

# PREFACE TO PLATO

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## Psyche or the Separation of the Knower from the Known

AT some time towards the end of the fifth century before Christ, it became possible for a few Greeks to talk about their 'souls' as though they had selves or personalities which were autonomous and not fragments of the atmosphere nor of a cosmic life force, but what we might call entities or real substances. At first this conception was within reach only of the more sophisticated. There is evidence to show that as late as the last quarter of the fifth century, in the minds of the majority of men, the notion was not understood, and that in their ears the terms in which it was expressed sounded bizarre.<sup>1</sup> Before the end of the fourth century the conception was becoming part of the Greek language and one of the common assumptions of Greek culture.

Scholarship has tended to connect this discovery with the life and teaching of Socrates and to identify it with a radical change which he introduced into the meaning of the Greek word *psyche*.<sup>2</sup> In brief, instead of signifying a man's ghost or wraith, or a man's breath or his life blood, a thing devoid of sense and self-consciousness, it came to mean 'the ghost that thinks', that is capable both of moral decision and of scientific cognition, and is the seat of moral responsibility, something infinitely precious, an essence unique in the whole realm of nature.

In fact it is probably more accurate to say that while the discovery was affirmed and exploited by Socrates, it was the slow creation of many minds among his predecessors and contem-

poraries. One thinks particularly of Heraclitus and Democritus.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the discovery involved more than just the semantics of the word *psyche*. The Greek pronouns, both personal and reflexive, also began to find themselves in new syntactical contexts, used for example as objects of verbs of cognition, or placed in antithesis to the 'body' or 'corpse' in which the 'ego' was thought of as residing.<sup>4</sup> We confront here a change in the Greek language and in the syntax of linguistic usage and in the overtones of certain key words which is part of a larger intellectual revolution, which affected the whole range of the Greek cultural experience.<sup>5</sup> There is no need in this place to attempt a full documentation of it.<sup>6</sup> The main fact, that such a discovery occurred, has been accepted by historians. Our present business is to connect this discovery with that crisis in Greek culture which saw the replacement of an orally memorised tradition by a quite different system of instruction and education, and which therefore saw the Homeric state of mind give way to the Platonic. For this connection the essential documentation lies once more in Plato himself and most specifically in his *Republic*.

Let us recapitulate the educational experience of the Homeric and post-Homeric Greek. He is required as a civilised being to become acquainted with the history, the social organisation, the technical competence and the moral imperatives of his group. This group will in post-Homeric times be his city, but his city in turn is able to function only as a fragment of the total Hellenic world. It shares a consciousness in which he is keenly aware that he, as a Hellene, partakes. This over-all body of experience (we shall avoid the word 'knowledge') is incorporated in a rhythmic narrative or set of narratives which he memorises and which is subject to recall in his memory. Such is poetic tradition, essentially something he accepts uncritically, or else it fails to survive in his living memory. Its acceptance and retention are made psychologically possible by a mechanism of self-surrender to the poetic performance, and of self-identification with the situations and the stories related in the performance. Only when the spell is fully

effective can his mnemonic powers be fully mobilised. His receptivity to the tradition has thus, from the standpoint of inner psychology, a degree of automatism which however is counter-balanced by a direct and unfettered capacity for action, in accordance with the paradigms he has absorbed. 'His not to reason why.'

This picture of his absorption in the tradition is over-simplified. There are clear signs in Homer himself<sup>7</sup> that the Greek mind would one day reach out in search of a different kind of experience. And any estimate of the mental condition of Homeric man will depend upon the point of view from which the estimate is made. From the standpoint of a developed self-conscious critical intelligence he was a part of all he had seen and heard and remembered. His job was not to form individual and unique convictions but to retain tenaciously a precious hoard of exemplars. These were constantly present with him in his acoustic reflexes and also visually imagined before his mind's eye. In short, he went along with the tradition. His mental condition, though not his character, was one of passivity, of surrender, and a surrender accomplished through the lavish employment of the emotions and of the motor reflexes.

When confronted with an Achilles, we can say, here is a man of strong character, definite personality, great energy and forceful decision, but it would be equally true to say, here is a man to whom it has not occurred, and to whom it cannot occur, that he has a personality apart from the pattern of his acts. His acts are responses to his situation, and are governed by remembered examples of previous acts by previous strong men. The Greek tongue therefore, as long as it is the speech of men who have remained in the Greek sense 'musical' and have surrendered themselves to the spell of the tradition, cannot frame words to express the conviction that 'I' am one thing and the tradition is another; that 'I' can stand apart from the tradition and examine it; that 'I' can and should break the spell of its hypnotic force; and that 'I' should divert some at least of my mental powers away from memorisa-

tion and direct them instead into channels of critical inquiry and analysis. The Greek ego in order to achieve that kind of cultural experience which after Plato became possible and then normal must stop identifying itself successively with a whole series of polymorphic vivid narrative situations; must stop re-enacting the whole scale of the emotions, of challenge, and of love, and hate and fear and despair and joy, in which the characters of epic become involved. It must stop splitting itself up into an endless series of moods. It must separate itself out and by an effort of sheer will must rally itself to the point where it can say 'I am I, an autonomous little universe of my own, able to speak, think and act in independence of what I happen to remember'. This amounts to accepting the premise that there is a 'me', a 'self', a 'soul', a consciousness which is self-governing and which discovers the reason for action in itself rather than in imitation of the poetic experience. The doctrine of the autonomous psyche is the counterpart of the rejection of the oral culture.

Such a discovery of self could be only of the thinking self. The 'personality', as first invented by the Greeks and then presented to posterity for contemplation, could not be that nexus of motor responses, unconscious reflexes, and passions and emotions which had been mobilised for countless time in the service of the mnemonic process. On the contrary, it was precisely these which proved an obstacle to the realisation of a self-consciousness emancipated from the condition of an oral culture. The *psyche* which slowly asserts itself in independence of the poetic performance and the poetised tradition had to be the reflective, thoughtful, critical psyche, or it could be nothing. Along with the discovery of the soul, Greece in Plato's day and just before Plato had to discover something else—the activity of sheer thinking. Scholarship has already called attention in this crucial period to changes that were occurring in the significance of the words denoting various kinds of mental activity. Their complete documentation need not be treated here. It may suffice to point to one symptom among many; namely that the same sources

which testify to a sort of virtuosity in the use of the words for 'soul' and 'self' testify also to the same kind of virtuosity in the words for 'thinking' and 'thought'.<sup>8</sup> Something novel is in the air, not later than the last quarter of the fifth century before Christ, and this novelty might be described as a discovery of intellection.

One way of expressing this novelty would be to say that a psychic mechanism which exploited memorisation through association was being replaced, at least among a sophisticated minority, by a mechanism of reasoned calculation. We cannot correctly say that the imaginative powers were yielding to the critical, though this, in the Alexandrian Age, seemed to be the practical result for Hellenism. The term imagination as it is used today seeks to combine the Homeric and the Platonic states of mind in a single synthesis. Another and more correct way of stating the effect of the revolution, if we are to employ modern terms, as we must, would be to say that it now became possible to identify the 'subject' in relation to that 'object' which the 'subject' knows. The problem of the 'object', the datum, the knowledge that is known, we shall explore in the next chapter. Here we concentrate on the new possibility of realising that in all situations there is a 'subject', a 'me', whose separate identity is the first premise to be accepted before we pass on to any further statements or conclusions about what the situation is.

We are now in a position more clearly to understand one reason for Plato's opposition to the poetic experience. It was his self-imposed task, building to be sure on the work of predecessors, to establish two main postulates: that of the personality which thinks and knows, and that of a body of knowledge which is thought about and known. To do this he had to destroy the immemorial habit of self-identification with the oral tradition. For this had merged the personality with the tradition, and made a self-conscious separation from it impossible. This means that his polemics against the poets are not a side issue, nor an eccentric piece of Puritanism, nor a response to some temporary fashion in Greek educational practice. They are central to the establishment



of his own system. Within the confines of this chapter let us take up the pertinent documentation of his *Republic*, as it reveals and illuminates the direct connection in his own mind between the rejection of the poets on one hand and the affirmation of the psychology of the autonomous individual on the other.

Soon after the beginning of Book Three, his programme for censoring the stories told by the poets is concluded. He has so far been dealing, as we recall, with content (*logoi*) and now he proposes to take up *lexis*,<sup>9</sup> the 'medium' by which the content is communicated. At this point he introduces the conception of *mimesis* and at first sight he seems content to use the term, as we have earlier pointed out, in a purely stylistic sense to distinguish dramatic impersonation from straight description. But when he asserts that the artist who employs the former in effect 'likenes himself' and not simply his words to another, and is in this sense a mimer, we realise that he is assuming a condition in the artist which must involve psychological identification with his subject matter. It is no longer merely a question of styling. In fact, as we have seen, his argument as it develops the theme of identification seems to draw little distinction between the artist, the performer, and finally the pupil who learns the poetry from either the artist or the performer. For it is surely the pupil who is to become the future guardian, and as Plato's argument develops, it focuses more and more on the psychological protection of the guardian during the course of his education. He stresses the profound effect which "imitations starting in early youth" can have upon "characters" and warns against the habit of "likening oneself to the inferior" (model). The precise effects which are registered upon the pupil's personality are not analysed in detail, but in general their impact is stated to be one of dispersal and distraction, of loss of focus and moral direction. This suggestion is first supported by appealing to the previous doctrine in Book Two of natural specialisation. The poetic mimer cannot select his one proper speciality for imitation; he is continually involved with a series of identifications, all of them inconsistent. When the medium used is expository

rather than mimetic, the shifts and changes are small. That Plato's words apply to the content, with its variety of character and situation, and to the response of the pupil, is indicated a few sentences later: 'we do not want our guardian to be a "two-aspect man" nor a "many-aspect man" nor do we want an artist who can become "any kind of person".' Then he leaves these matters and passes on to problems of mode and melody.

Later he resumes and summarises what for the young guardian should be the general objective of his education. He has to be 'an effective guardian of himself and of the music he has been learning, presenting himself rhythmically well-organised and harmonised'.<sup>10</sup> This comes near to a conception of an inner stability of the personality, self-organised and autonomous, a stability not possible under the existing practice of poetic education. But it is noteworthy that in this, the first programme of educational reform offered in Books Two and Three, the conception of the autonomous personality is not put forward and defended as such. True, the *Republic*, even in the earlier books, can use the term *psyche* in the Socratic sense. We should hardly expect otherwise in a thinker whose thinking begins within the Socratic orbit. But a systematic explication of the term and the doctrine behind it is reserved for Book Four, at a point where the cardinal virtues, already defined in a social context as attributes of the political community, are now to be defined as attributes of the individual personality. Here, in a context divorced from the problem of imitation, Plato first makes formal use of the assumption that the individual man has a *psyche* comprising three 'forms' which are correspondingly found in the three classes in the state.<sup>11</sup> He warns however against committing ourselves to the notion that this means that the *psyche* is divisible into real parts. Its three divisions have a convenience which is apparently descriptive only.<sup>12</sup> It does however have powers or capacities corresponding to our power of 'learning', to our 'spirit' (or 'will'?) and to our 'appetition' or 'desire'.<sup>13</sup> The fundamental distinction to be drawn lies between the calculative or rational, and the appetitive capacities,

with spirit or will lying between, potentially the ally of either.<sup>14</sup> He then, using this descriptive mechanism, states the psychological doctrine which is to support his moral doctrine. Spirit or will is properly the ally of the calculative reason. With its help the task of reason is to control the appetitive instincts and bring the whole *psyche* into a harmonised and unified condition, in which the virtue of each faculty, demonstrated in the performance of its proper role within its proper confines, is united with its fellows into a condition of over-all 'justice'. This is the true inner morality of the soul and as Plato sums up, he recalls and now explicates his previous description<sup>15</sup> of the guardian who has won self-mastery:

Righteousness pertains to the inner action not the outer, to oneself and to the elements of the self, restricting the specific elements in one's self to their respective roles, forbidding the types in the *psyche* to get mixed up in one another's business; requiring a man to make a proper disposition of his several properties and to assume command of himself and to organise himself and become a friend of himself . . . becoming in all respects a single person instead of many. . . .<sup>16</sup>

We are justified in calling this a doctrine of the autonomous personality, one which self-consciously rallies its own powers in order to impose upon them an inner organisation, the inspiration for which is self-generated and self-discovered.

When we read Plato, we can sometimes be convinced that there was no salvation outside of society, while at other times it is the kingdom within man which is all-sufficient. The *Republic* is bifocal in its emphasis. In the present passage at least the philosopher speaks as though, if justice were founded within one's own soul, it would be occupying the only entity which exists beyond time and place and circumstance. This, when he wrote, was a very new conception for Greece. It is put forward in this place with only indirect reference to the problems raised by poetic 'imitation', or, as we have interpreted it, psychological identification. The connection is there, for Plato's description of this subject who has become 'one person' instead of many recalls his previous description of that condition proper to the young

guardian who has had the proper kind of education, and has escaped the dangers of *mimesis*.

The next stage in the unfolding of Plato's psychology comes only in Book Seven. He has in the meantime confronted us with society's need to be governed not simply by guardians but by intellectuals, the philosopher-kings. What is the difference? It lies in the crucial distinction between the average experience of average men and a knowledge of the Forms; between the kind of mind which accepts and absorbs the passing show uncritically, and the intelligence which has been trained to grasp formulas and categories which lie behind the panorama of experience. The parables of the Sun, the Line and the Cave have been offered as paradigms which shall illuminate the relationship between ideal knowledge on the one hand and empirical experience on the other, and shall suggest to us the ascent of man through education from the life of the senses towards the life of the reasoned intelligence.

And what then, asks Plato, is the process, properly understood, that we name education? Not the implanting of new knowledge in the *psyche*. Rather there is a faculty (*dynamis*) in the *psyche*, an organ which every man uses in the learning process, and it is this innate faculty which, like a physical eye, must be converted towards new objects. Higher education is simply the technique of conversion of this organ. 'Thinking' is a 'function' (*arete*) of the *psyche* supreme above all others; it is indestructible, but it has to be converted and refocused in order to become serviceable.<sup>17</sup>

In Book Four Plato had sought a descriptive outline of the competing impulses and drives or 'faculties' (*dynameis*) in the *psyche*, which would at the same time not compromise its essential unity and absolute autonomy. Here the conception of that autonomy is now elevated to a plane where the soul attains its full self-realisation in the power to think and to know. This is its supreme faculty; in the last resort its only one. Man is 'a thinking reed'.

And what is to be the *mathema* or object of study which shall produce this effect of conversion?<sup>18</sup> As he seeks the answer to this

question and proposes 'number and calculation', as the first item in his curriculum, Plato drops into a linguistic usage which reaffirms, over and over again, the conception of the *psyche* as the seat of free autonomous reflection and cogitation. It is the learning process associated with arithmetic which 'leads to thought processes'. Sense experience *per se* 'fails to challenge the thought process to undertake inquiry' and 'the *psyche* of most men is not compelled to put a question to the thought process'.<sup>19</sup> Plato does not here mean that *psyche* and thought process are distinct, for a little later he speaks of 'the *psyche*, caught in a dilemma', asking questions of the senses, and again 'the *psyche* challenges calculation and thought process to undertake examination'. There are situations where sense impressions are contradictory. It is these which 'offer challenge to the intellect and stimulate thought process' so that 'the *psyche* in its dilemma sets moving the thought process in itself'.<sup>20</sup>

In this way, that autonomous self-governing personality defined in Book Four becomes symbolised as the power to think, to calculate, to cogitate, and to know, in total distinction from the capacity to see, to hear, and to feel. In Book Ten, as Plato at last returns to the problem of poetic *mimesis*, we discover how intimate in his own mind is the connection between this problem and the doctrine of the autonomous *psyche* which is able to think.

In Book Three the mimetic process had not been totally rejected; a degree of identification was possibly useful to the pupil in primary education if it helped him to imitate models which were morally sound and useful. Even so, Plato could not help suggesting that there was something psychologically unsound about the mimetic process as such.

But now, before reaching Book Ten, he has expressed in full the doctrine of the autonomous personality and identified the essence of the personality with the processes of reflection and cogitation. He is now therefore in a position<sup>21</sup> totally to reject the whole mimetic process as such. He has to propose that the Greek mind find an entirely new basis for its education. Hence the

extreme position in the matter of the arts put forward in Book Ten, so far from being a piece of eccentricity or a reply to some fleeting fashion in education, becomes the logical and inevitable climax to the systematic doctrine of the *Republic*.

Roughly the first two-thirds<sup>22</sup> of the attack is levelled at the character of the content of the poetised statement. The problem here is epistemological, and we shall come to it in our next chapter. It is met by using presuppositions about the character of knowledge and of truth which had been laid down in Books Six and Seven, and which are comprised within the so-called Theory of Forms.

Plato's argument, thus armed, and having disposed of the problem of poetry's content, turns upon<sup>23</sup> the character of the poetic performance as an educational institution and renews that attack which he had launched in Book Three. But now the victory has to be total. Since he is now equipped, and has now equipped his reader, with the doctrine of the autonomous personality and identified it as the seat of rational thought, he is in a position to re-examine *mimesis* from the basis of this doctrine, and he finds the two wholly incompatible. For the imitative process already described in Book Three as 'making yourself like somebody else' is now disclosed with compelling force to be a 'surrender' of one's self, a 'following-along' while we 'identify' with the emotions of others; it is a 'manipulation' of our *ethe*.<sup>24</sup> He even includes a reference to the fact that these experiences are 'recollections';<sup>25</sup> that is, the task of the poetic education is to memorise and recall. To this pathology of identification Plato now opposes the 'polity in oneself',<sup>26</sup> the city of man's own soul, and affirms as he had in Book Three the absolute necessity of building an inner self-consistency. This becomes possible only if we reject the whole process of poetic identification. And this identification is pleasurable; it appeals to the unconscious instinct. It means the surrender to a spell.<sup>27</sup> Plato's description cannot but recall the terms in which Hesiod had first described the psychology of the reflexes which assist memorisation. Plato himself is well aware that he is entering the lists against a whole

cultural tradition. That is why his peroration ends with a challenge to man to resist the temptations not only of power, wealth, and pleasure, but of poetry herself.<sup>28</sup> The appeal translated into terms of modern cultural conditions sounds absurd. Plato was not given to absurdity.

Did this conception of the autonomous rational personality derive from a previous rejection of the spell of oral memorisation, or did it precipitate this rejection? Which was cause and which was effect? The question is not answerable. The two phenomena in the history of the Greek mind are different ways of looking at the results of a single revolution; they are formulas which complement each other. One is entitled to ask however, given the immemorial grip of the oral method of preserving group tradition, how a self-consciousness could ever have been created. If the educational system which transmitted the Hellenic mores had indeed relied on the perpetual stimulation of the young in a kind of hypnotic trance, to use Plato's language, how did the Greeks ever wake up?

