IV.—PLATO'S VISION OF THE IDEAS.

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THE first point to strike one about Plato's writings as a whole is the unique combination of artistic and philosophic gifts—unique at any rate previous to Goethe. And it seems incredible that the perfect art of Plato's work should be a mere matter of expression. The supreme artist is not a man who says in some catchy phrase what we all think and feel; he is first and foremost a man whose experience is richer and fuller than that of others. It is narrated of a certain American that at an advanced age he had the singular good fortune to pick up a Shakespeare; after reading two or three plays he said—"Now that's a most remarkable book; I reckon there aren't a dozen men in Boston that could have written that book". The incapacity of the Boston gentlemen is probably not only a matter of comparatively limited command of language; the whole state of mind in which a man sits down to write *King Lear* or the *Ninth Symphony* must remain to most of us a thing totally unknown. But Plato's art is comparable to that of the greatest masters, and in this fact we have, I believe, the explanation of his myths and the partial explanation of his Ideal Theory.

Prof. Stewart, in his delightful book on *The Myths of Plato*, suggests, if I understand him right, that Plato had a clear conception of the limits of human science, and indulged in myth when he found it necessary to overstep those limits; it is not contended that he anticipated the Kantian argument, but that he grasped by direct insight the Kantian conclusion. I cannot assent to this; for it involves placing the Idea of Good in the sphere of myth, as distinct from that of science, which is contrary, not only to single expressions such as μέγιστον μάθημα, but also to the whole feeling of the passage in the *Republic* where the science of Dialectic is described. I think Plato did not count himself to have apprehended the Idea of Good, but he regarded its existence as scientifically established. Rather it seems to be true that his logical inquiries and his artistic intuitions acted

upon each other; that in most arguments we have logic alone; that in the myths we have intuition alone; but that in the Ideal Theory we have the product of their interaction. I am most grateful to Prof. Stewart for his distinction between Plato's myths and allegory; the myths are direct expressions of artistic experience—as is the symphony or the picture; and in the experience, let us say, of the myth of Er we have the artistic apprehension of matter whose logical apprehension is given in the main body of the *Republic*. But our subject is sufficiently large without the addition of the whole problem of the Myths. In the Ideal Theory we have a doctrine to which I believe that logic and intuition have both contributed.

In order to show the process by which I believe that the Theory in its full form arose, it is necessary to go over a great deal of quite familiar ground. Nearly every statement one can make is controversial, but as the arguments for and against in each case have been bandied about so long, I shall not pause to justify every step I take. For the chronological order of the Dialogues I follow Lutoslawski.

We begin with the well-known remark of Aristotle in *Metaph.*, a 6, that Plato's philosophy was a product of the interaction of the Heraclitean physics that he had learnt from Cratylus, and the search for true universals in ethics which he inherited from Socrates. ἐκ νέου τε γὰρ συνήθης γενόμενος πρῶτον Κρατύλῳ καὶ ταῖς Ἡρακλειτείοις δόξαις, ὡς πάντων τῶν αἰσθητῶν αἰεὶ ρεόντων καὶ ἐπιστήμης περὶ αὐτῶν οὐκ οὔσης, ταῦτα μὲν καὶ ὕστερον οὕτως ὑπέλαβεν. Σωκράτους δὲ περὶ μὲν τὰ ἠθικὰ πραγματευομένου, περὶ δὲ τῆς ὅλης φύσεως οὐδὲν, ἐν μέντοι τούτοις τὸ καθόλου ζητοῦντος καὶ περὶ ὁρισμῶν ἐπιστήσαντος πρῶτον τὴν διάνοιαν, ἐκείνῳ ἀποδεξάμενος διὰ τὸ τοιοῦτον ὑπέλαβεν ὡς περὶ ἐτέρων τοῦτο γινόμενόν καὶ οὐ τῶν αἰσθητῶν· ἀδύνατον γὰρ εἶναι τὸν κοινὸν ὅρον τῶν αἰσθητῶν τινός, αἰεὶ γε μεταβάλλοντων (987 a 32-987 b 7).

In the early dialogues Plato is entirely under the influence of Socrates; he has two aims—the portrayal of his master's character, and the illustration and application of his method. If the scepticism as to the truth of sense impressions has not yet appeared, it is because the metaphysical implications of his ethical inquiries have not yet attracted his attention. It is true that he nowhere mentions the Heraclitean philosophy, but it is equally true that he never has occasion to do so. In the *Protagoras* we find the first signs of dissatisfaction with the teaching of Socrates, and in its continuation, the *Meno*, we find Plato for the first time directing his attention specifically to the problem of knowledge; it is characteristic

that this problem is only introduced because on its solution depends the answer to the ethical question which is the main subject of the dialogue. Here emerges, of course, the distinction of knowledge from true opinion, and Plato, while admitting that Themistocles, Pericles and the rest were real statesmen, attributes their success to opinion. In the *Gorgias*, which adds little that concerns our present purpose, we find Socrates, as Plato's spokesman, declaring that these celebrated politicians were not statesmen at all—they filled the city, not with justice and temperance, but with harbours, tributes, and similar rubbish. Plato himself is the only true statesman, for he alone derives his political doctrines from knowledge of the good. In the *Meno* opinion is expressly stated to be as good as knowledge for practical purposes, so long as it is retained; but it is unstable, and knowledge differs from it only in being made fast by calculation of the cause—a view directly attacked in the *Theaetetus* and at least changed beyond all recognition in the great dialogues of the Ideal period.

