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P L A T O ' S     I D E A

of

G O D     and     the     S O U L

in their

relationship of God

M U T U A L     R E L A T I O N S

the Divine Elements in Human Nature.

the Problem of Evil.

the starting point of the Religious Life.

the Day of C. DUNSBY

theology.

theology on the Being of the word *and*

a dissertation presented for the

M.A. degree in the School of Classics

at

BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY

June 1912.

UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

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## Introduction.

### Preface.

The point of view from which I have written this dissertation is sufficiently explained in the Introduction. It remains only to acknowledge my indebtedness to previous writers. The books which have helped me most are: Caird's Evolution of Theology in the Greek Thinkers; and Fundamental Ideas of Christianity; Adam's Religious Teachers of Greece; Zeller's Plato and the Older Academy, and Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics; Prof Ritchies' Plato; W. Paëer's Plato and Platonism; Nettleship's Lectures on the Republic; Bozánquet's History of Aesthetics; Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible, Article "God"; Davidson's Introduction to the New Testament; Denney's Studies in Theology. In quoting Plato I have invariably used Prof. Jowett's translation, though not always word for word. Wherever it seemed possible to alter his rendering with advantage, whether by way of condensation or substitution, I have not scrupled to do so. My best thanks are due to Mr St George Stock for the patient care with which he has read through all the MSS. The work has gained considerably in arrangement, in conciseness, in accuracy of thought and language by his kindly criticism.

C.D.



What?

It is much more true from the point of view of the individual. The soul, in spite of its manifold relations with the world, in spite of its dependence upon the world for its existence and development, nevertheless retains an inexplicable sense of independence and non-relationship <sup>to it</sup>. Moreover the anomalies of life — the mutability of fortune, the unkindness of our fellow-men, the contradictions of character — all combine to alienate it still more from external affairs, and to impel it to seek for satisfaction in itself and in God. Thus, then, religion is primarily and perhaps ultimately, a personal matter. It postulates two entities only God and the soul; and though the former is revealed to the latter only in and through the world, the soul always feels the revelation <sup>to be</sup> transcendently more important than the medium through which it has been made.

Plato, in common with the general characteristics of Greek life and thought, is mainly concerned with the relation of the individual to the state. He seldom introduces into his discussions the subject of religion and then only in subordination to the main theme. This being so, it may seem strange that an attempt should be made to find in his works an exposition of that personal religion which has been said to be quite contrary to the Greek conception. Such an attempt however, is not so hopeless as it appears. Plato, though a Greek and a philosopher, was by nature intensely religious. He had in his character just those elements of sensitiveness and mysticism which impelled him, when his outward circumstances proved unfavourable, to retire within himself, and to seek for support in a more personal relation with God. This relation, indeed was shaped and coloured by the philosophical bent of his mind, so that the ultimate conception of God took the form of the Idea of Good rather than of one like to the Hebrew Deity; nevertheless this abstraction fulfilled the same function in Plato's spiritual life as was fulfilled by the more personal Jehovah in the life of the Jew. Abundant justification

for these statements will, I hope, be found in the sequel. As then one might seek in the pages of Isaiah for an answer to the question: 'What is my individual relation to the state?', so it is my intention to apply the Hebrew conception of religion to the dialogues of Plato, and to require from him an answer to the question: 'What is my individual relation to God?'.  
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forced men to gather into cities and other societies. The members of these communities, however, who had been united by a common need, now Chap 1. The progressive character of Plato's religion.

The progressive character of Plato's religion is revealed in his other interests. The ideas of war, strife and hatred, whence general conception of life. He conceives of life as a long process of development from a less to a more spiritual form of existence. "No creature", he says, "is born with that degree and kind of intelligence which it is destined to have at the time of its death." This development is not confined within the limits of the present life. It has its origin in existences which preceded, and its fulfilment in existences which follow, this one. These successive states are connected with one another in the relation of cause and effect. What we are now depends upon what we have been in the past, what we shall be hereafter depends upon what we are now. Plato does not apply his evolutionary conception to the explanation of physical phenomena. With him it is confined solely to the spiritual life of man. Responsibility for development is laid upon the will. Thus it follows that the process is not necessarily an evolution; under certain circumstances it may become a devolution.

This idea of the progressive nature of life is conceived by Plato in no figurative sense. He sees clearly that the process of discovery is of necessity a gradual one. A certain stage of experience must be reached ere the discovery can be made, and each stage becomes in its turn the starting point of a new revelation. In the Protagoras he gives a philosophical sketch of the beginnings of society. After describing briefly the invention of language and the manufacture of clothes and houses he proceeds to show how the need of some protection against wild animals



forced men to gather into cities and other societies. The members of these communities, however, who had been united by a common need, now that the danger was past began to realize how much opposed were their other interests. The clash of wills engendered strife and hatred, whence there arose gradually the ideas of law, justice, reverence, which were given by God to be the "ordering principles" of states. Such conceptions, however, could not have been apprehended by the human mind until the necessity for them had arisen.

Two reasons are suggested for regarding life in this way. The first is founded upon the fact of the divine creation. It is unnecessary here to enter into the problem of the relation of God to the idea of Good. In so far as God is held to be the efficient cause it follows that the world must have been created with a purpose. That it was so may be inferred from the cosmical appearance of the universe. Every natural object is so well fitted for the performance of its function that its explanation is found by inquiring what is that which it is most proper for it to do. Again, all the parts of the universe are made not in isolation nor as being equal in importance, but with reference and in subordination to the whole. This was a law so well understood and appreciated by Plato that he made it the basis of his sociological system.

The second reason is derived from a consideration of the demands of our moral nature. This life even in its entirety, is too finite to become the standard of good. It does not give complete satisfaction to the ideal part of our nature. Hence there is suggested the thought of another life,

The power of attaining to a knowledge of God is already  
 'Sophist 265      <sup>2</sup>Phaedo 98. and Republic 411 C      <sup>3</sup>Laws 903 B.

"Gorgias 527 C

Laws 903 C.      Philosophy of Plato: Introduction.      Politicus 272. and

the same. Laws 903 B.

more ideal than this, with reference to which the present should be lived. Such a conception at once casts upon all human conduct the shadow of an inner purposiveness which could not otherwise have been present.

If now, we inquire what is the end in which all this purposiveness will find its natural fulfilment, Plato would answer: in God. "God" is the natural and worthy object of a man's most serious and blessed endeavours." Whether this ultimate principle be expressed by the Idea of Good, as in the Republic, or in the more strictly religious language of the Laws, the meaning in either case is the same. Some spiritual entity is postulated as the source and explanation of all knowledge and all being in the contemplation of which alone the soul finds complete satisfaction. From the point of view of the individual therefore the purpose of life is the apprehension of God. There are not wanting indications that Plato conceived of the course of history much in the spirit of Schlegel as "the restoration in man of the lost image of God". In two passages at least he has drawn pictures of a previous state of existence in which the soul seemed to have a clearer knowledge of God than it has at present. If this idea be accepted it makes it even more incumbent upon the man to try to recover his lost estate.

God, therefore, in Plato's thoughts occupies the supreme place. He is not an entity in whose existence and Providence we may believe or not, as we choose, but the only rational end of existence. For the attainment of this end all the forces of the mind and of the world should be brought into operation. The power of attaining to a knowledge of God is already

Tim 23 C. Rep 518 D. "Gorgias 425 A. Gorgias 493 A.

Laws 803 C. Philosophy of History: Introduction. Politicus 272. and

Phaedrus 250. Rep 518 C. Tim 69 C. Rep 518 D.



in the soul.<sup>1</sup> His image lies lost, or at any rate dormant, in the mind. All that is required in order to bring it into consciousness is the presence of the appropriate stimulus. This is supplied out of the experience of life.<sup>2</sup> By contact with the material forces of the universe, in which also the hand and character of God is revealed, the image in the mind is revived. This process of recovery Plato calls "Conversion."<sup>3</sup> Thus happiness is identified not with momentary pleasure, nor even with the right choice of pleasures, but with education.<sup>4</sup>

But the world is so constituted as to conceal even whilst it reveals God. Just as the scaffolding around a newly-built house, which at first indeed was indispensable for building, when the house is finished becomes a superfluity and a hindrance; so the organs and objects of sense, whereby alone the image of God was discovered, finally tend to obscure the very idea which they themselves have revealed. So acutely does Plato feel the contradiction involved in this fact that he cries out almost in the words of St Paul: "The body is the tomb of the soul and we are now dead. Death is life and life is death."<sup>5</sup> The desires and passions of the flesh necessitate a mad universal pursuit after wealth, which is the root of all evil.<sup>6</sup> The transitoriness of natural phenomena is opposed to the idea of an eternal and immutable God.<sup>7</sup>

This contradiction is resolved only in another state of existence. It is apparent even from the most superficial observation that the soul departs from life with but a small part of its ideal possibilities realized. The limitations of its environment have prevented it from knowing God as He is to be known. On the other hand no soul that does

<sup>1</sup> Tim 69 C.      <sup>2</sup> Rep 518 D.      <sup>3</sup> Gorgias I 469 E      <sup>4</sup> Gorgias 493 A.

<sup>5</sup> Phaedo 66.      <sup>6</sup> Phaedrus 247 C.



not depart entirely pure, can associate with God. Hence it becomes necessary to postulate other states of existence, more ideal than this, wherein the soul may complete its work of sanctification. On the consummation of this process it becomes entirely free from wandering, fears, fierce desires and every other evil, and dwells forever with God.<sup>2</sup>

Phaedo 67 b

<sup>2</sup> Phaedo 81 a .

Chap.2 God as the End.

In the last Chapter it was stated that the purpose of life, according to Plato, is the attainment of a knowledge of God. We now proceed to a consideration of the passages which support this position. The first argument is drawn from the purpose of Creation. In the Timaeus we are told that God created the world because he wished all things to become as like himself as possible. Thus likeness to God is made the sole ground of existence. It would be wrong to suppose that in this passage Plato is attributing to God the possession of a human form. He has expressly warned us against entertaining any such notion. No other reason is given for the creation of man than that otherwise the world would not have been complete. It is the universe which was made in the likeness of God and therefore the universe alone can be an adequate image of Him. The various parts of which it is composed by their mutual relations and actions upon one another shew forth this image. It follows, then, that all creation is a revelation of God. Having no other motive for its beginning it can have no other for its continuance and end. The human mind, however, which alone of these parts is conscious of the image, and knows it is of God, is especially bound to enter into the spirit and intention of the Creator. In making God its end it is fulfilling the very purpose of its being.

Again, in the pursuit and apprehension of this end man as an intellectual being reaches his highest perfection.<sup>5</sup> Reason, which is the highest part of the soul, is chiefly concerned with relations. The idea of God,

<sup>1</sup> P.29d. <sup>2</sup> Tim 41b. <sup>3</sup> Protag.322a. <sup>4</sup> Rep.508d. <sup>5</sup> Phaedrus 246c.



as involving all the parts of the universe in their most relative form, makes demands upon the reason which could be made by no other science. Plato is well aware that his doctrine is contrary to the general opinions of men on the subject of the chief good. Mankind for the most part thinks that the best possessions in and for themselves are health, beauty, wealth and ten thousand other things; not less to be desired is the possession of unrestrained power to do whatsoever one likes. If to this be added an eternity of existence the Summum bonum is thought to have been achieved. In contradiction to this Plato affirms that no earthly possession has any value unless he to whom it belongs be a just and holy man, and to be just and holy, in Plato's sense of the words, is to be like God. On the other hand, when they are the property of a bad man, things which are most excellent in themselves become for that man the source of the greatest evil. Though this is a proposition quite incapable of proof Plato is as certain of its truth as he is that Crete is an island.

There is also a moral reason why God should be regarded as the End. Belief in His existence, at any rate, for the majority of men, is the ground of morality. It is the argument of the wicked man: if God does not exist what need is there of acting rightly? Plato would doubtless have preferred that righteousness should not rest for support upon the thought of God's providence. In the Republic he has tried to shew that justice is better than injustice for its own sake. He cannot help realizing, however, that the idea of goodness apart from its relation to God is a very lifeless abstraction, and he is compelled finally to



introduce into his scheme a vision of the last judgment where virtue receives her own reward and vice her own punishment. Moreover, in other places he has given hints of the true doctrine, that the best life is the life of virtue, because that is most pleasing to God. "God is just. He is therefore the friend of the just, the enemy of the unjust." "It is difficult in learning the art of public-speaking always to say and act the truth, nevertheless the good man will always endeavour to do so for the sake of pleasing God."<sup>2</sup>

A stronger argument is found in the identification of God with the most universal principles of knowledge. In adducing these as evidence of the place which the divine being occupied in Plato's thoughts it is not suggested that the latter was always conscious to himself of the full import of his teaching. During the middle period of his philosophy, at any rate, he was so much engrossed with the development of the doctrine of Ideas that it is not strange if he did not appreciate the necessity of shewing the relation in which they stood to God. When, however, he attributes to them the possession of qualities which have been universally regarded as peculiar to God, and when we remember that the idea of God is in fact cognizable to our minds only through these principles, it is reasonable to infer that whatsoever is said of them concerning their value for human life may justly be applied to God.

The most significant fact from our point of view is that only the most spiritual principles are selected for this purpose. It argues well for the high opinion which Plato entertained of the spiritual nature of the soul

is Beauty. The admiration of the soul is first aroused by the

Beauty reveals Rep 352 b. Phaedrus 273 e.

to love more the inward beauty of character. Thence it is led

on to the contemplation of the beauty of laws and institutions

Cratylus 389. Rep 475. Rep 592. Tim 47. Plato 490

that he should at different times have exalted into the position of Ends the ideas of Life, Law, Truth, Wisdom, Love, Beauty, Good. The first indeed is directly identified with God. In a fanciful discussion on the origin of various names Plato connects the name Zeus with the Greek word for "to live", alleging as his excuse that since God is the Source of life to all creatures no more appropriate name could have been devised than the one which was the embodiment of this fact. The idea of Law, "which is ever the same and wanders not through generation and destruction," is a frequently recurring thought. By it Plato wishes to express the eternal and immutable principles of the heavenly system. They alone offend not nor are offended. They alone present that aspect of orderliness and calm finality of purpose which is so conspicuously absent from the life of mortals. Hence a knowledge of them has been vouchsafed to us by God which may be for our imitation and guidance. "Truth" is the guide of the philosopher whom he must follow always and everywhere. Having this on his side he will be invincible, though he be in a minority of one.

"For the Truth can never be refuted".