The fundamental answer must lie in the changing technology of communication. Refreshment of memory through written signs enabled a reader to dispense with most of that emotional identification by which alone the acoustic record was sure of recall. This could release psychic energy, for a review and re-arrangement of what had now been written down, and of what could be seen as an object and not just heard and felt. You could as it were take a second look at it. And this separation of yourself from the remembered word may in turn lie behind the growing use in the fifth century of a device often accepted as peculiar to Socrates but which may well have been a general device for challenging the habit of poetic identification and getting people to break with it. This was the method of dialectic, not necessarily that developed form of logical chain-reasoning found in Plato's dialogues, but the original device in its simplest form, which consisted in asking a speaker to repeat himself and explain what he had meant. In Greek, the words for explain, say, and mean could

coincide. That is, the original function of the dialectical question was simply to force the speaker to repeat a statement already made, with the underlying assumption that there was something unsatisfactory about the statement, and it had better be re-phrased.<sup>29</sup> Now, the statement in question, if it concerned important matters of cultural tradition and morals, would be a poetised one, using the imagery and often the rhythms of poetry. It was one which invited you to identify with some emotively effective example, and to repeat it over again. But to say, 'What do you mean? Say that again', abruptly disturbed the pleasurable complacency felt in the poetic formula or the image. It meant using different words and these equivalent words would fail to be poetic; they would be prosaic. As the question was asked, and the alternative prosaic formula was attempted, the imaginations of speaker and teacher were offended, and the dream so to speak was disrupted, and some unpleasant effort of calculative reflection was substituted. In short, the dialectic, a weapon we suspect to have been employed in this form by a whole group of intellectuals in the last half of the fifth century, was a weapon for arousing the consciousness from its dream language and stimulating it to think abstractly. As it did this, the conception of 'me thinking about Achilles' rather than 'me identifying with Achilles' was born.

Thus the method was one means of separating the personality of the artist from the content of the poem. Hence it was that in his *Apology*, which whatever its historicity certainly attempts a summation of the Socratic life and of Socrates' historical significance as Plato saw them, the disciple represents his master's famous mission as in the second instance a resort to the poets to ask them what their poems said.<sup>30</sup> The poets are his victims because in their keeping reposes the Greek cultural tradition, the fundamental 'thinking' (we can use this word in only a non-Platonic sense) of the Greeks in moral, social and historical matters. Here was the tribal encyclopedia, and to ask what it was saying amounted to a demand that it be said differently, non-poetically, non-rhythmically, and non-imagistically.



It is of some interest in this connection to note that when Plato in his own elaborate development of Socraticism proceeds to construct the outline of the actual curriculum of his Academy, he too faces the same problem of awakening the prisoners in the cave from their long illusion. The first subject on the curriculum proposed for this purpose is arithmetic. This takes the place of the Socratic interrupting question. Why arithmetic, if not because it is a primary example of a mental act which is not one of recollection and repetition, but of problem-solving? To establish a numerical relationship is to achieve a small leap of the mind. Plato by number and calculation did not mean just 'counting' but 'counting up'. He is not asking for a repetition of the same series of symbols in fixed order, but rather the establishment of simple ratios and equations. This cannot be a mimetic process; it involves not identification with a series or list of phenomena, but the very reverse. One has to achieve personal separation from the series in order to look at it objectively and measure it.

That Plato thought of this discipline as some kind of equivalent for the elementary dialectic of Socrates is shown by the fact that he links arithmetical thinking with the uncovering of 'mental dilemma' (*aporia*),<sup>31</sup> and this in turn is created by the occurrence of contradiction in the sense data. In Book Ten he finds the same kind of contradiction in the poetised description of phenomena. The soul is puzzled, disturbed, and in malaise.<sup>32</sup> 'Arithmetic', the prototype of all calculation, is then challenged to solve the dilemma. This means a challenge to the autonomous *psyche* to take over the sense experience and the language of sense experience in order to remodel them.

So it is that the long sleep of man is interrupted and his self-consciousness, separating itself from the lazy play of the endless saga-series of events, begins to think and to be thought of, 'itself of itself', and as it thinks and is thought, man in his new inner isolation confronts the phenomenon of his own autonomous personality and accepts it.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Clouds* 94, 319, 415, 420, 714, 719; *Birds* 1555 ff.

<sup>2</sup> J. Burnet, 'Socratic Conception of the Soul'; A. E. Taylor, *Socrates*, pp. 35-88; F. M. Cornford, *Before and After Socrates*. The summary of the Socratic mission at *Apology* 29d8 reads: *χρημάτων μὲν οὐκ αἰσχύνῃ ἐπιμελούμενος ὅπως σοι ἔσται ὡς πλείστα, καὶ δόξης καὶ τιμῆς, φρονήσεως δὲ καὶ ἀληθείας καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπως ὡς βελτίστη ἔσται οὐκ ἐπιμελήσῃ οὐδὲ φροντίζεις;*

<sup>3</sup> For Heraclitus, *psyche* remains the Homeric 'breath', whether fiery or smoky, but at least three of his sayings imply that this breath in the individual is the seat or source of his intelligence: B107 (ghosts that are 'barbarian'); 117 ('a drunk man has a wet ghost'); 118 ('the dry ghost is the most intelligent'—reading *ἀθῆ ψυχῇ σοφωτάτη*). By Democritus *psyche* is distinguished as the seat of intelligence (Diodor, 1.8.7 = *FVS* B5, 1: *ἀρχήνοια ψυχῆς*, and B 31: *sophia* is the *iatrike* of *psyche*); and as seat of happiness (170, 171); of moral choice (72 and 264); of cheerfulness or its opposite (191); of grief (290). It is likewise opposed to the body as superior to inferior or as controller to controlled (37, 159, 187).

<sup>4</sup> *Clouds* 242, 385, 478, 695, 737, 765, 842, 886, 1454-5; cf. *Phaedo* 115c6: *οὐ πείθω, ὦ ἄνδρες, Κρίτωνά, ὡς ἐγὼ εἰμι οὗτος Σωκράτης, ὁ νυνὶ διαλεγόμενος καὶ διατάττων ἕκαστον τῶν λεγομένων, ἀλλ' οἴεται με ἐκείνους εἶναι ἐν ὄρεται ὄλλῃον ὕστερον νεκρὸν, καὶ ἐρωτᾷ δὴ πῶς με θάπτῃ.*

<sup>5</sup> The assumptions expressed in the *Phaedo* passage (previous n.) are the exact reverse of those that lie behind the language of the *Iliad*, 1.3-4: *πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν ἡρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἐλώρια τευχε κίνεσσαν*. Cf. *Iliad* 23.103-4: *ὦ πόποι, ἦ ῥα τίς ἐστι καὶ εἶν Ἄϊδαο δόμοισι ψυχῇ καὶ εἶδωλον, ἀτὰρ φρένες οὐκ ἐνὶ πάμπαν*. This does not mean that Homeric man was a shadowy creature, unsure of himself or his existence. On the contrary, since the emotions which accompany the senses are the foundation of all consciousness, and since, as these are intensified and enriched by their own expression, consciousness is intensified also (cf. Collingwood, cap. 10), an Achilles can 'live fully' as a human being without benefit of any Socratic belief that he must 'tend his soul'. The gulf between the two men is bridged by a transition from the imaginative consciousness to the intellectual self-consciousness.

<sup>6</sup> The discovery of self which is ascribed to the lyric poets by Snell (*Discovery*, cap. 3: 'The Rise of the Individual in Early Greek Lyric') is undocumented so far as vocabulary is concerned.

<sup>7</sup> Perhaps particularly in the *Odyssey*.

<sup>8</sup> *Clouds* 94, 137, 155, 225, 229, 233, 740, 762, 950; 695, 700 and below, n. 17.

<sup>9</sup> *Rep.* 392c ff. What follows in our text is a brief recapitulation of the argument of cap. 2, pp. 20 ff.

<sup>10</sup> 413e3-4.

<sup>11</sup> 435b.

<sup>12</sup> 435c4-d8.

<sup>13</sup> 436a9-10 *μανθάνομεν μὲν ἑτέρω, θυμούμεθα δὲ ἄλλω τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν, ἐπιθυμούμεν δ' αὖ τρίτῳ τινὶ κτλ.*

<sup>14</sup> 440c-441a.

<sup>15</sup> Above, n. 10.

<sup>16</sup> 443c9 ff.

<sup>17</sup> 518e2 ἢ δὲ τοῦ φρονῆσαι παντός μᾶλλον θειότερου τινός τυγχάνει, ὡς βοικεν, οὔσα, δ τὴν μὲν δύναμιν οὐδέποτε ἀπόλλυσιν, κτλ. Since φρονεῖν, like other terms describing psychic process (cf. Snell, *Discovery*, cap. 1, where however the phren- phron- words are not treated), had hitherto enjoyed a wide and from our standpoint ambiguous range of signification (pride, purpose, decision, intention, awareness, state of mind; cf. also Aristotle, *de An.* 3.3, and Fraenkel's *Agamemnon* 11.105, as cited by Holt, p. 60; the formula γιγνώσκω, φρονέω, τά γε δὴ νοέοντι κελεύεις occurs at *Od.* 16.136, 17.193, 281, on which Merry notes that 'there is not much shade of difference between the three verbs'), it may be inferred that here Plato deliberately narrows the verb (or extends it, depending on the point of view) to the signification of sheer thinking or intellection, a sense not substantiated with certainty in any previous author except Heraclitus B.113 (cf. Kirk's discussion, pp. 60-1; B.112 and B.116, as emended by Diels, would indeed anticipate Plato, but Kirk, p. 56, regards both as 'weak paraphrases' of B.113; as for Parmenides B.16.3 and Emped. B.108.2, the richer Homeric sense, a complex of thought feeling and perception, is probably still intended by both, though Kirk argues otherwise for Parm.). Adam's note *ad loc.* says 'The meaning of φρόνησις has changed since 4.433b in conformity with the intellectualism of Books 6 and 7'. This infers that the history of φρονεῖν is linked with that of φρόνησις, and raises the question of whether, even at *Rep.* 6.505b6, the *phronesis* which is named by οἱ κομψότεροι as the *summum bonum* may not be 'intellection' (the process) rather than 'wisdom' or 'knowledge' (the objectified product). In that case, at 505c2, φρόνησιν γὰρ αὐτό φασι εἶναι ἀγαθοῦ means 'thinking about the good', and Plato's objection, that prior 'comprehension' (σύνεσις 505c3) of the good is required in order to be able to 'think' about it becomes more plausible. Moreover, the fifth-century history of *phronesis* and other phron- words suggests that the present passage provides a better index to the character of the original Socratic quest than is furnished in earlier books of the *Republic*. *Phronesis* (cf. also on *mimesis*, above, cap. 3, n. 22, and on *genesis* above, cap. 10, n. 8) is an action noun originating in Ionic prose, before its entry into Attic (Holt, pp. 117-20, who cites Her. B.2 and Democritus B.119, 193, and then Sophocles, twice, and Euripides, once). Holt translates it as 'intelligence' and, in Her., as 'faculté de penser'. It thus represents (a) an attempt at abstraction but (b) an abstraction of a process or faculty. Holt explains this type of noun in—σις as an invention designed to denominate general traits shared by a class of actions regardless of whether they are 'actual' or not (réel versus irréal). This is a philosopher's or thinker's motive. Previous vocabulary had limited itself to denominating specific action. The evidence of Old Comedy (cf. Denniston, p. 120, for instances of phron- words, to which add the chorus of *phrontistae* in the *Connos* of Ameipsias, and 'miscarriage of a *phrontis*' in the *Clouds* line 137) points to the dawning awareness of intellection as a mental phenomenon in the sophistic-Socratic period, and to the attempt to express the notion by exploiting these

terms. Hence *Apol.* 29e1-2 (above, n. 2) should be translated 'You do not give any concentration (*ἐπιμελήῃ*) nor thought (*φρονιζέεις*) to thinking (*φρονήσεως*) and truth and the psyche, to put it in perfect condition (*δπως ὡς βελτίστη ἔσται*)' where the improvement of the psyche (cf. also 30b2) is not primarily ethical but intellectual. Its powers of intellection must be maximised (from which would follow ethical improvement). The passage in *Rep.* 7 (considered in our text) is thus to be understood simply as an expansion of the Socratic enterprise as stated in the *Apology*. To 'put the psyche in best condition' is to realise its *arete*, which equals τὸ φρονεῖν or φρόνησις. *Per contra*, as Adam notes, *phronesis*, as already used at *Rep.* 4.433b, has connoted intelligence as applied to practical politics—*εὐβουλία*. The above throws doubt on Jaeger's statement (p. 81, à propos of the usage of *phronesis* in the *Protrepticus*) that 'for a long time it had been split into two systems, one predominantly practical and economic, the other moral and religious . . . it was then taken over by Plato . . . and became pure theoretic reason, the opposite of *what it had been* in Socrates' practical sphere' (italics mine). Jaeger is undoubtedly correct in emphasising the contribution made by *E.N.* 6.5 ff. to the establishment of the concept of *phronesis* as 'practical wisdom' or 'prudence', but it would seem that the previous career of the word had been more complicated. Originally taken up by Socraticism in the sophistic-Ionic sense of 'intellection', it was (a) retained by Socratics in this sense as they explored the laws, linguistic, epistemological and psychological, of intellection and also (b) extended (by Plato, or earlier? Xenophon is an unreliable witness) specifically to *applied* political and ethical thinking, as expressing the most important or at least pressing use of the faculty, and identified with the kind of intellectualist virtue proper to a guardian, as at *Rep.* 4.433b (c) this split in application, which may have remained implicit in Plato, was then rationalised by Xenocrates (cf. Burnet, *Ethics*, p. 261 note). (d) The practical application was then selected by Aristotle and its definition amplified, and the term was thereafter confined within these limits. That the sense of 'political sagacity' or 'prudence' may not be pre-Platonic is perhaps indicated by the parallel case of *phronimos*, which in the sense of 'politically sagacious', 'prudent' (as opposed to 'in one's senses', *Soph. Aj.* 259, or 'intelligent', *OT* 692, *El.* 1058), does not seem to be earlier than the fourth century (Eurip. *frag.* 52.9 cited in this sense by *LSJ* is of dubious meaning, and its authenticity rightly doubted by Nauck). Hence when Aristotle says, *E.N.* 6.5.5 (justifying his own definition of *phronesis*), 'we think of Pericles and his like as *phronimoi*, in virtue of their capacity to objectify their own good and that of men generally, and we assume that the *oikonomikoi* and the *politikoi* belong in this category', he is appealing to a verbal usage which would not readily have been understood in the Periclean age itself, but one which developed as the philosophers discussed in retrospect and analysed the statecraft of that period. The editors of *LSJ* s.v. *φρονεῖν*, by equating 'understanding' with 'prudence' as the basic sense of the verb, indicate the influence of the *Ethics*.

<sup>18</sup> 521C10.

<sup>19</sup> νόσις 523a1, b1, d4.

<sup>20</sup> 524a7 ἀναγκαῖον . . . τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπορεῖν. 524b4 περιᾶται λογισμὸν τε καὶ

νόησιν ψυχή παρακαλοῦσα ἐπισκοπεῖν . . . 524d3 . . . παρακλητικὰ τῆς διανοίας . . . ἐγερτικὰ τῆς νοήσεως . . . 524e4 ἀναγκάζοιτ' ἂν ἐν αὐτῷ ψυχῇ ἀπορεῖν καὶ ζητεῖν, κινούσα ἐν ἑαυτῇ τὴν ἔννοιαν.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. 10.595a7 ἐναργέστερον . . . φαίνεται, ἐπειδὴ χωρὶς ἕκαστα διηρηται τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς εἶδη.

<sup>22</sup> 595a-603d.

<sup>23</sup> 605c-608b.

<sup>24</sup> 605d3 ἐνδόντες ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς ἐπόμεθα συμπάσχοντες.

<sup>25</sup> 604d8 τὰς ἀναμνήσεις . . . τοῦ πάθους.

<sup>26</sup> Above, cap. 1, n. 4.

<sup>27</sup> 607c6 σύνισμεν γε ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς κηλουμένοις ὑπ' αὐτῆς; cf. c8.

<sup>28</sup> 608b4 ff.

<sup>29</sup> This rephrasing will substitute for a poetised image of act or event (above, cap. 10) a paraphrase thereof, which will yield a descriptive statement or proposition of some kind, which then becomes the basis of what Robinson (p. 51) calls 'Socrates' primary questions', namely, 'Is X Y?' or 'What is X?'.

<sup>30</sup> *Apol.* 22b4.

<sup>31</sup> 524a7, e5; cf. n. 20.

<sup>32</sup> 602c12 πᾶσά τις ταραχὴ δῆλη ὑμῖν ἐνοῦσα αὐτῇ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ; d6 τὸ μετρεῖν καὶ ἀριθμεῖν καὶ ἰστάναι βοήθειαι χαριέσταται πρὸς αὐτὰ ἐφάνησαν.

## The Recognition of the Known as Object

**T**HE concept of the autonomous personality was not one that could be achieved in the abstract as though it were a scientific solution to a problem in external nature. True, it was a discovery which once made could be generalised as pertaining to all human kind, but in the making of it the thinker could proceed only by personal introspection of himself. For any Greek of this period, from the time of Heraclitus to that of Plato, it was a personal and intimate discovery. The exhortation to know thyself became a motto approved not only by the Delphic aphorism but by the dialectic of Socrates.

It would have been theoretically possible, one can suppose, for Greek thinkers, once they were armed with this postulate and the language in which to express it, to have developed a philosophy of total subjectivism in which 'I' in my fully realised condition of self-consciousness and inner freedom become the universe, a sort of existentialist centre of reality supplying the source of all moral imperatives and all criteria of true and false. There were two obstacles to this occurring, or perhaps a single obstacle under two guises. It was inherent in the temperament of the Greek people that they should take nature and the external environment seriously. Their plastic arts demonstrate this conclusively, for while the geometric beginnings are the product of an inner vision which could stress the mental design at the expense of the external phenomena, the succeeding development through the archaic, classical and Hellenistic periods shows with equal force the profound respect with which the artist confronted the 'facts', so to speak, outside himself and sought to imitate these facts even as he retained inner control over them. Correspondingly in philo-

sophy, as the existence of the self was progressively clarified, there occurred a parallel and simultaneous effort to bring the self into relation with what is not self. The existence of the subject in short, for the Greek, came to presume the existence of the object.

The *Republic* remains faithful to this bifocal objective when, after asserting and describing the organisation of the autonomous *psyche* in Book Four, it proceeds in Book Seven to identify the proper faculty of this *psyche* as the activity of 'thinking'. For if you think, you have to think about something.<sup>1</sup> If you reflect and calculate, there must be data outside your thinking for you to master and to organise. Correspondingly while in Book Four<sup>2</sup> Plato can perhaps incautiously suggest that justice within the soul, the justice of inner conviction, is enough, he later abandons any contentment with this intellectual position. Only a just society can ever make possible the existence of the fully just man; and for the just society the patterns exist beyond man himself in the structure of the cosmos.

