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## Plato's Simile of Light (continued). Part II. The Allegory of the Cave

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# PLATO'S SIMILE OF LIGHT.

(Continued.)

## PART II.

### THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE.

'He led a wretched life, unto himself unknowne.'—*Faery Queen*.

'Quid? talpam num desiderare lumen <non> putas?—CICERO.

THE first part of this paper argued that the traditional application of the Cave to the Line was not intended by Plato, and led to a misunderstanding of both similes. The Cave, it was said, is *attached* to the simile of the Sun and the Line by the visible region outside the cave, which is a reintegration of the symbolism of sun, originals and images in the sunlight, and the new system of objects inside the cave is compared and contrasted with the natural objects in the visible outside. As we know that the natural symbolism illustrates the Platonic education, our main task in this paper will be to find the meaning of the cave, untrammelled by the associations of the lower line.

#### A. *The Human Θεωρία.*

Bδ. *περὶ τοῦ μαχεῖ νῶν δῆτα ; Φι. περὶ ὄνου σκιᾶς.*

1. The Cave is avowedly an allegory of human nature.<sup>1</sup> It begins by describing a state (*πάθος*) which symbolizes want of education (*ἀπαιδευσία*), and the plot turns on the possibility of leading men in that state to the contemplation of the Good, and then persuading or compelling them to return among men who have never seen the Good. It illustrates the journey of the soul to the *νοητὸς τόπος* (517b). We shall have to ask what does the cave signify, in what condition are the prisoners, and what is the 'loosening and healing' that the prisoners undergo. I may anticipate the result of our discussion by saying that the allegory is not framed to exhibit how opinion mounts by a graduated ladder to knowledge. It is not even primarily concerned with the relation of the sensible to the intelligible, and throws little light, for good or bad, on Plato's supposed inability to connect the two. The allegory is exactly what he declares it to be, a study of our nature with regard to *παιδεία* and *ἀπαιδευσία*.

But *ἀπαιδευσία* is not a mere privation, the primitive or naïve level of experience that education is destined to transcend by natural means.<sup>2</sup> That would make the question about the possibility of philosophy absurdly simple.

<sup>1</sup> 514a 1, 515a 5.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., 492e. This part of Book VI. is the most valuable commentary on the Cave, although the application of the Cave to the line

has obscured it.

As in the first paper, *Sun, Cave, and Line* are used for the similes, and *sun, line, cave* for the objects themselves.

'*Ἀπαιδευσία* is the education that suits the cave, though Plato will not allow it the name.<sup>1</sup> It is a positive and perverted state, a psychical disposition with its own apparently adequate satisfactions, which successfully rivals the claims of philosophy to rule the destiny of men. The cave-system in all its parts tends to foster and maintain this disposition, and Plato conceives the struggle between the two rival impulses to be as eternal as human nature (see VIII. and IX.).

Let us begin with the cave as a whole. If the *nature* of the visible is such that the eye is led to its ruler, the sun, the *purpose* of the cave seems to be to keep the prisoners engrossed with the shadows. I say the purpose, because all the signs point to its being contrived by human minds for human ends. The bonds that hold the prisoners fast and the shadows that enchain their interest, so that fetters become unnoticed, are devised by men. Equally the wall, the puppets, and the fire, are artificial things, serving the ends of the showmen. The cave, in fact, is arranged like the galanty-show of our grandfathers.<sup>2</sup> It seems an entertainment, but is a prison, and whether the inmates will or not, their whole world is the shadow-play. The fire-system may then, like a galanty-show, be defined in terms of the shadows that it is its sole object to produce; and its purpose seems to be to absorb the prisoners so that they are unaware of the *θεωρία* outside, and are, indeed, turned away from it.<sup>3</sup> The cave, therefore, seems contrived to make the *shadows* compete with the fairer spectacle that leads to the sun. Since it is managed by men, it may fitly represent an institution, but is hardly adequate to symbolize nature, as some think. In a word: the puppet-show rather suggests Vanity Fair than the Cosmos.