"The Divine says Plato," is beauty, wisdom, goodness and the like".

In the Phaedo the Summum bonum is made to consist in pure knowledge. "All true virtue is the companion of wisdom." This is the one true coin for which we should be ready to exchange every other possession. In the Symposium the final cause of all human toils is Beauty. The admiration of the soul is first aroused by the beauty revealed in external forms and colours. Next it learns to love more the inward beauty of character. Thence it is led on to the contemplation of the beauty of laws and institutions

*Cratylus 369<sup>a</sup>    Rep. 485<sup>e</sup>    Rep. 500<sup>e</sup>    Tim 47<sup>e</sup>    Rep 490<sup>a</sup>  
Gorgias 273<sup>b</sup>    Phaedrus 246<sup>e</sup>    Phaedo 69<sup>e</sup>    Symp. 210<sup>e</sup> ff*



and sciences. Finally, by a natural progression it rises to the conception of one universal Beauty which abides eternally, neither coming into being nor perishing, neither increasing nor diminishing, formless, bodiless, unrelated. The extravagance of Plato's language may be excused when we consider that he is trying to realize to himself his own idea of the ultimate principle of the universe, <sup>S</sup> starting from an aspect of nature which has ever been associated with the most ideal part of the soul, he ends by forming an abstraction possessed of attributes which are in no way peculiar to the idea of Beauty, but which are peculiar to God <sup>was</sup> alone. In this respect Plato, who as much a poet as a philosopher, resembles other poets. <sup>T</sup> <sup>to</sup> They have attempted to describe the Divine Being through the medium of some particular aspect of life which for the moment has taken strong hold of their imagination.

The idea of Love in the Phaedrus is not so much identified with God as it is the means whereby God's will is revealed to man. Love is the inspiration of all great poetry and of all prophesy. It is a divine madness which impels us to seek for God. It is the golden chain which unites us with our fellow-men.<sup>2</sup> By its power we are initiated into the mysteries and the glories of the higher life, and obtain a clearer apprehension of true being.<sup>3</sup> In his treatment of love Plato emphasizes the intellectual side rather than the emotional. Herein his attitude differs from that of St Paul upon the same subject. For once the positions <sup>He</sup>

if he did not consciously identify them in thought, yet he certainly

Phaedrus 245 a — <sup>2</sup> Phaedrus 252 E. <sup>3</sup> Phaedrus 247.

Rep. 605 a Rep. 502 c Rep. 311 Theaet. 177 a

Rep. 502 a Rep. 401 a Rep. 207 a



of the Hebrew and the Greek writers are reversed. St Paul is chiefly concerned with love as it reveals to us our duty to our neighbour; Plato eulogizes it rather as the power which leads to a knowledge of God.

It is not, however, until we come to consider the idea of Good that we can fully realize the spiritual character of Plato's religion. In this conception he has summed up all the qualities which he had previously applied to the ideas of Wisdom, Beauty, Love. The Idea of Good is the highest knowledge. We have insufficient knowledge of it yet without this nothing is advantageous to us. All other things become useful and beneficial only by their use of this. The Good is neither Knowledge nor Truth,<sup>2</sup> but the object of Knowledge and the source of Truth. It is the Cause of Being and the Essence in all things known, yet far transcends Essence in dignity and power.<sup>3</sup> Of this alone do all men necessarily seek not the appearance but the reality.<sup>4</sup> As the first principle of knowledge it is directly cognizable by the reason, requiring no further hypothesis to give it validity. The grand image to which alone it can be worthily compared is the sun. The Idea of Good stands in the same relation to the intellectual world as the sun, its own offspring, to the physical.<sup>6</sup>

Such is Plato's magnificent expression for the ultimate principle of the universe. It is impossible to believe that in writing of the Good in such terms he was not identifying it with God. Even if he did not consciously identify them in thought yet he certainly

Rep 505 a    <sup>3</sup> Rep 509 b    <sup>5</sup> Rep.511    ~~Theaet.176 a~~

Rep.509 a    Rep.505 d    <sup>6</sup> Rep.506 e

wrote in such a state of mind as can be felt by a mortal creature only towards God. The important point for us is that this conception occupied the supreme place in Plato's scheme of education. To it as end was directed all the teaching<sup>of childhood</sup> and youth; with reference to it as sole standard magistrate and ruler were enjoined to manage the affairs of state. For the Idea of Good has an universal relation to the lives of all the citizens.

Three further proofs are suggested that God is the End. The first is implied in all that has been said as to the purpose of the Ideas. In each case the Ideas were held up as a way of escape from evil. The material side of our nature being essentially opposed to the spiritual, there arises a persistent struggle for the mastery between the higher and the lower. The former is nourished and developed by daily association with the spiritual aspects of knowledge. Moreover there is another kind of evil, called moral turpitude, which is caused not by ignorance nor by physical aberrations, but by inability on our part to remain true to the divine principle within us. From this the soul is released only by assimilation to God. "Evils have no place with God; wherefore we ought to fly away thither and to become like Him."

Again, there are three ultimate forces which control the destinies of the world: God, matter, and human will; each of which exercises an influence in the production of any given result. The course of circumstances, therefore, affecting the life of a particular person is more or less out of his own control. The religious mind, which



will not admit that all things are the result of chance would  
 faintly believe that the Providence of God overrules for good the  
 wickedness of men. Hence it feels the necessity of postulating  
 some such overruling power as the ultimate principle of  
 the universe.

Finally, as God is the object of the soul's striving in this  
 life, so He will be the object of its attainment in the next.  
 The reward of living virtuously upon earth will be everlasting  
 life with God in Heaven.  
 His existence is proved rather, if susceptible of proof at all, by the  
 consistency of the parts among themselves. Yet this unateness of  
 our knowledge of His existence for the advantage we might de-  
 rive from other things.

The arguments therefore which can be adduced in proof of God's  
 existence rest mainly upon probability. They do not carry immedi-  
 ate conviction to the mind. It is quite possible for the mind,  
 even after examination, to continue to withhold its assent to them.  
 In point of fact, however, Plato does not think that consistent dis-  
 belief in the existence of God is possible, though he admits the  
 possibility of consistent disbelief in His interest in human affairs.  
 At some time or other in a man's life he will be betrayed into acting  
 as though he believed that God existed. With regard to the causes  
 of such disbelief, Plato, contrary to what we might expect, does not  
 ascribe it to a love of sensual pleasure, but rather to materialism.

### Chap. 3 The Existence of God.

The Existence of God is an inference from the facts of the world. Being the highest knowledge attainable by the human mind it cannot be supported by any further hypothesis.<sup>2</sup> We are unable to apply to it the same proofs as are applied to other things. The explanation of everything else is found by discovering its relation to the whole. The idea of God, however, which is intended to be the explanation of the whole cannot be supported by a reference to the parts. His existence is proved rather, if susceptible of proof at all, by the coherence of the parts among themselves. Yet this unsureness of our knowledge of Him destroys for us the advantage we might derive from other things.<sup>3</sup>

The arguments therefore which can be adduced in proof of God's existence rest mainly upon probability. They do not carry immediate conviction to the mind. It is quite possible for the mind, even after examination, to continue to withhold its assent to them. In point of fact, however, Plato does not think that consistent disbelief in the existence of God is possible, though he admits the possibility of consistent disbelief in His interest in human affairs. At some time or other in a man's life he will be betrayed into acting as though he believed that God existed. With regard to the causes of such disbelief; Plato, contrary to what we might expect, does not attribute it to a love of sensual pleasure, but rather to materialism.

At the same time he recognised that his own

Rep 517 b<sup>2</sup> Rep. 511<sup>3</sup> Rep. 505 e<sup>4</sup> Laws 888 c<sup>5</sup> Laws 967 a

his belief.

Laws 888 c<sup>6</sup> Sophist 238 e<sup>7</sup> Thalesus 25 e<sup>8</sup> Sophist 238 e<sup>9</sup>



The materialistic attitude is thought to be a consequence of the study of natural science. By this men are inclined to ascribe effects to necessary causes rather than to the operations of an intelligent will accomplishing good. The view of the materialist is that fire, water, earth, air - "Comprehensively termed nature" - are the first of all created things, and that the cause of the generation and destruction of all things is subsequent to these. Instead of earth, air, fire, water, a modern materialist would perhaps speak of atoms or electrons. The position of both, however, is fundamentally the same: the first cause is expressible in terms of matter rather than of mind. Against the adoption of this view Plato contends that it destroys the possibility of discovering the first Cause without supplying anything in its place. In a world where all things are related nothing can be explained by an aggregation of unrelated atoms. "The attempt at universal separation is the final annihilation of all reason; for only by the union of conceptions with one another do we attain to discourse of reason." It would be inconsistent with the whole aspect of the universe to believe that it was the result of an irrational and random chance. Plato in fact remembered, what too many thinkers are apt to forget, that explanation, in order to have any value for us, must be always relative to human intelligence and human needs. He himself, therefore, preferred to believe that the world, being before non-existent, came into being from God, and was made by God as Creator with divine reason and knowledge. At the same time he recognised that his own natural disposition was principally accountable for bringing him to this belief.

Plato's first argument for the existence of God is cosmological. The problem of Causation was made simpler for him in that, with the exception of the passage quoted above, where he appears to think otherwise, he invariably takes for granted the existence of matter as such. His difficulty consists in explaining it in its present form. God is the Creator as being the cause which imposed a limit upon unlimited matter. Of Creation, however, even in this sense some cause was necessary.<sup>2</sup> Now the essence of soul, or mind, is the power of self-motion. It alone of created things can create a result.<sup>3</sup> Also there are spiritual entities, such as justice, goodness, truth, which are no less real than the physical.<sup>4</sup> Soul is still more obviously the cause of these. On both grounds therefore, - on the ground both of physical and of moral phenomena - Plato feels justified in inferring that God or universal Soul is the first principle of all things.<sup>5</sup>

The second and perhaps strongest argument is derived from a consideration of the teleological character of the universe. The earth, the sun, the stars, the fair order of the seasons, the division<sup>of</sup> them into months and years bear evident tokens of the workings of a mind upon them.<sup>6</sup> Such an order is adapted not merely to the preservation of life but also to the formation of conceptual knowledge. All nature is akin.<sup>7</sup> Every part of the universe

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Q Coleridge's definition of the poetic imagination " as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of Creation in the infinite I AM."

Philebus 30 c      <sup>3</sup> Laws 896 a      <sup>5</sup> Laws 899a-b      <sup>7</sup> Me<sup>no</sup>s 81 c  
Tim 28 e      <sup>4</sup> Laws 892 a      <sup>6</sup> Laws 886 a      <sup>7</sup> Gorg. 508 a



implies and is implied by every other part. Thus the mind is enabled to advance from the known to the unknown. From a particular experience it can apprehend an universal truth, simply because the universal is contained implicitly in the particular. How important this is for the development of knowledge it is unnecessary to point out. Such a process would be impossible unless the external world were "exquisitely fitted to the mind and the mind to the external world." The fact that they are so fitted is a matter for continual wonder. Hence, from the marks of design in the universe Plato is led to infer the existence of God as the designer and architect.

The moral argument has been already employed in proving that God is the End. It is no less valuable as establishing the fact of His existence. Unless God exists virtue is impossible, or if not impossible, at any rate improbable. Deprived of Him as their Source and Guarantee the moral relations between man and man lose their significance. It is a little difficult for us to realize the truth of this argument. The conceptions of Law, Justice, Righteousness have received such universal validity; and society by long acquaintance has become so habituated to them that we are apt to regard them as having vital force in themselves. Historically, however, they have their root in belief in God's existence, a conception which has been equally universal and lasting. It is only of late years that the offices of law-giver and priest have been separated; among the ancients they were not so. To the authority which the laws possessed by virtue of the magistrates' civil position was added the awful sanction of religion. In listening to the decree of the law-giver the people seemed to be listening to the very voice of God. A few educated minds have been able to rise above this dependence and to pursue righteousness for its

own sake; but for the generality of mankind, except in the case of the utterly abandoned, the unseen terrors of the next world have always been a greater object of dread than the legal punishments within the cognizance of the reason and is decided by aishment of this. Plato was fully aware of the truth of this mere examination of their grounds. Since these are complete in fact, and thus in the Laws, where he was compelled to deal with themselves they require no further support from the character of human nature as he found it, he has sought to give religious force to his enactments by bringing them into connection with the good one. Perhaps they differ fundamentally from the strictly religious thought of the existence of God. Apart indeed from such connection it is difficult to understand what possible appeal the legislator could make to the minds and wills of his fellow-country men.

As was suggested in the last paragraph a further proof of the existence of God is found in the universal consent of mankind. Such an argument is almost weak in its universality. We are so accustomed to expect from all human creatures an acknowledgement of belief in a Divine Being that we forget to consider how wonderful it is that such an idea should be present at all. It is a position which, on account of our enlarged opportunities for studying its grounds is stronger even to-day than it was in Plato's time. The latter, however, appeals to it with confidence. If Religion be defined as "the feeling which falls upon man in the presence of the Unknown" we may readily assent to the truth of the proposition. Such unanimity proves that though human nature may differ in other respects, in its highest manifestation it is the same. Amid all the various ways in which the races of the world have been distinguished from one another this common belief in the existence of God, like a golden thread, has run through them all.



Thus far the arguments which we have been considering are the arguments of natural religion. The question of their validity falls within the cognizance of the reason and is decided by a mere examination of their grounds. Since these are complete in themselves they require no further support from the character of the hearer. A bad man is as capable of judging of the truth as a good one. Herein they differ fundamentally from the strictly religious argument of revelation. The latter required<sup>s</sup>, in order that a proposition may be believed, in addition to the ascent of the reason, a certain prior attitude of faith on the part of the will and emotions. From this point of view a proposition is true because we believe it to be true and because such belief makes life richer and grander. The hypothesis that God exists becomes true for the religious mind because in practice it is found to work. This is the pragmatic stand point, and the question for us is what elements are there in Plato of such an argument ?. How far did he consider that the religious experience itself justified belief in God's existence ?.

It is at least certain that he would have been prepared to admit the important part which the emotions play in leading the mind to particular beliefs. He himself was naturally inclined to take a religious view of the universe. In a passage already quoted, he has given clear evidence that he actually believe<sup>d</sup>s in the truth of certain highly problematic propositions merely because it seem<sup>ed</sup>s better to believe in them than not to do so.<sup>z</sup> He recognized also that the highest beliefs of all are incapable of being described in words. We cannot

<sup>1</sup> Sophist 265 d.