In the *Cratylus* we find Plato for the first time directly interested in the problem to which the Ideal Theory offers a solution—and it can be no mere coincidence that this dialogue represents Socrates, from whom Plato learnt to search for definitions, as pitted against Cratylus, from whom he had learnt to believe in the unceasing flux of all material objects. All through the dialogue we are approaching the Ideal Theory, but though it often seems the only possible conclusion of the argument, it never appears in its full form. At 386 *c* it is urged that if we reject the doctrine of Protagoras—*τὸ οἶα ἂν δοκῇ ἐκάστω, τοιαῦτα καὶ εἶναι*—and that of Euthydemus—*πάσι πάντα ὁμοίως εἶναι ἅμα καὶ ἀεὶ*—we are driven to believe in objective truth. At 389 *b* we find that the carpenter makes a shuttle, with his attention fixed on the *εἶδος*, and this *εἶδος*—*δικαιοτάτ' ἂν αὐτὸ ὃ ἔστιν κερκὶς καλέσαιμεν*. But this *εἶδος* is determined teleologically and there is no further hint of it as a metaphysical reality. It is not till the end of the dialogue that any such notion is introduced; at 439 *b* Socrates says that the true method of learning or discovering is more than he and Cratylus are likely to find out, but they may agree that it is *οὐκ ἐξ ὀνομάτων, ἀλλὰ πολὺ μάλλον αὐτὰ ἐξ αὐτῶν*. And then Cratylus is invited to consider a notion that has often occurred to Socrates—*ὃ πολλῶν ὀνειρώττω πότερον φώμεν τι εἶναι αὐτὸ καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἐν ἑκάστῳ τῶν ὄντων οὕτω* (439 *c*). It is then pointed out that on any other hypothesis knowledge is impossible, and Socrates and Cratylus urge each other to go on looking for the answer to this question.

"*Ἴσως μὲν οὖν δὴ οὕτως ἔχει, ἴσως δὲ καὶ οὐ*—it is a long journey from this tentative and sceptical approach to the full and confident assertions of the *Symposium*. In the speech of Socrates in that dialogue a prophetess is introduced to reveal the mystery—thus Plato prepares us for a doctrine that is not only quite unsocratic, but has about it the dignity of a religious dogma. It is the prophetess who speaks, but the experience described is Plato's; it is impossible to read the closing paragraph of that speech without feeling that Plato is telling us of a means to a great experience which has come to himself. The language of initiation is freely used; the prophetess is afraid Socrates may not be able to follow *τὰ τέλεα καὶ ἐποπτικά*, in whose interest all other love exists. The process consists in a saturation of the soul with beauty,—first beauty in a single object, then beauty of form in all its manifestations, then beauty of character. (Here Socrates is urged specially to attend.) *ὅς γὰρ ἂν μέχρι ἐνταῦθα πρὸς τὰ ἐρωτικά παιδαγωγηθῇ, θεώμενος ἐφεξῆς τε καὶ ὀρθῶς τὰ καλὰ, πρὸς τέλος ἤδη ἰὼν τῶν ἐρωτικῶν, ἐξαίφνης κατόψεται τι θαυμαστὸν τὴν φύσιν καλὸν, τοῦτο ἐκείνο, ὃ Σώκρατες, οὐ δὴ ἔνεκεν καὶ οἱ ἔμπροσθεν πάντες πόνοι ἦσαν . . . αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ μεθ' αὐτοῦ μονοειδὲς αἰεὶ ὂν.* This is a great deal more than the discovery of an affirmative answer to the question with which the *Cratylus* concluded; it is not a rhetorical way of saying that the existence of an *αὐτὸ καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἐν ἑκάστον τῶν ὄντων* is now established. This is the language of rapture and ecstasy. *ἐξαίφνης κατόψεται*—the Idea of Beauty must have suddenly flashed upon Plato, and he believes that the vision may be won by others who set out to look for it in the same way. One other great artist at least had an almost identical experience—an experience whose interest is all the greater for us in this connexion because it appears to be a case of involuntary imitation, Plato himself being the model. In the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* Shelley describes an experience closely analogous to that which I believe Plato to have had between the dates of the *Cratylus* and the *Symposium* (cf. especially stanzas ii., iv., v., vi.).

The vision was the answer of Plato's imagination to the perplexity of his intellect. In the *Cratylus* we see him wondering whether it is possible to assert the objective reality of the subject-matter of science; his whole tendency is clearly towards an affirmative answer, and then in a moment of strong excitement or exaltation his imagination hurls forth before him the very Idea of Beauty. Doubt is now impossible; the logical tendency is confirmed by the imagina-

tive intuition, and the image beheld is endowed with the attributes suggested by the logical problem.

