IV.—THE ETHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE IDEA THEORY (I.).

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The Idea theory of Plato when it has not been reduced to a mere logical doctrine faultily expressed has generally been regarded as the strange aberration of a mind dominated by abstract notions. The value and the meaning of the theory has been greatly obscured in consequence. We generally approach the theory from the logical side, and forget that Plato was from first to last, from the *Laches* to the *Laws*, primarily an ethical thinker. To ethical thought a fact finds its explanation not in its relation to a system of efficient causes but in its relation to a culminating purpose. Plato's thought is fundamentally teleological: and if we approach it from the ethical point of view most of the difficulties vanish which are thought to beset it, and in particular the Idea theory reveals itself as the first really masterly attempt to solve the ultimate problem of philosophy. In this and a succeeding paper I shall attempt to show how a perception of the fundamentally ethical quality of Plato's thought explains the rise, the development, and the modification of his Idea theory.

Everyone must grant that a teleological explanation, when and if possible, is the fullest and ultimate explanation. The only causes we can really be said to know are the final causes of our own conscious activity. As soon as we pass from final to efficient causes our difficulties begin, for we have to ask—and cannot answer—how the final cause is itself the efficient cause of the first member in the chain of efficient causes to which it is prior. Because we thus fail to relate the two principles we can never outside the experience of our own activity deduce the presence of the final from the presence of the efficient cause. No "argument from design" can ever be more than probable, because design itself can never be demonstrated. Hence science whose nature it is to seek certitude will have nothing to do with teleology. It is right for science to reject it, but not to deny the ultimate value of such an explanation were it possible. Where it is possible,

i.e. in the experience of our own activity, it is at once manifestly the fullest explanation. In fact science to secure her partial explanation has to forego forever the full understanding of what she seeks to explain. A fact, and more particularly a process, is only truly known when its relation to a purpose is known, and even a denial of purpose, which equally with its affirmation is beyond science, becomes a form of explanation inasmuch as it is an answer to this necessary question.

It is just the necessary questions beyond the scope of science that philosophy considers, and certainly Plato believed that for knowledge the teleological explanation is ultimate. It is quite mistaken to regard him as a philosopher to whom the ethical is a secondary consideration, to whom "ethics, politics, logic, physics are so many forms of applied metaphysics".[1] On the contrary, the metaphysical theories of his predecessors and the logical concepts he himself helped to develop are rather his instruments or means for the solution of the problem of speculative ethics, poor enough instruments at first for so gifted a mind, but becoming finer and finer in his hands, themselves gradually shaped in the progress of the work they are meant to accomplish.[2] Consider *e.g.* how in the *Meno* the important logical distinction of knowledge and opinion arises out of the ethical question, and is introduced in order to solve it. There seems no reason to regard the ethical starting-point in this and so many other dialogues as merely a literary introduction. If we take it for what it purports to be many difficulties are avoided.

One further presupposition must be made. It is no longer possible to deny a development in Platonic theory from period to period, and therefore to understand it we must presume a certain order of the dialogues. The following chronological facts, which seem sufficiently established, will be here assumed,—(1) that the small "Socratic" dialogues are earliest; (2) that the *Symposium* is earlier than the *Phædo* and that both are earlier than the *Republic;* (3) that the "dialectical" dialogues, *Thæetetus*, *Parmenides*, *Philebus*, *Sophist*, are later than the *Republic;* (4) that the *Timæus* and *Laws* fall in the last period.

Two seemingly inconsistent tendencies are characteristic of deeply ethical natures. (1) They insist on a certain direc-

[1] R. D. Archer-Hind's *Introduction to the Phædo.*

[2] *Cf. Philebus*, 23 C, where in a dialogue that is essentially one of reconstruction Plato talks of "requiring weapons of another make from those he has used before, tho' some of the old ones will do".

tion of one's being, toward the good and away from the evil that is in the world, an insistence on the goodness of the good which derives half its strength of appeal from the implied acknowledgment that evil too is a real thing. (2) Yet they tend ultimately to deny the very existence of evil, and to make the good not only the supreme *ought* but also the absolute *is*. Such a type of mind will at the end of an essentially teleological system come to deny teleology altogether. For purpose, the differentia of the ethical idea, in the necessity for its realisation implies a present imperfection, and, more than imperfection, it implies duality. In religion similarly it would almost seem as if a man can hardly be in earnest about God unless he believe also in the devil. So the ethical system moving, as all systems strive to do, towards monism moves towards self-destruction.