<sup>2</sup> Laws 662 b.

<sup>3</sup> Rep. 506 e.

set them forth as a syllogism. The grounds whereon they rest are too vast and too closely interwoven with the whole fabric of our being to admit of their being imparted to another. We ourselves know not whence they came nor why we believe in them. On the whole then it seems reasonable to infer that Plato in many cases would have accepted faith as sufficient "evidence of things not seen". He would have deemed the experience of the will and the emotions as a sufficient guarantee of the existence of God, even without the reason's consent. In contradiction to the evidence of sense and the opinions of the world he held up as true these great principles of religion, which indeed are incapable of proof, but which are equally incapable of refutation.

Gorgia's 509 a. 527 b.



## Chap. 4. The Nature of God.

The subject of the present Chapter is one about which not much can be said. As often as we attempt to analyse our notion of the Divine Being we find that it consists of little more than a collection of negative qualities. It is easier to say of God what He is not than what He is. The finite mind cannot grasp the Infinite. Being itself a part of that infinity it is as though the part were trying to comprehend the whole. It would seem therefore that it matters little what conception of the Divine Being we entertain, since all conceptions must from the nature of the case fall far short of the reality. Such, however, is not the case. It is a fact well proven by experience that there is a vital connection between a nation's idea of God and its national character, and that any slight change in the standard of the one is followed immediately by a corresponding change in the standard of the other. It might be thought that such a statement is almost tautologous, since what else is a nation's idea of God than the expression of its own character? This objection is removed when we consider that a nation's idea of the Divine Being is the result of the combined thought of all the best minds during a long period of time, whereas its character is exhibited in the lives of a multitude of individuals, each of whom separately is inferior to the national ideal. It is no small achievement, therefore, if a writer can by a purified conception raise this standard even a few degrees. In matters of religion the presence or absence of a single attribute may make all the difference between progress and reaction, hope and despair.

The chief point in which Plato's conception of God differs from that of his contemporaries is in its increased spirituality. In the poems of Homer and in the other literary works of his day he found many false notions current about the Divine nature which were acting deleteriously upon the popular mind. It speaks much for the strength of his religious convictions that he was prepared to sacrifice even the sacred gift of poetry, in order to put an end to this influence. Such notions erred for the most part in attributing to God the possession of a human form. It is a mistake common to the early history of all religions. If it be true that man was made in the image of God it is much more true that God has always been made in the image of man. The mistake, as Plato has observed, is due to our inability to think of the Divine Being except under a material image. We imagine Him to be partly bodily and partly spiritual. In contrast with this Plato affirms that God is wholly spiritual, and that the possession of a human form is rather a sign of weakness. Thus he finds himself in complete agreement with the doctrine that "God is a Spirit, and they <sup>that</sup> worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth."

In another respect also, that is, in his exposition of the righteousness of God, Plato runs counter to the opinions of his contemporaries. It was popularly asserted that God is the Author of good and of evil, and that He gives arbitrarily of each to whomsoever He will. There is a sense indeed in which it is difficult to understand how God is not the author of evil, as well as of good; for in so far as He is the Cause of all things He must be the Cause of



evil also. But it was certainly not this metaphysical difficulty which caused men to speak thus irreverently of Him. The explanation is rather to be sought in the general lowness of the moral thought and feeling of the time. Plato, as we shall see later, never succeeds finally in reconciling the righteousness of God with the apparent misrule of the universe; nevertheless he is profoundly convinced of the fact of His righteousness. "In God there is no unrighteousness at all, but He is altogether righteous". "He is not the cause of evil, but the cause of Good only. Of evil we must seek some other cause." He sees clearly that to believe the opposite would be to make all religion impossible. In the thought of the purity of God is involved belief in the truth of the moral imperative of our own souls. If God be not righteous what guarantee have we against being deceived in all the other relations of life? We come to Him as to one "with whom is no variableness, or shadow of turning". His righteousness is the one principle which remains constant through this inconstant world. In the strenuousness with which he maintains this position, apparently in complete contradiction to the logic of facts, Plato approaches most nearly to the religious optimism of the Hebrew prophets.

Closely connected with the subject of the righteousness of God but in no way identical with it, is that of His Goodness. The two attributes differ from one another in that the former expresses the attitude of obedience which God chooses to maintain towards His own laws, the latter the benignant treatment which in consequence of this He metes out to His creatures. The thought of the Divine Goodness is not a common one in early religions. To the ancient peoples God

appeared more in the character of a tyrant than in that of a father. He was dreaded more than he was loved. Even in the Old Testament there are not many instances in which God is represented as "pleading" with His people. Nor has Plato laid so much emphasis upon this attribute as we might have expected. He speaks of God often as Father, but it is usually in the sense of begetter; and the moral import<sup>1</sup> of the relation is rarely or never in his mind. He does not even rise to the height of Aristotle who conceived of God as "the perfection after which the whole creation strives." Of the creation he says only that "God desires that all things should be as good as possible." He does better when he comes to describe God's dealings with men in their every day life. "To him whom He loves God gives all things good" so far as is consistent with the laws of the universe.<sup>2</sup> There is always attached to Plato's descriptions of the Divine relations a feeling of coldness; not indeed peculiar to him, but common to here Greek literature generally. We look in vain for any sign of that warm reciprocity of affection which Paul depicted as subsisting between the Father and His children. As Professor Jowett has observed<sup>3</sup> "God is just: the friend of the just, the enemy of the unjust." "Holding in his hand the beginning, middle, and end of all things" He moves according to His nature in a straight line towards the accomplishment of His end. Justice always follows Him, and is the punisher of those who fall short of the Divine Law. "He cannot be bribed to overlook sin, nor can the sinner escape His notice." "If thou sayest: I am small and will creep into the depths of the earth, or am high and will fly up to heaven, you are not so small or so high but that you shall pay the fitting penalty."<sup>4</sup> The eyes of the Lord pierce through the covering of the flesh into the secrets of the heart.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Psalm. Cxxxix 7, 8.  
<sup>2</sup> Tim 30a <sup>3</sup> Rep. 612e <sup>4</sup> Rep. 352b <sup>5</sup> Laws 716a <sup>6</sup> Rep 365d <sup>7</sup> Laws 905a Gorg. 523e



In his treatment of the Divine wisdom Plato is <sup>in</sup> one respect unique. He affirms that the word "wise" can be truly applied to God alone. Of all others we can only say that they are 'philosophers' or seekers after wisdom. Certainly there is something inspiring in this thought of the Divine Being as possessed of the whole sum of knowledge and as sitting in silent contemplation of all time and all existence.

Finally Plato claims for God the attribute of unchangeable eternal existence. Being the very idea of life itself He cannot perish. It is wrong to say of Him that He was or will be, but we must say only that He is.

It is interesting to enquire how far Plato attributes personality to God. The word "person" in this connection is apt to be a misnomer. It is erroneously taken to imply belief in the actual bodily appearance of God. But we have already shown that such an idea is quite contrary to Plato's thoughts. All that is meant by the question here is: Does Plato conceive of God as subject only, or object only, or both? The answer will have to be inferred from his general treatment rather than from particular exposition. As Professor Jowett has observed "the difference between the personal and the impersonal was not so marked to him as to ourselves." There are passages which suppose<sup>nt</sup> all three views. In the Sophist he speaks almost passionately in defence of the subjectivity of God. "Absolute Being is possessed of life and motion and soul and mind. We cannot believe that it is devoid of life and mind, and remains in awful unmeaningness an everlasting fixture." In the Republic on the other hand, where the Idea of Good is held up as the supreme object of attainment, it is

<sup>1</sup> Phaedr. 278d    <sup>2</sup> Phaedo 106d    <sup>3</sup> Timaeus 38    <sup>4</sup> Introduction to Philebus

<sup>5</sup> Sophist 249a (Jowett)

not suggested that the Idea itself in any way helps the soul towards this attain-ment. The Good is passive rather than active; a Being to be known rather than one that knows. In the Phaedrus the subjective and objective theories are partially reconciled. God is what He is by contemplation of the Ideas; but still the Ideas are something dis-tinct from Him. God is not subject and object. In the Parmenides the true hypothesis is suggested that the Ideas exist in the mind of God. Plato however rejects this notion as involving the separation of God from the world. He was in fact hindered by his own pre-suppositions from arriving at the true theory. If he could have identified knowledge with concrete reality he would have found no difficulty in conceiving of God as both subject and object, as Himself the content of His own Consciousness.\*

On the whole there is no satisfactory exposition in Plato's works of the essential nature of Deity. He has represented the life of God as an eternal contemplation of knowledge absolute in existence absolute. He has surrounded Him with a wonderful panorama of the <sup>most</sup> sublime and glorious conceptions imaginable to the mind. But speculatively if not practically he has removed God too far from the world. The reality whereon He gazes is not the reality with which we have to do; it is one to which we can attain only in our highest and

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It might be said that from the religious point of view it matters little which hypothesis we adopt, since all are equally inconceivable. Wholly conceivable they certainly are not, but that does not prove that they are not partly so; still less does it prove that the last hypothesis is not much more conceivable than the two former ones. Where there is a choice between partial conceptions we must choose the most probable.



best moments. It follows therefore that God can have little or no sympathy with our limited existence. Plato could not have spoken to men and women in the words of St Paul: "it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Instead of human life being transfigured by the thought that herein God is being revealed, the soul is invited to shun the grossness of earth and earthly associations, and to live a life of pure spirit. This indeed is the consequence of Plato's speculative position, but it does not represent his practical one. We shall find when we come to discuss his theory of salvation that he lays almost as much emphasis as St Paul on the value of human experience. The universal point of view are quite impossible. Such is one explanation of the belief, common in ancient times, that God takes no interest in human affairs. It is difficult to understand how the existence of God could be conceived at all without at the same time involving a belief in His personal oversight of the world. But the ancients, so when God appeared more in the character of the First Cause than of a moral governor, held this view. They thought that He, having created the world out of chaos and given motion to it, had then withdrawn Himself from all active participation in its course. In proof of their notion they pointed to the many marks of imperfection and failure visible in the world. The abortions, the monstrosities, the upheavals of nature are all opposed to the idea of a perfect Being guiding and ruling the universe. The law of the survival of the fittest is a harsh law, bringing in its

Chap. 5 The Providence of God.

All created things  
and consequently, existing after a perfection which they never realize  
All our conceptions of the Divine Being are necessarily subject to the limitations of human intellect. God is all; but it is seldom that we are able to think of Him thus. For the most part we have to be content to approach Him under one or other of His manifestations. This, indeed, is convenient, but it is apt to lead us somewhat astray. The particular notion which we have chosen, when it is surveyed in isolation, and as though it were the whole, places in a false light all the other manifestations. Hence we are led to entertain ideas respecting Him which from the universal point of view are quite impossible. Such is one explanation of the belief, common in ancient times, that God takes no interest in human affairs. It is difficult to understand how the existence of God could be conceived at all without at the same time involving a belief in His personal oversight of the world. But then the ancients, to whom God appeared more in the character of the First Cause than of a moral governor, held this view. They thought that He, having created the world out of chaos and given motion to it, had then withdrawn Himself from all active participation in its course. In proof of their notion they pointed to the many marks of imperfection and failure visible in the world. The abortions, the monstrosities, the upheavals of nature are all opposed to the idea of a perfect Being guiding and ruling the universe. The law of the survival of the fittest is a harsh law, bringing in its train the death of the weak. Laws 901 c - 903 e. It must be because He thinks that neglect of the parts is of no consequence to the whole. Or, if they are of consequence and He neglects



train great suffering upon the individual. All created things are constantly striving after a perfection which they never realize or which they realize only in the species. This might be termed the "natural" objection.

Plato finds another explanation of the same belief in the anomalous character of life. There are many facts in the moral world no less than in the natural which seem entirely to contradict the notion of God's Providence. He gives as an example the same problem which perplexed the mind of Job so much that it drove him almost into unbelief: why do the wicked prosper and why do the righteous suffer? A more modern problem would be: why should there be such differences in opportunity, so that one man starts out well-equipped for the battle of life, another handicapped by every possible disadvantage of environment and education? Such were the very real problems which agitated the minds of Plato's contemporaries, and which made it difficult for them to believe that God takes an interest in human affairs. This might be called the "moral" objection.

The first objection arises chiefly from an inability to survey the whole of the facts at once. The easiest and most obvious way of refuting <sup>it</sup> therefore is to draw attention to the facts which have been neglected. This is the method which Plato adopts. His arguments for the existence and moral nature of God have already been discussed. In the following reasoning he takes for granted these two positions. First of all he inquires: what are the assumptions which underlie the belief that God takes no interest in human affairs? Apparently there are two, of which the second is brought forward alternatively on the denial of the first. If God takes no interest in human affairs it must be because He thinks that neglect of the parts is of no consequence to the whole. Or, if they are of consequence and He neglects

them, His neglect must be attributed to carelessness and indolence. In his manner of formulating the first proposition it will be observed that Plato assumes that God does take an interest in the whole if not in the parts. Herein, as was stated in the last Chapter his practical standpoint is widely different from his speculative. The latter left no room either wholly or in part for the intervention of God in the world. But now in the Laws, which were written for a practical purpose, we find him silently taking for granted the opposite belief.

What then is meant by this antithesis ? In what sense can it be said that God exercises an influence over the whole but not over the parts ? The contrast appears to be that between the operation of natural laws which press equally and undeviatingly upon all, and the supposed suspension or acceleration of these on behalf of some particular person. It might be readily granted that God is the ruler of the world through these universal principles, but not that He alters them in response to the prayers or sacrifices of an individual. The necessity of framing some such hypothesis as the former would appeal even to the irreligious mind. Belief in the latter requires an act of faith and cannot so easily be made a subject of proof. We conclude, therefore, that Plato is justified in making this distinction. It is impossible to explain the most ordinary phenomenon of nature or the most elementary act of thought without assuming as its source the active presence of some spiritual power.

But supposing this to be true, does it follow that God takes an interest in the parts? Plato affirms that it is impossible to care for the parts without caring also for the whole. Expressed thus abstractly the proposition is perfectly true. The whole cannot be preserved without the parts for the simple reason that the whole is



what it is only by the existence of the parts. Nevertheless it furnishes no proof that God takes an active interest in human affairs. The parts which go to make up the whole world are not parts merely but are in a certain sense "wholes" in themselves. The human mind, heart, will, until they are brought into subjection to the Divine character, have their own centre and circumference which are no less real than those of the Creator. God, whose character represents the good and purpose of the whole, must in the fulfilment of these ignore to a certain extent the claims of the individual as such.