It is useless to gloss over the all but impassable barrier between the cave and the upper region, as defenders of the view that the allegory depicts a natural progression are wont to do.<sup>4</sup> 'Ἔστι δ' οὐκ εὐέξοδον, like Hades.<sup>5</sup> But the inmates of this place do not even desire to leave their prison;<sup>6</sup> for they know no better life. The whole cave is 'a little glooming light, much like a shade,' and Plato takes pains to emphasize the confusion of men passing from the darkness to the light outside, or from light to darkness, and the need for habituation before they can see at all.<sup>7</sup> It would be absurd to represent the philosopher, who has seen all things in the light of the Good, as blinded and useless when he enters the world of sense, particularly if he must educate the prisoners by means of objects in that world. But if the cave, as Plato draws it, is in some sense unnatural, then we can understand the double confusion of those entering or leaving it. The two systems, I contend, carry the mind in two divergent directions by their intrinsic structure.

<sup>1</sup> See especially 492e and 493a-c.

<sup>2</sup> 'A shadow-pantomime produced by throwing shadows of *miniature figures* on a wall or screen' (O.E.D.). There is, so far as I know, no earlier description of the shadow-play, as distinguished from the puppet-play, in Europe.

<sup>3</sup> 518d, οὐκ ὀρθῶς δὲ τετραμμένῳ οὐδὲ βλέποντι οἱ ἔδει: 519b 5.

<sup>4</sup> 'The gradual ascent,' Shorey, *loc. cit.*, p. 238, Adam on 532b.

<sup>5</sup> *Persae*, 688.

<sup>6</sup> 515d.

<sup>7</sup> 516a, 517a, and see below.

Plato does not leave the nature of the divergence in doubt. The sights of the cave are human, and those outside in the sun are divine.<sup>1</sup> We may use the important passage in 532b to elucidate the distinction.

That summary of the allegory contrasts the *φαντάσματα θεία* in the sunlight with the shadows thrown by the fire, and it is evident that the light which casts them gives the images their value. It is not enough to say, on the analogy of *Sophist* 266c-e,<sup>2</sup> that the 'illusions and reflections of nature are divine as compared with those produced by the hand and tongue of man.' The divine reflections are not illusions: they are symbols. In Plato *θείον* means the higher range of man's activities and their objects, in which his divine nature is manifested. Thus the study of mathematics, which is symbolized by the 'divine shadows,' is an exercise of this divine power, and it is by contemplation of the *νοητόν* in mathematics and dialectic<sup>3</sup> that man himself becomes *θεῖος*. We must, in fact, interpret the shadows by the light that casts them, and bear in mind what that light means. On the other hand, the 'human' activities of the cave must be taken in antithesis to the divine activities outside. The propaedeutic cannot be carried on in the gloom of the cave, nor can Nature be represented by the artificial instruments of illusion. Let us then see what the human *θεωρία* can be.

In 533b Plato distinguishes the mathematical *τέχναι*, which give a hold on Being, from the various arts *which are turned towards the opinions and desires of men*, or towards becomings and compositions, or towards the tending of growing and composite things. All the latter serve human ends,<sup>4</sup> but the first of them requires our special attention, for it is pre-eminently the art fostered by the cave, the art that turns men away from Being. The cave glorifies a human *τέχνη* with its special end, and that *τέχνη* creates a habit of mind and a life incompatible with the best life. Such a life is not simply the life of opinion, though it excludes knowledge, nor is it merely the practical as opposed to the theoretical life. We must turn to Plato's psychology to understand the character that it stamps on men's souls.

His original analysis of the soul discovered three main tendencies, each of which found its outlet in the ideal state. But with the central books the enquiry deepens and becomes more concrete. The philosophic nature, which was defined as the nature fit to rule, is now seen to have as its objects the

<sup>1</sup> 517d, ἀπὸ θείων θεωριῶν ἐπὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπεια. Cf. 518a, ἐκ φωτὸς εἰς σκότος.

<sup>2</sup> The classification in the *Sophist* is only superficially like this one, because it does no more than distinguish between what man makes and what God makes. But this is a piece of symbolism, and must be interpreted in accordance with the requirements of the symbolism. In the *Sophist* fire and sun and shadows are all alike made by God; but this can have no bearing at all on a simile which turns upon the distinction between fire and sun, between one set of shadows and the other.