Plato began by making the good *one*, this is the work of the early dialogues,—and then he made it *all*. As a disciple of Socrates he followed the method of concepts, but as a fundamentally ethical thinker he transformed—where too he may simply have followed Socrates—a logical into an ethical ideal. In doing so he took into account only one side of that logical doctrine. It was a method of saving reality in a world where else it would seem that "all things leak like a pot" (*Crat.*, 440 C), and its importance to Plato was that it saved those things which mattered. Plato's first thought was to save the reality of the good, and for the present he was heedless that his method of concepts must preserve equally that of evil also. The ethical claim is primarily for the security of the good: while it must admit the present existence of evil, it denies its right to existence and postulates the possibility of its final annihilation. But the good must be eternal. "The good," said Epicharmus, "is a thing-in-itself."[1]

Plato therefore asked: "Tell me whether there is or is not any absolute beauty or good, or any other absolute existence?" (*Crat.*, 439 C). In putting the question in this form Plato is not thinking merely of the reality and stability assured by a system of concepts. The ethical universal is clearly to him something more than any other. It has an attractiveness for and a claim[2] on the knower of it, making the relation

[1] τό γα
ἀγαθόν τι πρᾶγμ' εἶμεν καθ' αὑθ' : ὅστις δέ κα
εἰδῇ μαθὼν τᾶν', ἀγαθὸς ἤδη γίνεται.

[2] The Greeks, more loyal to life than we, preferred to see in the good the attractive rather than the imperative, but both aspects of the ethical idea, its attractiveness and its bindingness, the good as eternal law and the good as eternal source of satisfaction, presuppose this quality of, so to speak, *felt* independence.

between knower and known seem almost reciprocal, implying that they are indeed objects of knowledge, permanent realities answering to the permanence of mind, as distinct from the ever-changing and therefore unknowable objects of sense.

This is the starting-point of the Idea theory of the *Symposium*. Here the good appears under its form of beauty, under the form *i.e.* which reveals most clearly its quality of attractiveness, and to it there answers love, the generic name for all attraction. "There is nothing men love except the good, is there?' 'No, certainly,' I should say, 'there is nothing.' 'Then,' she said, 'it is the simple truth that men love the good" (*Sym.*, 206 A). The important fact is that the good is loved for itself. We desire some things because they fall inside other purposes or schemes—they are rendered attractive because they fit in, a new item of knowledge, for example, that gives completeness to knowledge already possessed—but in contradistinction to these the beautiful or good has an immediate, even abrupt, attraction which gives it a sense of greater objectivity, and it is just this quality which made the Idea theory psychologically possible. No concepts can be simply "creations" of the mind, but ethical concepts least of all.

Once this foothole in reality has been found, logic comes to the aid of the ethical claim. There are logical grounds for regarding these concepts of beauty and goodness as fundamental. It might be said :—

(1) Other universals only cover a part of the nature of that thing to which they are applied. What is white is much else besides that bears no relation to whiteness. But 'beautiful' and 'good' (taking 'beauty' (*κάλλος*) in that extended meaning it has in the *Symposium*, as applying to the internal as well as the external nature, so that we can speak of the beauty of holiness or of goodness itself) are concepts which determine the whole nature. So far as they do not it is because there is contradiction in that nature, *i.e.* because it has in it that opposite which is the only limitation of the good. An object may hold not-white attributes without any diminution of its whiteness, but can it hold not-good attributes without having its goodness thereby limited or modified? Just as beauty in its ordinary acceptation comprehends all the external character of an object, so the beauty that is called goodness, if the term is applicable to anything without limitation, must comprehend its whole nature.

And we can go further. Suppose we take any beautiful material thing, a statue or a picture, it might be held that a single particular of that thing, a single feature of the statue,

a ray of light and shade in the picture, is potentially determinant of the whole, so far as that whole is adequate to the conception of beauty. (True, we cannot deduce the whole from the part, but then we have always in these matters to accept approximation and we recognise that our idea of beauty is imperfect no less than the object; as the artistic sense grows, more and more determinations would be ruled out as incongruous, thus suggesting the possibility of one unique perfection.) Given a starting-point of sense, the single conception of beauty may determine what the unity of the whole should be, so that any beautiful object, in so far as that unity is realised in it, is simply a particular embodiment of the one beauty. Its beauty is individual, true, but this individuality can be regarded as simply the limit set on the universal beauty when it is forced to submit to empiric laws, it may be the necessary particular way in which beauty appears under certain conditions of sense. And just as the beauty in all parts of any object is one, so is the beauty of all objects one.

This conception underlies the account in the *Symposium* of the soul's progress towards Beauty, as it moves up from particulars to the Idea. It is really a progress in knowledge, in the knowing of what we are all the time seeking. We desire the thing, the phenomenon, because it is an embodiment of beauty; if we only knew, therefore, it is the beauty manifested through it, the Idea of beauty, that we really desire. We seek without knowledge, not knowing even what it is we seek. This knowledge is the revelation of the Idea, and the nature therein revealed is "beauty absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting, without diminution and without increase, or any change, in which participate the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things".[1] Such a nature is not "in the likeness of a face or hands or any other part of the bodily frame, or in any form of speech or knowledge, or existing in any other being, as for example, in an animal, or in heaven or in earth or in any other place". This assertion of the *ὑπερουσιότης* (to use a scholastic expression) of the good is very important. The essential, primary, Idea is to Plato *ὑπερούσιον*, above substance, the maker of realities, the disposer of substance. This is no mere hyperbole. Plato's Idea in the *Symposium* is beyond what we mean by substance, and the difficulties of the Idea theory only begin when Ideas cease to be *ὑπερούσια*.[2]

[1] Here for the sake of accuracy I modify Jowett's translation, which I use for the various quotations from Plato.