Yet admitting the proper virtue of the soul is to think and to know, and that thinking must have an object, why could not this object still be the self? As we have said, the great respect for the social and natural environment prevented this solipsist solution. But it was equally forbidden by the character of the mental and cultural revolution which had brought the soul so to speak to birth. What was Greece, or rather the Greek intellectual leadership, revolting from? Plato has supplied the answer; it was the immemorial habit of self-identification with the poem. This psychological identification had been the necessary instrument of memorisation. And why was memorisation essential if not to preserve the private and public law of the group, its history and traditions, its social and family imperatives? If therefore the habit was to be given up, if the knowing self was to be isolated as subject, it would follow that the object known by the subject became the content of the tribal encyclopedia.

'I' am therefore to be separated from the poem. If this is done, does not the poem then become the object of my knowledge?

No, for the poem's structure, rhythm, syntax, and plot, its very substance, have all been designed for a situation in which 'I' do not exist. They provide the machinery of self-identification, the magic of the spell, the drug that hypnotises. Once I end my absorption in the poem, I have ended the poem too. Its structure must change and become a re-arrangement of language suitable to express not a performance or a re-enactment but something that coolly and calmly and reflectively is 'known'.

What kind of change must come over the poem which shall conform to the change that has come over me? What will make it an object of my knowledge? Its function has been to record and preserve in the living memory the public and private law of the group, and much else. Where was this to be found in the poem? As such, it did not exist. The contents of the encyclopedia can be identified by retrospective analysis, as they were in Chapter Four, but in the epic story they are implicit, not explicit. They appear only as acts and events performed by important persons or happening to important persons. This was inevitable as long as the law was to live in memory. For memory could identify effectively only with acts and events. But now that it becomes possible to know the law, the act and event become irrelevant. They should be discarded; they are the accidents and incidentals of place, time and circumstance. What we require to think about and to know is 'the law itself'.

So it must be somehow isolated from its setting in the great story and set 'itself by itself' and identified 'per se'. It must be 'abstracted' in the literal sense of that word. The Greek for this object, thus achieved by an effort of isolation, is 'the (thing) in itself',<sup>3</sup> precisely the equivalent of the Latin *per se*. And so the Platonic pages are filled with the demand that we concentrate not on the things of the city but on the city itself, not on a just or unjust act but on justice itself by itself, not on noble actions but on nobility, not on the beds and tables of the heroes but on the idea of bed *per se*.

This simple idiom in short is designed to crystallise in the first



instance that initial and essential act of isolation which separates a law or topic or principle or concept from its instances, or abstracts it from its context. But how is this done? You can take a word, justice, city, courage, bed, ship, and treat it as a common name and demand a general definition of it which will cover all the possible poetised instances. But this procedure is sophisticated. It becomes possible only when the spell of the poetic tradition has been already broken. It imposes itself upon the poetic process as an alternative and wholly alien procedure. But how, while still working within the tradition, can one start to extrapolate such topics and principles out of the narrative flux?

The answer is that you can take similar instances and situations which are severed and scattered through different narrative contexts but which use many of the same words and you can proceed to correlate them and group them and seek for common factors shared by all of them. Navigation and its rules do not constitute a topic of the first book of the *Iliad*. But the four different narrative contexts in which embarkation and landing are in question do in effect provide a paradigm of the rules. This can be seen if the pluralised instances are unified, if the 'many' can become a 'one'. So another way of putting the mental act of isolation and abstraction is to say it is an act of integration. The saga will contain a thousand aphorisms and instances which describe what a proper and moral person is doing. But they have to be torn out of context, correlated, systematised, unified and harmonised to provide a formula for righteousness. The many acts and events must somehow give way and dissolve into a single identity. In short 'the thing *per se*' is also a 'one'.

Once it becomes this, the original syntax of the poem has been destroyed. For the poem was in its very nature a story, an event-series. Otherwise it was not memorisable. And an event-series is conducted in verbs of past, present and future, or, if these tenses are not distinctively developed, in verbs of action and happening in time phases. Putting it another way, the only data which can live in the memory are experienced data with which we identify

in act and in situation, and acts and events are 'happenings'; they 'become' or 'are done'. *Per contra*, once the abstracted integration, the law or principle, has come into being, nothing can happen to it. It just is. It can be expressed in language the syntax of which is analytic; that is, terms and propositions are organised in relationships which are timeless. The angles of a triangle are two right angles; they do not gain possession of two right angles; they were not once three right angles and now have become two. They never did anything; they just are. Such a statement is totally divorced from the idiom and syntax of the saga. In short, the absolute isolated identity is not only a 'one', it is also a 'being', in the sense that its linguistic expression is innocent of tense and time. It is not an act or event but a formula; *per contra*, the whole syntax of the poem from which it has emerged is now seen to be one of 'becoming'.

And finally this abstracted object, divorced from concrete situation, no longer needs to be visualised; in fact it cannot be. For visual experience is of colour and shape which occur only as they are pluralised and made specific and so concretely visible in their sharp differentiations from their neighbours. We see the ship, and the men and cargo, and the sea over which they sail, the sail bellying in the wind, the wave breaking foamy and white, even as we hear the wind whistling and the wave hissing. These effects are all there in the saga language—they have to be in order to enlist the indirect aid of mental vision and so reinforce the acoustic resources of the ear. But as the specific sensual nuances of this situation dissolve into a treatise on navigation the visible becomes invisible, the sensual becomes dissolved into an idea. So the abstracted object of knowledge has to lose not only plurality of action in time but also colour and visibility. It becomes 'the unseen'.

Thus the autonomous subject who no longer recalls and feels, but knows, can now be confronted with a thousand abstracted laws, principles, topics, and formulas which become the objects of his knowledge. These are the essences, the *auta ta*, the things

*per se*. Are they a heterogeneous and random collection? Or do they in their turn exhibit a new kind of mutual organisation, some sort of counterpart to the old narrative organisation of the great poem? Platonism assumes from the beginning that they do; that the new objects of sheer thought constitute an over-all area of the known which has its own inner logic and constitutes a system. In short, the knower confronting the known is coming to terms with a new complete world of knowledge.

Theoretically this world can be regarded as systematic and exhaustive. All the abstracted essences somehow gear in with each other in a relationship which is no longer that of narrative but of logic. They all fall into a total ground plan of the universe. It is theoretically possible to exhaust the area of the known; at least the mind of a Supreme Knower might manage this. For the known, in order to be known, must be definite; it cannot go on forever as the story could. It must be a system and a system to be such must be closed. Hence in its over-all aspect the world of knowledge itself furnishes the supreme example of a total integration, within which a thousand minor integrations disclose themselves in ascending and descending hierarchies. The abstracted object *per se* is a one, but so also is the world of the known taken as a whole.

To confirm the picture we have drawn of the Greek or rather Platonic discovery of the known, and of the new properties<sup>4</sup> which were a condition of its being knowable, we can turn back again to the *Republic*.

That work, if we accept Plato's own description of the first book as a 'proem',<sup>5</sup> proceeds in the second book to confront the protagonist Socrates and hence also the reader with a fundamental challenge. The cause of righteousness has already been defended against Thrasymachus, but this effort leaves both Glaucon and Adimantus unconvinced. Prove if you can, says Glaucon, that righteousness is acceptable 'on account of itself as well as for its effects'. He then uses the more abstract formula: 'What is the power possessed by vice and virtue respectively itself

*per se*, as it inheres in the *psyche*? Please ignore the rewards and effects'; and again 'I want to hear it praised itself *per se*'.<sup>6</sup> Then to give point to this challenge he describes a sophisticated doctrine which traces the rise of justice to a reluctant social compact, formed in defiance of our instinctive preference for injustice (provided, that is, that we manage to be the aggressors rather than the victims).

Following him, Adimantus sharpens the challenge still more by pointing out<sup>7</sup> that, theories aside, the traditional moral education to which the young are submitted never meets the condition laid down by Glaucon. Parents approve not righteousness 'as a thing itself'<sup>8</sup> but only the prestige it gains among men and the rewards it wins from heaven. Or else, virtue is approved reluctantly as a doubtful and painful achievement, while vice it is suggested is not only pleasant but is rewarded so that the wicked can flourish and the virtuous are afflicted. As for heaven, it can turn a blind eye if we use the right form of prayer and appeasement. The youth can only conclude that 'virtue *per se*' is irrelevant; a specious decorum<sup>9</sup> of behaviour becomes the goal, while below the surface we pursue our selfish ends in order to succeed in life. For these traditional views Homer and Hesiod are both cited and quoted, as also are Musaeus and Orpheus and the poets and poetry.<sup>10</sup>

And then Adimantus returns to the language used by Glaucon and repeats and enlarges the fundamental challenge. All statements so far made on this subject, all encomia of righteousness, have concentrated purely on the factors of reputation and social prestige and reward. But virtue and vice respectively, 'each a thing itself by its own power inhering in the *psyche*, have never been adequately followed through in discourse to the conclusion that the one is the maximum of evils and the other the maximum good'.<sup>11</sup> And he concludes his peroration by repeating this language thrice: 'Prove what each itself by itself does to its possessor; take away the social effects. . . . Praise only this (property) of righteousness, namely, that which itself becomes of itself through itself beneficial to the possessor. . . . Explain what

each of them itself through itself does to its possessor and leave the rewards and the social effects to others to describe.'<sup>12</sup> The demand for a mental act of isolation could not well be more emphatic. It also amounts to a demand that the right thing to do in given circumstances be translated and transmuted into a concept of 'righteousness'. The demand is primarily intellectual and it is fairly novel.<sup>13</sup> That is why it is reiterated, for it is to set the stage for the massive argument of the remaining books. The formula *kath' auto, per se*, is thrust into the argument by the intellectual Glaucon. Adimantus adverting to the tradition distinguishes between a righteousness which can be defined intrinsically for its own sake and one which is always involved in extrinsic situations. His language is in Platonic terms a little less stringent than Glaucon's.<sup>14</sup> But the joint impact of both demands is clear: we are going to be required to think of righteousness as an object isolated from its effects and treated as a neuter, as a formula, or as a principle, not as an example geared to a specific situation or act.

Does the challenge also disclose that this object could be integrated only at the expense of the poetic idiom and syntax? No, not here; exposition of the intellectual insight required must wait until popular virtue has been defined and disposed of. But the implication is there; it is the poets who are saddled with the responsibility of describing only the rewards and effects of righteousness.

Now if the mnemonic tradition could preserve only situations and acts which illustrated the public and private law, it was in fact limited to describing the effects of the law. Your example of virtue in action had to be that of a superior man acting successfully. This meant the saga was confined to describing the honour and the prestige of virtue, for only these were concrete. It memorialised what happened to a hero as he acted, how others responded to him, and his own affirmation of his own honour and pride. The plot of the *Iliad* provides a conspicuous example. When Glaucon says: leave the effects of virtue to others, he denotes the events which in the saga continually clothe the principle

in concrete situations, and which constitute an illustration of its 'effects' in terms of rewards or punishments.<sup>15</sup> We learn the importance of piety, or its reverse sacrilege, from what happens to Agamemnon and to the army in the opening of the *Iliad*. We are not treated to the notion, still less to the definition, of 'piety *per se*'. This would require a new language and a novel mental effort. As Adimantus says, 'no one has followed this through adequately in discourse'.

Here then is the concept of an 'object', fiercely isolated from time, place and circumstance, and translated linguistically into an abstraction and then put forward as the goal of a prolonged intellectual investigation. We have to contemplate it with our mind, for it is invisible. But this is not said yet, nor for a long time. The ultimate intellectual purport of this challenge, the implications of the expression 'itself *per se*', are actually postponed till Book Five. In the meantime, as the state and the soul are respectively expounded and defined according to a tripartite pattern of classes and of faculties, a working definition of justice is attempted. Can it be anything but an example of that specialisation, of division of labour, which had guided the development of society from its primitive beginnings?<sup>16</sup> Applied to the state as a whole, this means that each class does its own business or keeps to its own. Is this not in fact a rule sanctioned by popular tradition? asks Plato. Is it not the principle which guides any judge in a lawsuit, to assign to each his own?<sup>17</sup> Applied to the individual, this must mean a strict observance by his three psychic faculties of their several roles, without trespassing on each other's territory.<sup>18</sup> But Plato offers this suggestion cursorily, as though even he were not satisfied with it, and proceeds to a peroration in which the righteous man is presented in completely traditional and also conventional terms. He is a reliable trustee, he does not rob temples, nor commit adultery, nor steal, nor neglect his parents or the gods.<sup>19</sup>

Now his Greek audience did not need to have the *Republic* written for them in order to arrive at these elementary and time-

honoured truths. So far from breaking with the poets and with current practice he has arrived at a simple summary of current morality. Plato in fact, as has often been pointed out, offers here a formulation of virtue suitable for popular consumption and guidance, to produce a docile and well-behaved population, before he proceeds to the much more controversial task of proposing a curriculum for his philosopher-kings. The doctrine of Book Four therefore postpones the answer to the essential challenge of Book Two.<sup>20</sup> 'Justice *per se*', as an intellectual object, has been set before us but then left suspended in mid-air. We have described this interruption only to stress the fact that while the intellectual premise that justice must be objectified and treated as an abstraction had to be offered in Book Two as a stark contrast to the whole idiom and thought world of the previous poetic tradition, this premise is not met and fulfilled<sup>21</sup> until Book Five, when the procedures of the intellect itself are taken up and examined.

This becomes possible only in the aftermath of a political challenge: 'The intellectuals must be given political power.'<sup>22</sup> But what is this intellect, this subject who thinks and knows? Or rather; what are the objects of its intellection, for only as these are defined can the true character of the subject also emerge.<sup>23</sup> And Plato then returns to the linguistic formula 'the thing *per se*' and expands it.

'The beautiful and the ugly are opposed and therefore distinct from each other, so that each is a one. The same formula applies to just unjust, good bad and so forth; each itself is a one' . . . and in the same context he proceeds to stress over and over again the existence of the 'beautiful *per se*' or of 'beauty *per se*' and so forth. This is the object which the mind (*dianoia*) should embrace, and, searching for a word to describe this mental faculty, he pitches on *gnome*—it is the 'knowing faculty' which addresses itself solely to these abstracted objects in their self-sufficient isolation.<sup>24</sup>

Amplifying this relationship (for he is conscious that it is unfamiliar) and seeking to overcome the objections of an imaginary

opponent, he then asks: 'does the knower know *something*?' That is, does knowledge have to have an object?<sup>25</sup> In answering his own question he defines some attributes of this object, which we for a moment postpone. But after defining them he challenges his reader to recognise the existence of the 'beautiful *per se*' and the 'just *per se*', and even adds by implication 'the double', 'the half', 'the great', 'the small', 'the light', 'the heavy *per se*' to his list of examples of objects which have to be abstracted and isolated from their application. These are the specific objects of knowledge (*gnosis*).<sup>26</sup>

From here on, the *Republic* when necessary will always assume the absolute necessity of the isolation of the 'per se'. It represents after all a method with which the procedure of earlier dialogues has made us familiar. But it is in the *Republic* that the original genius of the method as constituting a break with previous concrete experience is most clearly exposed. For even as he introduces these objects in the first context quoted from Book Five they are described primarily as integrations, that is as 'ones' concealed behind or among the pluralised appearances where they lurk. 'Each is itself one but appears as many images presented wherever you turn because of its involvement with action and bodies, and also with other objects like itself.' The import of this last phrase can here be neglected. It refines upon but does not alter the basic theory, which is that the all-various actions and the multiple physical objects (which we infer to be the stuff of the narrative experience) break up sets of abstract unities and disperse them into pluralities of images and image situations. Plato does not here suggest how you reverse the process. We have cited as a possible example the integration of four different instances of sailing methods, in order to discover the topic or form of navigation. But in any case it is this integrative aspect of the abstract object which first monopolises Plato's emphasis as he proposes it for us to think about. It is a 'one'.<sup>27</sup> Later, he is to suggest it is like a grouping of all possible instances under a common name;<sup>28</sup> the single name, the sheer noun, then itself becomes the unifying



factor in the mind. Here he simply emphasises over and over again the contrast between 'the beautiful sounds and colours and shapes and all that is created out of them' on the one hand, and 'the beautiful *per se*' on the other: the contrast between 'beautiful acts-and-events (*pragmata*)' and 'beauty *per se*'.<sup>29</sup> The 'many', it is clear, are equivalent to the pluralised instances, the various scattered situations and not merely to the physical things in which the many beautifuls may occur.

Now, since he has already cited more than one example of this kind of object—that is, has applied the abstractive method to several words and will apply it to many more—it is obvious that these objects of knowledge themselves constitute a 'many' but a new sort of 'many'.<sup>30</sup> What is the difference between a group of such objects and a group of events or situations? He replies: these objects severally just 'are' or (in the participle) each of them is simply 'being'.<sup>31</sup> What precisely is being? To ask the question in this form is to prepare the wrong answer. Being we might say is not a noun but a syntactical situation (though later Plato will use a noun—*ousia*—to describe this situation).<sup>32</sup>

The abstracted objects of knowledge, as known and as stated, are always identical with themselves—unchanging—and always when statements are made about them or when they are used in statements these statements have to be timeless.<sup>33</sup> Their syntax excludes tenses of the verb 'to be'. Principles and properties and categories and topics just 'are'. When placed in relationship with each other they provide the terms of analytic statements or of equations, which cannot share in the syntax of process and time, for they are not statements of specific situations and instances, not statements of action.

We need not ask here whether Plato does not sometimes seem to confuse timelessness with immortality. That his prime pre-occupation is with linguistic syntax is indicated in the fact that he raises this issue by first posing the problem: 'What is the character of the known? What is it the knower can know?' And he answers: 'He can only know what is'.<sup>34</sup> This cannot mean a

metaphysical entity. He has already told us that the knower knows the abstracted identities. These then are what 'is'; in the plural they continually 'are', as the angles of a triangle 'are' always two right angles. If you integrate the rules of navigation till you have exhausted them, then, *qua* 'rules *per se*' in contrast to the story which uses them, they just 'are'. Hence he says 'the object of science is that which is'.<sup>36</sup> Because his argument in this context insists, for reasons to be examined in the next chapter, on the contrast between 'what is' and 'what is not', we can become distracted and imagine we are being asked to look at entities rather than at syntactical relations. That it is timelessness on which he has his gaze focused is indicated by the fact that he thrice describes the object *per se* as 'always holding itself self-identical within the same'; 'always being self-identical within the same'; 'always itself identical within the same'.<sup>36</sup> In short he tries to focus on the permanence of the abstract whether as formula or as concept, as opposed to the fluctuating, here-today-gone-tomorrow character of the concrete situation.

This fluctuation is one way of describing that change and variety of situation which alone can inform a story which is time conditioned. Plato's expression for it in this context is 'rolling' or 'wandering'.<sup>37</sup> He uses these terms to describe an endless alternation between the condition of being and that of not being. That is, Agamemnon is noble in one context and base in another; therefore he is both noble and not noble, base and not base. Achilles is now angry and now remorseful; that is, he is and is not angry; he is and is not remorseful. For that matter, Achilles is alive and then dead; he wanders between is and is not. This is a way of dramatising the fact that concrete narrative deals with concrete objects and situations which are all different, or else there would be no narrative, rather than with categories, principles or formulas which persist unchanged.