<sup>3</sup> In the *Epinomis* (990d) a distinction is drawn between the art of land-surveying and pure geometry, similar to that which is made in the propaedeutic between the disciplines that lead to Being and the arts that are merely useful: δ δὴ θαῦμα οὐκ ἀνθρώπινον ἀλλὰ γεγονὸς θεῖον, κ.τ.λ. For the utilitarian arts as serving the ἀνθρώπινος βίος in the narrow sense see Xenophon, *Mem.* IV. 7, 2. See also 500c, θεῖω δὲ καὶ κοσμίῳ δ γε φιλόσοφος ὁμιλῶν κόσμῳ τε καὶ θεῖος εἰς τὸ δυνατόν ἀνθρώπῳ γίγνεται. See 500e, θεῖω παραδείγματι; 518e (an important passage), 589d.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. *Soph.* 219a.

forms and the Good. Now in the unregenerate state the life of philosophy has fallen quite apart from the practical and political life, and its votaries are despised and persecuted. This is not all. Such a state perverts the best natures, which are fit for philosophy, by the *praise and blame* of the assemblies and law-courts.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the soil does not allow the plants that grow in it to develop their proper virtues; <sup>2</sup> τὸ φιλότιμον is cherished at the expense of τὸ φιλόσοφον. On the other hand, ὁ θεῖος καὶ κόσμος φιλόσοφος, intent on an eternal order, will not turn εἰς ἀνθρώπων πραγματείας.<sup>3</sup> So the actual state not only does not allow for the natural division of labour, but causes an absolute perversion of function. The few philosophers have no function, and the majority are warped<sup>4</sup> by their surroundings and seek a human good. This is what the cave, as first described, attempts to depict, and this great cleft must be overcome to found a καλλίπολις.

In the first place the allegory contrasts two 'lives,' that of theory and that of politics.<sup>5</sup> The highest end of the latter is the honours that the cave can give.<sup>6</sup> If the prisoners remain in the cave, or are not rescued when they are young, they will never know a higher Good. Their prize is τιμή, and they strive for it like the competitors at Olympia, from whom Pythagoras drew his parable of the three lives.<sup>7</sup> This system of rewards engenders a wisdom of its own, which is no more than a technique of affairs,<sup>8</sup> but it is all that the cave seems to need. It is in this sense that the cave is a place of δόξα. As the end is not the form of the Good, but a human good (520d 1) dimly groped after, knowledge is excluded, and a human τέχνη takes its place.

The famous allusion to Achilles' expression of loathing at the world of the dead then comes to its own.<sup>9</sup> It does not simply mean that the life of opinion is like Hades, but that the sacrifice of knowledge and the Good is a high price to pay for the *life* of φιλοτιμία.<sup>10</sup> Plato suggests the point with unmatched felicity. Achilles in Homer answers Odysseus' soothing words :

πρὶν μὲν γάρ σε ζῶν ἐτίομεν ἴσα θεοῖσιν  
 Ἄργεῖοι, νῦν αὖτε μέγα κρατέεις νεκύεσσιν 485  
 ἐνθάδ' ἑών· τῷ μὴ τι θανάων ἀκαχίζεω, Ἄχιλλεῦ.

<sup>1</sup> 492b-c, 493d; cf. 516c, τιμαὶ δὲ καὶ ἔπαινοι.

<sup>2</sup> 491d.

<sup>3</sup> 500b-c, 492c. Cf. 517c, τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων πράττειν.

<sup>4</sup> 490e, 491c.

<sup>5</sup> Βίαι . . . 518a 7, ἐκ φανεροτέρου βίου ἤκουσα (cf. b 2); 520e 4, εἰ μὲν βίον ἐξευρήσεις ἀμείνω τοῦ ἀρχεῖν; 521b, Ἐχεις οὖν βίον ἄλλον τινα πολιτικῶν ἀρχῶν καταφρονούντα ἢ τὸν τῆς ἀληθινῆς φιλοσοφίας; b 9, τιμὰς ἄλλας καὶ βίον ἀμείνω τοῦ πολιτικοῦ.

<sup>6</sup> Τιμαὶ . . . 516c 8, 519d 6, 521b 9, 540d 5. The philosopher 'knows other honours and a better "life," but men like Kallikles believe that there is but one life': ζηλῶν οὐκ ἐλέγχοντας ἀνδρας τὰ μικρὰ ταῦτα, ἀλλ' οἷς ἔστιν καὶ βίος καὶ

δόξα [scil., τιμή] καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ (Gorgias, 486c). φιλοτιμία is also φιλονικία, Rep. 516e 9, 517d 8, 521a. See especially 520c: ὡς νῦν αἱ πολλαὶ [πόλεις] ὑπὸ σκισμαχούντων τε πρὸς ἀλλήλους καὶ στασιαζόντων περὶ τοῦ ἀρχεῖν οἰκοῦνται, ὡς μεγάλου τινὸς ἀγαθοῦ ὄντος.