[2] Lutoslawski and Shorey maintain that the superiority of the good to substance, *i.e.* material substance, cannot be taken literally, whereas in

(2) We know things partly under concepts which cover —or mean—part of their nature, wholly under those which cover the whole. In fact we can only be said to know a thing in so far as it is comprehended under one concept. But the good appears as the all-comprehensive concept, and therefore the knowledge of the good is the completest knowledge of reality.

In the *Phædo* this point of view has considerably developed. The question raised by Socrates, "Must not true existence be revealed to the soul in thought, if at all?" (*Phædo*, 65 C) is immediately particularised in the form, "Is there or is there not an absolute justice . . . and an absolute beauty and absolute good?" This identification of the good with the true was to carry Plato very far. The ethical motive which at first merely guided in the *direction* of the good, other ways being possible for the soul, now leads step by step to the denial of any reality but that object of study.

At the close of the *Symposium* two ways of development remained open. (1) Plato might have retained the one all-comprehensive Idea. Just as he had found the unity of the virtues in knowledge, so he might have found the unity of knowledge in the good. He might have limited the doctrine to the single Idea of the good, including thereunder whatever can be regarded as giving an absolute value to things, their beauty or desirableness. (2) He might extend the doctrine to include other Ideas than that of the good. Such an extension would weaken the original teleological character of the system, but on the other hand the logical argument for the Idea of good, the argument from universals, held equally for other Ideas. One further type of concepts in particular fascinated Plato, those of mathematical science. Not only did these illustrate excellently the higher perfection of thought-object over sense-object (as Plato had already shown in the *Meno*), a doctrine essential to the Idea theory, but there was also a very important precedent in the number philosophy of the Pythagoreans.

Plato therefore was led to extend the sphere of Ideas, and in the *Phædo* another class of Ideas besides the ethical, *viz.*, the mathematical, make their appearance. It is true that the Ideas of beauty and goodness are still those most insisted

fact this superiority is not only quite intelligible but is necessary for the Platonic scheme; the concept of good is prior to every other, including that of substance;—logically substance is prior to attribute, but ethically the comprehensive attribute of good is prior to substance. (We must remember also that Ideas of attributes are no less self-existent than Ideas of substances.) The great source of confusion in the Idea theory is that it does not distinguish logical from ethical presuppositions.

upon; when the question is one as to the nature of reality they remain in the foreground (*cf.* 77 A: "For there is nothing which to my mind is so patent as that beauty, goodness, and the other notions of which you were just now speaking, have a most real and absolute existence"), but those other Ideas begin to claim a place in reality also (*cf.* 78 D), though the difficulties they bring with them have not yet appeared. The Idea of the good is still the principle of explanation, and thus though no longer alone is exalted above all other Ideas.

This is clearly expressed in the famous autobiographical passage of the *Phædo* (97 C *sqq.*), a passage of very great importance for the interpretation of Plato. Unfortunately, this passage itself requires interpretation, more than one view of its meaning being possible. The interpretations generally offered seem to me either logically inconsistent or linguistically unsound, and this must be my excuse for dwelling on this section at some length.

Socrates has been relating his ineffectual attempts to master natural science, the problems of physics and physiology. He declares the subject fascinated and yet bewildered him. All this talk of hot and cold principles controlling growth and decay drove out of his head other and self-evident facts, *e.g.* that growth is in man the result of certain (consciously performed) actions, *viz.* eating and drinking. His bewilderment led him to conclude that he had no natural capacity for this study, and indeed leaving natural science out of the question he found in the most ordinary facts of perception much to perplex him.

"Then I heard some one reading, as he said, from a book of Anaxagoras, that mind was the disposer and cause of all, and I was delighted at this notion, which appeared quite admirable, and I said to myself: If mind is the disposer, mind will dispose all for the best, and put each particular in the best place; and I argued that if any one desired to find out the cause of the generation or destruction or existence of anything, he must find out what state of being or doing or suffering was best for that thing, and therefore a man had only to consider the best for himself and others, and then he would also know the worse, since the same science comprehended both. And I rejoiced to think that I had found in Anaxagoras a teacher of the causes of existence such as I desired, and I imagined that he would tell me first whether the earth is flat or round; and whichever was true, he would proceed to explain the cause and the necessity of this being so, and then he would teach me the nature of the best, and show that this was best; and if he said that the earth was in the

centre, he would further explain that this position was for the best, and I should be satisfied with the explanation given, and not want any other sort of cause" (97 C-E).