We seem therefore to be confronted with two apparently contradictory propositions. On the one hand the business of the world can be carried on successfully only by the operation of natural laws and by the subordination of the parts to the whole. On the other hand it is a necessary postulate of the religious consciousness that God should interfere specifically in response to the prayers of the individual. Can these two propositions be reconciled, and what hint of reconciliation has Plato given? It may be generally admitted that in all cases where the efficacy of prayer is in question the chief object to be attained is some change in the mind of the person praying. It is not necessary to suppose what is manifestly impossible, that any change in the attitude of God is desiderated. In seeking to apprehend God in prayer the soul really apprehends itself more truly. If therefore in consequence of a deeper insight into its own nature it is led to entertain more optimistic views of the world, and on returning to the world finds that its expectation is not falsified by the facts, the same result is achieved as if God had interfered specifically on its behalf.

Now Plato's answer to the problem practically amounts to this : Though the world is governed by universal laws, which make our choice and conduct irrevocable, yet these are so designed as to favour the choice of virtue and hinder the choice of vice. He therefore, who, having attained to a more exalted conception of God, wishes to live a better life, will find that all the forces of the universe are favourable to his endeavour. Thus his prayer will be realized. Whatsoever may be thought of the truth of this doctrine its originality and great religious value will hardly be denied. Whether it can be supported by an appeal to the facts is doubtful. Like all great spiritual truths it requires for its acceptance more faith than reason.

Let us turn now to the second assumption underlying the same thesis: if the parts are of consequence and God neglects them His neglect must be attributed to carelessness and indolence. This may be refuted by showing that it is contradictory to the Divine nature. There are certain fundamental attributes which we are agreed must be supposed to belong to God if He exists. Namely, all acknowledge that God hears and sees all things; also that He is good and perfect. From the first of these admissions it follows that if God wished to take an interest in human affairs there is nothing in the nature of things which would prevent Him. And from the second, that if there were any moral reason why He should exercise His power He would not refrain from doing so. Is there then any moral reason why God should interest Himself in the affairs of men.? Plato thought that there was. The world and all mortal creatures are the creation and property of God. Hence He would not rightly



neglect His own. This argument seems to be as sound in logic as it is dignified in spirit. When once the existence and nature of God have been admitted His providence and care of men follow as a necessary consequence.

The value of the above reasoning is dependent upon the denial of the proposition that it is possible to care for the whole without caring also for the parts. That however, has not yet been fully denied. It is possible to care for the whole without caring specifically for the parts. The ultimate force which controls the universe may be like the Car of Juggernaut -- a blind, resistless fate crushing in its onward course good and evil alike. That it is so is the assumption which underlies the moral objection to Divine Providence.

As has been already pointed out, a certain degree of probability is given to this conjecture by the anomalous nature of life. Generally speaking it is true that the forces of the world are so designed as to offer greater incentive to virtue than to vice; but the law does not always hold good. One may often behold

"--- desert a beggar born,

And needy nothing trimmed in jollity,

And art made tongue tied by authority,

And folly doctor-like, controlling skill,

And simple truth miscall'd simplicity

And Captive Good attending Captain Ill."

The consciousness of these anomalies impels us to seek for some further explanation. None of course is forthcoming, for they are quite inexplic-

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able. The human spirit, however, which still labours under a sense of their extreme injustice turns as a last resource to religion. The consolation which Christianity offers is expressed in the words of Christ and of St Paul: "Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." "All things work together for good to those that love God." The answer of Plato is expressed in precisely the same language." Consider, O man, whether nobility and goodness are not something other than saving and being saved. For not after this, how he may live as long as possible ought a man to strive; nor should he be a lover of life; but leaving all these things to God, and believing that none can escape his appointed day, let him consider how he may live this life as well as possible." " Thus then must we understand about the righteous man, that whether he be in poverty, or in sickness, or in any other of the so-called evils, for him both in life and in death all these things will end in some good. For never does God neglect him who hath an earnest desire to be just; and, following after righteousness, to become, as far as in a man lies, like unto Himself."<sup>2</sup>

The fact of Divine Providence having been admitted we may next inquire by what means Plato supposed that this care was exercised. As has already been shewn, he believed that in some measure it was through the operations of natural law. The very fact that the world constitutes a rational system, convertible by the reason to its own uses, lessens the rigorousness of existence and makes virtue possible. These however can be regarded as the workings of Providence only from the point of view of the universal. The



religious consciousness, which makes the particular the chief unit of life, requires something more. It demands that Providence, in order to be of any value shall be as elastic and as diverse in its operations as human life itself. Nothing less will satisfy it than a personal oversight of every thought and impulse of the soul. These conditions are fulfilled completely by Plato's doctrine of the *Seinores*.

A few years ago it would have been considered absurd to discuss seriously the existence of such Beings. Lately, however, belief in them has been expressed by a great modern scientist; so that that which was at first perhaps only a guess of Plato's may soon be found to be in harmony with the highest conclusions of science. The lesser deities are not apotheosized men. Unlike the human race they were created directly by God, and are therefore immortal. They are enjoined to rule and pilot mortal creatures in the best and wisest manner possible, averting from them all but self-inflicted evils. To each soul there is assigned a guardian *Seinore* which takes possession of its life and continues with it after death. The character of the *Seinore* allotted is not the same for all, but is dependent upon the choice of life made by the individual. It will be observed that this relationship is so formulated as to preserve in every

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"I am impressed with the reality and activity of powerful but not almighty helpers, to whom we owe guidance and management and reasonable control."-- Sir Oliver Lodge at Birmingham University Pub. Hibbert Journal January 1912.

<sup>1</sup> Timaeus 41.

<sup>2</sup> Timaeus 42 e

<sup>3</sup> Phaedo 107 c

<sup>4</sup> Rep 620 e

way the freedom of the will. The lesser deities exercise an influence over the general direction of conduct, but do not take away our responsibility for each specific act of choice.

By this conception Plato satisfies the two main demands of religion, that Providence should be both spiritual and personal. The creatures who have thus laid upon them the duty of guiding human destiny are neither blind forces nor abstract principles. They have a clearer consciousness of the end to be desired and of the means whereby that end is to be attained than ourselves. As Beings endowed with Divine attributes they are able to call forth and to respond to every holy and gracious impulse of the soul. Moreover the fact that their influence is commensurate with life itself removes the old antithesis between the whole and the parts. The soul which believes in the truth of this doctrine need have no further doubts as to whether God answers prayer or has respect to its sacrifices. It is true of course that no proof is offered by Plato of the existence of the *Seiunes*, nor perhaps could any be offered now. But in matters of religion the need and the belief are always of themselves a sufficient proof. They find their justification not in syllogisms but in the bed-rock of human experience. The *Seiunes* are hypothetical only in the sense in which all religious truths are hypothetical. Perhaps in the near future some more rational proofs of their existence will be forthcoming. Until that time comes however we must be content to accept them on faith. To an age which could not possibly have risen to the conception of the Divine Paraclete the thought of the guiding, attendant Deities must have come with peculiar consolation.



## Chap. 6 The Divine Elements in Human Nature.

In this Chapter it is designed to shew what in Plato's opinion are the peculiar characteristics of man whereby he is distinguished from other animals, and what in consequence of these is his relation to the rest of creation. Here again the inquiry will be prosecuted only from the point of view of religion. The answers to these two questions have been already implied in what has been said as to the object of life. Plato has fixed unerringly upon belief in God as the chief glory of human nature. Herein is man by comparison with the other animals a divine being and is related in a unique manner to the Lord of the Universe. To him alone is it given to conform consciously to God's Cosmic purposes. This belief is not something erratic or accidental but was intended beforehand and provided for by God. In the *Timaeus* the creation of man is represented as being resigned into the hands of the created gods, who are bidden to imitate the divine power as it had been manifested in their own generation. But God Himself provides the divine and ruling part whereby we are enabled to pursue righteousness and to know God. The meaning which seems to underlie this division of labour is that in one aspect of his nature man has a physical and imperfect origin; in another he is fulfilling an ideal purpose which, though it is only slowly developing itself, was present potentially from the very beginning. Plato was often impelled to recognize in human character the presence of a strange element of goodness unaccountable except on the

<sup>1</sup> Protag. 322 a.

<sup>2</sup> Politicus. 271 e.

<sup>3</sup> 41 c.

Meno 99 d.

supposition of a divine inspiration. In the existence of the fine arts he seemed to find a reason for believing that the knowledge of Himself is preeminently a gift of God.

"Of all the things which a man has, next to God, his soul is the most divine and the most truly his own." In this proposition Plato expresses a fundamental truth which he never deserts in all his writings. The soul is divine because it has a divine origin, and it is most truly our own because it is that which makes us what we are. By it we are enabled to rise from earth to our kindred in heaven. It most resembles the immortal, intelligent, uniform, indissoluble, unchangeable nature of God. Logically the soul, and all the things that are akin to the soul, was created before the body. This must be so because the soul is the formative principle of our nature. There are in all of us two parts, the better and superior part which rules, and the worse and inferior part which obeys. It is the former which brings into unity the composite elements of which we are made. We should therefore always give that part the preference.

In what then does this divinity consist, and how does it manifest itself? Plato, borrowing a phrase from Homer, affirms that the soul is divine because it contains an image of God. The meaning underlying this metaphorical expression, seems to be, that the principles of reason and justice wherewith we apprehend God are already in the soul. "Every soul of man has in the way of nature beheld true being; otherwise it would not have passed into a living form." The soul not merely has knowledge of God, but its very being is made up of that knowledge. Apart from the thought of God it would not be. In the soul's endeavour to embody itself in reality are found the cause of our human form, of the world, of existence. All that is most valuable in life is



contributed by it from its own nature. Hence true education consists not as the many suppose, in putting something into the soul, but in bringing to the light what is already there.

In the *Timaeus* Plato gives a metaphysical explanation of the presence of this image. Before incarnation, he says, each soul was shown the nature of the universe and the decrees of destiny, in order that the first birth might be one and the same for all, and that no one of them should be lessened in any way by God.<sup>2</sup> This difficult passage seems to set forth two important truths. In the first place it is insisted that all men "in potentia" are equally capable of apprehending God. Morality is universal. However much we may differ from one another in other respects we all have an equal right of entrance into the kingdom of Heaven. In the second place by thus planting in every human creature the attributes of will and self-direction God gave to men a protection against His own possible arbitrariness. Man as a creator becomes in a sense equal with God. His freedom requires that God should win obedience for Himself by reason and persuasion rather than by force. These truths though they appear somewhat obvious when thus expressed are in fact not commonly met with. The obligations of the Deity to mankind seldom trouble the unspeculative Christian, and the tendency of Western theology is to bring all men to salvation by emphasis on their common sinfulness, rather than upon their common inheritance of will and reason.

In the *Republic*<sup>3</sup> Plato has laid down the general principle that if we wish to discover the true nature of the soul we must consider it not in the lowest but in the highest manifestations. "Let us see whom she

<sup>1</sup> Rep 518 c.

<sup>2</sup> Tim 41 E.

<sup>3</sup> Rep 611 d.  
Jowett's trans.

affects, and what converse she seeks in virtue of her near kindred with the immortal and eternal and divine." To him it appears that all this is summed up in the single word "philosophy". Philosophy occupied in Plato's thoughts the same relation to life as religion does in ours. By it he meant to express our consciousness of a divine principle in the world, and our conscious search after it. Consequently the proofs which he adduces in support of our divinity are rational rather than religious. They have their seat in the mind and will rather than in the emotions.

"Geometrical equality has great force both in heaven and among men." This passage may be taken as symbolic of Plato's whole attitude toward universal principles. It would be strange indeed if he who was the most brilliant and enthusiastic exponent of abstract ideas should not make the power of apprehending these the touchstone of the soul's divinity. Man is essentially a rational creature. He appears to find by his own power that which is common in all phenomena. Thus he advances from the perception of individuals to the conception of universals. Knowledge of universals is the foundation of reasoning, and reasoning is the instrument of philosophy. By this power therefore man is united with God in two respects. In the first place he is enabled to rise to the conception of God Himself; and in the second place he resembles God in so much as God is what He is by the contemplation of these same ideas. In the very act of conceiving a universal principle the mind apprehends that of which itself is the creator: that is it apprehends itself. In this it approaches most nearly to that unique operation of the Infinite mind whereby subject and object become one, where God is Himself the object of His own consciousness. It is not *unnatural* to



suppose therefore that in this resemblance the soul's divine origin is revealed.

Somewhat closely connected with this is the soul's power of perceiving relations. Apart from such a power there would have been no means of bringing under a single conception things otherwise utterly diverse. How for instance could we have perceived the ideas of equality, similarity, size, distance, which are never present to the senses, unless there were already implanted in the soul the ideas themselves? This is an important doctrine for the foundation of any ideal philosophy. Plato uses it against the materialistic philosophers of his day who would not believe in the existence of anything which they could not touch. The best example of its working seemed to him to be Geometry. On this account he recommended Geometry as the final study of those who wished to apprehend the highest truths. The value which he ascribes to the power of perceiving relations may be inferred from the fact that he has excluded from the benefits of Divine providence all who through some cause or other have lost it. "No madman or senseless person is dear to God". The peculiar respect in which the insane mind differs from the normal one is just in its inability to perceive relations.

Turning now to a more ethical aspect of the soul's nature a further proof of its divinity is found in the power of free-choice.

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J. F. Milton. Comus. "Mortals, . . .  
Love virtue; she alone is free."

<sup>1</sup> Rep 523.

<sup>2</sup> Rep 382 e.

Love virtue, she alone is free."

Rep 317 d, e.

Protag 322 a.

"What definition shall we give of that which we call the soul? What else than <sup>the</sup> motion which moves itself; for this is its peculiar possession?" Character, it has been truly said, is Destiny. In a sublime passage of the Republic Plato has freed God from ~~the~~ responsibility for man's misdeeds, because to man has been given the power of free-choice. "Virtue is free; which according as a man honours or dishonours, so he shall receive more or less of it. The issue lies in the hands of him who makes the choice. God is not responsible". In one sense, indeed, this freedom may be thought to have degraded human nature, since it has led us into sin. In another and far higher sense however it has exalted us, for by it we are enabled "to climb

"Higher than the sphery chime,"

and to render to God our conscious and willing obedience. The fact of the soul's freedom has been universally regarded as proving its divine birth. In this respect alone it is almost equal to God.

