427	III 281A-304E	What does "the Beautiful" mean?
2. Hippias Minor	D		427	I 363A-376C	Right or Wrong
3. Ion	D		405	I 530A-542B	Homer
4. Menexenus	O		387	II 234A-249E	A Funeral Oration
5. Charmides	R	Nos. 1-18	or later		
6. Laches	D	between	422 ?	II 153A-176D	Temperance
7. Lysis	R	399	422 ?	II 178A-201C	Courage
8. Cratylus	D	and	430 ?	II 203A-223B	Friendship
9. Euthydemus	R	387	421	I 383A-440E	Language
10. Gorgias	D	B.C.	422	I 271A-307C	Life and Knowledge
11. Meno	D		402	I 447A-527E	Ethics and Politics
				II 70A-100B	Can goodness be taught?
12. Euthyphro	D	3	4	5	6
13. Apology	O		399	I 2A-16A	Piety
14. Crito	D		399	I 17A-42A	Socrates's Defence
15. Phaedo	R		399	I 43A-54E	Legality
16. Symposium	R		399	I 57A-118A	Immortality
17. Protagoras	R		415	III 172A-223D	Love
18. Republic	R		435	I 309A-362A	Sophists
			421	II 327A-621D	Justice
19. Phaedrus	D	Between 387 and 367	Between 411 & 404	III 227A-279C	Rhetoric
20. Theaetetus	D	367	399	I 142A-210D	Theory of Knowledge
21. Parmenides	R	367	450	III 126A-166C	Logic
22. Sophist	D		399	I 216A-268D	Definition
23. Statesman	D	Nos. 22-28 between	399	II 257A-311C	The Statesman's Function
24. Philebus	D	360	After		
25. Timæus	D*	and	422	II 11A-67B	Is Pleasure the Good?
26. Critias	D*	348	421	III 17A-92C	Cosmology
27. Laws	D*	B.C.	?	III 106A-121C	Early Man (a fragment)
28. Epinomis	D*		?	II 624A-969D	Organising the State
				II 973A-992E	Mathematical Appendix to the Laws

* These are virtually Lectures.

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