<sup>7</sup> See Aristotle, Fr. 58 (Rose), for an application of the figure of θεωρία.

<sup>8</sup> See 491-3, especially 493b: σοφίαν τε καλέσειεν καὶ ὡς τέχνην συστησάμενος, κ.τ.λ., and 493d, comparing 516c, τῆς ἐκεῖ σοφίας.

<sup>9</sup> 516d; Odysseus, XI. 489.

<sup>10</sup> 516e, 'κεῖνά τε δοξάζειν καὶ ἐκείως ζῆν . . . ζῆν ἐκείως (ζῆν is the verb of βίος). This phrase too, be it noted, is the equivalent of τιμωμένους τε καὶ ἐνδυναστεύοντας.

The full bitterness of his reply lies in the line that Plato deliberately paraphrases: I would rather be a bondsman among the living

ἢ πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι καταφθιμένοισιν ἀνάσσειν.

Why did Plato substitute for this the heightened phrase *τιμωμένους καὶ ἐνδυναστεύοντας*? To any lover of tragedy it would convey a second reminder that the glories of our blood and state are shadows. *Ἐνδυναστεύειν* is an Aeschylean word, spoken by the shade of another king, Darius, as he revisits the scene of his former power:

ὄμως δ' ἐκείνοις [*scil. τοῖς κατὰ χθονὸς θεοῖς*] ἐνδυναστεύσας ἐγὼ ἤκω (*Persae*, 691).

With such art does Plato suggest that the cave-dweller is 'a hunter of Shadows, himself a shade.'<sup>1</sup> The Homeric lines seem to have become almost proverbial for the vanity of *φιλοτιμία*; for we meet them again in Chrysostom's dialogue of Diogenes and Alexander about kingship (*De Regno*, IV. 50, *cf.* 52).

Before we touch the vital point, the release of the prisoners, let me state the implications of the accepted view, and of that which I propose to substitute for it. The former conceives the allegory to relate the sensible to the intelligible. The state of the prisoners is merely opinion, which can be transformed into knowledge by a gradual critical process leading from the concrete to the ideal. Corresponding to these psychical stages, which are diversely explained, are grades of objects leading to the Good, although the upper and the lower parts are imperfectly joined. But this merely betrays Plato's usual embarrassment about the relation of the two worlds. We may call this the progression or ladder theory.<sup>2</sup>

Now this is not an interpretation of the Cave, but a misinterpretation of the quadripartite Line. We must no more seek for a classification of the grades of perception or opinion in the cave than for 'any thing concerning the sea, and the dominion thereof' in Domesday Book.<sup>3</sup> There is no gradual and decorous initiation step by step, but the violent conversion of a soul well-nigh lost in the City of Destruction. The psychological view now suggested does justice to the dualism of the two systems, and regards the cave, with all its machinery, as focussed upon the shadows. These make the prisoners turn the wrong way (518d) and look where they can never find the Good. It seems to follow that the machinery, whatever it may mean, is an instrument for producing shadows, not a series of steps to the Good.

<sup>1</sup> I wish to suggest a not unlikely meaning for another allusion to Hades. Those who are rescued from the cave are compared to men raised from Hades to the gods (521c). The names of some who did so ascend are collected by Adam; but, so far as Plato had any definite figure in mind, is not Pollux (or rather Castor) appropriate for the very reason that leads Adam to exclude him? Castor's life above was *intermittent*—'si fratrem Pollux alterna morte redemit'—and he owed it to the self-sacrifice of

Pollux. Each took his turn below. But the prisoners in their Hades can only be rescued by men who sacrifice the divine life for the time, and they must themselves take their turn in the cave. Cf. 520c, *καταβατέον οὖν ἐν μέρει*, 520d, *ἐν μέρει*, 540b, *ὅταν δὲ τὸ μέρος ἦκη*. The plot involves a *κατάβασις* and *ἀνάβασις* by turns.

<sup>2</sup> Olympiodorus, *In Phaedonem*, 101, 11 (Norwin): *βαθμοὶ τῆς ἀληθείας*.

<sup>3</sup> *Pepys's Diary*, December 21, 1661.