I submit that this is the obvious and only possible interpretation of Plato's words. It is quite essential to the coherence of the passage that the ultimate beauty should be perceptible in a manner analogous to that of perceiving particular beautiful objects; no doubt it is not supposed to be actually seen by the eyes, for it is immaterial, but it is directly perceived by the mind, which is sensitive to Ideas as the eye is sensitive to light. Once the vision has come, it is itself the proof of the reality of the Ideas. And this proof is not regarded by Plato as mythological, but as scientific. The vision is pointedly, and repeatedly called *μάθημα* (211 c). The problem of universals may be solved by any one who will take the trouble to see a universal; a particular training makes a man sensitive to the Ideas—and once he has seen one, his doubts and difficulties vanish. But not only is a logical problem solved; life itself becomes divine and eternal to the seer of the vision. If beauty in the human form can so move a man that he cares neither to eat nor drink, but only to gaze, what must we suppose to be the life of one who has beheld Beauty itself in its unsullied purity, unencumbered by flesh and colour and the trappings of mortality? Such a man will bring forth true virtue and win the love of God and immortality (211 c - 212 a).

I propose now to trace very briefly the subsequent history of the theory; then to inquire whether it is possible to determine at all closely the nature of the vision and the circumstances in which it was experienced; and lastly to suggest some particular points in which this view of the origin of the Ideal Theory solves the logical difficulties of the Theory.

The supposed fact discovered in the vision of Ideal Beauty was immediately accepted by Plato as the solution of his problem. In the *Phædo*¹ all general terms are substantiated, and a whole realm of Ideas is set up. Nowhere except in the tenth book of the *Republic* is the utter disparateness of Ideas and particulars so strongly insisted on as here. I cannot, however, accept the theory that the

¹ If we hold that the *Phædo* is earlier than the *Symposium* we must also hold that Plato arrived at the Ideal Theory on its philosophical side before the first occurrence of the vision. This in no way militates against the main point that I am urging, for I do not at all wish to deny that the Ideal Theory is a philosophy and requires philosophical discussion; my point is that the Theory is *also* a religion with a basis of ecstatic vision; and it seems to me more natural that the vision, with all the apparatus of the prophetess, etc., in its exposition, should come first and the elaborated philosophy afterwards.

Symposium and the *Phædo* are complementary in this respect—the *Phædo* insisting on disparateness, and the *Symposium* on the continuity of process from one to the other (Caird, *Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers*, vol. i., p. 112): for the vision in the *Symposium* is a sudden revelation *ab extra*—ἐξαίφνης κατόψεται—and the previous process is only a preparation of the soul making it fit to receive the vision. The Ideas are real external facts, which may be perceived by Reason as by another sense. The relation of a particular to its Idea in the *Symposium* is μέθεξις (211 b)—and that of such a kind as to leave the substance unaltered. In the *Phædo* the same term recurs (100 c), with the addition that it is not to be regarded as a precise term. “If any one tells me that an object is beautiful, . . . I leave all other questions, for I am far from clear about them, but I am convinced simply, literally and perhaps naïvely of this, that nothing makes it beautiful except ἡ ἐκείνου τοῦ καλοῦ εἴτε παρουσία εἴτε κοινωνία ὅπη δὲ καὶ ὅπως προσγενομένη. οὐ γὰρ ἔτι τοῦτο διίσχυρίζομαι, ἀλλ’ ὅτι τῷ καλῷ πάντα τὰ καλὰ γίγνεται καλὰ (100 d). All these expressions are no doubt metaphors, but the relation must have been conceived in such a way as to suggest these metaphors rather than others. And we have to remember that in *Republic*, X., the metaphor used is μίμησις, which still more emphasises the separateness of the Ideas. In the *Phædo* we learn definitely that we cannot altogether apprehend the Ideas while we are still in the body; but in the pre-natal state we did, and after death we shall again, apprehend them perfectly. The completely ordered teleological system of the Ideas, insisted on in the *Republic*, is suggested in the passage where Socrates expresses his disappointment in Anaxagoras (97 c). Plato characteristically takes the strongest instance he can think of; a true scientific method, he says, would settle the question whether the earth is round or flat by showing which it is better that it should be (97 e). He adds that he has found no teacher of this method, and has had to fall back on a δεύτερος πλοῦς (99 d), namely the method of hypotheses, one being suggested after another until at last one is found to cover all the facts, ἕως ἐπὶ τι ἰκανόν ἔλθοις. I see no trace of irony anywhere in this passage. It shows us Plato as he developed his conception of the Ideal world into the full system centred in the Idea of Good which appears in the *Republic*. The supremacy of the Idea of Good is the metaphysical counterpart of the teleological theory of science presented in the *Phædo*.

When Plato had discovered in the *Meno* the distinction between Knowledge and True Opinion, he immediately ap-

plied it to practical questions in the *Gorgias* ; so now, having discovered the Ideas, he at once passes to the political importance of his discovery—in the *Republic*.

It is to be noticed that there is very little real argument produced in support of the Ideal Theory in either the *Phædo* or the *Republic* : in the former it is accepted at once without argument, and in the latter it is accepted by Glauco ; and Antisthenes, or whoever else the imaginary opponent may be (476 *d*), is rather ridiculed than confuted. The Ideal Theory is already treated as an accepted dogma of the Platonic school ; the master had seen the vision and the disciples believed in the doctrine he had drawn from it.