In the myth of the Protagoras Plato has said that man, on account of his kinship with God, alone of living creatures acknowledges the existence of God and has erected altars and images in His honour. This is a result of the fact that he alone possesses a moral sense of right and wrong. Man is not able to follow simply the guidance of his instincts or to give unrestrained satisfaction to his lusts, but, as often as there arises in his mind a choice between two opposing courses, he is impelled to choose the one which appears more right; or, if he disobey this, to suffer in consequence the consciousness of having sinned. The standard of good to which he refers the claims of each

\* CP Milton. Comus "Mortals,..... Plato has suggested that

Love virtue; She alone is free." Truth and of

Laws 896 a.

<sup>2</sup> Rep 617 d,e.

<sup>3</sup> Protag 322 a.



does not exist within his own will. It abides somewhere externally to himself, at one with the vast forces of nature. Its mandate is not always clear to him. Often-times it is present only as a dim shadowy something whose direction he feels he ought to obey, but which he can never sufficiently understand. "True and assured opinion about the honourable and just and good, and their opposites, whenever it is present in the soul, is a divine principle in a divine race." This principle Plato calls not inappropriately "the eternal element of the Soul." The possession of a moral sense imposes upon us an obligation of remaining true to it at all times and of honouring that part of our nature which contains it. Plato has expressed this in unmistakable language. "When a man desires to get money dishonourably, or endures to possess it not conveniently, he does not afterwards honour his soul by his giving:- nay rather he injures it more. For he sells the fairest and most valuable part of himself for a paltry sum of gold. But all the gold that is under or upon the earth is not to be given in exchange for virtue." With this we may worthily compare the great utterance of Christ: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

It is not necessary to suppose that the struggle which is suggested in the above passages always takes place. If desire were continually opposed to right there would be little chance of virtue being practised. There is a natural affinity between the highest part of the soul and Truth; and this accounts for its constant striving to realize it. "Truth is the meadow whereon the soul's wing by which it flies to Heaven is nourished." In another place Plato has suggested that there is in the soul a power or faculty of loving the truth and of

Politicals 309 c. <sup>3</sup> Laws 728 a. <sup>2</sup> Politicals 309 b. <sup>4</sup> Phaedrus 246 E.  
Philebus 58 d.

doing all things for the sake of the truth. It is exemplified logically in our inability to rest in a contradiction, and ethically in our demand that the outer and the inner man should be in harmony. It has led on the one hand to a love of knowledge for its own sake, on the other to an aversion for everything that is merely appearance.

Very much akin to the soul's love of truth is its love of the Good. As is well known Socrates carried this to the extreme of paradox, and Plato in a measure has adopted his view. "It is not in human nature voluntarily to come to those things which it believes to be evil, instead of the good." Such a doctrine, when pushed to its furthest consequences, would make deliberate wrongdoing impossible; and thus <sup>but there is a sense in which it is profoundly true.</sup> far at least it is incorrect. The human mind has a natural proneness to recognize and respond to the best, when that has been pointed out to it. Its errors of judgment, where they occur, are occasioned far more by want of knowledge than by want of will. There have always been a few things - the works of the greatest poets, for example - which have commanded the universal and immediate respect of mankind. The value of Plato's paradox consists just in its recognition of this susceptibility. "True love is a love of Beauty, and Order, temperate and harmonious." The problem of education therefore is not so much how to strengthen the will as how to impart knowledge. If only the soul be surrounded with fair sights and fair sounds it will naturally and of its own accord respond to them. A great writer has truly said that when once the world is convinced on authority that a certain object is worthy of being loved it will very soon find something to love in it; "for there is nothing else which men love than the good." One cannot but feel that in this fact lies much cause for religious optimism. The progress of humanity is not entirely at the mercy of



the incalculable elements in our nature - the will and the conscience; but by reason of the soul's love of the good we are permitted to enter at once into the rich heritage of the past and to found there-upon the conduct of the present and the anticipation of the future.

Finally, the soul is divine because ( if we may use Scriptural language to express a pagan sentiment ) it is the temple of the Holy Spirit. In the Laws Plato speaks of " a principle and a divinity that dwells in man and preserves all things, if it receive its fitting honour from those who make use of it." It is possible that in this passage Plato was thinking of the "Daimonion" of Socrates. If so, he differs somewhat from the opinion of his master who believed that his internal monitor was a rare and even unique possession. Plato does well however, in enlarging its application to all human creatures; for what Socrates possessed in a high and exceptional degree most of us possess in part. The principle referred to cannot be identified with conscience, because that has no power of itself. It might be regarded as an expression of the general truth that all things, and human nature among them, are striving unconsciously toward perfection; but this again would ignore the element of will which seems to be required besides. There is another and a better interpretation. Is it fanciful to suppose that here we have another aspect of the doctrine of the "Daimones"? Just as Christ from the point of view of the Deity is the Son, but from the point of view of man is the Spirit, so the Angels from the point of view of God are His sons, from the point of view of man an indwelling spirit. If this interpretation be correct Plato has most strangely anticipated the doctrine of the Trinity three centuries before the Incarnation. Or perhaps it would be truer to say that he has supplied

<sup>1</sup> Laws 775 E.

<sup>2</sup> Rep 496 c.

the mould into which the later teaching of Christianity was destined ultimately to cast itself?

These then are the various ways in which the divinity of the soul is revealed. Of the qualities which we have considered there is scarcely one which does not bear an intrinsic excellence in itself. In the aggregate they present a sufficiently striking appearance to justify Plato in his general belief that mankind were marked out for some great and lofty destiny. Such destiny could not have been realized unless the world had been favourable to a being possessed of these qualities. Our next enquiry therefore must be as to the relation which man bears to the world in consequence of his spiritual nature. On the whole, though passages may be cited to the contrary, Plato does not represent this relation as antagonistic. He recognized that the soul has to make its home somehow in the world and that it is dependent upon the world for its development. His unwillingness to represent the relation as perfectly friendly is due not so much to any theoretical difficulty as to his extraordinary consciousness of the actuality of things. He teaches clearly enough that God is to be found in the world no less than in the soul if only we look for him. In his manner of enunciating this doctrine he much resembles Ruskin. It will be remembered that the latter in "Modern Painters" defines the poetic imagination as that power which interprets for us the phenomena of nature in terms of the Divine attributes. Plato also, with true poetic instinct, finds the proper complement of the soul's divinity in the immutable principles of the universe "which offend not nor are offended". From this we may infer that he considered the world to be capable of a spiritual interpretation. He saw in the most materialistic truths of natural science moral lessons for the guidance



and uplifting of human life. All that is required is a conscious desire on the soul's part to find God.

But apart from the symbolic meaning of nature, which will appeal only to the most spiritually minded, the universe is favourable to man in another respect also. It <sup>serves</sup> ~~shews~~ as the material upon which Reason exercises its power, and in contact with which it finds itself. For without the stimulus which is afforded by external objects the mind would remain barren and undeveloped. Hence they are called secondary or cooperative causes to distinguish them from primary causes such as will and thought. The secondary causes, too, are open to a spiritual interpretation, though not of so ideal a character. In the *Timaeus* Plato speaks of "the higher use and purpose for which God has given them to us." He takes as an example the power of sight. "The sight in my opinion is the source of the greatest benefit to us; for had the eyes never seen the stars, and the sun, and the heavens, none of the words which we have spoken about the universe would ever have been uttered. But now the sight of day and night, and the revolution of the months and years, have given us the invention of number, and a conception of time, and the power of inquiring about the nature of the whole; and from this source we have derived philosophy, than which no greater good ever was or will be given by God to mortal man."

In so far then as the world is subject to such religious interpretation, both in its essential meaning and as an aid toward knowledge of God, the relation between it and the soul cannot be regarded as antagonistic. It may indeed be thought extremely harsh that so sensitive an entity as the soul should have been made dependent upon matter at all;

but Plato, although probably he felt this, has not expressed any opinion about it. He was doubtless wise and great enough to recognize the futility of such a sentiment, and to try as far as possible to make the best of life as he found it. It is important to remember this in view of what will be said later ~~on~~ about Plato's attitude toward mysticism. There are many elements of mysticism scattered about his writings, but they are always of the healthiest type. They shew plainly enough his consciousness of the symbolic meaning underlying reality, and of his preference for that meaning above the sensational one, but they give no support to the idea that he advocated a life of contemplation only. His whole doctrine of the soul disproves this. He believed that there was a necessary and intelligent connection between the soul and its environment: first, because the essence of soul is development; and secondly, because this development must proceed according to law and the order of destiny. But what development could there be in a life of mere contemplation? "Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary." <sup>1</sup> The element of opposition is supplied by the world. Further, though doubtless the laws of reason are logically antecedent to their manifestation in matter, yet the presence of matter seems to be simultaneous with their realization in mind. All that the mind knows about itself and about its destiny is derived from contact with experience. It would be impossible therefore for any one holding this view to believe that the soul's purposes would be best achieved by withdrawing itself wholly from the world.

\* Milton Areopagitica Laws 904 d. 1.



# Chap. 7. The Problem of Evil.

Plato, like St Paul, was painfully conscious of the existence and hatefulness of evil, and of its antagonism to God. The first he has expressed in one very pregnant sentence. "The evils of life far out number the goods." That this was his sober conviction may be inferred from the fact that in the place in which it occurs it was not necessary to the course of the argument. It would be wrong to suppose that therefore Plato was a pessimist. His mind was blest with a rare sanity and perspicacity of judgment, which would forbid him either to exaggerate or misinterpret the facts. Such a belief is quite consistent with faith in the ultimate removal of evils. Plato, indeed, owing to his peculiar doctrine of their cause, did not think that evils could ever perish; but he believed firmly in our ability to escape from them. "Evils, Theodoms, can never perish; for there must always remain something that is antagonistic to good. Of necessity, they hover round this mortal sphere and the earthly nature, having no place with God in heaven. Wherefore, also, we ought to fly away thither, and to fly thither is to become like God, as far as this is possible."<sup>2</sup> Thus, then, although evils are imperishable that is not to say that there is no escape from them. We may escape by changing our nature and our abode. In the highest form of existence there will be no degrees of comparison but everything will be superlative.

It is difficult to see why moral evil should not cease. Moral goodness, unlike natural fitness, does not depend for its existence upon the presence of its opposite. There is in fact in the passage where this idea is set forth a confusion between evil which is a negative good, and moral turpitude. The former is a property of matter, the latter of mind.

There will be no evil with God because there is finally no communion between the perfectly pure and the partially impure.<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*

Evils are of two kinds - those which arise from the progressive nature of revelation, and those which are inherent in the nature of the will. Aristotle, as is well known, has shewn that every object becomes matter or form according to the point of view from which one regards it. It is form with respect to the matter immediately below, matter with respect to the form immediately above. Hence every form, excepting the highest is capable of being regarded as matter. Such alternation of form and matter is one of the necessary forms of thought. It is not an evil in itself but inseparable from the nature of revelation. The second kind of evil might be said to be equally inseparable from the nature of the will, but since it is possible for the will to act without creating the evil it cannot be said to be equally necessary. The first is, <sup>a natural evil,</sup> unavoidable by us even if we wished; the second is a moral evil whose cause and remedy alike are within our own power. Now although this distinction is never clearly expressed or accepted by Plato it is plain that he was aware of it. In the *Sophist* he attempts to distinguish between two kinds of vice. The one, corresponding to disease of the body, is a state of moral turpitude and requires correction for its removal; the other, corresponding to deformity is called ignorance and is remedied by instruction.<sup>2</sup> It is obvious that the latter is not an evil in the same sense as the former. All men even the wisest, are necessarily ignorant of many things; and there is no one so ignorant as not to be aware of a few things. Who, then, is gifted with so fine a discernment that he can say what degree of wisdom constitutes virtue, and what degree of ignorance constitutes vice? The true test of the

<sup>1</sup> *Phaedo* 67 b.

<sup>2</sup> *Sophist* 228.



moral quality of an action is found by examining the intention of the doer. No one has expressed this more distinctly than Plato, "If a man gives a part of his property to another, or if on the other hand he takes away from another what does not belong to him, we ought not thus simply to say that that man is just or unjust; but whether he benefits or injures the other in obedience to some principle or as a result of some good intention, that is what the lawgiver must consider."

Of the evils which arise from the progressive nature of revelation acts, the first and most painful is that the soul being dependent upon the body for its existence is forced to spend a large amount of time and of labour in acquiring food for its sustenance. This prevents it from pursuing philosophy so much as it would. The evil is still further aggravated if, as is generally the case, the body is attacked by any disease. The more religion is defined in the spirit of Plato as a process of self-realization, which can be attained only by a liberal education, the more pressing becomes the question what proportion of time should be spent in bread and butter studies. The difficulty was not so great for Plato as it is for us, for he believed with Aristotle that certain classes were by nature intellectually unfitted for the highest pursuits. These therefore would naturally relieve philosophers from the trouble of earning their daily bread. He felt the limitation most keenly in so far as it interfered with mental concentration. If it had been possible he would have liked to live, not on "bread alone" but on the "Word of God" alone. For physical consciousness is a hindrance to pure thought. "All experience shows that if we would have pure knowledge of anything we must be quit of the body, and the soul in herself must behold all things in themselves." "In this present life

<sup>1</sup> Laws 862 b.

<sup>2</sup> Phaedo 66 b.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid 66 e.

I reckon that we make the nearest approach to knowledge when we have the least possible concern or interest in the body." This is a longing common to all idealistic temperaments. It finds expression in the words of Hamlet, "O that this too too solid flesh would melt, thaw and resolve itself into a dew".

A second limitation is discovered in the influence which sensation exercises over the mind and will. The feelings of desire, pleasure and pain, fear, anger are a necessary result of the perception of objects. The mind cannot gaze unmoved upon the stream of presentations which pass before it. In so far as they are perceived they become objects of desire and aversion; and the will has to decide whether they do or do not help forward its general purpose. The whole mental life being thus inseparably bound up with sensation, there is no time for clear thought or calm deliberation. As a result the will is often persuaded to acquiesce in that which the reason does not approve. So strange and tyrannical did this influence appear to the spiritual minds of Plato and St Paul that they both were led to conceive of the human soul as a dualism whose parts are essentially antagonistic to one another. Herein is justified what we said in the opening chapter that the world obscures the very image which itself has revealed. By the senses we are brought into communion with God, and by the senses we are separated from Him. The body which was intended to be the temple of the Holy Spirit oftentimes becomes instead the Charnel house of the dead.

There are many limitations attaching to the development of knowledge. Of these the greatest is that we know the particular before the universal, and we can know the universal only in and through the particular. The mind is so constituted as to be bound to believe that the knowledge

<sup>e</sup>  
Ibid 67 A.