Of this hope he was sadly disappointed on examining the system of Anaxagoras. That philosopher forsook mind altogether, and instead of explaining the reason that is in things if mind has ordered and disposed them, he had "recourse to air, and ether, and water, and other eccentricities". Anaxagoras like the rest failed to distinguish cause (*τὸ αἴτιον τῷ ὄντι*) from condition (*ἐκεῖνο ἄνευ οὗ τὸ αἴτιον οὐκ ἄν ποτ' εἴη αἴτιον*). "And thus one man makes a vortex all round, and steadies the earth by the heaven; another gives the air as a support to the earth, which is a sort of broad trough. Any power which in arranging them as they are arranges them for the best never enters into their minds; and instead of finding any superior strength in it, they rather expect to discover another Atlas of the world who is stronger and more everlasting and more containing than the good; of the obligatory and containing power of the good they think nothing; and yet this is the principle which I would fain learn if any one would teach me" (99 B).

Socrates himself has also failed in this pursuit, and has had to follow a second-best method (*τὸν δεύτερον πλοῦν*). This is explained in the following passage: *ἔδοξε τοίνυν μοι μετὰ ταῦτα, ἐπειδὴ ἀπείρηκα τὰ ὄντα σκοπῶν, δεῖν εὐλαβηθῆναι, μὴ πάθοιμι, ὅπερ οἱ τὸν ἥλιον ἐκλείποντα θεωροῦντες καὶ σκοπούμενοι· διαφθείρονται γάρ που ἔνιοι τὰ ὄμματα, ἐὰν μὴ ἐν ὕδατι ἢ τινι τοιούτῳ σκοπῶνται τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ. τοιοῦτόν τι καὶ ἐγὼ διενοήθην, καὶ ἔδεισα, μὴ παντάπασι τὴν ψυχὴν τυφλωθείην βλέπων πρὸς τὰ πράγματα τοῖς ὄμμασι καὶ ἑκάστῃ τῶν αἰσθήσεων ἐπιχειρῶν ἅπτεσθαι αὐτῶν. ἔδοξε δή μοι χρῆναι εἰς τοὺς λόγους καταφυγόντα ἐν ἐκείνοις σκοπεῖν τῶν ὄντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν. ἴσως μὲν οὖν ᾧ εἰκάζω τρόπον τινὰ οὐκ ἔοικεν. οὐ γὰρ πάνυ συγχωρῶ τὸν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις σκοπούμενον τὰ ὄντα ἐν εἰκόσι μᾶλλον σκοπεῖν ἢ τὸν ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις· ἀλλ' οὖν δὴ τάντῃ γε ὥρμησα, καὶ ὑποθέμενος ἑκάστοτε λόγον, ὃν ἂν κρίνω ἐρρωμενέστατον εἶναι, ἃ μὲν ἄν μοι δοκῇ τούτῳ συμφωνεῖν, τίθημι ὡς ἀληθῆ ὄντα, καὶ περὶ αἰτίας καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἁπάντων τῶν ὄντων, ἃ δ' ἂν μή, ὡς οὐκ ἀληθῆ.* He goes on to explain that the method is the familiar way of Ideas, postulating the existence of an essential beauty and goodness and greatness and so on (*ὑποθέμενος εἶναί τι καλὸν αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτό*). These are the only causes he pretends to understand. "I know nothing and can understand nothing of any other of those wise causes which are alleged; and if a person says to me that the bloom of colour, or form, or any such thing is

a source of beauty, I leave all that, which is only confusing to me, and simply and singly, and perhaps foolishly, hold and am assured in my own mind that nothing makes a thing beautiful but the presence and participation of beauty in whatever way or manner obtained; for as to the manner I am uncertain, but I stoutly contend that by beauty all beautiful things become beautiful" (100 D).

Of this very interesting account the following interpretations have been offered:—

(1) The knowledge Socrates abandons as too hard for him is the knowledge of natural science, the investigation of physical causes, from looking at which Socrates turned to study the "inner world of thought," making thought a sort of mirror of reality.

But it is totally unlike Plato to give the objects of physical science any reality at all, much more to make them superior in reality to the objects apprehended by thought (concepts as distinguished from percepts), to λόγοι. Would Plato for a moment have regarded the knowledge of final causes (revealed by the method of Ideas) as "second-best"? Would he have thought the modifying clause (*οὐ γὰρ πάνυ συγχωρῶ*, *κ.τ.λ.*) a sufficient criticism of a view that was a denial of his whole philosophy? Besides, Socrates has been explaining that the principle he has failed to attain to was the principle of the sustaining power of the good (99 C), and that both the first and the second methods lead to the knowledge of this the final cause (*τὸν δεύτερον πλοῦν ἐπὶ τὴν τῆς αἰτίας ζήτησιν*). But natural science with its "airs and ethers and waters," recks nothing of final causes.

These objections have led to another interpretation which has at least the merit of not attributing to Plato a doctrine subversive of all his principles.

(2) The method Socrates abandons as beyond his reach is the direct study of the eternal Ideas. He is driven to investigate the ultimate reality not in itself but in thought-images, in universals or concepts "which shall represent the Ideas to him".