In the central books of the *Republic* there is a great deal of rapturous language about the Ideas, which reminds us of the *Symposium* (cf. 486 *a*, θεωρία πάντος μὲν χρόνου, πάσης δὲ οὐσίας : 490 *b*, ὁ ὄντως φιλομαθὴς . . . οὐκ ἐπιμένει ἐπὶ τοῖς δοξαζομένοις εἶναι πολλοῖς ἐκάστοις, ἀλλ' ἰοὶ καὶ οὐκ ἀμβλύνειτο οὐδ' ἀπολήγοι τοῦ ἔρωτος, πρὶν αὐτοῦ ὃ ἔστιν ἐκάστου τῆς φύσεως ἄψασθαι ᾧ προσήκει ψυχῆς ἐφάπτεσθαι· προσήκει δὲ ξυγγενεῖ· ᾧ πλησιάσας καὶ μιγείς τῷ ὄντι ὄντως, γεννήσας νοῦν καὶ ἀληθειαν, γνοίη τε καὶ ἀληθῶς ζῶη καὶ τρέφοιτο καὶ οὕτω λήγοι ὠδίνος, πρὶν δ' οὗ). These books do not materially advance the solution of the question left open in the *Phædo* as to the relation of Ideas and particulars, nor is the substantiation of purely relative notions in the passage dealing with the propædæutic studies anything more than an elaboration of what is already implied in the *Phædo*, where μέγεθος is included among the Ideas ; but the systematisation of the Ideal realm itself is carried far further, and the aspirations towards a complete teleology, expressed in the *Phædo*, find their realisation in the supremacy of the Idea of Good, as the source of both subjective and objective existence. Whether or not Plato here *confuses* truth and value is a question that touches the Ideal Theory on its logical side ; he certainly identifies them, and that without advancing any arguments to justify him in so doing.

So far Plato has confined his attention to such general terms as are usually expressed by adjectives, except where language happens to supply a noun, such as μέγεθος or ἰσχυς (*Phædo*, 65 *d*), for some adjectival notion. It is true that in the *Cratylus* we heard of the εἶδος which δικαιοτάτ' ἂν αὐτὸ ὃ ἔστιν κερκὶς καλέσαιμεν : 389 *b* ; but it was not there suggested that there existed in heaven or elsewhere a perfect shuttle ; the εἶδος there is in fact determined by the purpose of a shuttle. But in *Republic*, X., we are presented with the real bed in heaven, which God made, and which the car-

penter imitates as well as he can. No doubt the language here is peculiarly crude, and the appearance of God as the Maker of the Ideas suggests that the whole passage is mythological. But for all this the doctrine of the passage is the necessary development of what precedes. "Bed" is just as much a general term as "Big" or "Beautiful," and if the argument is to apply to one such term it must apply to all. In fact *Republic*, X., 595 a-597 e, is a passage of quite crucial importance in the development of Plato's philosophy, and it is by no means to be dismissed as an excrescence; for there appear here two considerations which are subsequently to prove fatal to the earlier ideal theory with its basis of ecstatic vision—namely the application of the theory to all general terms, and the *πρῶτος ἀνθρώπος* argument.

Let us take the second first. Here, in *Republic*, X., the argument is introduced to prove that each Idea is single; for if there were two, they would not be the real Idea, but this would appear above or behind them as the principle of their unity; e.g., if we suppose two ideal beds, we shall have to suppose another which determines each as an ideal bed—and this will be the real Idea (597 c). In the *Parmenides* this same argument is applied with ruinous effect to the Ideal Theory itself (132 a); for a third Idea is wanted to connect the Idea with its particulars, and so *ad infinitum*.

The same fate awaits the extension, made in *Republic*, X., of the Ideal Theory to general nouns; he asserts fearlessly the existence of the Ideal Bed, but this too leads to absurdities. In the *Parmenides*, at 130 c, Socrates confesses to a perplexity whether there are Ideas of Man, Fire, Water, and so on, and himself urges that to maintain the existence of Ideal Hair or Ideal Mud would be to fall into an abyss of absurdity. It is true that *Parmenides* replies by assuring Socrates that it is only his youth which makes him despise these things, but the passage is significant, and occurs in the middle of an elaborate attack on the ideal theory.¹ My point at present is that two of the charges contained in that attack are further developments of what is first introduced in *Republic*, X.