<sup>2</sup> Tim 42. and *Corinthians* 493a.



which it possesses, however partial and fragmentary, is true; and to act always in accordance with its belief. Since experience in early years is necessarily very limited, and in later life not much more advanced, we are always liable to be led astray through ignorance. Thus it is that there appear to be many goods instead of one absolute good. Knowledge of the latter is obtained only from a survey of the whole. From the same cause arises the opposition between custom and nature. Custom is only one aspect of nature. At first the local habits of hamlet and village are right. Soon however they have to yield to the wider interests of the town; and the interests of the town to those of the nation. And it is found ultimately that even the practices of a nation are not always consistent with the good of humanity. This slow development renders the course of life change-ful and uncertain, and there does not seem to be in anything abiding truth.

Again, Spiritual knowledge can be attained only by a great effort on our part. The powers of apprehension which we possess are too clumsy to admit of our knowing God as He is. We cannot realize to ourselves all that we know and feel concerning Him. If we wish to communicate our thoughts we have to employ an image, which is but a "child of the Truth". The limitation which is thus imposed upon us makes difficult our own faith and prevents us from strengthening the faith of our friends.

The essential character of all the evils which arise from the progressive nature of revelation is their unavoidableness. It is impossible to conceive of a state of things in which they would not

<sup>1</sup> Gorg 493 a.      <sup>2</sup> Gorg 502. and Protag. 352-3.      <sup>3</sup> Gorg 483. becomes for  
<sup>4</sup> Rep 508 d.      <sup>5</sup> Rep 517 b.      <sup>6</sup> Rep 506 e.      <sup>7</sup> Rep 507 a.

be present. No human being can be held responsible for their presence. Herein they differ fundamentally from evils of the second kind which are a result of the will's inability to remain true to the right. These are evils in the true sense of the word because they are not merely avoidable but life would proceed much better without them. Yet it is Plato's supreme object in his ethical philosophy to prove that moral evil has no existence. In contradiction to the general opinion of mankind he affirms that no one ever voluntarily does anything wrong. The doctrine from the point of view of religion is so revolutionary that we may be excused for examining it at some length.

There can be no reasonable doubt that Plato believed firmly in the fact of the will's freedom. It is manifested in the whole trend of his teaching. Having the example of Socrates before his eyes he was never weary of exhorting man to try to exert their own strength, and not to drift helplessly over the ocean of life before every wind and current of opinion. By the very fact that he identified will and knowledge, he showed his confidence that if only knowledge were present volition was bound to follow. It may also be inferred indirectly from the many schemes of reward and punishment in the life hereafter which he has drawn. In all these the soul is represented as being punished or rewarded according to the character of its earthly life. In the Laws he has given an explicit statement of his belief, and at the same time has answered one of the chief objections of the Determinist. "God desired, therefore, generally that each several character should always possess and occupy a certain place and abode. But He left to our own wills the responsibility of the formation of a particular character. For we all of us become for



the most part what we are by the bent of our desires and the nature of our souls." But when once we have chosen we become subject to the eternal laws of the universe which have been fashioned in a fixed way by God. Thus Plato preserves the balance between determinism and indeterminism. The will is capable of making a volition without<sup>in</sup> certain limits. This volition will be followed by certain consequences. Its determinism consists solely in the fact that it has no power to prevent the consequences from following; unless, indeed, by another volition. Thus its apparent inability to realize its aims is due much more to ignorance of the consequences than to the determining influence of past events. It was the more easy for Plato to believe this because, as was pointed out before, he also believed that the eternal principles of the universe are more favourable for the practise of virtue than for that of vice.

From the very perception of objects arises sensation either pleasurable or the reverse, and in the effort to prolong or avoid this there is occasion for the exercise of the will. The obligation of choice is thus forced upon us by the necessities of our nature. But though such obligation is ever-present and inescapable we are not thereby deprived of our responsibility. The will is not less able to choose because it must choose. If we control our desires we shall live virtuously; if on the other hand we are controlled by them we shall live unjustly -- in either case we shall have to give account in the next life of the way in which we made our choice.

At the beginning of the present Chapter a passage<sup>2</sup> was cited in which Plato emphasized the necessity of judging the moral quality of an action by the intention of the doer. It may be taken as typical

Tim 42.

<sup>2</sup> Laws 862 b.

of his whole attitude toward things in themselves. He believed, like Hamlet, that "there is nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so". One sensation or one idea in itself is as good as another. It begins to have moral significance only when it is brought into relation with the Final Good, that is to say, with God. "God is the measure of all things". A vicious state of mind is caused therefore, not by acceding to the enjoyableness of sensation, but by believing that the objects which give the pleasure are most plain and most true.<sup>2</sup> Such a belief ascribes to each sensation a value which it does not possess. God is the standard of truth; and everything partakes more or less of truth according as it helps forward or hinders His general purpose. If therefore we allow ourselves to be dominated by a particular pleasure to the neglect of other and higher ends we become guilty of an offence against Him.

Now though theoretically all acknowledge the necessity of having some standard other than momentary desire, in fact few of us base our conduct upon so wide a principle. As often as we are brought face to face with a choice which involves a sacrifice of immediate or personal interest we <sup>almost</sup> invariably choose the lesser good. What reason can be assigned for this preference? According to Plato, it is either because the mind has never rightly apprehended the existence of the higher; or, if it has apprehended, because it has been overcome by the force of circumstances.

The word "ignorance" is used by Plato in a variety of meanings. It covers everything from complete absence of knowledge to the knowledge which is only just short of perfection. Perfect knowledge he did not think it possible for anyone to possess. Hence in this life

<sup>1</sup> Laws 862 b.

<sup>2</sup> Phaedo 83 c.

<sup>3</sup> Laws 716.



at least no one can be perfectly virtuous. The case of complete ignorance is likewise hypothetical. If a man has no *apperceptive* ground whereby to distinguish between the relative values of two objects, he will obviously be unable to choose the better; or, if he does choose it, it will be by accident and not by design. In either case he would not be held responsible for his choice. The only people who need to be considered here are those who occupy the middle ground of opinion. They have sufficient knowledge to give them confidence in choosing, but not sufficient to enable them always to choose rightly. In those cases where their mistakes are due to ignorance it is not usual to make them responsible for them. The essence of moral sin is to know the right and to do the wrong. Plato's definition of ignorance enlarged the possibilities of the former case so as entirely to exclude the possibilities of the latter. According to him, all failures were due to ignorance. No one could be held responsible for his wrongdoing because he did it involuntarily.<sup>2</sup> If one had known what was right one would have been bound to do it. In enunciating this doctrine Plato was well aware that he was running counter to the established belief. "The rest of the world are of opinion that knowledge is a principle not of strength, or of rule, or of command; their notion is that a man may have knowledge, and yet that the knowledge which is in him may be overmastered by anger, or pleasure, or pain, or love, or perhaps fear, - just as if knowledge were a slave and might be dragged about any how." On the contrary "knowledge is a noble and commanding thing, which cannot be overcome, and will not allow a man, if he only knows the difference of good and evil to do anything which is contrary to knowledge."

<sup>1</sup> Protag 357 a.<sup>2</sup> Protag 345 e.<sup>3</sup> Protag 352 a.b.

Why Plato was led to adopt this view must be sought in his psychology.

The soul is divided into three parts, the desires, the passions, and the reason. The self, which is not identical with any of these, has besides the power of free-choice. Virtuous conduct arises when the self obeys the voice of reason and controls the desires and passions. Vice on the other hand is caused by disobedience to the voice of reason. If the reason were possessed of perfect knowledge such disobedience would be impossible; in so far however as its knowledge is imperfect the self may and often does act contrary to its dictation. Unwillingness therefore to obey the higher principle is due to the limited nature of the soul. "The greatest evil to men, generally, is one which is innate in their souls, and which a man is always excusing in himself and never correcting; I mean that which is expressed in the saying 'that every man by nature is and ought to be his own friend.' Whereas the excessive love of self is in reality the source to each man of all his offences; for the lover is blinded about the beloved, so that he judges wrongly of the just, the good, and the honourable, and thinks that he ought always to prefer his own interests to the truth." The self-centered nature of the will, therefore, is the ultimate cause of its failure. In the process of creating its universe it necessarily refers all things to itself as standard. When the law of God is revealed a new standard is presented which has a higher claim upon the soul's obedience. It is inevitable that the new standard will conflict in some measure with the old. Until therefore the claim of the new is felt with sufficient force the old will be preferred.

<sup>1</sup> Laws 689 a. 902 a. 862 d.

<sup>2</sup> Laws 731 e. (Jowett)



It would seem that such an explanation excluded all moral responsibility. If sin is ignorance by what right does the law-giver punish wrongdoers? What incitement is there to moral development? In answer to the first question Plato said that punishment should be remedial. It should have for its object, not vindictive satisfaction, but the improvement of the guilty person. In answer to the second he affirmed that there was a sufficient motive for well-doing in the fact that all men necessarily did all things for the sake of the good. When once they realized that their ignorance was the barrier which withheld them from the good they would of their own accord offer themselves up for punishment:- "For it is better to be punished than not to be punished."

We turn now to the second reason which has been adduced for the will's failure. Plato quotes with approval the saying of Simonides that "man cannot help being bad when the force of circumstances overpowers him." From this point of view all the limitations which have been shewn to attach to a progressive revelation, including ignorance, may be regarded as so many hindrances to successful volition. Of these the chief is heredity. No one has any control over the mental and physical disposition which he receives from his parents. If they are good, so much the better for him; if they are bad, he is to be pitied rather than blamed. It is the character of these which has most influence in shaping the ultimate life. Plato believed that even pain has an influence over the soul; and that an ill-disposition of the body will often lead a man to evil. So much does he feel this that he urges upon all parents the duty of being wisely provident and self-restrained in the begetting of children.

Another circumstance against which it is impossible to contend is innate desire. Since this is only a specific instance of Plato's larger doctrine of necessity it will be as well perhaps to give <sup>here</sup> an account of that doctrine.

The three entities with which Plato starts out are God, the Ideas, and matter; beyond these there is no higher principle. Necessity is either the limitation which the Ideas impose upon the power of God, or the relation which matter bears to form. As was stated in a previous chapter the relation between God and the Ideas is never satisfactorily explained. We are left in doubt as to whether they are the creation of God, or whether they existed from the beginning co-eternally with Him. The Ideas supplied the pattern according to which the world was made. Every limitation therefore which is present in the world is due in the first place to them. It was a common saying in Greece that "not even God can fight against necessity." By this Plato understands such necessity as we find in the laws and properties of numbers. His explanation is quite in accordance with the teaching of modern philosophy. "There is a sense in which it is no irreverence to set limits to the divine will, and power, and to hold that there are eternal principles and laws to which even Omnipotence must submit. It is no more a limit to divine than to human power to say that there are things which are impossible to it. that, for instance, it cannot make  $2 + 2 = 6$ , or transform a circle into a square."

A similar limitation is imposed by matter. The elements of which the world is composed were all necessarily existent beforehand. They were without reason and measure, and such as everything may be expected to be when God is absent. The Creation is a result of the union of necessity and mind. Mind, the ruling power, persuaded neces-

<sup>1</sup> Politicals 272e <sup>2</sup> Rep 597c <sup>3</sup> Laws 818a <sup>4</sup> Tim 68e <sup>5</sup> Tim. 53a.b  
<sup>6</sup> Caird. Fundamental Ideas of Christianity Lect. 7.



sity to bring the greater part of created things to perfection.<sup>1</sup> In this it was only partially successful. Matter retained an inextinguishable antagonism to form.<sup>2</sup>

The necessity which is present in the cosmos reappears in the microcosm. The reason is subject to the same limitations of thought, the will to the same violent upheavals of desire. Passion, regardless of the voice of reason, hurries on the soul irresistibly to destruction. In all the soul's efforts to realize the divine character, matter acts as a restraining force. Nothing can overcome it except perfect knowledge. Since that is not attainable in the present life the utmost we can expect is that a man should be as good as possible.

We have now considered the two kinds of evil in some detail. It remains only to consider the question of responsibility. Who is to be blamed for the presence of evil in the world.? Plato, like other great ~~ether~~ religious teachers, has attempted to answer the question by imagining a state of innocence and a fall." In the beginning, when time first was, human beings were not generated from one another as they are now, but from the earth. God Himself was their shepherd, and ruled over them. Under Him were no governments or separate possessions of women and children; neither was there any violence or devouring of one another, or war or quarrel among them. For they had no property or families, but the earth gave them abundance of fruits, which grew on trees and shrubs unbidden, and were not planted by the hand of man. And they dwelt naked, and mostly in the open air; for the temperature of their seasons was mild; and they had no beds, but lay on soft couches of grass, which grew plentifully out of the earth. Moreover they had the power of holding intercourse, not only with men, but with the animal creation. But in the fulness of time the governor<sup>3</sup> of the

<sup>1</sup> Tim. 48a

<sup>2</sup> Politicus 273

universe let the helm go, and retired to his place of view; and then Fate and innate desire reversed the motion of the world. The reason of the falling off was the admixture of matter in the world; this was inherent in the primal nature, which was full of disorder, until attaining to the present cosmos. From God, the constructor, the world indeed received every good, but from a previous state came elements of violence and injustice, which, thence derived, were implanted in the animals."

A number of difficulties are presented in this explanation. The ultimate responsibility for evil is laid upon matter. God is not the Creator of matter and therefore He is not the cause of evil. But no explanation is given of the existence of matter; and no reason is assigned why God should have let go the government of the world. God is the principle which unites form and matter: is He not therefore in some measure responsible for the result? Plato himself feels the force of this objection and in the Laws has suggested another answer. He admits that since universal soul is the cause of all things it must be the cause of evil as well as of good. We must suppose therefore that there are two souls, one the author of evil and the other the author of good. The best soul takes care of the world and guides it along good paths; but when the world moves wildly and irregularly, then the evil spirit guides it. This passage is interesting as shewing how nearly Plato approached to the Scriptural doctrine. It is no more satisfactory however as an explanation, for the presence of an evil spirit is part of the problem to be solved. But perhaps it is unfair to expect from an author consistency upon such a subject. We are concerned not so much with the metaphysical as with the religious aspects of the question. From this point of view Plato's position is

<sup>1</sup> Politicus 271 (Adapted from Jowett).