This view has the support of Mr. Archer-Hind and Prof. H. Jackson, the former of whom argues as follows—"The passage, as I read it, has the following significance: I attempted, says Socrates, to discover *τὸ ἀγαθὸν* as the ultimate cause working in nature. But when, after long endeavour, I failed in the struggle, I began to fear that by fixing my gaze too intently on realities I might be blinded in soul, as men are bereft of their bodily vision by gazing on the sun. So I bethought me of framing in my own mind

images or concepts of those realities which I desired to study, and in them safely to examine the nature of their types. But though I admit these concepts are but images of the realities, mind I don't allow they are so in any greater degree than material phenomena: both in fact are images; but whereas phenomena are the images presented to us by our senses, concepts are the images deliberately formed by our understanding; concepts therefore are more real than phenomena in proportion as understanding is more sure than sense" (*Phædo*, App. ii., p. 189).

This interpretation has no support in either the language or the logic of the passage

A. (1) There is nothing in the Greek to suggest the distinction of "universal" (λόγος) and Idea, and there are several expressions which imply their identity; *cf.* particularly 100 A, ὑποθέμενος ἑκαστότε λόγον, with 100 B, ὑποθέμενος εἶναί τι καλὸν αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτό,[1] where λόγος and εἶδος seem equivalent, just as we have οὐσίαν τε καὶ λόγον in *Phædrus* 245 E.,

(2) The interpretation gives a very forced sense to straightforward expressions. Surely ἐπειδὴ ἀπείρηκα τὰ ὄντα σκοπῶν must refer to what has just preceded, the history of Socrates' experiment in the study of nature, and the words μὴ παντάπασι τὴν ψυχὴν τυφλωθείην βλέπων πρὸς τὰ πράγματα τοῖς ὄμμασι καὶ ἑκάστῃ τῶν αἰσθήσεων ἐπιχειρῶν ἅπτεσθαι αὐτῶν (99 E) lose all their meaning unless they refer to sense-objects grasped in sense-perception. The argument that τυφλωθείην here cannot apply to the obscurer objects of sense is absurd. The word was used in just the same meaning a few pages back (96 C). The rapid and ceaseless process of phenomena as they appear to the philosopher's eye might be compared with the effect of a dazzling light, though Socrates himself is unwilling to press the analogy. Further, it is so difficult to fit into the view under consideration the words that follow (βλέπων . . . ἅπτεσθαι αὐτῶν), that both Mr. Archer-Hind and Prof. Jackson are inclined to resort to the desperate theory of interpolation. But their case demands a far more rigorous excision.

B. The logical difficulties are no less serious.

(1) If Plato had made this distinction of "universal" and Idea he would have cut himself off from all knowledge of reality, though he has in this same dialogue already expressed confidence in his power to grasp it. The theory of ἀνάμνησις might indeed suggest the distinction of concepts or the "reminiscences" of Ideas from the Ideas themselves, but

[1] Since writing the above, I notice that this argument has been employed already by Mr. R. P. Hardie in *Mind*, N.S., vol. v., p. 171.

such a distinction would have been self-destructive, for being for ever cut off from knowledge of the Ideas we are for ever incapable of knowing that the concepts are like or "represent" the Ideas. The tentative and temporary theory of *ἀνάμνησις* must not be pressed to this conclusion, for Plato here in the dialogue which introduces that theory states very clearly his belief in the soul's direct knowledge of reality, her "communion with the unchanging" (79 D), her "pure apprehension of pure existence" (83 A).

(2) The interpretation fails entirely to account for the discussion of physical or efficient causes and to relate that investigation to the course Socrates represents himself as now pursuing, and it fails to show how one or the other method of study is connected with the ultimate principle, "the necessary and containing power of the good".

The whole difficulty arises from a failure to recognise that in fact the teleological explanation was for Plato the ultimate principle of *all* knowledge. Why did the philosophy of Anaxagoras cause so profound a sense of disappointment in the mind of Socrates? "And I thought that I would then go on and ask him about the sun and moon and stars, and that he would explain to me their comparative swiftness, and their returnings and various states, active and passive, and how all of them were for the best" (98 A). Natural science is no knowledge at all unless it seeks to answer this last question. *His* natural science, the study he perforce abandoned, sought to answer this question. It was to be something more than the science of the physicists who mistake the presuppositions of knowledge for knowledge itself. The science that constituted his first method was not physical science at all, as ordinarily understood. Physical science investigates physical law, but law reveals reason and reason seeks an end. Therefore we postulate an end behind the law, and because science or the knowledge of law is not necessarily the knowledge of the end which it implies, it can never by itself satisfy such an inquirer as Socrates or be regarded by him as knowledge at all. He himself tried to find the knowledge which consists in the relation of the facts of science to the principle of the good, but found the task too hard. He could not rest content with the efficient causes, but when he tried to go beyond them, the multiplicity of the phenomenal world bewildered him. It was as if one should attempt, say, from the movements of the chisel to explain the beauty of a statue or, to take his own instance, from the various co-ordinations of muscle and bone to explain the presence of Socrates in the State prison of Athens. Or per-

haps we may compare it to the attempt to read the design of a tapestry from the crossing and interweaving of the threads, a method more difficult and more minute and conceivably impossible. It may happen we are looking on the wrong side of the cloth, that which does not reveal the design. In rational conduct this design, the only possible design, is the good. "When we walk we walk for the sake of the good and under the idea that it is better to walk, and when we stand we stand equally for the sake of the good" (*Gorg.*, 468 A). In the phenomena of experience this design is too hard to unravel. We give up the attempt, in this world of constant becoming, to understand how behind it there lies the "binding power of the good". Yet since the world is essentially rational (this view is fundamental for Plato's earlier thought, that the forces of the world without us are actuated by the same power that lives and moves in us) such a connexion must remain an "hypothesis".[1]