It will be apparent that I regard the *Parmenides* as a direct attack on the earlier Platonic theory; this is shown to be the intention by the fact that Socrates is the representative and champion of the Ideal Theory, and is here defeated in

¹ It has been suggested to me that Plato hoped to get over the difficulty of (e.g.) Ideal Mud by his doctrine of the *κοινωνία εἰδῶν*: but this doctrine is used in the *Sophist*, if I understand Plato rightly, only to secure the possibility of certain kinds of predication.

the argument.¹ Socrates could not be himself the spokesman of the theory on its first appearance, for it was utterly foreign to the historic Socrates; so the prophetess of Mantinea was invented. But after the Socrates of the Dialogues had been himself initiated by the prophetess, he could quite consistently appear as the spokesman of the theory in the *Phædo*, the *Republic* and the *Phædrus*. As the spokesman of an Ideal Theory he appears in the *Parmenides*; surely it is legitimate to infer that the Ideal Theory here refuted—refuted by Parmenides and upheld by Socrates—is meant to be the same as the Theory with which by this time Socrates' name is so closely connected. And as a matter of fact it is precisely the theory which appears in *Republic*, X. If we like to adopt an interpretation of the earlier Ideal Theory which squares better with modern logic, though it involves totally ignoring the language of religious ecstasy, and also reduces the tenth book to a very crude popularisation—a popularisation introduced just when it is of vital importance to maintain the argument at the highest level—then we may regard the *Parmenides* as an attack on some theory that Plato had never held. But I cannot ignore that rapturous language; it proves that the Ideal Theory is not purely logical. And I cannot believe that so consummate an artist as Plato could possibly have introduced the crucial passage in Book X. unless he meant it every word: it is fitting that the emotional exaltation should be less in that passage, to prepare for the effect of the myth; but a deliberately weak piece of argument in that position is utterly inconceivable. Moreover, why in the world is it the invincible Socrates who takes charge of the discredited theory in the *Parmenides*, and thereby incurs defeat, unless to remind us that he had won victories with this very theory in previous dialogues?

The *Parmenides* shattered the old ideal theory.² In the

¹ It has been objected to this that on my hypothesis the Socrates of the Dialogues was only initiated in the *Symposium*, but is represented in the *Parmenides* as younger than he was at the date of that supposed initiation. I do not feel this objection very strongly; Socrates' name had become connected with the Ideal Theory by a literary convention, but he had to be represented as a young man to keep up the illusion of the conversation with Parmenides. In any case, however, there is a kind of anachronism, and no doubt opinions will differ as to which is the more probable.

² By "the old Ideal Theory" I mean the theory which is both a philosophy and an ecstatic religion. The vision implied independently existing Ideas, and this implication is shown in the *Parmenides* to be untenable. In that dialogue it is not the Ideas, but certain theories of the relation existing between Ideas and Particulars, that are attacked—i.e., the theories suggested in the *Symposium* (μέθ' ἑξ), *Phædo* (παρουσία—κοινωνία

Sophist its upholders are treated as people with whom Plato had never had anything to do—people who μάλα εύλαβώς ἄνωθεν ἐξ ἀοράτου ποθὲν αὐτύνονται, νοητὰ ἅπτα καὶ ἀσώματα εἶδη βιαζόμενοι τὴν ἀληθινὴν οὐσίαν εἶναι (246 b)—an exact description of his own previous procedure: and at 248 c, where he exclaims, “Can we ever be made to believe that motion and life and soul and mind are not present with perfect being? Can we imagine that being is devoid of life and mind and exists in awful unmeaningness an everlasting fixture?” we have the final repudiation of the Idea of Good as presented in the *Republic*. After this it is no surprise to find that in the *Philebus* the royal mind of Zeus takes the place of the Idea of Good as the central principle of the Universe. In the *Timæus* the Ideas reappear, but as mythical elements in a mythical fabric, and it seems at least possible to interpret them in this work as being the perfect thoughts of God. In these later dialogues the old ideal theory is not to be found. The vision had faded, and the logical objections were able to tell.

The vision had faded; and this will seem natural enough when we proceed to examine the nature of the vision itself and the circumstances of its occurrence. On the former point the *Symposium* gives no help, but the language is entirely in harmony with the other passage that is of chief importance for this subject—Socrates' second speech in the *Phædrus*.¹ Here all the images are those of brilliant, dazzling light. κάλλος δὲ τότ' ἦν ἰδεῖν λαμπρόν (250 b); ὁλόκληρα δὲ καὶ ἁπλᾶ καὶ ἀτρεμῇ καὶ εὐδαίμονα φάσματα μνούμενοί τε καὶ ἐποπτεύοντες ἐν αὐγῇ καθαρᾷ (250 c); ἀστράπτουσιν (254 b). The whole language in both dialogues is of vision, and these phrases suggest the nature of the vision. All is in perfect harmony with the *Symposium*: there was a dazzling brightness, too brilliant to have form or colour (ἀχρώματος τε καὶ ἀσχημάτιστος: *Phædrus*, 247 c). All this throws a new light on the passage in the *Republic* where the Idea of Good is compared to the sun, and where language about being dazzled is frequent. (Cf. especially 515 c-c: the vision of real objects gives pain at first to the Cave-dweller διὰ τὰς μαρμαρυγὰς:

is only another term for μίθεξις) and *Republic* (μίμησις, or, as it becomes in the less poetic *Parmenides*, ὁμοίωσις). This section of the Dialogue ends with the announcement that we must still believe in εἶδη, in spite of these difficulties, but the belief that remains, however much sounder philosophically, is emotionally impoverished.