<sup>2</sup> Laws 896 d



plain. The principle of Good after which the soul strives is free from every moral imperfection. " In God there is no unrighteousness at all." The evils which "make calamity of so long life " are not of His making. " God gives all things as good as possible to His children."

If God is not responsible man is still less so. He is the unhappy victim of circumstances. Sin is due either to ignorance or to the influence of the passions. The only case in which a man could be responsible for ignorance is when he had opportunity for gaining knowledge and neglected it. But in no place does Plato suggest that he was aware of this possibility. The tyrannical nature of the desires is reaffirmed in the myth of the Phaedrus. There the soul is described under the image of a charioteer and a pair of winged steeds. The charioteer drives in company with Zeus to the outer circle of the Heavens where he beholds the colourless, formless, intangible essence of true being. Owing however to the intractability of one of the steeds he is unable to keep up with the divine chariot. Thus the soul falls further and further away from God, until at length it becomes embodied in an earthly form. In this fall is typified the struggle between the spirit and the flesh. The cause of the soul's failure is inherent in the nature of matter.

We may point out in conclusion that Plato does not represent evil as wholly negative:— it serves a disciplinary purpose also. "We learn by suffering." " Some are benefited by being punished at the hands of God. The tribulations of life winnow away the transient and unworthy elements of our nature and leave bare what is eternal. Also, true evil consists not in pains or poverty or in any other such thing, but in the way in which these are overcome. It is possible to live morally





The word 'Conversion' is not used by Plato in so absolute a sense as it is by Christian writers. The latter for the most part signify a complete change from darkness into light; Plato however means by it rather a turning from the twilight to the dawn, and from the dawn to the noonday sun. The evolutionary character of his religion prohibited that there should be a violent distinction between the religious and the irreligious life. The one as part of the same continuous process develops naturally out of the other. But even in an unbroken progression there are some moments which are relatively more important than others and there must be some external or internal stimulus to ensure the continuance of the forward movement. These moments and this stimulus constitute the real starting point of the religious life. <sup>1</sup> Apart from special considerations, a constant and universal reason for belief in God is found in the value which that belief has for the individual soul. Self-development being the essence of soul it must develop according to the order of destiny. The good man no less than the artist requires a standard with reference to which he may live and work. <sup>2</sup> God as the end gives a value to the objects of life. All the poverty and emptiness of existence result simply from our inability to apprehend Him as He is. <sup>3</sup>

Again, religion, transcending the limitations of intellect and opportunity reconciles all differences by making righteousness the standard of worth. The man who acts wisely - that is, in accordance with reason, is to be preferred above all other men, of every rank and ability, even though he may not be able to read or write. Virtue is

<sup>1</sup> Laws 904 d. <sup>2</sup> Gorgias 503 e. <sup>3</sup> Rep 505. <sup>4</sup> Laws 699 c.d.

not given by money, but from virtue come money and every other good of man, public as well as private.<sup>1</sup> There is also a consciousness that God as the author of our being and the giver of all good gifts has a claim upon our obedience. Though the soul is of heavenly birth and is more honourable than the body,<sup>2</sup> yet God is to be honoured more than our own soul.<sup>3</sup> He is naturally the worthy object of a man's most serious and blessed endeavours.<sup>4</sup>

But perhaps the chief force which awakens interest in spiritual things is the conflict of faith and reason. Such conflict arises in the breast either of one who is dissatisfied with the prevailing views of the nature of the Divine Being, or of one who desires to examine for himself the grounds upon which his faith rests. There was in Plato's mind a marked distinction between conventional and personal belief in God.<sup>5</sup> He believed that up to a certain point the former is sufficient, but that there comes a time when faith must be superseded by a reasoned and systematic belief. There are many objections to be urged against this. People<sup>6</sup> say that we ought not to inquire into the Supreme God and the nature of the universe, nor busy ourselves in searching out the causes of things,<sup>7</sup> "because it is impious ; that such enquiry often succeeds in unsettling men's beliefs without putting anything better in their place; that they engender contempt for tradition and the heritage of the past; that the highest truths are incapable of being apprehended by reason.

In answer to the first objection Plato affirmed that it was impossible to worship God aright unless we understand thoroughly His nature. In answer to the third, he defined 'reverence' as a proper respect for

<sup>1</sup> Apology 30a    <sup>2</sup> Rep. 517b    <sup>3</sup> Laws 821a    <sup>4</sup> Laws 727a    <sup>5</sup> Laws 726  
<sup>6</sup> Laws 803c    <sup>7</sup> Laws 821.



what is traditional, and said that every good man ought to feel this. He did not deny that many truths, perhaps the highest, are matters of revelation rather than of faith; but still felt that we ought to seek for knowledge where that was possible.<sup>2</sup>

The main justification, however, of those who would substitute reason for faith is that both are parts of a continuous process. Faith is not concerned with one thing, reason with another; the subject matter in either case is the same. That it is so is shown in the growth of the moral consciousness. Pleasure and pain are the first perceptions of children, and these are the forms under which virtue and vice are originally present to them. By education Plato means "that training which is given by suitable habits to the first instincts of virtue in children; when pleasure, and friendship, and pain, and hatred, are rightly implanted in souls not yet capable of understanding the nature of them, and who find them, after they have attained reason, to be in harmony with her. The harmony of the soul, when perfected, is virtue."<sup>3</sup> There is little or no danger that the childrer will wander away from their former affections, for those who have been rightly educated generally become good men.<sup>4</sup>

Hardly less powerful than the conflict of faith and reason is the consciousness of sin. By it men in all ages have been impelled to sacrifice and prayer. The victim on the altar is not merely a gift, but a propitiation. Some offence has been committed against the Divine Being which can be expiated only by the shedding of blood. Paul made this the central point of his teaching: "all men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." It might be thought that conviction of sin was excluded from Plato's religion by his definition of sin as

<sup>1</sup> Laws 699 c.    <sup>2</sup> Meno 86 b.    <sup>3</sup> Laws 653 a. (Jowett)    <sup>4</sup> Laws 644 a.

ignorance. How can a man be blamed for an offence which he committed inadvertently? But irresponsibility is not inconsistent with repentance. One may feel remorse for what has been done, not because one is responsible, but because the act is hateful to God. Plato consistently represents sin as that which alienates man from God. The penalty of wrong-doing is to lose sight of the divine image implanted in nature and in the soul. Only the soul which is entirely pure at the time of departing reaches heaven. Love is the interpreter between God and man because God does not mingle with man. There is finally no communion between good and evil.

The desire for a more spiritual life is not awakened by consciousness of sin alone, without repentance. Ritual cannot expiate sin. In the Republic Plato speaks of "mendicant prophets who go to rich men's doors and persuade them that they have a power committed to them of making an atonement for their sins and those of their fathers by sacrifices and charms and games." Expiation was part of the elaborate ritual of the Mysteries. Plato does not deny that such ritual may have some efficacy; he merely suggests that sacrifice must be offered with sincerity and true repentance, if it is to have any weight with a just and holy deity. Redemption is wrought, both in this world and in the next, by pain and suffering; there is no other way in which men can be delivered from their evil.

But of all the motives which impel the soul to seek for God the most pleasing is the longing to idealize one's kindred. Plato depicts love in its highest form as a desire on the part of the lover of creating in the beloved a character like that of God. "Everyone

<sup>2</sup> Phaedo 83c <sup>3</sup> Symp 202e <sup>4</sup> Theaet 176e <sup>5</sup> Phaedo 67b <sup>6</sup> Rep. 364e <sup>7</sup> Rep. 365e  
<sup>1</sup> Gorg. 525b



chooses the object of his affections according to his character, and this he makes his god, and fashions and adorns as a sort of image which he is to fall down and worship." He desires to create in him such a nature as is possessed by God. In order to realize this he is compelled to gaze intensely on God, to think of Him, to become possessed by Him, to receive His character and ways, as far as man can participate in God. These he attributes to the beloved, and loves him all the more. And he persuades him to imitate God, and to bring himself into harmony with the divine nature. Thus love is the power which unites us not merely with one another, but also with God.

Phaedrus 252e

# Chap.9. The Way of Salvation.

The genius of Plato was so universal that one may find in his works an exposition of more than ~~the~~ one theory of life. Stoicism and Mysticism, the two philosophies which have played the largest part in the development of religion, owe their origin to him. They are alike in that both make the supreme good consist of independence of reality. "The good man is self-sufficient,--he finds his happiness in himself. Since he is least in need of other men, the loss of a son or brother, or the deprivation of fortune is to him of all men least terrible. He will bear with equanimity any misfortune of this sort which may befall him." "The soul when using the body as an instrument of perception, that is to say, when using the sense of sight or hearing or some other sense, is dragged by the body into the region of the changeable, and wanders and is confused; the world spins round her, and she is like a drunkard when under their influence. But when returning into herself she reflects; then she passes into the realm of purity, and eternity, and immortality, and unchangeableness, which are her kindred, and with them she ever lives; then she ceases from her erring ways, and being in communion with the unchanging is unchanging. These elements of Stoicism and Mysticism are not confirmed. They do not represent Plato's normal attitude toward the world. For the most part he teaches us that evil is overcome by entering more largely into life. Revelation is impossible without the aid of material supplied by the senses. "Neither agent nor patient have any absolute existence; but as they come together and generate sensations and objects of sense, the one becomes a quality and the other a percipient." God is the power



which gives knowledge to the subject and being to the object. In the meeting point of spirit and matter He is revealed.

The most important<sup>1</sup> of ethics is "how \* to distinguish the life of good and evil, and to choose always and everywhere the better life as far as possible." The choice involves a knowledge of life as a whole. The aspirant after holiness must be familiar with all the learning of his age. He must know "what is the effect of beauty when compounded with poverty or wealth, and what are the good and evil consequences of noble and humble birth, of private and humble station, of strength and weakness, of cleverness and dullness, and of all the natural and acquired gifts of the soul. Then he must look at the nature of the soul, and from the consideration of all this determine which is the better and which is the worse life."

In practice the theoretical and practical aspects of the process of salvation are inseparable, but for the purposes of exposition it will be convenient to consider them apart. We will consider the soul first as the spectator of all time and all existence, and then as the actor of it.

The standard with reference to which the good man guides his life is the coherence of the whole.<sup>2</sup> We enter into relationship with the world by means of the senses. God gave us sight "that we might behold the courses of intelligence in the heavens, and apply them to the courses of our own intelligence which are akin to them, the unperturbed to the perturbed; and that we, learning them and being partakers of the true computations of nature, might imitate the absolutely unerring courses of God and regulate our own vagaries."

<sup>1</sup> Rep 506e    <sup>2</sup> Rep 618c    ' Gorg 503e    \* Tim 47b (Jowett)    Rep. 503d, 500b

There are two kinds of causes in the world, the one divine and the other necessary. The necessary causes are the objects of sense. These have to be studied for the sake of the divine causes; for without them and when isolated from them the divine cannot be apprehended or received or in any way attained by us. By reason, which is the divine part of the soul, we advance from the perception of individuals to the conception of universals.<sup>2</sup> The study of geometry is the best preparation for this, because it leads to a knowledge of relations<sup>3</sup>; but law and art, which are the creations of mind in accordance with right reason, are not much inferior as a revelation of God.<sup>4</sup> The most universal idea is the idea of God, which is reached last of all, and then only with difficulty. In the apprehension of this the soul reaches its highest perfection<sup>5</sup> intellectually and morally.

Plato's account of the way of Salvation on its theoretical side is chiefly remarkable for the absence of conditions. There is no barrier of sin which would prevent the soul from turning to God. Ignorance is expiated by the very act of conversion. "The man who is earnest in the love of knowledge and true wisdom necessarily becomes immortal and is pre-eminently happy." There is no elaborate ritual to be observed. Religion is not something apart from the life of every-day, but that same life raised to a higher level. So too the means of grace are in no way mysterious or exceptional. All that is required is comprehended in a liberal education. The material whereon the mind must work is drawn from the ordinary appearance of the external world. The

<sup>1</sup> Tim 68e   <sup>2</sup> Phaedrus 249c   <sup>3</sup> Rep. 523   <sup>4</sup> Laws 890d   <sup>5</sup> Rep. 505   <sup>6</sup> Rep. 508d, 500b  
<sup>7</sup> Tim. 90b



soul is prevented, if prevented at all, only by mental or physical weakness.

It is erroneous to suppose that Plato advocated a life of contemplation only. The pragmatic elements of his teaching are as numerous as the mystical. Doubtless he felt with all the poignancy of a sensitive nature the drawbacks of the present life, but he never allowed his feelings to interfere with his sense of duty. As long as he was in the world he fulfilled the obligations which earthly existence brings. There is no necessary opposition between concrete and abstract knowledge. In so far as they are formed out of the same stuff they must have a common purpose. They help one another by their mutual correction. The further the abstract is removed from the concrete the more unreal does it become. The most abstract sciences are not always the most exact. Again, conceptual knowledge is not always attainable even where it is desirable. Religion is based for the most part upon sub-conscious instinct. Few minds have a metaphysical reach sufficiently great to enable them to grasp the principle of things. If in early years the instincts have been rightly trained there will be no need of a change of conduct when reason develops. The concretely lovely will be the abstractly lovely, the concretely true the abstractly true. Nor for these who have attained a knowledge of principles is there any finality in such attainment. Each principle becomes in its turn the concrete material of a yet wider abstraction. The soul is always living in a world partly actual, partly ideal. The opposition is not necessarily between the body and the spirit; it may be between a more and a less imperfect spiritual state. The ideal state is one in which there is no-

-thing further to be desired ;but that is found only in a knowledge of the whole.

In adjusting the relations between soul and body Plato always laid the emphasis on soul. He believed that spiritual excellence was a greater dynamic for good than physical excellence. Nevertheless he condemns excessive cultivation of the mind at the expense of the body." When a weaker or lesser frame is the vehicle of a great and mighty soul, or conversely, when they are united in the opposite way, then the whole being is not fair, for it is defective in the most important of all symmetries ;but the fair mind in the fair body will be the fairest of all sights to him who has the seeing eye. An impassioned soul which is more powerful than the body convulses and disorders the whole nature of man ;and one that is too eager in the pursuit of knowledge wastes itself away. We should not move the body without the soul, or the soul without the body. The mathematician or anyone else who devotes himself to some intellectual pursuit must allow his body to have motion also and practice gymnastics; and he who would train the limbs of his body should impart to them the motions of the soul, and should practise music and all philosophy, if he would be called truly fair and truly good." In the <sup>2</sup>Philebus the "true" pleasures which arise from temperance and health are described as "the handmaidens and inseparable attendants of virtue."