Then the two *θεωρίαι*, turning the soul in divergent directions and to conflicting goods, are connected with the actual cleft between the lives of politics and philosophy described in Book VI. They seem to represent the choice between *φιλοτιμία* and *φιλοσοφία*, between the *ἀνθρώπινος βίος* and the divine life. We may even hazard a conjecture about the material from which Plato drew his figure. Pythagoras' apologue of the three ways of life was a figure of the Olympic games. The spectators were compared to those who lived a life of contemplation, and this had a specific reference to the *θεωρία* of the heavens. This perhaps suggested the *θεωρία* outside the cave, and equally the literal sense of *θεωρία* at a play or *πανήγυρις* is figured within the cave. It will be remembered that in Book V. Plato called the lover of sights, as opposed to the *φιλόσοφος*, a *φιλοθέαμων* (Aristotle's *φιλοθέωρος*), and here the metaphor is expanded into an allegory. But fused with this image there is even an older figure, that of Hesiod, who first described the two ways—the one smooth, the other rough and steep at the first.<sup>1</sup> This fusion is implied in the very title of the Pythagorean apologue (600b), and plays its part in the conventional imagery at the beginning of Parmenides' poem, not to speak of the parable of Prodikos. But this allegory represents less a parting of the ways than the difficult effort to compel those who have turned the wrong way to enter upon a better road.

The cave, then, is no antechamber to the visible region; it is intended to be self-contained. Nor is the shadow-play enacted in the vast theatre of the Cosmos. It is but a trivial *θαυμαστοποιία*,<sup>2</sup> framed by men, not gods. This allegory is no myth. Its true parallel is less the rich underworld of Virgil than the hole where Odysseus saw his friends and foes, who once were strong and now are impotent. Here men sit with 'twilight eyes,' guessing at mysteries that are only the mysteries of riddles. If the redeemer comes, he speaks a language that they do not understand. Like the Roman at Tomi, he might say:

Barbarus hic ego sum qui non intellegor ulli.

So the allegory, in this setting of darkness competing with light, resolves itself into an *ἀγών*, where, as in a comedy, two opposing principles contend for the mastery. But this *δίκαιος λόγος* is armed with the weapons of science. Can a man who knows the Good rescue some from the temptations of *φιλοτιμία*? Plato has scoured the two principles for judgment as if they were statues. In Book IV. he exhibited *τὸ φιλόσοφον* as a disposition opposed to *τὸ θυμωειδές* and *τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν*.<sup>3</sup> Book VI. sets forth the temptations that beset the

<sup>1</sup> *Works and Days*, 287. For traces in our simile see 532e: ὡσπερ ὁδοῦ ἀνάπαντα . . . καὶ τέλος τῆς πορείας; 515e, διὰ τραχείας τῆς ἀναβάσεως (cf. Hesiod, 291); 517b 4, 5; 521c; 531c; 533b 3, c 7. See also Part I., p. 146, n. 2.

For the applicability of the metaphor of *θεαταί* to politicians see Cleon's speech in Thucydides, III. 38.

<sup>2</sup> For *θαυμαστοποιία* as a metaphor for some trifling pursuit, see Isocrates' attack on the cosmologists in *Antidosis*, 269. The galanty-show is a natural image for the vanity of *φιλοτιμία*. See *The Dynasts*, II. v., viii. (on Napoleon's marriage): 'All day have they been waiting for their galanty-show.'

<sup>3</sup> See Stocks, *Mind*, April, 1915.

young in the life of politics and the incompatibility of the two lives in the existing state. Books VIII. and IX. describe the gradual encroachment of the *φιλάρχος* and *φιλότημος* upon the philosopher, and then—'if gold ruste what shal iren do?'—the long decline to the monstrous perversions of the tyrant. This struggle between the philosopher and the lower dispositions is dramatized in the Cave at its sharpest, in the effort to found and maintain a Kallipolis.<sup>1</sup> He must make them break with their nocturnal way. Some are warped too greatly; but some, if caught young enough, may be rescued. For the sunlight is the natural medium for the eye.

2. The prisoners, says Socrates, are 'like us.'<sup>2</sup> It is necessary to emphasize the bonds and their warping effect, because it is usually assumed that the prisoners are simply naïve, practising, some of them, the 'good *εἰκασία*.' But Plato uses every device of language to suggest that they are kept in a state of illusion and are warped by it.<sup>3</sup> This is why the *ἀγών* is a real struggle. The phrase 'like us' must be made taken a little more specifically than of the 'human race at large.' May we not connect it with a dominant idea in the *Republic*, that men are made like the men they live among and the community to which they belong? Book VII., having argued that it is not impossible to create the ideal state, closes the discussion *περί τε τῆς πόλεως ταύτης καὶ τοῦ ὁμοίου ταύτῃ ἀνδρός*, and the two following books trace the connexion of constitution and character. The pressure that moulds citizens after one model has been described in VI., where praise and blame and even penalties are said to corrupt the best natures in democracy. In the words of the *Gorgias*, their neighbours require them to become *αὐτοφυῶς* <*ὁμοίους*> *τούτοις* (sc. *τῷ δήμῳ*, 513b). This pressure I take to be symbolized by the whole machinery of the cave: the prisoners are in the power of an engine devised to corrupt the ingenuous mind. The citizens are made all alike, and the speaker, with mournful irony, suggests that these captives in their bonds are like himself and his fellow-citizens.<sup>4</sup>