This then is the method that Socrates abandons for his alternative way. Instead of seeking the goodness of the phenomenal and changing[2] we may turn our attention to the permanent revealed in and through this constant process, the universal that abides, which is in truth all that is known or knowable in the world of becoming. If we can relate these permanent elements to the principle of the good, can see these to be reasonable, we shall have explained everything in the phenomenal as well—except the fact of its phenomenality. The abiding is the real; if we can explain the abiding, or the universal, we shall have accomplished even more than was possible by the first method, we shall have shown the goodness or the reason of the permanent in its permanence, instead of in its transient manifestation,—we shall have understood reality.

(It was only at a later stage that Plato saw how little it availed to call some obstructing element "unreal," and indeed the later realisation of this truth had much to do, as will appear presently, with the modification of the theory.)

So far as the ultimate principle is concerned Plato might

[1] We may note that in the *Timæus* Plato does make the attempt, though only on "probable" grounds, to construct the natural science here abandoned as too hard, a science, *i.e.*, which relates laws to ends.

[2] Note that Plato says τὸν ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις (σκοπούμενον τὰ ὄντα) (100 A), not τὸν τὰ ἔργα σκοπούμενον. The ὄντα are the phenomena known in their reality, *i.e.* in their relation to the good (for Plato holds with Parmenides, ταὐτὸν δ' ἐστι νοεῖν καὶ οὕνεκεν ἐστι νόημα), the ἔργα the inadequately known objects of physical science. How else can the opposition be accounted for?

have left the universals outside the rank of the Idea, but this the logical method rendered impossible. That method gave the same kind of reality to all universals. What Plato therefore has to do is to show the relation of these inferior Ideas to the archetypal Idea, and this begins to appear, though obscurely, in the *Phædo*. Everything is what it is by participation in some λόγος; the great, the small, the equal share in greatness, smallness, equality—they are what they are in virtue of the form or proportion they exhibit. So far then they are explained by reference to what is more real than themselves. But these reals are not reals in their own right, and therefore not a sufficient explanation (*cf.* ἄλλην αὖ ὑπόθεσιν ὑποθέμενος, ἥτις τῶν ἄνωθεν βελτίστη φαίνοιτο, ἕως ἐπί τι ἱκανὸν ἔλθοις, *Phædo*, 101 D). A thing is great because it shares in greatness, we must say, but only when we know that it is good to share in greatness, *i.e.*, that greatness shares in goodness, have we the true explanation. Just as phenomena reflect the Ideas, so do the lower Ideas reflect the good. The system begins to appear as an hierarchy. The only way up from these lower Ideas is by the recognition of their participation in the good, just as the only way from the world of sense is by the recognition of its participation in the Ideas. The two methods of the *Phædo* are now clear; the one would go straight from phenomena to the archetypal Idea, the other uses the lower Ideas as media. This is the explanation of the ascent by hypotheses suggested in the *Phædo* (101 D) and more explicitly described in the *Republic* (511 C).

Already in the *Republic* the difficulty caused by the introduction of the second class of Ideas has forced itself on Plato's attention. In the *Republic* he virtually says that these both are and are not Ideas; he admits in fact that only the self-explanatory is Idea, only that in which the light of its own purpose is manifest. Hence the division of the world of νοητά into two sections, of which the higher consists simply of the true or ethical Ideas. (Plato distinguishes these latter Ideas as the good, the beautiful, and the true, but it is obvious that the lower members of that hierarchy are there at all because of their ethical significance, their immediate attractiveness or "value".) The lower section is only potentially or "hypothetically" Ideal, the "hypothesis" being not the existence of these objects, but their goodness,[1] that

[1] Prof. Jackson, in an otherwise instructive article in the *Journal of Philology* (vol. x., p. 144), misses this important point. He says: "His meaning must be that the geometer starts from such propositions as, 'There may be such a thing as length without breadth, henceforward

they are best and for the best. When they are seen in the light of the good, when they reflect the good, they become objects for the pure intelligence (*καίτοι νοητῶν ὄντων μετὰ ἀρχῆς*, 511 D). We destroy their hypothetical character.[1]

Within the world of Ideas there is now an essential cleavage manifest, in fact there is a certain inconsistency in making these mathematical concepts Ideas at all, for if the objects of sense 'reflect' the various Ideas and yet are not, when seen in this light, made objects of pure intelligence, why should *τὰ μαθηματικά* become such intelligibles when they reflect the good? If these are to be Ideas we want a new name altogether for the highest class of existences. It may have been a perception of this difficulty that led Plato at some time to give the mathematical concepts a place midway between Ideas and phenomena.