Speculative knowledge must be brought to the test of reality in order that its genuineness may be discovered. Plato, like Milton,

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\* "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloister'd vertue, unexercis'd and unbreath'd, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortall garland is to be run for not without dust and heat." Areopagitica.



did not believe in a "cloister'd vertue". The man who would be truly courageous must begin by taking up arms against his own pleasures and by overcoming them; for "if he be unpractised in such conflicts he will not be half the man he might have been in respect of virtue". Perfect temperance is to be attained only by him "who has fought with the shameless and unrighteous temptations of his desires and lusts, and conquered them in earnest and in play, in word and in deed."

The philosopher is not to be allowed to remain in mere contemplation of the eternal ideas. Having received the best education which the state can provide he must use it for practical purposes. His aim should be to create in his fellow-men a character consistent with the image of God which is revealed in the universe. In order to achieve this he will "look at justice and beauty and temperance as they are in nature, and again at the corresponding quality in mankind, and will inlay the true human image which is, as it were, the 'form and likeness of God.' One feature he will erase, and another he will inscribe, until he has made the ways of men, as far as possible, agreeable to the ways of God."

There is no direct communion between God and the soul. The purity of the Divine nature shrinks from association with matter. So long as the soul is enshrined in mortal flesh it must employ indirect means of communion. The three ways open to it are prayer, revelation and worship.

Socrates believed that prayers should be expressed in general terms.<sup>5</sup> Since God knows what we have need of before we ask Him, there is no need for us to pray for particular things. It is probable that Plato shared his master's view, for in the Phaedrus he has put into his

<sup>1</sup> Laws 647 d. <sup>2</sup> Rep 519 d,e. <sup>3</sup> Rep 561 c. <sup>4</sup> Symp 203 a. <sup>5</sup> Xenophon Mem. 1.9.

mouth a prayer agreeable to this conception. "Beloved Pan, and all ye other Gods who haunt this place, give me beauty in the inward soul; and may the outward and inward man be in accord. May I reckon the wise to be wealthy, and may I have so much gold as only the temperate can bear." Plato did not think that prayers for the dead were of much avail. "Not much can be done in the way of helping a man after he is dead."

Supernatural truth is conveyed to men by inspiration. There is a madness which is the special gift of Heaven, and the source of the chiefest blessings among men. Prophecy is a madness, and the prophetess at Delphi, and the priestesses of Dodona, when distraught, have conferred great benefits upon Hellas." Plato believed also in the inspiration of art. "There is a third kind of madness, which is a possession of the Muses; this enters into a delicate and virgin soul, and there inspiring frenzy, awakens lyric and all other numbers; with these adorning the myriad actions of ancient heroes for the instruction of posterity." Art which does not express immortal truths is not divine. "A false poet has no place in God."

Sacrifices and hymns of praise may be offered up to the Deity.\* "For a good man to sacrifice to God and to hold converse with Him is the best and noblest of all things, and most conducive to a happy life." But they must be offered with sincerity and true repentance. God is not moved by the sacrifices of a bad man. In the eternal conflict between good and evil He is our ally on the side of good. He would not for the sake of a bribe relinquish his proper task. "That is as if wolves might be supposed to toss a por-

\* Phaedrus 279b (Jowett)    \* Laws 959b    \* Phaedrus 244a    \* Phaedrus 245a  
 \* Rep 382d    \* Laws 716d



tion of their prey to the dogs, and they, mollified by the gift, suffered them to tear the sheep." Since in the Phaedrus, Love is said to be the interpreter between God and man, we may infer that Plato believed with the prophet that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

Plato's dialogues have been called "the Bible of the Educated." If by this be meant that his religion has an intellectual cast, the statement is perfectly true. Knowledge is for him the "panacea of panaceas," the sovereign remedy of all ills. He rightly felt that character requires education and opportunity for its development. Nevertheless his religion is not confined to any particular class. In two respects it is universally applicable, first because the power of attaining to God is already in the soul; and secondly, because the intention of the will, not intellectual knowledge, is made the basis of righteousness.

Laws 905d- 907b

Curtias 106 b

The most materialistic argument is made by Plato that we ought to live any life which would give us the greatest pleasure as well as in this. The possibility of an immortal life is proved by the existence of higher powers which point us to the divine than our own.

Conception and generation are a principle of immortality in the mortal creature. In beginning offspring we have the desire of becoming as the gods, and representing our immortal. The only condition is that the soul shall be as true. Thus immortality is

What should be our attitude toward such questions as the immortality of the soul Plato tells us in the *Phaedo*. "I am well aware," he says, how very hard or almost impossible is the attainment of any certainty about questions such as these in the present life. And yet I should deem him a coward who did not prove what is said about them to the uttermost, or whose heart failed him before he had examined them on every side. For he should persevere until he has attained one of two things: either he should discover or learn the truth about them, or, if this is impossible, I would have him take the best and most irrefragable of human notions, and let this be the raft on which he sails through life - not without risk, as I admit, if he cannot find some word of God, which will more surely and safely carry him."

The progressive nature of revelation involves the idea of continued personal existence. Just as in the beginning of life the soul finds itself related in some mysterious way to the past, so at the end it feels that its experience has some reference to the future.

The most materialistic argument is "unable to show that we ought to live any life which does not profit in another world as well as in this." The possibility of an intermediate state is proved by the existence of higher creatures whose powers are more akin to the divine than our own.

"Conception and generation are a principle of immortality in the mortal creature." In begetting offspring men shew their desire of becoming as far as possible everlasting and immortal. The only condition is that the birth shall be in beauty. Thus immortality is

<sup>1</sup> *Phaedo* 85b.c (Jowett) <sup>2</sup> *Gorg* 527a <sup>3</sup> *Symp* 202e <sup>4</sup> *Symp* 206c



identified with aspiration after God.

The principle of change involves a continuance of the principle of change. One form of existence cannot persistently be the end or else the world would speedily cease to exist. "If there were no compensation of sleeping and waking, the story of the sleeping Endymion would in the end have no meaning, because all things would be asleep too, and he would not be thought of. In like manner if all things which partook of life were to die, and after they were dead remained in the form of death, all would at last die, and nothing would be alive." Plato failed to see that there is no guarantee that in this process of change personal identity will be preserved.

The immortality of the soul is proved by its power of self-movement. The creative act of the will resembles the creative act of God. It is a spiritual force utterly unlike any of the forces of nature. They come into being by a certain disposition of elements and, when that disposition is altered, cease to be. But the power of the will remains the same through all changes of time and space. Being a part of the Divine nature it has no beginning and no ending.

No physical force can affect the soul, and it is manifest that no moral force destroys it. "Even the cutting up of the body into the minutest pieces does not destroy the soul." The only <sup>evil</sup> which has any effect upon it is unrighteousness; but that does not lessen it in any way. A bad man is as much a separate entity as a good one. Hence we conclude that the soul is indestructible.

The soul is the formative principle which in spite of changes of organism and experience preserves our individuality in this life and in the next. "A man is the called the same, but in the short interval

<sup>1</sup>Phaedo 73 b

<sup>2</sup>Phaedrus 245 c

<sup>3</sup>Rep. 611 a

which elapses between youth and age, he is undergoing a perpetual process of loss and reparation -- hair, flesh, bones, blood and the whole body are always changing. So too habits, tempers, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains, fears, never remain the same in any one of us, but are always coming and going." "What makes each one of us to be what we are is only the soul." Death is the separation of two things soul and body; - this, and nothing else. "After they are separated they retain their several characteristics. The body has the same nature and ways and affections; - he who by nature or training or both, was a tall man while he was alive, will remain as he was, after he is dead; and the fat man will remain fat; and so on. And I should infer that this is equally true of the soul." It is necessary for the soul to pass into the next life in order that it may give account of itself to God and fulfil its destiny. The punishment and rewards which it receives, and the choice of another life which it has to make, are determined by its individual characteristics.

Finally, the religious conscience demands that the anomalies of this life should be set right in another. "If only death had been the end of all the wicked would have had a good bargain in dying, for they would have been happily quit not only of their body, but of their own evil together with their souls." But as it is, Plato has good hope "that there is yet something remaining for the dead, and as has been said of old, some far better thing for the good than for the evil."

The future is hidden from our sight that the fear of punishment

<sup>1</sup> Symp. 207 e      <sup>2</sup> Gorg. 524 b      <sup>3</sup> Phaedo 107e, 113e.      <sup>7</sup> Phaedo 63 c  
<sup>2</sup> Laws 959 a      <sup>4</sup> Laws 959 c      <sup>6</sup> Phaedo 107 d



may not be the motive of righteousness. The ultimate reason for doing right is the pleasure of a good conscience. Nevertheless rewards and punishments are introduced to adjust the anomalies of life.<sup>2</sup> There is a necessary connection between the character of the soul in the present life and its position in the scale of existence in the next. The good rise in the scale of existence, the bad descend. "O youth or young man who fancy you are neglected by God know that if you become worse you shall go to the worse souls, or if better to the better, and in every succession of life and death you will do and suffer what like may fitly suffer at the hands of like.<sup>3</sup>

'For that is the justice of the Gods who inhabit heaven.'<sup>4</sup>

The punishment which overtakes evil-doers is spiritual rather than physical. By reason of their evil deeds they have become so corrupt in character that no pure person will associate with them. They lead a life answering to the godless and wretched pattern they have set themselves.<sup>5</sup> If the soul be impure and have done impure deeds, or been concerned in foul murders or other crimes which are the brothers of these -- from that soul every one flees and turns away; no one will be her companion, no one her guide, but alone she wanders in extremity of evil until certain times are fulfilled, and when they are fulfilled, she is borne irresistibly to her own fitting habitation.<sup>6</sup>

In the next life as in this redemption is wrought by pains and suffering.<sup>7</sup> God's forgiveness of sinners depends upon the forgiveness which they receive from those whom they have offended. At the end of the appointed time "they lift up their voices and call upon

<sup>1</sup>Gorg. 523 e    <sup>2</sup>Laws 904e    <sup>3</sup>Theaet 176e

<sup>4</sup>Gorg. 525 b

<sup>5</sup>Gorg. 522d523    <sup>6</sup>Hom Odyss 19 - 43

<sup>7</sup>Phaedo 108 b

the victims whom they have slain or wronged to have pity on them<sup>85</sup> and to receive them. And if they prevail, then they come forth also and cease from their troubles; but if not, they are carried back again into Tartarus until they obtained mercy from those whom they have wronged." Thus the great law obtains in Heaven as on earth that we shall be forgiven as we forgive those that trespass against us.

The reward of the righteous is to come to that to which they are most akin - to the divine and immortal and rational. They are released from the folly and errors of men, from fears and passions and all other human ills; and, if they are perfectly pure, live for ever with God.

An interesting problem is raised by the question what will happen to children who die as soon as they are born. It is an essential part of the Platonic religion that opportunity for development should be given in this life. Those therefore who by a premature death are deprived of the advantages of living are naturally incapable of entering into a more spiritual existence. Plato was aware of the problem, but mentions it only to leave it unanswered. The interpreter who led him through the under-world told him about that as about other things, but what he said was "not worth repeating".

The character of the future life is not regarded by Plato as being wholly disparate from the present, but rather as a more idealized form of it. In his description of Heaven there are many expressions which remind us strangely of the Book of Revelations. "In that fair region everything that grows - trees and flowers and fruits - are fairer than they are here; and there are hills, and stones in them in a like degree smoother and more transparent than our emeralds and sardonyxes and

<sup>1</sup> Phaedo 114 b.

<sup>2</sup> Phaedo 81a, 82c.

<sup>3</sup> Rep 615 c.



jaspers; for there all the stones are like our precious stones, and fairer still. They are the jewels of the upper earth, which also shines with gold and silver and the like; and they are visible to sight and are large and abundant in every region of the earth, and blessed is he who sees them. And the temperament of the seasons is such that the inhabitants of the place have no disease, and live much longer than we do, and have sight and hearing and smell, and all the other senses, in far greater perfection. And there they have temples and sacred places in which God really dwells, and they hear His voice, and receive His answer, and are conscious of Him and hold converse with Him." Plato does not claim that this account is literally true: it is only an approximation to the truth. "I do not mean to affirm that the description which I have given of the soul and her mansions is exactly true - a wise man would hardly say that. But I do say that, inasmuch as the soul is shown to be immortal, one may venture to think, not improperly or unworthily, that something of the kind is true."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Phaedo 110 d.

<sup>2</sup>Phaedo 114 d.

# Excursus on Plato's use of the word θεός.

The word θεός has in all cases been translated "God" irrespective of number. The only exception is a quotation from Homer. My reason for doing so was partly that the work might be more uniform and partly because I have been unable to discover any difference in Plato's use of the singular and plural. In going through the dialogues I noted every instance in which the word θεός occurs. The number of instances of the four forms in each dialogue is as follows:

	θεός	ο θεός	θεοί	οἱ θεοί
Lysis	2	1	1	-
Laches	2	-	1	1
Charmides	1	3	-	-
Apology	2	22	24	1
Crito	-	1	1	1
Euthyphro	-	-	21	34
Euthydemus	1	-	4	3
Protagoras	3	2	4	1
Meno	-	1	9	-
Gorgias	1	2	33	3
Symposium	15	12	33	12
Phaedo	4	8	10	4
Republic	24	26	71	16
Phaedrus	18	7	18	5
Cratylus	4	12	10	15
Theaetetus	7	3	10	-
Parmenides	1	3	1	-
Sophist	7	2	3	-
Politicus	7	4	5	-
Philebus	3	2	10	4
Timaeus	18	20	21	5
Critias	2	7	10	1
Laws	64	44	193	62
Totals	186	182	493	168

Grand Total 1029



Grand Total 1029

This list does not include  $\eta^c \theta\epsilon\acute{o}s$  which occurs a few times in the Timaeus.

With the exception of  $o\iota^c \theta\epsilon\acute{o}\iota$ , which is generally used with reference to particular gods, the singular, with and without the article, and plural seem to be used interchangeably. I would ask the reader to compare the use of  $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}s$  and  $\delta^c \theta\epsilon\acute{o}s$  in the Timaeus 38c, 53b, 47b.c. Laws 716c; of  $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}s$  and  $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\iota$  in Timaeus 27b.c; of  $\delta^c \theta\epsilon\acute{o}s$  and  $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\iota$  in Laws 900e. 901a; of  $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}s$ ,  $\delta^c \theta\epsilon\acute{o}s$  and  $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\iota$  in Timaeus 47b.c Parmenides 134d.

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