In the next book Plato continues the argument by focusing upon the character of the subject, namely the intellectual (*philosophos*)<sup>38</sup> and his knowing mind. How can the subject's mind

however be described? Plato had already indicated the answer. It is describable in terms of the kind of objects it thinks about and these have now been defined. So we are now told the philosopher is the man who 'lays hold on the always itself self-identical within the same', and again 'knowledge is of each being (thing)'.<sup>39</sup> These expressions indicate that whole group of isolated abstractions which have been already described. Then comes the question: Is there any overarching discipline (*mathema*) which can train the subject to think about this kind of timeless object?<sup>40</sup> The final answer is to wait till Book Seven. But Plato replies in general terms that it will be a '*mathema* of that beingness (*ousia*) which always is and is not put into wandering by becoming and perishing'.<sup>41</sup> The phraseology once more may tempt the reader to think he is being asked to look at a metaphysical super-reality rather than at a syntactical situation. But it is the latter that Plato intends. The term *ousia*<sup>42</sup> or 'beingness' is used to suggest that the several abstracted objects, the principles, formulas, categories and the like, compose an area of final knowledge outside ourselves. The contrasting syntax of narrative is here properly rendered as the realm of becoming (more strictly of 'birth')<sup>43</sup>; the realm of the endless event-series. It is the realm of those multitudinous situations which happen.

Plato now begins to talk about 'all', or 'the whole', of that area potentially to be known by the subject. It is 'all truth' and then he adds that the subject 'contemplates all (or every) time and all (or every) beingness', which is the nearest his language can get to that notion of 'timeless statement' which we have adopted in our exposition of his meaning.<sup>44</sup>

This then affirms by implication that the known constitutes, in theory at least, a total area of knowledge, a 'world', an order, a system, populated by abstractions which, being themselves achieved by an act of integrating previous experience, also inter-connect in a series of over-all relationships which constitute a 'super-integration'. Plato constructs his parable of the Line to identify this total area as the *noetos topos*—the area of the intel-

ligible, or as the *noeton genos*, the genus of the intelligible.<sup>45</sup> It is the over-all sum of objects known by the subject, encyclopedic in its scope, but its content is invisible and abstract as the content of the poetic encyclopedia was not. Below it lies the area of the visible, which is really not a physical location as we are tempted to think from the vividness of Plato's language, but a level of human experience where the sensual consciousness absorbs the concrete panorama of things 'as they seem', performing their endless narrative of birth and death, action and passion. We have to ascend from the lower to the upper portion of the Line; that is, both portions represent psychic activities but of different kinds. Plato here is less concerned to suggest how the objects of intellect are integrated and abstracted out of the sensual than to stress the totally different type of experience which the intelligible represents. He dramatises this antithesis as one between the visible and the intelligible worlds. So it is here, as he advances the notion of the known as a sum-total of knowledge, that he is drawn also to stress that non-visual<sup>46</sup> and non-imagist condition, which dissolves the vividness of the story into a language which is wholly abstract. This non-visualness, when added to integrity and to timelessness, completes the trilogy in which are comprised the non-epic properties of the sheer idea.

Plato's quest has been for a simple but decisive terminology which shall define both the various abstract objects known by the knowing subject and also that super-object, the realm of final knowledge, in which they are comprised. That quest is now achieved, and as he pursues in Book Seven the problem of the specific disciplines to which our personalities must be submitted in order to wake them up and make them think, he is able to assume that the knowing psyche has to be converted 'from that which becomes towards that which is'; or 'dragged from that which becomes toward that which is'.<sup>47</sup> This language describes the rupture of age-long mental habits of recollection and of discourse which had dealt with concrete events that 'become'. It proclaims the learning of a new mental habit,<sup>48</sup> that of conceptual

thought directed towards abstractions which are outside time. Hence arithmetic 'drags us toward beingness'. The intellectual 'must try and grasp beingness after emerging from becomingness'.<sup>49</sup> The mind must be taught to enter a new syntactical condition, that of the mathematical equation, in preference to the syntax of the story. The content of this beingness he says is not a set of metaphysical entities but 'the great, the small', and similar categories and relationships, or 'the nature of number viewed by sheer intellect'.<sup>50</sup> In short, the content consists of those same isolated abstractions, existing *per se* because divorced from all immediate context and all specific situation, which were first proposed in Book Five in the guise of 'the just *per se*' and 'the beautiful *per se*'.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Cf. n. 25 below. This proposition, so fundamental to Plato's system (for it carries the corollary that the Forms cannot themselves be thoughts; cf. *Parmenides* 132b3-c12, and also below, cap. 14), was probably anticipated by Parmenides, or at least latent in the language he used (B 2.7 and 8.35-6). The *Charmides*, to be sure, explores the possibility that knowledge is to be found in self-converse, but the result of the inquiry is an *aporia*.

<sup>2</sup> 443c9 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Undoubtedly a Socratic formula: *Clouds* 194 is decisive. In the *Apology* it occurs only at 36c8. In 'early' Plato its implications are spelled out at *Euthyphro* 5di ff. ἡ οὐ ταυτὸν ἐστὶν ἐν πάσῃ πράξει τὸ δοῖον αὐτὸ αὐτῷ καὶ τὸ ἀνόσιον αὐτὸ τοῦ μὲν ὁσίου παντὸς ἐναντίον, αὐτὸ δὲ αὐτῷ ὁμοιον καὶ ἔχον μίαν τιὰ ἰδέαν κατὰ τὴν ἀνοσιότητα πᾶν ὅτιπερ ἂν μέλλῃ ἀνόσιον εἶναι; where the *idéa* may represent the Platonic addition unless the well-known views of Burnet and Taylor carry conviction (cf. Havelock, 'Evidence').

<sup>4</sup> These could be described as belonging to the mental situation which 'knows that' as against the one which 'knows how' (cf. Gould, cap. 1). But historically, the one evolved from the other: *techné* was the mother of *philosophía*, and *epísteme* the consort of both. The complexities of this semantic relationship need not however preoccupy us here; cf. below, cap. 15, n. 22.

<sup>5</sup> 357a2 and above, cap. 1, n. 37.

<sup>6</sup> 357b6 αὐτὸ αὐτοῦ ἕνεκα 358b5 αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ ἐνὸν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ 358d2 αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ ἐγκωμιαζόμενον.

<sup>7</sup> 362e1 ff.

<sup>8</sup> 363a1 οὐκ αὐτὸ δικαιοσύνην ἐπαινοῦντες.

<sup>9</sup> 365c4 σκιαγραφίαν ἀρετῆς.

<sup>10</sup> 363a7-d2; 364c5-365a3; 365e3-366b2.

<sup>11</sup> 366e5 ff. αὐτὸ δ' ἐκάτερον τῆ αὐτοῦ δυνάμει τί δοῦναι, τῆ τοῦ ἔχοντος ψυχῆ ἐνόν κτλ.

<sup>12</sup> 367b4 τί ποιῶσα ἐκάτερα τὸν ἔχοντα αὐτῆ δι' αὐτὴν ἢ μὲν κακόν, ἢ δὲ ἀγαθόν ἐστιν. 367d3 ὁ αὐτῆ δι' αὐτὴν τὸν ἔχοντα ὀνίνησιν κτλ. 367e3 τί ποιῶσα ἐκάτερα τὸν ἔχοντα αὐτῆ δι' αὐτὴν κτλ.

<sup>13</sup> It is usually interpreted less stringently, as, e.g. by Gould, p. 142: 'Glaucón and Adeimantus together appeal to Socrates to convince them in effect of the primacy of moral demands' (my italics). This would be true if Plato's language was written as though it assumed moral concepts familiar to us. In that case, the repetition of the demand would be a rhetorical device. But in fact the concept of 'the moral' or 'morality' which gives meaning to the phrase 'primacy of moral demands' is itself only being born, as an object of cognition, before our eyes as we read the *Republic*. Hence Plato's repetition of the demand is a measure of the mental effort and of the achievement implicit in the step of isolating 'the right' as an abstract object, or of converting 'the right thing' into 'rightness'.

<sup>14</sup> Contrast the δι' αὐτὴν of Adeimantus (n. 12) with the καθ' αὐτό of Glaucon (n. 6).

<sup>15</sup> These *doxai* and *timai* (*Rep.* 366e4) are the sole object of heroic endeavour, typified in *Iliad* 1.353 τιμὴν πέρ μοι ὄφελ' ἔστιν Ὀλύμπιος ἐγγυαλίξαι. Saga by definition was a celebration of *kleos*.

<sup>16</sup> 433a1 ff.

<sup>17</sup> 433e3 ff.

<sup>18</sup> 441d12.

<sup>19</sup> 442e6-443a11.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Gould, p. 154: 'It seems that the definitions of ἀρεταί (sc. in Book 4) are too feeble and circumscribed to be the adequate end of any quest . . . The discovery of the real nature of justice is referred, in spite of the definition only recently concluded, to the future once again . . .'

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Book 6, 484a5-7 ἐμοὶ γοῦν ἔτι δοκεῖ ἂν βελτιόνως φανῆναι εἰ περὶ τούτου μόνον ἔδει ζηθῆναι, καὶ μὴ πολλὰ τὰ λοιπὰ διελθεῖν κτλ, which could be interpreted to mean that in the grand design of the *Republic* all else is subordinate to the definition of the philosophic intellect.

<sup>22</sup> 473c11; cf. below, cap. 15.

<sup>23</sup> 475e3-4.

<sup>24</sup> 475e9-476d7.

<sup>25</sup> 476e7.

<sup>26</sup> 478e7-480a1; cf. also 484c7 τοῦ ὄντος ἐκάστων . . . τῆς γνώσεως.

<sup>27</sup> 476a5 αὐτὸ μὲν ἐν ἑκάστων εἶναι κτλ. Cf. 479a4 ἂν τις ἐν τὸ καλὸν φῆ εἶναι κτλ. At *Philebus* 15a4 ff. Plato supplies the terms ἐνάς and μονάς to describe these integrations, as he probes the problem of their relation to phenomena.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. below, cap. 14, p. 270.

<sup>29</sup> 476b5 ff., 476c2 ff.

<sup>30</sup> 479e7 τοὺς αὐτὰ ἕκαστα θεωμένους 484c6 τοῦ ὄντος ἐκάστου δὲ ἕκαστον τὸ ὄν.

<sup>31</sup> 479e7 αἰὲν κατὰ ταῦτα ὡσαύτως ὄντα 480a4 ὡς τι ὄν 484c6 τοῦ ὄντος ἐκάστου 484d6 ἕκαστον τὸ ὄν.

<sup>32</sup> That the syntactical situation has priority in Plato's mind over the metaphysical is indicated at *Parmenides* 135b: however difficult it may be to define the relationship of the Forms to each other or to particulars, they have to exist, or else 'descriptive discourse' (*διαλέγεσθαι*) will be impossible. The nature of this situation is explored in the *Sophist*, especially 257d ff. On *ousia* vid. below, n. 42.

<sup>33</sup> Vid. n. 31, and 479a2 *ἰδέαν* . . . αἰὲν μὲν κατὰ ταῦτα ὡσαύτως ἔχουσιν 484b3 τοῦ αἰὲν κατὰ ταῦτα ὡσαύτως ἔχοντος.

<sup>34</sup> 476e7 ff.

<sup>35</sup> 477b10 *ἐπιστήμη μὲν ἐπὶ τῷ ὄντι πέφυκε, γινῶναι ὡς ἔστι τὸ ὄν.*

<sup>36</sup> Vid. n. 33.

<sup>37</sup> 479d3 *μεταξὺ που κυλιθεῖται* 484b5 *οἱ δὲ . . . ἐν πολλοῖς καὶ παντοῖας ἰσχοῦσιν πλανώμενοι οὐ φιλοσοφοῦν* 485b1 (cf. n. 41 below). (Cf. *Od.* 1.1-3; *Parmenides* B 6.6; and Havelock HSCP, 1958, pp. 133-43.)

<sup>38</sup> Below, cap. 15, pp. 280 ff.

<sup>39</sup> 484b4 (above, n. 33); 484c6 (above, nn. 30, 31).

<sup>40</sup> 485a1 cf. 521c1.

<sup>41</sup> 485b1 *μαθήματός γε αἰὲν ἐρῶσιν δ' ἂν αὐτοῖς δηλοῖ ἐκείνης τῆς οὐσίας τῆς αἰὲν οὐσίας καὶ μὴ πλανωμένης ὑπὸ γενέσεως καὶ φθορᾶς.*

<sup>42</sup> Its use in the *Republic* has been postponed by Plato to this point, but it appears in its philosophical sense as early as *Euthyphro* 11a7. Its habitual translation 'essence' (cf. Robinson, p. 52, where *οὐσία* and *εἶδος* are treated as equivalents) tends to veil the fact that in the Socratic quest for 'what each thing is' (Robinson, p. 74, commenting on *Rep.* 533b and 334b) the 'what' in the Greek is, if I may so put it, less important than the 'is'; for usage of *ousia* cf. Berger.

<sup>43</sup> 485b2 *μὴ πλανωμένης ὑπὸ γενέσεως καὶ φθορᾶς* cf. cap. 10, n. 6.

<sup>44</sup> 485b5 *πάσης αὐτῆς* (i.e. τῆς οὐσίας) d3 *πάσης ἀληθείας* . . . ὀρέγεσθαι 486a5 τοῦ ὄλου καὶ παντός αἰὲν ἐπορεύεσθαι a8 *θεωρία παντός μὲν χρόνου, πάσης δὲ οὐσίας.*

<sup>45</sup> 509d2. 'Knowledge', though it expresses a conception which seems obvious to us, is not easily translatable into pre-Platonic Greek, and the 'known object' still less so. Heraclitus B 32 *ἐν τὸ σοφὸν μόνον* and 108 *ὁκόσων λόγους ἤκουσα, οὐδεὶς ἀφικνεῖται ἐς τοῦτο, ὥστε γινώσκειν ὅτι σοφὸν ἔστι πάντων κεχωρισμένον* may adumbrate this conception; the upper portion of Plato's Line constitutes a declaration that it has now crossed the threshold of the European consciousness.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. especially 511a1 *δ' οὐκ ἂν ἄλλως ἴδοι τις ἢ τῇ διανοίᾳ.*

<sup>47</sup> 518c8 *σὺν ὄλῃ τῇ ψυχῇ ἐκ τοῦ γιγνομένου περιακτέον εἶναι.* 521d3 *μάθημα ψυχῆς ὄλκον ἀπὸ τοῦ γιγνομένου ἐπὶ τὸ ὄν.*

<sup>48</sup> The 'mental situation', which in Greece preceded the 'separation of the knower from the known' and the 'recognition of the known as object', may be thought of as analogous to that situation defined by Collingwood as the 'aesthetic experience'. Thus, p. 292: 'It is a knowing of oneself and one's world, these two

knowns and knowings being not yet distinguished'; and again, p. 290: 'In the case of art, the distinction between theory and practice or thought and action has not been left behind, as it has in the case of any morality that deserves the name. . . . Such a distinction only presents itself to us when, by the abstractive work of the intellect, we learn to dissect a given experience into two parts, one belonging to "the subject" and the other to "the object". The individual of which art is the knowledge is an individual situation, in which we find ourselves. We are only conscious of the situation as our situation, and we are only conscious of ourselves as involved in the situation.' If this be accepted as a definition of the conditions under which the aesthetic sensibility operates, does it follow that it was difficult for a pre-Platonic Greek to create something genuinely ugly? Cf. Collingwood, p. 112; 'The reason why description, so far from helping expression, actually damages it, is that description generalises. To describe a thing is to call it a thing of such and such a kind: to bring it under a conception, to classify it.'

<sup>49</sup> 523a2 ἑλκτικῶ ὄντι παντάπασι πρὸς οὐσίαν 524e1 ὄλκον . . . ἐπὶ τὴν οὐσίαν 525b5 διὰ τὸ τῆς οὐσίας ἀπτεδὸν εἶναι γενέσεως ἐξαναδύντι.

<sup>50</sup> 524c6 μέγα αὐ καὶ μικρὸν ἢ νόησις ἠναγκάσθη ἰδεῖν 525c2 ἕως ἂν ἐπὶ θέαν τῆς τῶν ἀριθμῶν φύσεως ἀφίβωνται τῇ νοήσει αὐτῆ.



## Poetry as Opinion

LET us look back for a moment over the road that has been travelled. The original departure-point lies in those Homeric days when the Greek culture had been one of oral communication. This fact created a set of conditions for the preservation and transmission of the Greek ethos which were only starting to change radically in the generation just preceding Plato's. By ethos is meant, concretely speaking, a linguistic statement of the public and private law (including history and technology) common to the group and expressive of its coherence as a culture. This statement had been orally memorised and repeated by successive generations of Greeks. The function of the poet was primarily to repeat and in part to enlarge the tradition. The Greek educational system, if the term may be used, was placed wholly at the service of this task of oral preservation. It would effectively preserve and transmit the mores only if the pupil was trained to a habit of psychological identification with the poetry he heard. The content of the poetic statement had to be phrased in such a way as to allow this identification. This meant it could deal only with action and event involving persons.

Plato himself in his *Republic* sufficiently documents the functional character of poetry and the mechanisms of psychological identification by which it was memorised. We have gone on to argue that the same work is systematically organised behind two doctrinal goals which constitute the core of early Platonism: the affirmation of a 'subject', that is, of the autonomous thinking personality, and the affirmation of an 'object', that is, of an area of knowledge which shall be wholly abstract. We have also argued that these twin goals of Platonism are both directly con-

ditioned by his perception of the need to break with the poetic experience. That experience had been central; it had constituted an over-all state of mind; let us call it the Homeric. And he proposes to substitute a different state of mind, the Platonic. The Homeric had been expressed in a given kind of language with a given kind of syntax. He proposes a different kind of language and a different syntax.

It is not perhaps difficult to accept the conclusion that the autonomous psyche was indeed a doctrine which can be directly related to its opposite, the submergence of the self-consciousness in previous poetic education. But is it not going rather far to assume that the whole doctrine of an area of knowledge populated by abstract objects, the area of the 'ones', of 'beingness', of the 'invisibles', is also in effect designed as a total correction of the poetic account of experience; that these objects are conceived as a direct replacement of the acts and events which constituted the content of the epic narrative?

What are the labels which Plato himself applies to the non-abstract and non-philosophic experience? It recognises, he says, only the many and the visibles. It is an area of becoming, of distraction, and of ambiguous movement. We have quoted this kind of terminology from his text. Over-all, is he as early as Book Five prepared to give a name to this kind of experience? Yes, he firmly labels it as *doxa*, or opinion.<sup>1</sup>

What proof then is there that by *doxa* he means to identify the Homeric state of mind?<sup>2</sup> Is it not usual to assume that opinion denominates the opinion of the average common-sense man, the unthinking materialist, or 'realist', who does not philosophise, who uses language superficially and illogically, whose vision is fixed purely on physical externals? All this Plato says of him, and the modern Platonist is therefore inclined to identify this person with the modern average man so far as he does not think, reflect, or penetrate behind obvious appearances.