But in the *Republic* this inconsistency has not yet broken up the Ideal system. In books vi. and vii. Plato definitely attempts to read the universe in the light of the Idea, and the scattered hints of the *Cratylus*, *Symposium*, *Phædo* and perhaps *Phædrus*[2] are now developed into a coherent system. It may be well to look at this unification before considering how the unreconciled elements rendered the unity only ap-

called a line,' but does not show, or even attempt to show, that there is such a thing. If he could prove that there is such a thing, this which is now a *ὑπόθεσις*, *i.e.* an *ἀρχὴ ἀναπόδεικτος*, would become an *ἀρχή* proper." But in the first place the geometer never does make such a proposition—he is not concerned with any other existence of lines and circles than that existence which they have for his thought, and his study is not in the least affected by the denial of straight lines "in nature". In the second place, no philosophy proves or tries to prove these "hypotheses," and Plato least of all would suggest that the mathematician may be making a mistake by investigating thought-realities for whose objective existence he has no warrant. How can they be placed in the region of *νοητά* at all unless already they are recognised as belonging to the real? What is yet unconfirmed is their relation to the supreme reality. Because the world is rational—this being the fundamental hypothesis—they *must* be related to the good, but so far this is taken on trust. The hypothesis is simply the act of faith which the full vision of goodness will render needless.

[1] *Cf.* 533 C, *οὐκοῦν ἡ διαλεκτικὴ μέθοδος μόνη ταύτῃ πορεύεται, τὰς ὑποθέσεις ἀναιροῦσα*, when their goodness is manifested or their relation to the good. The mathematician does not ask the value of the square and circle, he keeps within the bounds of his spatial systems; but if "God always geometrises," it is not for the sake of geometry. As the phenomenon is an image of the Idea, so is the lower Idea, the mathematical object, an image of the highest—when seen in its goodness (*cf. Rep.*, 517 B *sqq.*).

[2] Certainly the argument of the *Phædrus* suggests a fairly early date, though stylometric evidence seems to place it not earlier than the *Republic*.

parent, and led Plato, who showed here an energy of self-criticism unparalleled in the history of philosophy, to a deep and progressive process of modification and reconstruction.

The world is fundamentally rational. The real is the abiding, and the abiding is the knowable, therefore the real is the knowable. The reason that is in us is the reason that is in the world. Reality has two aspects, the known and the knower, and these correspond in every relation—as is the kind of object so is the kind of knowing. "All nature is akin and the soul has learnt all things," Plato had already said in the *Meno* (81 C), and now he shows how truth and understanding are begotten of the contact of the pure intelligence with the pure Idea (*Rep.*, 490 B). So again to the desire of mind there corresponds the desirableness of the object of mind. The philosopher is not simply the knower of knowledge, but also the lover of it because knowledge is lovable; and the universe is representable as a scale of existences corresponding to the various faculties of knowing. There is no attempt so far to give priority to either aspect, mind or existence. The Ideas are eternal, and so is mind that knows the Ideas.[1]

It is noteworthy that the description Plato here gives of the Ideas is truest—and indeed profoundly true—of the ethical Ideas. The peculiarity of these has already been

[1] Zeller and other critics argue in favour of making the Idea of the good identical with Deity. This view does not fit into the construction outlined above. The Ideas are powers but not intelligences; they are even akin to intelligence inasmuch as mind can only know what is of its own nature, but they are essentially the correlates of mind in an eternal correspondence. The difficulties of the position we may well believe led Plato to postulate an original creative mind (of which there are hints already in the *Republic*), just as a further difficulty to be considered later led him at last to postulate two world-spirits—but by that time the Idea theory had undergone much modification. The Idea theory demands this correspondence throughout, so that at the summit of the scale of existences there would be the good as perfectly known (*i.e.*, the good as it fully is) and the perfectly pure intelligence that knows it, *i.e.* God. This is the logical relation of the Deity and the Idea of the good, as is implied in *Parm.*, 134 D, "and if there be such a thing as participation in absolute knowledge, no one is more likely than God to have this most exact knowledge". The development of the view that creative intelligence is prior to created existence is part of the process of reconstruction (*cf. Philebus*, 22 C). In the present view mind is not regarded as originally creative nor yet are the Ideas powers in themselves. It is out of the correspondence of mind and Idea that creation is created. If so, Zeller's question (*Plato and the Older Academy*, Eng. ed., p. 267 n.), "Is the Divinity actually a second cause together with the Idea, or merely another expression for the causality of the Idea?" presents no dilemma at all. Plato, who had to face as had never been done before the question of the relation of knower and known, of the subject and object of thought, did not begin with but only ended in dualism.