¹ For my interpretation of the *Phædrus* I am largely indebted to Mr. W. A. Pickard Cambridge, of Magdalen College, Oxford, who pointed out to me how this dialogue harmonises with and supplements my interpretation of the *Symposium*.

and if one be dragged to the true light ἀρα οὐχὶ ὀδυνᾶσθαι τε αὖ καὶ ἀγανακτεῖν ἐλκόμενον καὶ ἐπειδὴ πρὸς τὸ φῶς ἔλθοι, αὐγῆς αὖ ἔχοντα τὰ ὄμματα μεστὰ ὁρᾶν οὐδ' αὖ ἐν δύνασθαι τῶν νῦν λεγομένων ἀληθῶν. First he will look only at shadows, then at reflexions in water, then at the real objects, and last of all at the sun itself.)

There is no need to point out the frequency of such experiences as I have attributed to Plato; the Shekimah in the Jewish Temple, the "excellent glory" at the Baptism and the cloud at the Transfiguration of Christ, the dazzling light at St. Paul's conversion—are familiar instances. Whatever their explanation may be, I should class Plato's experience with these.

And now we may inquire under what circumstances Plato beheld this vision. Here no doubt is possible; ὅταν δὴ τις ἀπὸ τῶνδε διὰ τὸ ὀρθῶς παιδερασσεῖν¹ ἐπανιών ἐκείνο τὸ καλὸν ἀρχηται καθορᾶν, σχεδὸν αὖ τί ἄπτοιτο τοῦ τέλους (*Symp.*, 211 b). It is no accident that both the dialogues where the ecstatic nature of the vision is insisted on are panegyrics upon Love; nor is it a mere insignificant detail that Glauco, the Lover, is always the interlocutor in the most Ideal passages in the *Republic*. The language of the *Symposium* is clear enough; but that of the *Phædrus* is unmistakable.

This is, after all, in accordance with all analogy. The mystic vision or the prophetic afflatus is induced by an excitement so violent as to paralyse the critical faculties, and almost, if not quite, to remove self-consciousness. Dervish dances are the stock instance, and we remember that men said "Is Saul also among the prophets?" because the King of Israel "stripped off his clothes and lay down naked all that day and all that night" (1 Samuel xix. 24). The excitement of παιδεραστία was to Plato quite sufficient to provide opportunity for trances (*cf. Phædrus*, 254 c-e, the struggle of the charioteer of the soul and the passionate steed: the latter βιαζόμενος, χρεμετίζων, ἔλκων ἡνάγκασεν αὐτὸν προσελθεῖν τοῖς παιδικοῖς . . . καὶ ἐπειδὴ ἐγγὺς ἦσαν, ἐγκύψας καὶ ἐκτείνας τὴν κέρκον, ἐνδυκὼν τὸν χαλινὸν μετ' ἀναιδείας ἔλκει· ὁ δὲ ἡνίοχος ἔτι μᾶλλον ταῦτ' οὐκ ἐβόησεν, ὥσπερ ἀπὸ ὑσπληγος ἀναπέσων, ἔτι μᾶλλον τοῦ ὑβριστοῦ ἵππου ἐκ τῶν ὀδόντων βία ὀπίσω σπάσας τὸν χαλινόν, τὴν τε κακὴν γλῶτταν καὶ τὰς γνάθους καθήμαξεν καὶ τὰ σκέλη τε καὶ τὰ ἰσχία πρὸς τὴν γῆν ἐρείσας ὀδύναις ἔδωκεν). Prof. Stewart devotes only a single page to this subject (*The Myths of Plato*,

¹ *Cf. Republic*, 490 b, already cited.

p. 336), and concludes with the remark: "The reflexion, in most cases a trite one, that even the best men are apt to become tolerant of the evil which prevails in the manners of their age, is hardly, in this case, a trite reflexion, for it is such an oppressively sad one". I do not know for what public Prof. Stewart was primarily writing, but for purposes of scientific exposition this seems to me a most inadequate treatment of an important subject. For in fact Plato is not only tolerant of *παιδραστία*, but regards it as the means to the highest spiritual experience. What would for most men be the material of purely animal indulgence was for him the occasion of the beatific vision. That this may be so the sensual element must be suppressed (256 *a* and *b*), yet the presence of the sensual impulse appears from the whole passage to be necessary. It is quite incredible that this speech of Socrates should be other than the record of genuine experience.¹ The soul has seen the vision in its purity in the other world, before birth. The beautiful youth stirs up desire; but the other two elements in the soul resist—then yielding they approach and behold *τὴν ὄψιν τὴν τῶν παιδικῶν ἀστράπτουσαν* (254 *b*): that is not the language of mere sensual excitement; no intensity of feeling after that fashion could suggest such an expression—"his face did shine as the sun". Then memory of the prenatal vision revives—*καὶ πάλιν εἶδεν αὐτὴν μετὰ σωφροσύνης ἐν ἁγνῷ βάθρῳ βεβῶσαν*. The youth becomes for the philosophic lover an embodiment of the Ideal Beauty, and may be the object of a reverence bordering on worship; *ὁ δὲ ἀρτιτελής, ὁ τῶν τότε πολυθεάμων, ὅταν θεοειδὲς προσωπὸν ἴδῃ κάλλος εὖ μεμιμημένον ἢ τινα σώματος ιδέαν, πρῶτον μὲν ἔφριξε καὶ τῶν τότε ὑπῆλθεν αὐτὸν δειμάτων, εἶτα προσορῶν ὡς θεὸν σέβεται, καὶ εἰ μὴ ἔδεδίει τὴν τῆς σφόδρα μανίας δόξαν, θύοι ἂν ὡς ἀγάλματι καὶ θεῷ τοῖς παιδικοῖς* (251 *a*). Plato is careful to avoid incurring the charge of advocating sensuality; the proofs of Socrates' perfect continence are given by Alcibiades in the *Symposium* as soon as Socrates himself has finished his description of the ecstasy of love; and in the *Phædrus* a sharp distinction is drawn between the supreme bliss of the lovers, who, after severe struggle indeed, restrain their impulses, and the vulgar enjoyment of the sensual (256 *a-d*).