We have on the contrary assumed frequently in the preceding argument that when Plato defines this mental condition he is

attacking a problem specific to his own culture, and one which is indeed created by the previous poetised experience of Greece. It was a mental condition which to be sure has something in common with common sense even today, but not much. We have assumed that it had certain specific characteristics, that it spoke in a specific idiom, which were the direct result of the mnemonic procedures we have described; and these had to pass away. If we are correct, what Plato is pleading for could be shortly put as the invention of an abstract language of descriptive science to replace a concrete language of oral memory.

At any rate it is time to ask: does Plato's own text give any support to the thesis that the experience of the many visibles which become and perish, one which is labelled, not merely in the *Republic*, as 'opinion', is really intended to denominate the content and idiom of the poetised tradition?

If it is, then the many fluctuating visibles correspond to the acts and events which, so we have argued, could alone be retained in the oral memory. They are an interpretation in effect of the narrative syntax in which a specific something is always being done or is happening but in which topics, categories, formulas, and principles never appear. Is Plato ever prepared to identify poetry as essentially a system of narrative syntax? Not very explicitly, it must be admitted, although the implication is there in his assumption, maintained fairly consistently, that the content of poetry is *mythos* as opposed to dialectical *logos*. He can call it *logos* too, but then he is using *logos* as a general term for 'content'.

Everything said by a *mythologos* or poet, he says, is a 'going through of what has happened or is or will be'.<sup>3</sup> The phraseology points to his awareness of the time-conditioning which, as we have argued, is inseparable from the syntax of the memorised material. He says this in Book Three as he first introduces the problem of the medium (*lexis*) in which poets speak. By Book Seven he is prepared to establish a complete philosophic alternative to the entire poetic curriculum. Can it be music? he asks.

No: 'music educates in habit patterns and it transmits a sort of harmonised and rhythmic condition by using harmony and rhythm. It does not transmit science. As for its content, this has a second set of characteristics which correspond, whether the content be mythic or of a more reliable kind. It contains no discipline of any use for what we want . . .'.<sup>4</sup> What those characteristics of content are, which correspond to the rhythm and harmony of meter and accompaniment, he does not say.

At Book Ten, having put forward *mimesis* as the label now not only of personal identification but of the artistic representation, he asks, 'What does the poet represent?' and he replies 'He represents human beings involved in action, whether this action be autonomous or the result of external compulsion and including what men think or feel about their actions; that is how they interpret their effect in terms of weal or woe to themselves and their corresponding joys and sorrows'.<sup>5</sup> Here certainly the content of poetic representation is limited to action and to situation, to doings and to events, and to the thoughts and feelings only as they emerge as reflexes to acts and events, not as isolated and objectified reflections.

To this extent, Plato's formulas for poetic content do tend to place the accent on a purely narrative series. This does not mean narrative at the expense of drama. On the contrary, dramatised representation merely has the effect of transferring the action to the speaker's own person but without altering one whit the narrative syntax. Indeed dramatic impersonation is if anything less capable of an alternative syntax than is impersonal statement, which is one reason why Plato had given some preference in Book Three to the latter.

This poetised panorama of the act and event in which we become involved is in Book Ten explicitly labelled as the enemy of science and as wholly alien to being. As these terms are used, they carry with them those previous contexts in Books Five and Seven in which their significance had been explained. The argument of Book Ten, when compared with those doctrines of the

two earlier books which it uses, can conveniently be broken down and itemised as follows:

- (1) Poetry is first introduced as the corruption of the intellect. This *may* be a reminiscence of the parable of the Line where the mathematical intellect presides over the third section of the Line.<sup>6</sup>
- (2) This reminiscence of the Line is reinforced when the objects of mimetic are compared to those physical appearances reflected at random in a revolving mirror—of all kinds, shapes, and sizes without discrimination. That is, *mimesis* corresponds to the bottom-most division of the Line, where even the objects of sense are only reflected in water and the like.<sup>7</sup>
- (3) The quality of this mimetic content is then exposed, so far as the painter is concerned, as consisting of phantom appearance. This is because *mimesis* can portray only one aspect, frontal or sidewise and so forth, of an object, never the whole object at once. This portrayal is in contrast to what is.<sup>8</sup>
- (4) On this ground, mimetic is then placed in stark antithesis to science (*episteme*).<sup>9</sup>
- (5) Then after a long polemic against Homer and the poets as educators Plato sums up the poet's function as 'mimetic of a phantom of virtue' . . . 'he uses words and expressions to put what we might call coloured surfaces upon all the techniques . . . and these devices possess an inherent spell.'<sup>10</sup>
- (6) The next stage<sup>11</sup> in Plato's analysis of what is represented by *mimesis* is to try to define it in terms of those psychic habits within ourselves to which it makes appeal.
- (7) And what, asks Plato, are these habits? or what is their area of experience? His answer is: optical deception which communicates contradictory reports concerning identical

objects, as these are distorted by the 'wandering' of the coloured surfaces and by distance.<sup>12</sup>

- (8) By contrast the calculative element in the soul corrects such distortion by measurement and number and so avoids contradiction within the same.
- (9) It should be impossible to entertain contradictory opinions which defy the science of measurement.<sup>13</sup>
- (10) The appeal of *mimesis* is therefore alien to 'thinking' (*phronesis*).<sup>14</sup>
- (11) And if we turn specifically to poetry we find that its content consists of continual action and passion fluctuating and inconsistent.
- (12) It can therefore appeal directly to that faculty which is the enemy of calculation—the pathological part of us which the calculative power and law try to control and restrain. A mimetic poet for emotional reasons cannot have a relationship with the calculative faculty.<sup>15</sup>
- (13) Besides, he cannot distinguish great and small but holds the same to be now one and now the other.<sup>16</sup>

Plato may have written this polemic at white heat. It is filled with terminology with which readers of the *Republic* should be familiar, but the terminology is not explicated and the philosopher employs shortcuts in his argument to drive home his final thesis—that thesis which first showed over the horizon at the beginning of the treatise when in Book Two he confronted the 'enemy' in the guise of current morality as it is found in the accounts of the poets. Here this poetised account, so it is hinted, like a mirror reflects a content consisting of a plurality of unorganised visibles of which it cannot be said that they are. The poetic experience is the function of a faculty which is the antithesis of science; it is a condition of opinion which accepts a constant wandering and contradiction in physical reporting; one which is alien to number and to calculation. We conclude that if we cannot apply the term 'is' to reports of this kind, this is because the report shifts and

contradicts itself. The same physical thing now appears to be of a given size or dimension and yet again of a different dimension; it both is and is not.

The pattern of this terminology and the doctrine behind it have been developed earlier in the *Republic*, first in one passage we have already examined in Book Five where the doctrine of the isolated abstracted objects is first introduced, and secondly in Book Seven where the doctrine of the conversion of the soul towards thinking about what is (another passage already noticed) culminates in the introduction of arithmetic as the first discipline which shall begin the conversion. Let us here turn back first to Book Five, and consider the entire context in which the theory of the object *per se* is first proposed as a theory of philosophic knowledge.

Plato had proposed the *philosophos* as the only proper source of political authority in the state. What kind of person is this type? Obviously he is a man who 'likes what is intellectual' (*sophia*) and therefore 'likes to study' (*philomathes*) anything and everything. To which objection is at once made that this description exactly fits those who 'like sights and sounds', the sight-seers who are certainly not philosophers.<sup>17</sup> It is to clarify the distinction between these two types of men that Plato then offers a definition of what it is the philosopher thinks about and knows: namely the abstracted objects *per se* which are ones and are not many. *Per contra*, those who like sights and sounds embrace beautiful sounds and coloured surfaces and shapes. They are 'familiar with beautiful actions-and-events' but not with 'beauty *per se*'.<sup>18</sup> They live in a dream, and this mental condition is one of opinion, a condition intermediate between scientific knowledge on the one hand and of blank unconsciousness on the other. This opinion is a faculty which has its own specific object, and this object is also intermediate.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore this condition is one of continual mental confusion. He who likes sights and sounds is continually passing contradictory judgments about the same thing, and their moral

content seems to shift (so that just becomes unjust), even as their proportions and properties shift (so that light becomes heavy). He is continually saying of the same thing 'it is and it is not'.<sup>20</sup> We conclude that the 'many familiar conventions (*nomima*) of the many'<sup>21</sup> dealing with moral and other judgments are always wandering. This is a condition of opinion not of knowledge, a condition in which noble sounds and coloured surfaces are the objects embraced. We have therefore distinguished two main classes of human beings: those who like opinion (*philodoxoi*) and those who like what is intellectual (*philosophoi*).<sup>22</sup>

So much for the analysis of opinion in Book Five. A cross-comparison with the analysis of poetry in Book Ten reveals the continuity of the two. There is a distinction drawn in each case between a concrete state of mind (which is confused) and one which is abstract and exact. The former is called the 'opinion of the many' in Book Five, and in Book Ten is identified once as 'opinion'<sup>23</sup> and otherwise as the mental condition of the poet and of his report on reality. In both cases, this concrete state of mind reports a version of reality which is pluralised, visual, and various. This pluralisation in both cases is then translated into terms of contradiction. The judgments made about colours, shapes, and sizes are contradictory. The statements made about actions and events and their moral properties are contradictory also. The same thing is now good and bad, now great and small. Consistent moral judgment and consistent physical measurement are alike impossible. If they could be achieved, it is implied, they would in each case be effected by the same faculty. *Per contra*, the condition of opinion is like a dream-state (Book Five) or like being under a spell (Book Ten).

The comparison clarifies one problem. In Book Ten, Plato uses the painter and his pictures of physical objects as an analogy for the poet and his stories of action and passion. Does he however mean that the poet like the painter gives a report of physical reality in the same erroneous language in which he reports the acts and the moralities of human beings? The language of Book



Ten can be regarded as ambiguous on this point. The coloured surfaces employed by the poet could be a mere metaphor for his rhythm and his poetic skills. But when it is realised that the fascination of the vision with isolated colours and surfaces and shapes is also the basic flaw in the 'many' who are prisoners of 'opinion' in Book Five, and that it is this general opinion which gives distorted and contradictory reports of physical reality because of its obsession with these colours, it becomes impossible to avoid the conclusion that Plato intends to judge poetry as a report on the physical environment as well as on the moralities of men, and that he finds it as unsatisfactory in the one case as in the other. And essentially for the same reason. It cannot employ the measuring, calculating and reasoning faculty either in representation of physical objects or in representation of human manners. In the latter case, since the poetic representation becomes effective only as audiences identify with it personally in order to memorise, their reasoning faculty is likewise inhibited from controlling or measuring their personal reactions.

What then is the relation of the poetry of Book Ten to the opinion of Book Five? Obviously they are described in terms of similar states of mind. Since, however, for us poetry represents a much more esoteric experience than does opinion, we would at first conclude that the poet and his poetry happen to be a particular example of the general error inherent in opinion, an example which Plato pillories for some special purpose of his own.

But a different answer is possible. Suppose the poetry of Book Ten is coextensive with the opinion of Five? It is certainly described as though it were. Suppose in fact that it is in Book Ten that Plato fully reveals what he has been getting at in Book Five, when he called his target opinion?

This would certainly be in line with the thesis we have been defending throughout, namely, that the Homeric state of mind was a general state of mind. For in that case, the poets represented the public medium and the only one by which the general state of mind could express itself. They and they alone furnished the

'culture-language', as we called it, and hence also the cultural norms, within which was formed the 'opinion of the many'. And the intensity of Plato's epistemological attack on poetry, as an erroneous report on physical fact and moral value, would be explained, because he is thereby attacking error as it exists in society generally.

If that were so, we would expect that the attack on the many in Book Five should betray some evidence that the ultimate target does lie in poetry; even if that target is fully unfolded only in Book Ten. And it does. Taken as a whole, the passage is devoted to a formalisation of the relationship between knowledge on the one hand and opinion on the other and the definition of the gulf between them. But the antithesis is prepared for us initially by introducing us to two human types, the 'philosopher' versus the 'sight-seer', who represent respectively these two levels of human experience, and the passage concludes by reaffirming these as two fundamental and opposed types of humanity. The sight-seer is precisely defined before the analysis ends as a man who rejects the abstracted object *per se* and whose type of comprehension is enmeshed in contradictions so that he cannot report the physical or the moral world with consistency. He is specifically equated with the 'opinion-lover'.<sup>24</sup>

Now who is the sight-seer? As introduced, he is portrayed as a kind of theatre-goer who perpetually makes the rounds of the Dionysiac choruses both metropolitan and provincial.<sup>25</sup> But why, we should ask, does Plato in seeking to define the new intellectual standards of the Academy imply that the obstacle to their achievement is simply a habit of attending the theatre? This seems more frivolous than the deep seriousness of his purpose required. Theatre-goers in our culture are a sophisticated minority of the better educated. The whole passage makes it clear on the other hand that Plato's target is the average man of average mind. In what sense was the average Greek mind a theatrical mind? The answer can be found only by supposing that Plato's real target here is the poetic performance, by which the cultural tradition was

stored, kept alive, and memorized, and with which the living memories of the audience had to identify. In short, though here as sometimes in Book Ten he focuses on dramatic performance because it is the most contemporary form of the tradition, his target (as in Book Three also) is 'the poets and Homer', the epic performance no less than the tragic. It is not poetry as it might be read from a book that he is attacking. It is the act of memorisation through identification in the poetic performance which to him is inseparable from the poem itself, and which constitutes a total act and condition of *mimesis*.

His phraseology in Book Five supplies more than one hint that this is indeed his target. The 'devoted sight-seers' are equated with the 'devoted hearers of sounds', and the equation stresses the acoustic relationship which is fundamental to the performance. The fond object of their devotion is 'fair sounds and coloured surfaces and shapes and all that is fashioned therefrom'.<sup>26</sup> This accent on sound and colour and shape as the field of experience of opinion is repeated in the conclusion of the argument<sup>27</sup> when he seeks to clinch the contrast between this field and the field of vision of the philosopher. The phrasing is suggestively ambiguous and deliberately so; it describes on the one hand the acoustic-visual content of the poetised tradition and the degree to which it concretely visualises situations and things, no less than its use of rhythm, meter, and music to do this. Yet it also describes the physical things and artifacts<sup>28</sup> with which the external world is so variously and indiscriminately populated. The same double reference covering the content of the poetic record and the outward appearance of the physical world is exploited in Book Ten.

Again, this contrast is also described as issuing from a 'familiar acquaintance with acts-and-events (*pragmata*)' and as a plurality of familiar conventions held by the many about the just and so forth'.<sup>29</sup> Such language can refer only to the moral and social content of what we have called the tribal encyclopedia, the fountain head of all social convention for the Greeks.

At one point in Book Five Plato uses the triple classification of

'sight-seers, devotees of technique and practical men'.<sup>30</sup> No excuse is furnished in the immediate context for this surprising combination as an over-all definition of the average man and his opinion, but it is a recollection of the famous tripartite classification in the *Apology* where Socrates describes his mission undertaken to the politicians, the poets and the craftsmen.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, as already noticed, the over-all experience of these theatre-goers is likened to a dream. This is the equivalent of that rhythmic and emotional spell so necessary to the act of identification, which is described in Book Ten as the accompaniment of poetry.

It now appears, if we are right, that the over-all plan of the *Republic* calls for a progressive definition of a new education in Platonic science which, at every stage of its development through the secondary to the advanced levels, finds itself in collision with the general mind of Greece. This mind in turn is defined always in terms of the mental habits and conventions acquired through long practice in the oral poetry of Greece considered as a vehicle of moral guidance and also of physical description. Whenever the epistemology of Plato's own system is in question he feels compelled to define it in contrast to the psychology and the language employed in the poetic performance. We have added, what he does not explicitly reveal, that this habit and this language had been required by the conditions of oral memorisation and preservation of the group experience.

Books Two, Three, Five, and Ten therefore progressively reveal the enemy of Platonism to be this poetised state of mind, and the attack on poetry becomes progressively more drastic as the theories of Platonism have been progressively expanded and deepened. What then of Book Seven, where Plato, as we have seen, identifying the autonomous *psyche* of the thinker and of the knower, calls for it to be awakened and converted away from becoming toward the abstracted object which constitutes timeless and intelligible knowledge? Does he here, in Book Seven, repeat his rejection of poetry as a candidate for this task? Yes he does,

for as we have seen he summarily dismisses all music as now irrelevant to his purpose<sup>32</sup> and proposes arithmetic as the discipline which shall accomplish this awakening. He says no more of poetry in this place, yet the analysis he proceeds to offer of that mental condition which arithmetic can correct is one that he is going to use again when he comes back to the poet in Book Ten. It is an analysis which selects contradiction as the root error of the concrete state of mind. This is a dialectical weapon. Let us look for a moment at the over-all use to which Plato puts it.

Poetry, he says in Book Ten, is not a viable method of discourse, because it reports reality only in terms which are self-cancelling. In fact it embraces contradiction almost as a principle. Like the painter, the poet reports of the same thing that it is now great, now small. The poet is therefore essentially irrational and the same contradiction pervades all his moral statements about action and passion. A hero, that is to say, behaves now well and now badly, thus failing to furnish any one pattern of goodness in the abstract. This epistemological contradiction in the content of the poem sets up a corresponding psychological contradiction in the *psyche* of the listener, who identifies with the tale and so becomes now good, now bad, now angry and now calm.<sup>33</sup>

What we observe here is that, viewing the pluralisation and the concreteness and the confusion of the poetised statement, Plato has reduced all these objectionable aspects to one: they violate the principle of consistency. This must mean that in poetry antithetical statements are made of the same person and antithetical predicates are attached to the same subject. He or it is now good and now bad, now big and now small depending apparently on the point of view.

It was in Book Five that he had first used this weapon. He had proposed opinion as the label of that experience which is aware only of the many. But suppose, he continues, our objector asks for proof that opinion (that is, this experienced and vivid impression of the multi-changing panorama of appearances) is not knowledge: we reply: knowledge must be of something that is;

ignorance, its opposite, is of what is not. Since the object of opinion can be neither, then, since opinion is a faculty distinct from both knowledge and ignorance, its object can be neither. The only possibility left is that its object, its area of discourse, lies in between. It is the area of the 'is plus the is-not'.<sup>34</sup>

Now, continues Plato, warming to his theme, to illustrate what I mean, the vision of your ardent sight-seer is filled with many beautifuls, uglies, justs, and unjusts, doubles and halves. But every one of this many can at another time appear ugly instead of beautiful, half instead of double. It is therefore no more beautiful than it is not beautiful and this is true of all the many familiar conventions entertained by the many. And so this condition we call opinion is one which continually apprehends is and is not.<sup>35</sup>

What Plato is getting at, if the contexts of Books Five and Ten are compared, is a contrast between two syntactical situations. In any account of experience which describes it in terms of events happening, these have to be different from each other in order to be separate events. They can only be different if the situations of 'characters' in the story, or of phenomena, are allowed to alter, so that Agamemnon is noble at one point and base at another, or the Greeks at one point are twice as strong as the Trojans and at another point are half as strong. Hence the subjects of these predicates 'are and are not'. He does not mean that they cease to exist, but that in this kind of discourse it is impossible to make a statement which will connect a subject and a predicate in a relationship which just 'is', and which is therefore permanent and unchanging.