In a drama—and that is what the prisoners seem to see and hear—the play is the thing.<sup>5</sup> We may therefore ignore for the moment the mechanism

<sup>1</sup> 519c: *ἡμέτερον δὴ ἔργον . . . τῶν οἰκιστῶν.*

<sup>2</sup> 515a 5.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. 495d: *ὑπὸ δὲ τῶν τεχνῶν τε καὶ δημιουργῶν ὡσπερ τὰ σώματα λελώβηται, οὕτω καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς συγκεκλασμένοι, κ.τ.λ.*; 535d 9: *πρὸς ἀλήθειαν . . . ἀνάπυρον ψυχῆν.* Plato suggests that the *τέχναι* of the cave produce *βάνανσοι* (495e, 522b). See the list of *φθοραὶ τῆς ψυχῆς* in p. 491 of Book VI. The best illustration of the figure of the bonds is *Theaetetus*, 173a-b. For an *ἀγών* that failed compare Plutarch's story about the calling in of Plato for the younger Dionysius: *διαλεωβημένον ἀπαιδευσία καὶ συντετριμμένον τὸ ἦθος* (*Dion.* c. X.).

<sup>4</sup> The terrestrial cavern of Empedokles and the myth of the *Phaëdo* have given plausibility to the identification of this Hades with the earth

and its inhabitants. If any particular place suggested the cave to Plato, it would seem to be the cave of Vari on Hymettus, which corresponds in all essential points to the description in the text. See Wright, *Harvard Studies in Class. Philology*, XVII.

<sup>5</sup> It is important to observe from 515a-c that the shadow-play is the prisoners' whole world. Four questions are asked to emphasize this confinement in one plane, so to speak. (1) What do they see of themselves and of each other? The shadows. (2) And of the puppets? The shadows. Following Proclus, some modern writers have supposed that there are two kinds of shadows, those of the puppets and those of the prisoners. But c2 shows that this is not so: indeed it is manifest that the intrusion of large

which produces it; indeed the prisoners are unaware of it, so complete is their illusion. The shadow-play therefore seems to be the whole experience of citizens who have chosen a lower Good than the supreme Good, and will include their politics, law, poetry, ethical and social standards, their science and philosophy, at best such as the tinker's apprentice can give them. It will, in short, provide an 'education' in which the many set the standard (492e), and will have all the *τέχραι* except that which leads to Being.<sup>1</sup> As they cannot give an account of their shadows, they are reduced to sharp-witted guessing at what comes next, and the prize goes to the best guesser.<sup>2</sup> Such a condition seems to be hopeless because it is self-complete. As in an exciting play, the prisoners are satisfied to anticipate the sequel. They have no windows open to a larger world.

Plato has thus depicted certain dispositions hardening into a 'life.' The levels at which that life may be lived are described in Books VIII. and IX.<sup>3</sup> Can the best be rescued in time?

immobile shadows upon the moving show would spoil the illusion—an accident that we have all seen at a lantern entertainment. I take it that they are seated well below the line of the firelight (cf. 514b 2 and 4, and see Mr. Wright's plan of the cave of Vari). The point surely is that (1) the prisoners see even of themselves only what is presented to them by the showmen, and (2) that they can't tell the source of their illusion because it is behind them.