It has often been remarked that Plato has one great prejudice—against Pleasure. This should now be easily intelligible. Platonic love, if it means "a sentimental passion

¹ The only way to establish this would be to quote the entire speech from 250 *c* to 256 *e*.

of a vegetable fashion," is a most outrageous fiction. Plato's was a temperament of storm and stress. In the quotation from Sophocles at the opening of the *Republic* (329 c), in the *Εὐφήμει* with which Socrates meets Glauco's half-suggestion that the Idea of Good is Pleasure (509 a), in the wonderful combination of playful irony and prophetic earnestness with which Callicles is annihilated in the *Gorgias*, we catch the voice of Plato's dread of pleasure. Yet it is in an experience for which duly controlled passion fits the soul that the vision is beheld. I do not think we ought to talk about tolerance of prevailing evils; for in any case it is hard to deny that the capacity for virtue and for vice is the same, and that the material of the lowest is also that of the highest. In these healthier times the marriage relation has taken the place of *παιδευαστία*, but Plato's position remains sound both in its optimism and in its warning—for there is "a way to Hell even from the Gates of Heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction". It is not *any παιδευαστία* that brings the vision, but τὸ ὀρθῶς παιδευαστεῖν (*Symposium*, 211 a). 'Ορθὸς ἔρωσ is almost a technical expression. Μείζω δέ τινα καὶ ὀξύτεραν ἔχεις εἰπεῖν ἡδονὴν τῆς περὶ τὰ ἀφροδίσια; Οὐκ ἔχω, ἢ δ' ὅς, οὐδέ γε μανικωτέραν. 'Ο δὲ ὀρθὸς ἔρωσ πέφυκε κοσμίου τε καὶ καλοῦ σωφρόνως τε καὶ μουσικῶς ἐρᾶν; καὶ μάλα, ἢ δ' ὅς. Οὐδὲν ἄρα προσοιστέον μανικὸν οὐδὲ ξυγγενὲς ἀκολασίας τῷ ὀρθῷ ἔρωτι; Οὐ προσοιστέον. Οὐ προσοιστέον ἄρα αὕτη ἢ ἡδονή, οὐδὲ κοινωνητέον αὐτῆς ἐραστῇ τε καὶ παιδικοῖς, ὀρθῶς ἐρῶσί τε καὶ ἐρωμένους; Οὐ μέντοι μὰ Δί', ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες, προσοιστέον (*Republic*, 403 a, b).

It remains for us to discuss the influence which these experiences had on the Ideal Theory regarded as an attempt at systematic philosophy. In the first place it accounts for the separate reality attributed to the Ideas. That is, no doubt, a logical thesis capable of being discussed on its own merits, but it was not logic alone that created the theory. In the *Cratylus* we find Plato confronted by the problem which the Ideal Theory claimed to solve; but the fact of the existence of Ideas was borne in upon Plato by a sudden and unaccountable experience.

This suggestion also removes the main difficulty about Plato's Dialectic as a method of thought; for it is no longer true that he is endeavouring to establish a science independent of all experience. Kant's proof of the necessity of the figure in geometric reasoning could no more be alleged as a refutation of the possibility of Dialectic. For the Ideas are, on this hypothesis, to be themselves regarded as actual matter of experience. The advance from *διάνοια* to *νόησις*

is not from thought with a figure to pure thinking (in the modern sense), but from thought where a sensible object is used as an inadequate representative of the Idea, to thought where the Idea itself is directly apprehended and no representative is required. The method therefore is independent of bodily sensation but is not independent of experience or intuition (*Anschauung*).