What kind of statements then does he want and what kind of syntax will they require? Now we can turn to Book Seven to find out. There as he introduces number and calculation as the key discipline which shall train the mind to abstract the intelligible out of the visible he proposes a dichotomy not between knowledge and opinion but between 'intelligence' and 'sensitivity'.<sup>36</sup> The latter reports the fact of three visible fingers as such;

but it goes on to report that one of them is both great and small, both hard and soft, meaning both greater than one and smaller than the other, harder than one and softer than the other.<sup>37</sup> Hence in the language of Book Five it both 'is and is not'. The sensations reported are contradictory; so 'intelligence and calculation' are summoned to solve the mental dilemma and they do so by asking the question: 'What do I mean by the hard or by hardness, by the big or by bigness, etc.?' And they proceed to distinguish and to recognise the mental objects hardness versus softness, bigness versus smallness. These, and not the fingers, are what are counted up and calculated, so that they emerge as separate abstract objects of the intelligence even though our sensible experience keeps confusing them.<sup>38</sup> It is as the intelligence is trained to apprehend them that 'it cleaves to beingness' instead of to 'becomingness'.<sup>39</sup>

Thus when Plato in Book Ten argues that the artist is a man of opinion who confuses his dimensions and cannot reason or calculate and who deals with physical appearances which both are and are not he is continuing the doctrines of Book Five and of Book Seven and reducing the root disease of poetry to this kind of contradiction. But contradiction is a disease only if we assume that it is not the immediate events and situations that are real but the isolated abstractions such as greatness and smallness or right and wrong. It is only of these that statements can be made which are never contradictory. Agamemnon in varying aspects of his behaviour is and is not noble. But nobility always 'is' a virtue. In short, the appeal to banish contradiction is another form of the appeal to name and to use and to think about abstracted identities or principles or classes or categories and the like, rather than concrete events and acts of living passionate people.

*Doxa* or 'opinion' (or 'belief') is the word which in the *Republic* is preferred as the label of the non-abstract state of mind. There were historical reasons for its choice, later to be explored.<sup>40</sup> Book Ten equates *doxa* with *mimesis*, the latter representing both the content of poetry and that psychological condition which ex-

periences poetically. But in Book Seven, in the passage about the fingers, where the problem about the plural and the concrete and the visible is reduced to one of physical contradiction, the term *doxa* is replaced by *aisthesis*, in both the singular and plural.<sup>41</sup> This word is usually rendered as 'perception' or 'sensation'; we have preferred the translation 'sensibility' to indicate the connection of the word in its original usage with emotional reflex as well as with percipient organ. The use of the term here is of obvious importance for the development of Platonic epistemology. It begins to remove the problem of cognition from the area of the poetised experience of narrative events and to place it in the context of sense experience of physical objects. It is more technical and professional in its overtones. Of the sight-seers in Book Five it is not said that they used 'sensibility', but only that they had been 'familiar with' or had 'embraced' or had 'looked at' the visible panorama.<sup>42</sup> But here it is said of the subject that he is 'sensible' of a finger. The use of *aisthesis* gives promise of greater precision in a debate which will turn on the merits of different theories of cognition and differing criteria of truth.

The structure of the argument in the *Republic*, however, shows how 'opinion' and 'sensibility' and 'mimetic experience' are all bound up together, at least in Plato's mind at this stage of his thinking. In Book Five, it is opinion that passes contrary judgments on great and small, light heavy, and the like. In Book Seven it is sensibility that reports conflicting judgments on size and smallness, hard soft, heavy and light. In Book Ten, it is in *mimesis* that size does not appear equal when it should; and the case is not otherwise with crooked and straight, great or less.<sup>43</sup> And as with sensibility in Book Seven, so also with *mimesis* in Book Ten, it is numbering and measurement that is needed as the weapon wielded by the calculative faculty. Whether Plato speaks of opinion or of sensibility or of poetry, they are all three alike judged and found wanting by the light of the same standard; they cannot become aware of those sheer abstracted identities represented by such terms as size or greatness or smallness. Of opinion



in Book Five as of *mimesis* in Book Ten it is also said that they fail to apprehend moral abstractions.

Thus it is possible to argue that the problem of physical perception and its confusions and contradictions, a thesis developed and examined in later Platonism, was originally developed within the larger context of the poetised experience and its inherent confusions. In both alike, according to Platonism, there is a failure to separate out clearly the abstracted objects, which are categories, relations, moral principles, and the like, from the concrete. But the narrowing down of the problem of experience to one of physical perception had the effect also of narrowing the object of experience from the total event-series down to the physical things in the series. Philosophy gradually forgot its original objective<sup>44</sup> which had been to throw off the mnemonic spell of the narrative. It substituted the attempt to throw off the spell of material things. In either case, the rival candidate for our philosophic allegiance is an abstract reasoning power which knows identities which are unchanging. But these identities when opposed to physical things become categories and properties rather than moral principles. The original objective of isolating a body of moral law from the tribal encyclopedia had been largely achieved. The philosophic problem of settling the status of the material world remained.

But to return to *doxa* or opinion: it is this word that, precisely because of its very ambiguities, was chosen not only by Plato but by some of his predecessors to crystallise those properties of the poetised experience from which the intellectuals were trying to escape. Both the noun, and the verb *doko*, are truly baffling to modern logic in their coverage of both the subjective and objective relationship. The verb denotes both the 'seeming' that goes on in myself, the 'subject', namely my 'personal impressions', and the 'seeming' that links me as an 'object' to other people looking at me—the 'impression' I make on them. The noun correspondingly is both the 'impression' that may be in my mind and the 'impression' held by others of me. It would appear therefore to be the ideal term to describe that fusion or confusion of the subject with

the object that occurred in the poetised performance and in the state of mind created by this performance. It is the 'seeming show of things', whether this panorama is thought of as within me or outside of me.

*Doxa* is therefore well chosen as a label not only of the poet's image of reality but of that general image of reality which constituted the content of the Greek mind before Plato. Its general significance prevailed in the end over its poetic one. If it originally united the two, this is precisely because in the long centuries of oral culture and oral communication it was the poet and his narrative that bore the responsibility for creating the general vision and preserving it and fastening it upon the minds of succeeding generations of the Hellenes.<sup>45</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I have for convenience used one conventional translation of *δόξα*, though there is much to support the contention that it signifies 'thought' in general (cf. Rosenmeyer 'Judgment and Thought', etc.), a symbol of an unqualified 'state of mind' which precisely because it is unqualified Plato would demote to a status below that of the exact science which knows the Forms, their relations to each other, and to phenomena.

<sup>2</sup> Plato probably had precedent for this; below, n. 40; cap. 15, n. 5.

<sup>3</sup> 392d2 πάντα ὅσα ὑπὸ μυθολόγων ἢ ποιητῶν λέγεται διήγησις ὅσα τυγχάνει ἢ γεγονότων ἢ ὄντων ἢ μελλόντων, perhaps a reminiscence of *Iliad* 1.70 and *Theog.* 32 (above, cap. 6, notes 20, 21).

<sup>4</sup> 522a4-b1.

<sup>5</sup> 603c4-7.

<sup>6</sup> 595b5-6: cf. Book 6, 511d8.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Paton, and also Notopoulos 'Parataxis', p. 14: 'This preoccupation with the particular is the natural state of mind of oral literature. . . Absorption in the particular unconcern with the logical relation of the parts to the whole is the unphilosophic condition of *εικασία* which Plato pictures for us in his account of the Cave.' With 596d8-e4 compare Book 6 509e1-510a3, where the objects include ἐν τοῖς ὕδασι φαντάσματα (also below, n. 12); at 598b3 a painting is called φαντάσματος μίμησις; Hamlyn would equate *eikasias* with sophistic.

<sup>8</sup> 598b1 ff.

<sup>9</sup> 598d4-5 διὰ τὸ αὐτὸς μὴ οἶος εἶναι ἐπιστήμην καὶ ἀνεπιστημοσύνην καὶ μίμησιν ἐξετάσαι.

<sup>10</sup> 600e5; 601a4-5, b1-2.

<sup>11</sup> Omitting the excursus on the distinction between user and manufacturer 601c-602b.

<sup>12</sup> 602c10-12 *καὶ ταυτὰ καμπύλα τε καὶ εὐθέα ἐν ὕδατι τε θεωμένοις καὶ ἔξω, καὶ κοῖλα τε δὴ καὶ ἐξέχοντα διὰ τὴν περὶ τὰ χρώματα αὐτῶν πλάνην τῆς ὄψεως.*

<sup>13</sup> 602d6-e10.

<sup>14</sup> 603a11-b1 *ὄλως ἡ μιμητικὴ . . . πόρρω . . . φρονήσεως ὄντι τῷ ἐν ἡμῖν προσομιλεῖ τε καὶ ἑταῖρα καὶ φίλη ἐστίν. . . .* On *phronesis* cf. above, cap. 11, p. 17.

<sup>15</sup> 604a10 ff.

<sup>16</sup> 605c1-3 *οὔτε τὰ μείζω οὔτε τὰ ἐλάττω διαγιγνώσκοντι, ἀλλὰ τὰ αὐτὰ τοτὲ μὲν μεγάλα ἡγουμένω, τοτὲ δὲ μικρά. . . .*

<sup>17</sup> 475d1-e1 *φιλοθεάμονες φιλήκοοι.*

<sup>18</sup> 476b4 *τάς τε καλὰς φωνὰς ἀσπάζονται κτλ. c2 ὁ οὖν καλὰ μὲν πράγματα νομίζων, αὐτὸ δὲ κάλλος μῆτε νομίζων κτλ.*

<sup>19</sup> 477a1-478d12.

<sup>20</sup> 479a5-b10.

<sup>21</sup> 479d3 *τὰ τῶν πολλῶν πολλὰ νόμιμα.*

<sup>22</sup> 480a6-13.

<sup>23</sup> 602e8-603a2 *ἔφαμεν τῷ αὐτῷ ἄμα περὶ ταῦτα ἐναντία δοξάζειν ἀδύνατον εἶναι . . . τὸ παρὰ τὰ μέτρα ἄρα δοξάζον τῆς ψυχῆς . . .* cf. 479c4 and 8 *δοξάζειν.*

<sup>24</sup> 480a1-7.

<sup>25</sup> 475d5-8.

<sup>26</sup> 475d3 and 476b4-5; cf. *Laws* 7.810e: the many poets, epic, iambic and the rest, serious and comic, are recommended as correct education for our young men who are thus rendered *πολυηκούους* as they learn whole poets by heart.

<sup>27</sup> 480a1 ff.

<sup>28</sup> Even the phrase at 476b6 *πάντα τὰ ἐκ τῶν τοιούτων δημιουργούμενα* is ambiguously relevant both to artifacts and to poems which describe them; cf. 10.596c5, d3, where *χειροτέχνης* and *δημιουργός* are applied to the case of painter and poet.

<sup>29</sup> 476c2, 479d3.

<sup>30</sup> 476a10 *φιλοθεάμονάς τε καὶ φιλοτέχνους καὶ πρακτικούς.*

<sup>31</sup> *Apol.* 22a8, c9 (but the order is varied).

<sup>32</sup> Above, n. 4.

<sup>33</sup> 10.603c10 ff.

<sup>34</sup> 478d1 ff.

<sup>35</sup> 479d7 ff.

<sup>36</sup> 523a10-b1 *τὰ μὲν ἐν ταῖς αἰσθήσεσιν οὐ παρακαλοῦντα τὴν νόησιν εἰς ἐπίσκεψιν* cf. 507c3 *καὶ ἀκοῆ τὰ ἀκούομενα καὶ ταῖς ἄλλαις αἰσθήσεσιν πάντα τὰ αἰσθητά.*

<sup>37</sup> 523c4 ff.

<sup>38</sup> 524b4 *πειρᾶται λογισμὸν τε καὶ νόησιν ψυχὴ παρακαλοῦσα ἐπισκοπεῖν εἴτε ἐν εἴτε δύο ἐστὶν ἕκαστα τῶν εἰσαγγελομένων . . . εἰ ἄρα ἐν ἑκάτερον,*

ἀμφοτέρα δὲ δύο, τὰ γε δύο κεχωρισμένα νοήσει . . . διὰ τὴν τούτου σαφήνειαν μέγα αὐ καὶ μικρὸν ἢ νόησις ἠναγκάσθη ἰδεῖν . . . ἐντεῦθεν ποθεν πρῶτον ἐπέρχεται ἐρέσθαι ἡμῖν τί οὖν ποτ' ἐστὶ τὸ μέγα αὐ καὶ τὸ μικρὸν.

<sup>39</sup> 525b5 διὰ τὸ τῆς οὐσίας ἀπτεόν εἶναι γενέσεως ἐξαναδύντι.

<sup>40</sup> In a subsequent volume: usage in Heraclitus and Parmenides is particularly pertinent.

<sup>41</sup> Above, n. 36. von Fritz (1946, p. 24) points out that *aisthesis* is not pre-Socratic, but nevertheless (p. 31) characterises the antithesis *nous-aisthesis* as late pre-Socratic. Should it not be identified as Platonic, even though, as von F. demonstrates, Protagoras Democritus and Gorgias forced the issues which precipitated it?

<sup>42</sup> 476c2 νομίζων 479a3 νομίζει 476b5 ἀσπάζονται 480a3 φιλεῖν τε καὶ θεῶσθαι.

<sup>43</sup> 602c7-8, 10.

<sup>44</sup> Notopoulos 'Mnemosyne', pp. 482 ff., noting Plato's preference for the oral word, in the *Phaedrus*, interprets this not in connection with the dialectical process, but as a reassertion of the claims and powers of oral memory, now put to philosophic use. This compels him (p. 484) to interpret *Theaet.* 191d as though it referred to 'memory in philosophy' when it in fact refers to the wax tablet conception of the mind which Platonic epistemology finds impossible.

<sup>45</sup> The account I have given of *doxa* in the *Republic* precludes the conclusion commonly held that in this dialogue the distinction between the respective objects of *doxa* and *episteme* is metaphysical, identifying two different 'worlds', in one of which the philosopher enjoys the 'vision of the Forms', but from which he is 'plunged in the swirling twilight world of compulsion', a world in which 'Plato has already resigned his hopes'—so Gould, p. 163. The difference is determined by considerations which are syntactical, not religious. It is to be noted that once the term 'world' is subtracted from statements like the above, they become meaningless (cf. also 'order' of being). There is no corresponding term in Plato's account.

## The Origin of the Theory of Forms

WHEN Plato insists that his contemporaries must turn away from the panorama of sensual experience, and focus instead upon the abstracted object *per se* which is the only possible object of thought, he sometimes identifies this object as a Form and also speaks of the Forms (in the plural) as furnishing a methodology or intellectual discipline which is familiar to his readers. Obviously it was not familiar to the average Greek whose state of mind was still that of opinion. But Plato's language presumes a circle of some sort which was accustomed to use the term Form to identify this kind of object.<sup>1</sup> Since this *methodos* of the Forms seems to be presumed in dialogues earlier than the *Republic*, and since the critical dialogues following the *Republic* often examine the possible meanings of the term *Form* and the way it should or might be used, it has become usual among scholars to speak of Plato's Theory of Forms.

The phrase suggests a doctrinal position in which Plato wished to vest his philosophical prestige. But the actual tone of his writings does not support this; it is too non-professional. When in the *Republic* he first introduces the objects which 'are', he calls them Forms,<sup>2</sup> yet in the *Republic* itself he can more often than not employ the conception of the object *per se* without calling it a Form; and even in contexts where as often he reaffirms the absolute character of Platonic knowledge, he does not necessarily feel compelled to use the word.<sup>3</sup>

It is even more important to notice that he can use the term 'form' over and over again without benefit of capital letter, so to speak, to mean type or kind or class or category, in contexts

where the possibility that this may also signify an object *per se* is not even in question.<sup>4</sup> In short he uses the word professionally and he also uses it casually and non-professionally. If one assumes that Plato's doctrine was systematic in the modern sense of that term, and also systematically expressed, one distinguishes sharply between the casual use of the word 'form' and its professional application as 'Form' and one ascribes the fact that the same term does double duty simply to an inadequacy of the Greek vocabulary. The assumption however may itself be at fault, and if so, the distinction between the two usages ceases to be sharp. If this is true, then the non-professional usage may shed light on the professional; nay, the professional may itself be only an attempt, not consistently pursued, to formalise the implications of the non-professional usage. It is to this conception of the problem that we address ourselves here.

Up to this point, in our pursuit of the meaning of Platonic doctrine, we have ourselves avoided the word Form, and this despite the fact that our area of investigation has focused on the *Republic* where the 'method'<sup>5</sup> of the Forms is explicitly avowed and used. Nor as we now take up this usage and the reason for it shall we attempt to find clues in those later dialogues where the problem of the Form and its relation to particulars is critically explored. By this time, Platonism had solved or felt it had solved the main issue which had given it birth, namely the urgent compulsion to break with the poetised tradition and with the poetised state of mind. Once a discourse of formal abstraction had become accepted as the proper instrument of science, whether moral or physical, the originally simpler if revolutionary motivation for the theory of Forms could be superseded; and the complexities of a new epistemology and a new logic of description with all its problems of predication and the like could properly come into the foreground. Our business here is with that simpler stage of development which produced the Form as an object of discourse in the first place. Clues to this stage in Plato's thinking are likely to be lost if they are sought in that refinement of language and

analysis which came later and which was framed to cope with sophisticated dilemmas.

Why have we preferred to avoid mentioning the term Form until this point? Our search has been for those historical and linguistic necessities which prompted Plato to change the idiom of the Greek tongue. The direct evidence of these necessities is furnished not in the Forms but in his reiterated use of the 'itself *per se*', which is 'one', and which 'is', and which is 'unseen'. This is Plato's fundamental language,<sup>6</sup> for by its own syntax it also betrays the syntax of that which he is breaking away from, that from which he is emancipating himself and from which he has to emancipate us. As has been explained, the converse of these attributes of the 'itself *per se*' is a pluralised series of events and acts which happen rather than are, and which are imagistically and therefore vividly portrayed, instead of being thought. In this series the integrity of the 'itself *per se*', conceived as category or as principle or as property or the like, gets broken up and scattered and dispersed through the pluralised instances, where we can say it may be present as a principle 'by implication', but where in fact it was not present in the Homeric discourse because that discourse lacked the linguistic facilities to name it.

This new Platonic language, then, discloses as no other language does the character of the revolution in Greek culture which it was the business of Platonism to announce. To understand the revolution we begin with this language and not with the Forms. As Plato himself puts it: 'For the majority of men it is impossible to entertain beauty itself instead of the many beautifuls, or any specific "itself" instead of the many specifics . . . so the majority can never be intellectuals.'

The phrasing of the 'itself *per se*', stressing as it does the simple purity of the 'object', gathered together so to speak in isolation from any contamination with anything else, indicates a mental act which quite literally corresponds to the Latin term 'abstraction'; that is, this 'object' which the newly self-conscious 'subject' has to think about has been literally 'torn out' of the epic context

and created by an act of intellectual isolation and integration. For example, the many (concealed) instances of proper conduct are gathered up into 'propriety *per se*, quite by itself'. This notion of propriety has had to be separated and abstracted from the image flow of events and situations where actors or agents happen to do proper or improper things.