With (3) we come to a crux. The reading of ADM is: *εἰ οὖν διαλέγεσθαι οἷοί τ' εἶεν πρὸς ἀλλήλους, οὐ ταῦτα (ταῦτὰ AFM) ἠγγὺ ἂν τὰ παρόντα αὐτοῦ νομίζεω νομάζεω ἄπερ ὁρῶεν;* F omits *νομάζεω*; Iamblichus omits *νομίζεω* and reads *ὄντα* for *παρόντα*; Burnet's text reads *ὄντα* and omits *νομάζεω*. I venture to state a case for the text as I have written it above. The prisoners are 'in blinkers'; they only see what is before them and they do not see each other. Well, if they talk, to whom do they think they are talking? To the shadows, for it is the show that they imagine to be themselves and others. The four questions seem to be about particulars, and lead up to the general conclusion in 515c. Translate 'If then they were able to talk to each other, do you not think that they would consider they were addressing those objects before them, the objects they saw?' This reverses an interpretation of Mr. R. G. Bury's (*C.R.*, 1903, p. 296). He considers that the shadows seem to address the prisoners. But this view depends on the supposition that the two previous questions deal with two kinds of shadows, and that the second pair of questions by reason of symmetry parallels the first pair. But since Plato writes 'if they could talk' the first question is to whom do they think they are talking, not to whom are they listening. Doubtless the second belief is implied, though not

explicitly stated by Plato. (4) If there is an echo, will the prisoners not think that the bearers' voices also come from the shadows?

There are thus two parallel groups of questions. The first and the third suggest that all the prisoners see and hear of themselves comes from the screen in front of them. The second and fourth show that the mechanism of the illusion is unknown to them. In short: what they might know of their own plane and of the showmen's plane is referred to the shadows of the puppets. Such is the conclusion of 515c: *Παντάσῃ δὴ, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, οἱ τοιοῦτοι οὐκ ἂν ἄλλο τι νομίζοιεν τὸ ἀληθὲς ἢ τὰς τῶν σκευαστῶν σκιὰς.*

Note the force of the interlaced construction: *ταῦτα . . . τὰ παρόντα . . . ἄπερ ὁρῶεν.* The received *παρόντα* spoils this. I doubt whether Proclus' *τὴν ἀρχὴν ὄντα νομίζουσα* (*In Rem Publicam*, I. 293, 20) gives any clue to the reading. It seems better to take this phrase as his interpretation of the summing-up in c1-2 just quoted.

<sup>1</sup> 533b 2, cf. 532c 4. The Cave should be read in the light of the distinction that Plato is careful to draw at each stage between the arts as they serve politics and utilitarian ends and the arts that draw to Being.

<sup>2</sup> 516c-d, 519a. Nettle'ship (on 516d) plausibly compares *ἀπομαντευομένη τὸ μέλλον ἤξει το εἰκασία.* But while *εἰκασία* means inference from actual evidence to a stable original, the prisoners exercise mere political 'divination' about the future from their flickering shadows, the originals of which are unknown to them. This mantic art is pure riddle-guessing, not a grade of perception. See 493b: *συνουσία τε καὶ χρόνου τριβῆ.* For the sense of 'groping' in *ἀπομαντεῖσθαι* see 505e.

<sup>3</sup> See also 519a-b, 521a.

3. The prisoners, their hearts 'propense to idols,' desire nothing better than the shadow-play :

τί Πλειάδων μέλει μοι  
τί δ' ἀστέρος Βοώτου ;

The rescue must therefore be made by force, by the *χάρις βίαιος* of a physician from without. The *ἀγών* must not be softened into a natural process due to some divine chance. Rescue comes from a method of education.<sup>1</sup>

Since the captive, released but resistant, is made to face the puppets and is questioned about them, it is assumed that they must be an integral part of the education, and that their bearers help in the process. Plato outlines a scheme of mathematics and dialectic, but here is a whole course or courses preliminary to the propaedeutic, in which sophists play their part, which teaches the neophyte to see Nature as it is, and reveals the character of the sun (sc., the fire). The presupposition, derived from an untenable application to the Line, is that the cave represents *necessary* and successive levels of experience. This is to confuse the gaolers with the rescuer, Cerberus with the 'star of Lethe.'

All such interpretations transform a conflict into an alliance, transmute the *γοητεία* into an education.<sup>2</sup> The rescuer works against the showmen, whose bait is the shadow-play, and the turning is not an initiation, but an exposure. A comparison with the *Politicus* would suggest that the showmen include the greatest of sophists—the politicians and rulers, with their accomplices.<sup>3</sup> What they show is, not the puppets, but the shadow-play ; what they do not desire to show are the puppets. Like the galanty-showman, they desire to maintain an illusion. What then is the difference between the two systems—governed by the sun and the fire—which the rescuer and the showmen represent ?