dwelt upon; being able to serve as ends or purposes they are something more than mere concepts, and all the characteristics which Plato ascribes to his Ideas are *in some sense* applicable to these. They are powers, being final causes. In a rational world—the world as now conceived by Plato—there can finally be no distinction between *ought* and *is*, the possible of realisation and the realised, and so also whatever *becomes* possible is *ipso facto* made actual.[1] We may compare how even Aristotle who so constantly attacked the dynamical deficiency of Plato's theory made the conclusion of his practical syllogism not the recognition of some particular end as to be done, but the doing itself.[2] Further they are exemplars to be realised in action, "fore-pictures" of something to be produced (as Fichte said), thought-schemes to which a phenomenal counterpart, a concrete action, can somehow correspond. They are prior and "above substance," in so far as in a rational world the goodness of a thing is the very ground of its existence. They are purer, more perfect than their realisations in action, for "what act is all its thought had been"? What exemplar is not better than its copy? In all conscious production it might be held that the idea or form being manifested is better than the manifestation, that the expression is never adequate to the thought that is expressed.[3] Finally they all lead up logically to one supreme end presupposed in every mediate end and making them all coherent, an end which so far as the world is rational is the ultimate explanation of all things. So much perhaps we may say without entering on the controversial ground of metaphysic at all, though the elements of controversy are not far off.

[1] *Cf.* Kant, *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, "Eine intelligibele Welt in welcher alles darum wirklich sein würde, bloss nur weil es (als etwas Gutes) möglich ist".

[2] *Cf. De Motu Animalium*, 701 *a* 9 *sqq.* "Whereas in the theoretical syllogism the end is inference, the apprehension of the two premisses being the apprehension and putting together of the conclusion, in the practical syllogism the conclusion that arises from the two premisses is action. Thus when a man apprehends that every man should walk and that he himself is a man, an act of walking immediately follows." Of course the ethical concept cannot unless particularised, cannot as a pure Idea of the good, become an end, and does not necessarily become one even then, and if it does become an end, its realisation does not necessarily follow. What is said above of ethical Ideas must be understood with this reservation.

[3] It is true that Goethe speaks of his work as containing more than he knew, and Kant declares that we can sometimes better understand an author in his words or writings than he understood himself, but that does not touch the question of the relation of the end as conceived to the end as realised. It is, to say the least, logically impossible that the realisation (or expression) should be *more* than adequate.

But the further we pass from the ethical Ideas the greater do the difficulties grow, the more alien are the elements introduced into the system. This becomes manifest in the last book of the *Republic* itself, where now the logical principle is openly asserted—"whenever a number of individuals have a common name, we assume them to have also a corresponding Idea" (*Rep.*, 596 A), and accordingly the instance of a bed is chosen, and the analogy drawn, picture of a bed : a bed : : a bed : Idea bed—an analogy not possible in the case of the ethical or even of the mathematical notions. We seem to have now introduced a third class of Ideas, with which our difficulties grow exceedingly. In fact in such a case the Idea can be nothing except the form or shape of the object given by analogy, a kind of self-subsistence, and the famous "third man" argument (attributed to the sophist Polyxenus but really only a development of an objection suggested by Plato here (597 C)) depends entirely on the conception of Ideas as shapes or forms. This objection, like many another, is quite inapplicable to the earlier conception, to the "colourless and *shapeless* and intangible essence" that originally the term Idea signified (ἡ ἀχρώματός τε καὶ ἀσχημάτιστος καὶ ἀναφὴς οὐσία ὄντως οὖσα, *Phædr.*, 247 C).

In fact to understand the Idea system as a coherent whole, to understand the scheme of *Rep.*, vi. and vii., we must remember that it is based on and leads up to the primary Idea of the good. This Idea is ultimate, ultimate for knowledge and for reality. If so, it must be admitted as a fundamental "hypothesis" that whatever we know is what it is because that is for the best and that whatever becomes becomes for the best, in short, that every efficient cause is for the sake of a fully rational final cause. But here the inconsistency of a metaphysic at once absolute and teleological reveals itself (though it is perhaps less obvious in a system which makes the ideal a good to be attained rather than a law to be observed). Plato realised the difficulty, and after various attempts to save the situation by calling "unreal" whatever was neither absolute nor "for the best," by making the objects of opinion, the world of multiplicity and error, a strange union of "real" and "unreal," "tossing about in some region which is halfway between pure being and pure not-being," chose to be greater than his system, to reveal rather than obscure its difficulties. The main difficulty was the obvious problem of all ethical or religious monism; if the world is rational, whence the "unreal," and whence error: if good, whence evil? If the real is the abiding, is not becoming itself an abiding principle? Thus the two problems, the problem of

change, in general of movement, the problem of evil, in general of imperfection, are unsolved, nay insoluble, on the Idea system as now conceived. It was to the fuller consideration of these that Plato now turned.

Hitherto he had somewhat neglected one side of reality. His characterisation had been of the known rather than of the knower, of the Idea rather than of the soul for which it is. But now that the difficulties just mentioned became prominent, he was led to consider more especially this other side. For the real evil is the evil in the soul (*Rep.*, 353 E *sqq.*), and as for movement, surely it must be explained by the self-moving, the soul which is the beginning of motion (*Phædr.*, 245 D). What if after all the τόπος νοητός be νοῦς itself?