It is fair then to speak of Platonism as posing an insistent demand that we think of isolated mental entities or abstractions and that we use abstract language in describing or explaining experience. What kind of abstractions did Plato, at the point where he wrote the *Republic*, have in mind? He nowhere gives a systematic list, but his answer to this question can be compiled as it were from a progressive series of contexts in each of which he is addressing himself to some aspect of this mental process.

When the "itself by itself" is first introduced in Book Five as a description of what the philosopher, and the philosopher alone, thinks about, the examples cited are beautiful, just, good, and their antitheses ugly, unjust, evil.<sup>8</sup> Indeed the fundamental character of the antithesis is itself used to argue for the existence of all these as abstract objects. This would mean that not only the positive moral principles or values but their negatives should be isolated and used in Platonic discourse. A little later as he presses the proof that only these objects are self-consistent, whereas the many exhibit only contradictory predicates, he reiterates the moral terms and adds double, half, great, small, light, heavy to the list.<sup>9</sup>

The next such list occurs in the parable of the Divided Line as he tries to describe the 'objects' which in section three of that Line are represented in the form of geometric figures. The examples given are odd, even, shape, three types of angle,<sup>10</sup> and 'the square itself' and 'the diameter itself'.<sup>11</sup> As to the fourth or uppermost section of the Line, he seems to imply that this represents that area of intellection where these and other abstractions are inter-related in a discourse which would be completely analytic, but he gives no examples.

Then in Book Seven, in the three-fingers passage, as he comes



to examine the key issue of that contradiction contributed by the 'sensibilities', to which intellect must supply the answer by separating out and counting the 'objects' that have become confused with the fingers, he lists, as examples of these objects, size, smallness, hard, soft, heavy, light.<sup>12</sup>

Finally in Book Ten, repeating in effect the doctrine of the fingers passage in another form, and calling attention once more to contradiction in the sensibilities, he asserts that the calculative faculty has to come to the rescue and measure great, less, and equal; the error of 'mimetic' is that it fails to distinguish great and small.<sup>13</sup>

These lists when cross-compared reveal considerable community. The first and second, from Book Five, disclose, what we know well from elsewhere in Plato, that 'goodness' and 'rightness' (or the 'principle' of good and the 'principle' of right), which to us are moral categories or imperatives describing and also informing human behaviour, are for Plato on a par with shape and dimension (size and smallness) and proportion (double and half) and the like; that is, on a par with those simple basic mathematical categories which we use in discussing the physical world. They are on a par because they all alike represent the same kind of psychic effort which breaks away from the many and unifies experience into ones. The simple mathematical categories are then joined by arithmetical ones (odd and even) and by geometric postulates (square and diagonal). Then they are also joined by some of the basic 'properties' as we might call them of physical objects, for example penetrability (hard and soft) and weight (heavy and light).

With these clues to guide us, it is pertinent to hark back to that curriculum of the sciences which is offered in Book Seven as the essential prelude to dialectic. These sciences as Plato repeatedly stresses are not to be studied as closed subjects supplying blocks of information or bodies of rules for mental absorption. Their entire purpose is to accelerate the intellectual awakening which 'converts' the *psyche* from the many to the one, and from 'becoming-

ness' to 'beingness'; this, if our thesis is correct, is equivalent to a conversion from the image-world of the epic to the abstract world of scientific description, and from the vocabulary and syntax of narrativised events in time towards the syntax and vocabulary of equations and laws and formulas and topics which are outside time.

Now, in this connection it is pertinent to notice in Book Seven that the sciences offered, from arithmetic to harmonics, are arranged in ascending series according to the abstract definition of their fields of operation. They are each a thought-world, so to speak, disposed within a set of co-ordinates; these co-ordinates form an ascending series which increases in complication. Within geometry we grasp the field of the plane 'in two dimensions'. Then follows the 'three-dimensional' which 'partakes in volume' and this must be grasped 'itself *per se*'. Then comes the 'three dimensional in motion' or 'motion applied to volume', and its field of mental vision is occupied by 'the speed that is' and 'the slowness that is' or 'the truth of equal or double or any other proportion'. Finally comes 'motion in sound'; for 'motion has several forms'.<sup>14</sup>

It should be pointed out that these phrases are used in Plato's text to define areas of the known, or objects of knowledge.<sup>15</sup> He speaks as though the detailed disciplines of the sciences are really useful only to open up the mental vision of systems of co-ordinates which govern them. Is it to be concluded that in this whole passage of the *Republic* Plato is appealing to the Greek mind to think about body and space, motion and velocity and the like, as such? or, we might say, to think about physical experience in these terms and using this kind of vocabulary? This is surely the clue to that passage, so startling to empirical scientists, where he damns and dismisses the study of the 'visible heaven'.<sup>16</sup> What he is appealing for is to get away from that kind of story of the heavens of which Hesiod's calendar is the epic prototype and from those ingenious orreries and constructs which confined themselves to trying to model and reproduce the visible appearances and the

motions of the heavenly bodies. A star-map is an example of what he rejects. He is demanding instead a discourse which shall rearrange these phenomena under general headings or categories of the physical so that they then can be expressed in the language of natural law. The visible heavens are to function only as a paradigm from which to elucidate the universal behaviour of bodies, expressed in equations which 'are' and do not 'become' or change. In the absence of a laboratory technique, he has to use the visible heaven as his controlled experiment in mechanics.<sup>17</sup> His appeal to the pupil is double-barrelled, and has to be, in the existing state of the Greek vocabulary. First, he says, start thinking not about how fast this particular object you see is moving or how big it is; think about speed and size as general co-ordinates; second, don't tell me 'look, A is rising faster than B'; try instead to say: the speed temporarily embodied in A is twice that of the speed temporarily embodied in B; and then say: the velocities of these two bodies are in given ratio to a theoretical common velocity; and this will bring you to consider what are the laws or formulas according to which apparent speeds vary. Thus invisible astronomy becomes a device for thinking in terms of what (a) is purely abstract and (b) can be stated in a timeless syntax as that which always 'is' and never 'is not'.<sup>18</sup>

Here is a new frame of discourse and a new kind of vocabulary offered to the European mind. We take it for granted today as the discourse of educated men. It does not occur to us that once upon a time it was necessary for it to have been discovered and defined and insisted on, so that we could easily and complacently inherit it. This discovery is essentially Plato's, even though he is building on a great pioneering effort in this same direction which had preceded him. The fact that Greek words which we are here able to translate as 'motion' or 'body' had already existed is not the point. It is their syntactical relationship that has changed, and as it has changed, the word is shorn of particularity and becomes stretched to the dimensions of a concept. In pre-Platonic usage (if we here except certain of the pre-Socratics) the words had

never been used as subjects of the timeless is. They had symbolised the flight of an arrow or the corpse of a particular man as they had fitfully presented themselves in the narrative series, and now they are going to mean just 'any and every motion' and 'any and every corpse in the cosmos' without qualification. They have been abstracted and integrated out of all the pictures of runnings or flights of arrows or men and of bodies of fighters and corpses of the dead. They have been made into 'invisibles'.<sup>19</sup>

Goodness and rightness (with evil and unrighteousness), proportion and size, dimension and weight and shape, odd and even, the square and the diagonal, solidity, motion, velocity, and volume—what does this kind of terminology represent to us? As terms of a sophisticated vocabulary, these are many different things: they are moral values; they are also axioms; they are physical properties; and also relations. In combination with each other they furnish the terms in which we state both moral principles and physical formulas, both equations and laws. They bespeak the language of categories, and also of universals. The only modern term that would apply to all alike would be the word 'concept'. For these share the common characteristic that as categories, classes, relationships or principles or axioms, they have been coined by the mind to explain and to classify its sensual experience or have been extracted from that experience and have been inferred from it. As Plato says, the one thing you can say about them all is that you cannot see or taste or hear them. Some other faculty of man's brain is responsible for this kind of language. If we call them 'concepts' it is to oppose them to the 'image'. If we call them 'abstract' it is to oppose them to the concrete visualised event or the concrete visualised things that behave in an event. And it is fair to say that Platonism at bottom is an appeal to substitute a conceptual discourse for an imagistic one. As it becomes conceptual, the syntax changes, to connect abstractions in timeless relationships instead of counting up events in a time series; such discourse yields the abstracted objects of 'intellection'.

Plato can never separate any discussion of these objects from the

activity of 'thinking' that apprehends them. They are *noeta* or they are nothing. And they are so often put before us less for their own sake than to illustrate and underline the difference between knowledge on the one hand and opinion on the other, or between an act of the intellect and an act of the sensory mechanism. It is more important to learn to think about this new kind of object than to decide on the precise names and numbers of the objects that there may be. This is the reiterated impression one receives from Plato's own account of the matter.<sup>20</sup>

Why then did he refuse to label them as concepts? He could have devised Greek for this purpose. Some of his predecessors, themselves aware of what was going on in the Greek mind, had for example spoken of 'thoughts' or 'notions' (*phrontides, noemata*)<sup>21</sup> as though they represented a new phenomenon in the Greek experience. Yet to describe these various phenomena, of language and of mental effort, which we have characterised as abstracted objects, Plato used a Greek term (in two variants) which avoids any suggestion of mental construction and is translatable only visually as 'shape' or as 'form'.

The Homeric meaning of this word refers to the 'look'<sup>22</sup> of a person, but it had already been specialised to some extent before Plato's day, at least by intellectuals, who if they were mathematicians used it to describe a geometric figure or construct,<sup>23</sup> and if they were cosmologists or medical men might use the word to describe a 'common look' shared by a group of phenomena;<sup>24</sup> it was thus a 'general shape' or, in the Latin equivalent, the *species*. It was probably these two<sup>25</sup> previous usages which encouraged Plato to exploit the word professionally and apply it, as apparently he intended at the time when he wrote the *Republic*, to almost any concept which was useful as a method of classifying phenomena or of determining principles of action or of generalising the properties of things or of determining their relationships.

Why did he prefer this sort of word to describe the results of conceptual activity, if it was for this kind of activity on the part of the Greek mind that he was appealing? It is better first to ask:

Why did he have to shun any term which would approximate to our 'concept'? The answer is probably very simple. A concept, at least at this stage of Greek speculative development, would mean any and every thought devised and put into words by the *psyche* of the aroused intelligence. The possibilities of abstraction are limitless, and of meaningful abstraction hardly less so. But in the sphere of morals, which is always for Plato the primary illustration of the need for conceptual thinking, he was completely devoted to the thesis that the principles of morality are fixed and finite and do not form an endless series and are not framed in terms of empirical adjustment to temporal circumstances. Here his fervent opposition to relativism surely warned him that to propose justice and goodness as abstract *conceptions* which we have to refine upon by our own intelligence would open the way to the endless invention of new formulas and new conceptions of what morality might be. Against this relativist acceptance of a morality which might have been developed historically by man for man's needs he had a revulsion which went beyond argument and reached into the depths of his consciousness. Probably it should be admitted that social background and class prejudice committed him very early in life to the proposition that social relations between men should be not only stable but also authoritarian.<sup>26</sup> And if so, the principles of justice which describe these relations must themselves be independent of human invention or improvement.

At any rate, the need to symbolise moral abstractions as final was the primary motive, we suggest, for calling them Forms. For the Forms, in order to be such, have to enjoy a kind of independent existence; they are permanent shapes imposed upon the flux of action, and shapes which, while they can be viewed and understood by my *psyche*, cannot be invented by it. So the Forms are not the creation of the intellect and this means that the 'objects' represented by such linguistic devices as 'the itself *per se*' are not the creations of the intellect either.

He had a second motive, perhaps equally strong. A great

multiplicity of these objects was used to describe not the sphere of moral action but the behaviour of the physical environment. Plato inherited from his predecessors an underlying conviction that as we experience physical phenomena we are somehow in contact with a world, an order, a system which exists outside ourselves and independently of our knowledge of it. As we have said in an earlier chapter, it was fundamental to the Greek genius, and we can see this in Greek art, that the external world should not be taken lightly or dismissed as non-existent. What was required was that its structure and logic be appreciated. This structure for Plato as for most Greek thinkers was itself abstract. It was also coherent and finite, a closed system, an object of intelligence, not of intuition. The senses in their report of it yielded only dilemmas and contradictions.

If so, then the mental categories we use in order to describe and to understand it, such as its figures and proportions, its spatial relations, its volumes and densities, its weights and its velocities cannot be merely arbitrary conveniences of the human intellect. They must somehow represent the cosmic structure itself. We do not invent them though we have to learn with great effort to think about them. So they too are Forms, the real existence of which is guaranteed independently of our cognition even though our cognition is geared exclusively to apprehend them.

So the abstractions demanded of the Greek mind become Forms, and not concepts. We may cavil with this outcome, but in the historical context it makes sense. If we view them in relation to the epic narrative from which, as a matter of historical fact, they all emerged they can all be regarded as in one way or another classifications of an experience which was previously 'felt' in an unclassified medley. This was as true of justice as of motion, of goodness as of body or space, of beauty as of weight or dimension. These categories turn into linguistic counters, and become used as a matter of course to relate one phenomenon to another in a non-epic, non-poetic, non-concrete idiom. Simply put, a narrativised experience says: 'The storm-god launched the river against the

wall and swept it away.'<sup>27</sup> An abstract version rearranges this to say 'The river had a force of such and such (which would mean a proportion of some universal or ideal unit of force which always 'is') and the wall had a weight (or mass or inertia) of such and such; the weight and the force when calculated and compared yield the result that the wall has to give way before the stress imposed on it'. But this particular result now depends on concepts of force and weight which just 'are' and which become the terms of equations which 'are'. These in Platonism would become the 'Forms' of force and weight, and their participation in each other becomes a law governing the relation of pressure to inertia. Then the application of this law to the given instance shows the 'Forms' participating in the particular situation of the wall plus the river.

Or again, Agamemnon challenged by Calchas to give up the priest's daughter is very angry; yet he adds: 'For all that I will give her back if that is better. Rather would I see my people whole than perishing. Only make you ready a prize of honour forthwith lest I alone of all the Argives be disprized, which thing is not proper. For you all behold how my prize is departing from me.'<sup>28</sup> This series of acts and events sharply but separately imagised—'I will give her back—the people must not perish—but get me a substitute—I am king—I am the only one to lose my prize'—these can be rearranged as the expression or illustration of moral principle or social law: 'The good of the army is paramount and this forces me to return the girl. Nevertheless my status is also paramount; justice therefore requires that I receive a substitute.' Here the 'good' of the army, the 'status' of Agamemnon, and the 'justice' of his demand are cast in a language which presumes some general standard of good and of propriety and of justice, by which the particular good and the particular propriety of the present situation can be estimated. The standards have to be expressed in ideal laws which just 'are'. They can participate in a given situation which 'is and is not', but only by providing the norms which persist through the situation and are obeyed in the course of the



actions and events which constitute it. These too, then, would be Platonic Forms.

For Plato, we repeat, these terms and the formulas made out of them were not just linguistic devices, nor inventions of the intellect, but entities of some sort existing outside of the mind. Yet the effort it takes to discover and to name them and to learn to use them provides the central preoccupation of Book Seven of his *Republic*, the book devoted *par excellence* to the curriculum of the Academy. The 'method' of the Forms is in a practical sense prior to the Forms themselves, if we realise that the abstract 'objects' do not come gliding into our consciousness suspended on clouds of illumination. Rather, we have to grapple with the many and seek their conversion into ones, an operation which first discloses these 'objects' as possible in language and in thought.

To call them Forms threw the main emphasis not on how we actually find and apply them but on their 'objectivity' *vis-à-vis* the 'subject' who has to think about them. Plato as he prepares to use and exploit the Form is becoming convinced of the ultimate separation of objective knowledge from the knowing subject, and convinced that it is this facet of the truth which above all he must dramatise. We may complain that he thus underplays the historical relationship of the new formal and abstract language to the old epic language. The one, we say, emerged from the other, just as the intellect emerged out of the Homeric consciousness. But if we remember the centuries of old habit, which had fused subject with object in sympathetic self-identification as a condition of keeping the oral tradition alive, we can realise how this inherited state of mind was for Plato *the enemy*, and how he would wish to frame his own doctrine in language which met it head on, and confronted it, and destroyed it. The net effect then of the theory of Forms is to dramatise the split between the image-thinking of poetry and the abstract thinking of philosophy. In the history of the Greek mind, it puts the stress on discontinuity rather than on continuity. This is ever the way with makers of revolutions. In their own day and to themselves and their own audiences they are

prophets of the new, not developers of the old. Socrates to be sure conceived of himself as a midwife of the soul, a metaphor which presupposes perhaps some continuity between the Socratic dialectic and previous experience. Plato's language, as it elevates the philosopher above the common run of men and the Forms above the common idiom and thought, is more stringent. A term less challenging than Form would not perhaps have accomplished his purpose.

Was this new idiom not in fact ushering in a completely new stage in the development not only of the Greek but of the European mind? It was; yet Plato was aware also and rightly so that only his genius had been able fully to realise that this was a revolution, and that it had to be pushed with urgency. Others before him had been moving in this direction, had been experimenting tentatively with the new syntax and had been aware that the poetic tradition was an obstacle. But only Plato saw the issue steadily and as a whole. If he therefore sought to populate the universe and the mind of man with a whole family of Forms which had emerged from God knows where, this was in a sense a necessity for him. For he was seeing into the heart of a profound change in the cultural experience of man. They were not his personal whim; they were not even his personal doctrine. They announced the arrival of a completely new level of discourse which as it became perfected was to create in turn a new kind of experience of the world—the reflective, the scientific, the technological, the theological, the analytic. We can give it a dozen names. The new mental era required its own banners to march under and found it in the Platonic Forms.

Viewed from this perspective, the Theory of Forms was a historical necessity. But before we leave it in the enjoyment of this status, it is proper to ask whether the choice of the term did not also carry with it certain grave disadvantages. What we are now going to say will strike many readers as controversial, especially those who feel the spell of Plato's mysticism. Our contention will be that a thinker whose historical task was to destroy

the effect of one spell should not have re-introduced another, and as it were by the back door. The trouble with the word Form is precisely that as it seeks to objectify and separate knowledge from opinion it also tends to make knowledge visual again. For as 'form' or 'shape' or 'look' it is something after all which you tend to see and watch and visually contemplate. Plato is so convinced of the reality of goodness and of odd and of even that he tries to make us see them.<sup>29</sup> But should he have tried?