Thirdly, our suggestion explains the chief difficulty about the realm of Ideas itself, which is the fact that on logical grounds the Ideal world should be no better and no worse than the actual; whereas of course it is treated as perfect in all respects. The only approach to an argument for it contained in the *Republic* is at 476 a: "Since beautiful and ugly are opposite they must be two; but if both are two, each is one". The Ideal world, then, may contain perfect beauty, but will also contain utter ugliness: and so each good Idea is balanced by a bad Idea. For it can hardly be urged that the perfection of the perfectly ugly is a good quality. Nor can it be pleaded in his defence that he regarded injustice or ugliness as a mere absence of beauty and justice, so that only the good qualities need be conceived as Ideas. The passage just quoted from the *Republic* forbids that, and the *Phædo*, 103 b, is decisive: αὐτὸ τὸ ἐναντίον ἐαυτῷ ἐναντίον οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο, οὔτε τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν, οὔτε τὸ ἐν τῇ φύσει—(a passage, by the way, which is also quite decisive against the conceptualist interpretation of the Ideas). No doubt the Platonists subsequently got out of the difficulty by denying Ideas of *στέρησις*. But where does Plato commit himself to the view that *ἀδικία* (e.g.) is a *στέρησις*? He had far too vivid an appreciation of the evil that is in the world to be content with such an evasion; for why is there any such *στέρησις* in a world governed by the Idea of Good? If the conditions of spatial and temporal existence require it—why those conditions? Plato's whole philosophy requires a positive principle of evil somewhere in the real world; yet his Ideal Theory does not contain it.

The incompatibility of Plato's conception of the Ideal World with the necessary conclusion of its logical basis need cause no perplexity to any one who believes that the Ideas were for him the objects of an artistic and almost religious experience. The emotional and moral value of the Ideas was determined for him by the experience in which they were discovered. Logically he should have believed in Ideal Ugliness; but he had seen the Idea of Beauty, and the Ideal world took its value not from the argument but from the experience. His mind was obsessed by the excellence

of that Idea, and the excellence was illogically but very naturally extended to all other Ideas. Only when the vision had faded did the difficulty of Ideal Hair and Ideal Mud begin to make itself felt (*Parmenides*, 130 d). The conviction of the beauty and glory of the Ideal World is prior to all argumentation about the Ideas ; the argument moves within the limits of that firm conviction.

I think Plato identified the object of his vision with the Ideal Beauty, and that this was the only Idea he had seen. We are practically told in the *Republic* (506 b-c) that he had never experienced the Idea of Good, and both the descriptions of the ecstatic vision treat its object as Beauty ; and in the *Phædrus* (250 d) it is suggested that Beauty alone of the Ideas is accessible to human experience during the period between birth and death.

Let me summarise briefly. In the earlier Dialogues, down to and including the *Cratylus*, we find Plato coming more and more into contact with the problem of the relation of Knowledge to Reality. Then suddenly all doubts are set at rest by an experience of some brilliant light, which he takes to be Ideal Beauty itself. This vision is recoverable ; it may be induced by τὸ ὀρθῶς παιδεσθῆναι. The metaphysical view of Beauty suggested is at once extended to all excellent or indifferent attributes, and though by implication it covers objectionable attributes also, this is not made explicit and the results of this implication are not faced. The Ideas are not mythical, but the subject-matter of the highest scientific knowledge. They are used as the metaphysical basis of scientific ethics. Then in *Republic*, X., Plato, feeling anxious about his rejection of Art, sees that by a legitimate extension of the Ideal Theory to cover, not only attributes, but general nouns, he can support that rejection ; he accepts that extension, thereby preparing the ruin of the Theory. The τρίτος ἄνθρωπος argument here incidentally introduced also contributes to that ruin. In the *Parmenides* the Theory is annihilated, and in the *Timæus* the Ideal World is part of a mythical structure.¹ The blood had cooled and the vision had faded ; whatever the experience may have been, at least the interpretation put upon it had been false. But the later dialogues have lost in fire all that they have gained in method.

To us the Ideal Theory is myth, as it was to Plato in the later period. Prof. Burnet wrote recently in *MIND* (N.S.,

¹ Let me repeat that I mean the "old ideal theory" with its basis of ecstatic vision and, in consequence, independently existing Ideas. Plato of course never denied the real significance of general terms.

57, p. 101) of the myths—"They have their roots in something older than philosophy, and possessing a vitality which is denied to philosophical systems". And just before (p. 100) he had pointed out that Aristotle, who begins with accepted facts and ends in myth, has always been a pillar of orthodoxy, while "most heresies come from Plato" because he insists on scientific treatment of ultimate questions. This is no doubt true; but this distinction is rooted in another. Here, as in all departments of human activity, the ultimate fact is temperament. Aristotle was bound to produce a philosophy which would be a basis for orthodoxy, for, colossal as was his intellect—perhaps the greatest in history,—he was by temperament a churchwarden; and Plato was bound to be the philosophic father of many heretics because he was by temperament a Titan. There is an inspiration in the spectacle of the old philosopher tearing in shreds his proudly built philosophy and beginning it all afresh. But among his actual works what I have called "the old Ideal Theory," which he himself rightly discarded, is worth more to mankind than the method of division elaborated in the *Sophist* and the *Politicus*, or the insertion of ὁμοια between τὸ ἐν and τὰ πολλὰ as desiderated in the *Philebus* (16 c-e). These may be of great scientific value, but they impart no impulse. The Ideal Theory, as held by Plato in his middle period, may be myth; but it is the outcome and expression of something more valuable than any specific doctrine, however true—of intellectual courage that refuses to allow any sphere to be set beyond the reach of knowledge, of mystic vision in which all that is mean and sordid disappears, and of temperamental fire without which no great achievement is possible in action or in art.