No doubt the previous use of the word for a geometric figure played its role in his own imagination.<sup>30</sup> He is careful in the parable of the Line to point out that geometric figures incorporate Forms but are not themselves wholly abstract; they still are visibles, or use visibles.<sup>31</sup> But it may be doubted whether he always succeeded in shielding himself rigorously against this visual contamination. The proof of the matter lies in the idiom and syntax he would himself sometimes employ to describe our relationship to the Forms. We ourselves he can say may 'imitate' them. After he wrote the *Republic*, he probably came to reject this way of expressing the relationship.<sup>32</sup> It is symptomatic however of its danger that it remains to this day the most facile method of explaining to students the operation of the Forms. Are they not patterns to which we liken our actions and ourselves? This gives rise to the doctrine that the philosopher 'imitates the objects that are' and 'likenes himself to them' and finally likens himself to God. 'For one imitates that with which one enthusiastically consorts.'<sup>33</sup> The last phrase sounds like an echo of Plato's analysis of the relationship between auditor and poem in Book Three. But now the context is not pejorative. Yet can Plato have it both ways? Is it not true that this kind of statement is simply rhetorical and obscures rather than reveals the essence of Platonism? For the objects being discussed are really graspable only after a tough dialectical effort which breaks up the dream and removes our habit of identification, substituting for it a separate and isolated objectivity. It would seem that in such metaphors, used not infrequently, Plato allows himself to fall back into the idiom of

precisely that psychic condition which he is setting out to destroy.<sup>34</sup>

Our relationship to these objects is not one of 'imitation', and never should be. Rather it is one of an anxious, puzzled, and often frustrated inquiry until we have grasped and named them, and an equally arduous effort of syntax and of composition as we apply them in meaningful statement. The notion of 'imitation' replaces all the Socratic sense of urgent effort by a new type of receptive passivity.

That this over-facile conception, this shortcut to the significance of the use of the Forms, was assisted by the choice of the word Form itself can be illustrated from a passage in the *Republic* which we have deliberately reserved for this place. No passage is more familiar to modern students of the theory precisely because no passage is so easy of comprehension. You have the unique and eternal Form of 'bed' corresponding to the common name 'bed'. Then you have a copying of the Form by the craftsman, who makes this bed or that, and incorporates the pattern therein. Finally you have the artist, whether the painter or poet, who 'imitates' the craftsman's copy, as he just paints the bed or sings about it.<sup>35</sup>

The reason why the Theory of Forms here uses this particular illustration is clear. The artist and the poet in common Greek idiom were both craftsmen.<sup>36</sup> Plato wants a trilogy which will put another craftsman on top of them in a superior status, and the philosopher in turn above him. This will dramatically, but we suggest only rhetorically, degrade the artist to third place and not just second and so clinch the Platonic dismissal of him. To get this hierarchy, a Form has to be chosen from which an artifact can be derived. Presumably a shoe or a saucepan, a clothes bag or a safety-pin, would have done as well, nay any artifact whatever which a given civilisation happens to have turned out. This raises the question whether in a culture that did not happen to use beds or nails (and such is conceivable) the corresponding Forms any longer exist.<sup>37</sup> But aside from the metaphysics of the problem,

the real limitation of this example of a Form is that it remains so patently an ideal 'shape' which you can indeed imitate by copying it as a sort of outline and which can easily be imagined existing as such even in the mind of God who, Plato incautiously suggests, may be responsible for its origin.<sup>38</sup> The visual content of the Form predominates over its dialectical use.

Hence also it is made here to correspond to a common name, that is, to a noun that denotes a concrete physical object. So used, the Form amounts only to the demand that we recognise all common nouns as indeed 'common'; they can be regarded as symbolising classes. The effort of abstraction which this requires of us is minimal and it does not yield the terms of an abstract discourse, for the term *bed* will still go on being used as *bed*. What the theory of Forms was properly designed to affirm was the existence of abstract properties and relations of physical objects and so forth. This is amply demonstrated by Plato's lists of examples in the *Republic* itself. No artificer tries to make 'dimension' or 'justice' or 'velocity' or 'equality'. And these abstractions considered as linguistic devices are all of adjectival origin. One could indeed ask whether a Greek noun denominating in the first instance a specific thing should ever be associated with a Form.<sup>39</sup>

But the Form of *bed* undeniably suggests visual relationships—an ideal geometry of a *bed*—even at the highest level, and so on down the scale of intellection to the poet's imperfect visualisation. This type of example is not exploited again<sup>40</sup> in this way by Plato. But one can say that repeatedly, in striving for a language which shall describe that new level of mental activity which we style abstract, he tends to relapse into metaphors of vision, when it would have been less misleading to rely always on idioms which stress the critical effort of analysis and synthesis. The crucial example is his use of the Greek word for 'view' or 'contemplation' (*theoria*), which to be sure has properly and happily transmuted itself into our word 'theory', signifying a wholly abstract level of discourse, but which in Plato continually suggests the

'contemplation' of realities which once achieved are there to be seen.<sup>41</sup> The mental condition is one of passivity, of a new sort perhaps. The poetic type of receptivity gained through imitation was an excited condition emotionally active. The new contemplation is to be serene, calm, and detached. It is to be like the 'inspection' of a religious rite as opposed to participation in a human drama. Plato has changed the character of the performance and has reduced us to silent spectators. But we remain sight-seers. Are we not simply being invited to avoid hard thinking and relapse into a new form of dream which shall be religious rather than poetic?

This would conduct us along the path which leads to mystic contemplation of truth, beauty, and goodness. It is not to be denied that Plato sometimes invites us to travel it. Yet we contend that it would not have been so easy to travel, if he had not tried to symbolise his newly-discovered abstractions in visual terms. The Forms thus made concrete, again acceptable to our senses and our affections, could proceed to populate a physical cosmos which had been prepared for their occupancy and their habitation. The *Timaeus* is Plato's final tribute to this kind of speculative vision. But it is a vision, not an argument. Dare we suggest that in the *Timaeus*, for this very reason, he also accomplished the final betrayal<sup>42</sup> of the dialectic, the betrayal of that Socratic *methodos* which had sought for formulae in order to replace the visual story by the purely abstract equation? There is to be sure a kind of algebra in the *Timaeus*. But it is well overlaid with the dream-clothes of mythology, and precisely for that reason the dialogue became the favourite reading of an age which clung to faith rather than science as its guide. Yet the day would come when the original drive of the Platonic method would revive, and the phenomenal flux would once more be examined and penetrated and subordinated to categories of explanation which possess a wholly abstract integrity. And when this day came, science would awaken again.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> 475e6 ff.; 504e7-8; 505a2-3; 507a8; 596a5-7.

<sup>2</sup> 476a5; strictly speaking, the language which affirms the existence and importance of the 'object' is first used at the beginning of Book 2, but its elucidation is postponed to this place (above, cap. 12, notes 6, 20).

<sup>3</sup> In the exposition (476a-485a) which follows upon the introduction of the Forms, and which depends on them, the term is used only twice, at 476a5 and 479a1. In the account of the university curriculum (including dialectic) which fills so much of Book 7, it is used only at 530c8, 532e1, 534c1, and of these instances the first two are 'non-professional' (*vid.* next note). In the *Phaedo* the term is not introduced until 103e (below, n. 6). In the *Theaetetus*, it does not appear at all.

<sup>4</sup> Some *exx.* are Book 2. 357c, 358a, 363e; Book 3. 396b, 397b; Book 4. 395b, etc., 432b, 435b-e, 443c.

<sup>5</sup> Above, n. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Thus, aside from the *Republic*, where we have sufficiently illustrated, in cap. 12, the way in which Platonic epistemology is dominated by the *auto to* (Book 2 *init.*, Book 5 476a-Book 6 485a, and the whole of Book 7), we find that the same is true of the *Phaedo* (e.g. 65b ff., 78d ff., 100b ff., in fact up to the point where the Forms are first used, *vid.* above, n. 3) and of the *Theaetetus*.

<sup>7</sup> 493e2-494a2 *αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν ἀλλὰ μὴ τὰ πολλὰ καλὰ, ἢ αὐτὸ τι ἕκαστον καὶ μὴ τὰ πολλὰ ἕκαστα, ἔσθ' ὅπως πλῆθος ἀνέξεται ἢ ἡγήσεται εἶναι; . . . φιλόσοφον μὲν ἄρα . . . πλῆθος ἀδύνατον εἶναι cf. 490b1-4; 500c2-3.*

<sup>8</sup> 475e9-476a4, repeated at 507b2-8, but without 'the just'.

<sup>9</sup> 479a1-b8.

<sup>10</sup> 510c4-5.

<sup>11</sup> 510d7-8.

<sup>12</sup> 523e3-524a10.

<sup>13</sup> 602d6-e6; 605c1-4. These last examples do not objectify the great, small, etc., as *auta ta*, but the mental processes which distort the *metra* and those which correct them are described in terms reminiscent of the contrast between *doxa* and *episteme* and their respective objects, and reminiscent also of that process by which reason corrects sensation as described in Book 7 (above, cap. 13, pp. 240 ff.).

<sup>14</sup> 528a9-b3 *μετὰ ἐπίπτεδον . . . ἐν περιφορᾷ ὃν ἦδη στερεὸν λαβόντες, πρὶν αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ λαβεῖν ὀρθῶς δὲ ἔχει ἐξῆς μετὰ δευτέραν αὔξην τρίτην λαμβάνειν ἔστι δὲ που τοῦτο περὶ τὴν τῶν κύβων αὔξην καὶ τὸ βάθους μετέχον 528e1 ἀστρονομίαν . . . φορὰν οὖσαν βάθους 529d2-4 ὡς τὸ ὄν τάχος καὶ ἡ οὖσα βραδυτής ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ ἀριθμῷ καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ἀληθείσι σχήμασι φορὰς τε πρὸς ἄλληλα φέρεται καὶ τὰ ἐνόητα φέρει 529e5 τὴν ἀλήθειαν . . . ἴσων ἢ διπλασίων ἢ ἄλλης τινὸς συμμετρίας 530c8 πλείω . . . εἶδη παρέχεται ἢ φορὰ 530d7 ἐναρμόνιον φορὰν.*

<sup>15</sup> 529b5 *μάθημα . . . ἐκεῖνο δ' ἂν περὶ τὸ ὄν τε ἦ καὶ τὸ ἀόρατον 529d4-5 ἃ δὴ λόγῳ μὲν καὶ διανοίᾳ ληπτὰ, ὄφει δ' οὖ 529d8 τῆς πρὸς ἐκεῖνα μαθήσεως*

ἕνεκα 530b8 χρήσιμον τὸ φύσει φρόνιμον ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ἐξ ἀχρήστου ποιήσειεν  
 c6 τῶν προσηκόντων μαθημάτων.

<sup>18</sup> 529c7 ff. and especially 530b7 τὰ δ' ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἕασομεν.

<sup>17</sup> 529d7 παραδείγμασι χρηστέον c2 διαφερόντως γεγραμμένοις καὶ ἐκπε-  
 πονημένοις διαγράμμασιν 530b6 προβλήμασιν . . . χρώμενοι.

<sup>18</sup> Cherniss, pp. 67-70, argues that the organised or 'official' curriculum of the Academy restricted itself to geometry, and cogently cites the evidence of a basic text of the subject, perhaps arranged by an Academic, which was quickly followed by an improved edition of the same, certainly by an Academic. The 'improved arrangement and greater generalisation of many theorems' in the latter he ascribed to 'pedagogical considerations in accord with Plato's conception of mathematical studies' (p. 68). However, to restrict the propaedeutic curriculum to 'plane and solid geometry and number theory' (p. 67), on the ground that Plato's sciences of ideal astronomy and ideal harmonics did not yet exist, seems to me too narrow a conclusion. If they did not exist, the Platonic purpose, plainly stated, was to create them in the course of instruction, or at least to introduce the pupil, before the 'dialectical age' of thirty, to problems or propositions concerning moving bodies and musical harmonies out of which he would be constrained, for example, to grasp motion as a purely abstract conception, expressing a genus which exists in two different species, and to contemplate the necessity of composing analytic formulae or 'definitions' which translate particular motions in terms of general laws. Hence the story that he 'set it as a problem for astronomers to determine what are the uniform and ordered motions, the assumption of which will account for the apparent movement of the planets' (Cherniss, p. 64) should be taken to reflect that kind of mental training which Plato calls for in the astronomical section of his propaedeutic curriculum. Its object in fact was not to produce a definitive solution to a particular problem, but to train pupils to grasp the notion of 'ideal motion in depth' and to reveal to them that any solution can be expressed only in statements which relate a given apparent motion to ideal motion, that is, to 'the speed which is and the slowness which is, in true (final) number and final figures' (n. 14) which is not a bad description of what Plato demanded in setting this particular problem. The fact that Eudoxus and Heraclides came up with quite different solutions would be a matter of comparative indifference to Plato. They were responding to what Cherniss calls 'the same stimulus' (p. 64) and it is to be guessed that the average academic pupil experimented tentatively and imperfectly with different solutions, by way of training in the abstract (hence as Cherniss says 'he never became a mathematical specialist'), before passing on to a dialectical examination of the basic norms which control (or should control) human action and cosmic phenomena.

<sup>19</sup> The pre-Platonic history of *phora*, *kinesis*, *soma* and kindred physical terms, as they were converted from an epic context in the event-series, and transmuted into abstractions by the pre-Socratics, will be explored in a later volume.

<sup>20</sup> 507b9 is typical: τὰ μὲν δὴ ὀρᾶσθαι φαμεν, νοεῖσθαι δ' οὐ, τὰς δ' αὖ ἰδέας νοεῖσθαι μὲν, ὀρᾶσθαι δ' οὐ. The fact that Speusippus, while presumably remaining under Plato's influence, was able to reject the Forms altogether, while Xeno-



crates provided a substitute by converting them into mathematical (not ideal) numbers (Cherniss, pp. 33-47), may indicate how that Academic training and discussion in which all shared was focused simply on the sheer process of isolation and abstraction, as the primary task of philosophy. The theory of Forms, i.e. the conversion of the *auto to* into *eidos* and *idea*, remained Plato's own. 'The Academy was not a school in which an orthodox metaphysical doctrine was taught, or an association, the members of which were expected to subscribe to the theory of ideas' (Cherniss, p. 81).

<sup>21</sup> Support for this statement is furnished not by the remains of the pre-Socratics (*vid.* Diels-Kranz, index, s. *vv.*) but mainly by the indirect testimony of the *Clouds*, where *phrontis* is used not only (like *phronesis*) in the generic sense of thinking as a mental activity (lines 229, 233, 236, 740, 762) but specifically of a single mental act, or (isolated) thought (137, and, in the plural, 952; add *phrontisma* at 154). Correspondingly, in the same play, the 'think' verbs can be used with the cognate internal accusative to express 'thinking a thought' (695, 697, 724, 735) as well as with direct object (225, repeated 1503, and 741). *Noema* is used generically at 229 (in conjunction with *phrontis*, above), but specifically at 705 ἀλλὸ νοήμα φρενός and 743 τι τῶν νοημάτων. The use of *merimna* in the plural (952, 1404) may also symbolise specific 'thoughts' (cf. *Emped.* B. 2.2, repeated 110.7; and also 11.1; and cf. cap. 15, n. 3). *gnome* in sing. and plur. occurs commonly (169, 321, 730, 744, 747, 761, 896, 923, 948, 1037, 1314, 1404, 1439), in the senses of 'mind', 'sentiment' or 'opinion', 'expression', and (perhaps) as 'a thought'. The enlargement of 'domain' assigned to *nous*, *phren*, *merimna* in the last half of fifth century has been determined by von Fritz (1946, esp. p. 31), but not the possible significance of the plural usage *noemata*, *phrontides*, *merimnae*.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Grube, pp. 9-10 (citing von Fritz, Natorp and Wilamowitz i. 346).

<sup>23</sup> Taylor, *Varia Socratica*, pp. 246-67; cf. ὀρωμένοις εἶδεσιν at *Rep.* 510d.5.

<sup>24</sup> *Emped.* B 98.5. The same philosopher frequently uses *εἶδη* in the sense of 'typical shapes', intermediate between the 'look' of a particular and the 'look' of a class or kind to which the particular belongs: B 22.7; 23.5; 71.3; 73.2; 115.7; 125.1.

<sup>25</sup> The influence of the atomist *εἶδη* and *ιδέαι* on Plato remains problematic, and the equivalency between *εἶδος* and *φύσις* (Taylor, p. 228) still more so.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Havelock, *Liberal Temper*, introd.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Iliad* 12.17 ff.

<sup>28</sup> *Iliad* 1.116 ff.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Euthyphro* δε εἰς ἐκείνην (sc. τὴν ἰδέαν) ἀποβλέπων and *Cratylus* 389a ποῖ βλέπων ὁ τέκτων τὴν κερκίδα ποιεῖ; β βλέπων . . . πρὸς ἐκεῖνο τὸ εἶδος . . . and the many metaphorical uses of sight in the *Republic* (below, n. 41).

<sup>30</sup> R. G. Steven notes (p. 154) Plato's visual preference for line over colour, which was aesthetically conservative. *Eidos* might therefore evoke that 'outline' which is closer to the formalism of archaic art, and the suggestion of which is retained in the translation 'Form' but obliterated if we substitute 'Idea'. Henry Jackson carried things too far when he inferred that the Ideas were very thin

matter of some sort, but there was nothing wrong with his judgment on Plato's Greek.

<sup>31</sup> 510d5 ff.

<sup>32</sup> The *Parmenides* (132d ff.) examines and rejects this metaphor.

<sup>33</sup> 500c2-7.

<sup>34</sup> It is this usage, as repeated for example in the *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus*, which has encouraged the construction of a Platonic theory of aesthetic, according to which artistic *mimesis* can be carried out at the metaphysical level; cf. above, cap. 2, n. 37. For A. Diès, p. 594, imitation is 'at the centre of his philosophy'.

<sup>35</sup> 596a10 ff.

<sup>36</sup> Above, cap. 13, n. 28.

<sup>37</sup> The problem posed by the Forms of artifacts is raised in the *Parmenides* 130c; cf. *Cratylus* 387a ff. It is possible that Plato never finally made up his mind on this point (Grube, p. 36).

<sup>38</sup> Above, cap. 2, n. 28.

<sup>39</sup> Cherniss, p. 5, treats *Republic* 596a as supplying 'one of the cardinal propositions of this doctrine of ideas'; cf. p. 34, where he argues the proposition is a necessary foundation for the doctrine, expounded in the *Phaedo*, that there is a separate idea for each number. But 'twoness' and 'bedness' surely enjoy different epistemological status: the former in fact is one of those abstractions which have adjectival origin. Grube loc. cit. notes the doubts raised in the *Parmenides* about the existence of ideas of artifacts.

<sup>40</sup> Assuming that the *Cratylus* is earlier (above, n. 37).

<sup>41</sup> E.g. 475e4, 500c3, 532c6, and the entire parable of the sun (507c6-509b10), which relies on an analogy between two types of vision. It is notable that the actual description of dialectic (532d8-535a2) avoids the metaphor, stressing instead the search, the question-answer, the *elenchus*, and the effort of ratiocination.

<sup>42</sup> How seductive this defection may be can be seen from Cornford's translation, p. 251, where he borrows from *Tim.* 46c to infer that in *Rep.* 7 'astronomy and harmonics . . . lead the mind to contemplate the beautiful and harmonious order manifested in the visible heavens and in the harmonies of sound . . .' This corresponds to *Timaeus* doctrine, but it contradicts what has just been said in the *Republic* about the visible heavens and audible sounds. Knowledge as presented in the *Rep.* is conceptual and dialectical, and in this sense also 'Socratic'; in the *Timaeus*, it is concrete, poetic and mythical.