The man who enters the cave is not confused because he is confronted by a lower grade of objects of apprehension, a stage through which he must have passed if they were necessary and natural antecedents of knowledge. Knowing the Good, he cannot understand or value the *ends* of the cave.<sup>4</sup> But once accustomed to the obscurity, he has the advantage that he can 'place' the counterfeit system in relation to the divine system without. What is the difference between them ? An image, we saw, tells about its original. To use a phrase of Proclus (*In Parmenidem*) : there is a natural *μετάβασις ἀπὸ τῶν*

<sup>1</sup> The confusion starts from *φύσει* in 515c: σκόπει δὲ, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, αὐτῶν λύσω τε καὶ ἴασιν τῶν τε δεσμῶν καὶ τῆς ἀφροσύνης, οἷα τις ἂν εἴη, εἰ φύσει τοιαῦτε συμβαίνοι αὐτοῖς. I owe the true rendering to Professor Burnet. It is: εἰ φύσει τοιαῦτε [scil., λύσω τε καὶ ἴασιν] συμβαίνοι αὐτοῖς (φύσει τοιαῦτε = τοιαῦτε τὴν φύσιν). For the healing see *Politicus*, 296b.

<sup>2</sup> The whole tone of the dialogue is decisive against the attempt to make the sophists into 'purgers' of the soul. They are like true educators as wolves are like dogs (*Soph.*, 231a)—

mimics and jugglers. Cf. *Rep.* 496a and 494e, also 493a and c.

<sup>3</sup> *Rep.* 492a ; *Polit.* 291a-b, 303b-c.

<sup>4</sup> See 517d-e and 582 b-c. Compare Mr. Conrad's *Arrow of Gold*: 'I was as much a stranger as the most hopeless castaway, stumbling in the dark upon a hut of natives and finding them in the grip of some situation appertaining to the mentalities, prejudices, and problems of an undiscovered country—of a country of which he had not even had one single clear glimpse before.'

εἰκόνων ἐπὶ τὰ παραδείγματα, and the keen-sighted can trace the connexion. But the shadows of the cave are intended to be self-complete and self-explanatory. The art of the cave is to tell the coming shadow, not to explain its cause. When the prisoner is compelled to face the puppets, he is asked what they are. If he had, like his rescuer, a knowledge of the natural system outside, he would have a standard of comparison. He would see that the fire-light is but an obscure and distorting medium compared to the sunlight, that the puppets are tiny artificial copies of the originals outside, and that the whole system is designed to cast shadows and to make men content with them. Knowing none of these things, and unable to see any connexion between the tiny puppets and the shadows, he believes that the latter are more real. He cannot discriminate 'the shadows proper to each thing.'<sup>1</sup> This struggle, in which the rescuer uses force and the prisoner unlearns nothing, cannot really represent an initiation, cannot be the free and unconstrained παιδεία prescribed in 536e. The so-called 'conversion to εἶδωλα'<sup>2</sup> has no justification in the text, and is conceived to suit the assumption that the lower stages are carried on in the cave. There is a forced turning and complete bewilderment, a very different thing from philosophic wonder.

What then are the puppets, which are incomprehensible to the prisoner and apparently valueless to the philosopher? It is significant that Plato does not trouble to define them. The originals in the *visible* are seen through their images, which are true so far as they go. The puppets are, however, magnified and distorted by their shadows, which are cast by a dim light. The shadows seem to be real till their originals are exposed as the paltry artefacts they are.<sup>3</sup> Then they are known to be human εἶδωλα of the real θεωρία in the sunlight. Plato's use of the word εἶδωλα for the notions of the sophists has been noted by Dr. Shorey; and I agree, with this qualification. They are not a stage in the education; their sole end is to cast shadows, to make illusion. When one who has been rescued returns to them, he sees, in the words of the *Sophist*, 'that the things which were great seem small, and the easy difficult.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Part I., p. 145. In 520c Plato means that the rescuer will be able to relate the puppet to its shadow and to that which it counterfeits; the prisoner can do neither.

<sup>2</sup> The phrase is taken from its context, which describes three main stages—the rescue, the propaedeutic, and the dialectic (532b). The first stage is the 'loosening from the bonds and the turning from the shadows to the puppets and the light and ascent from the cave to the sun.' A careful reading shows that the purpose is to change the light. Plato marks the break after the first stage by the words καὶ ἐκεῖ (in the sun), and by placing the third stage (the originals) before the second (their shadows) in order to emphasize as strongly as possible the break with the cave and the distinction between the two kinds of shadows. The mark of the first stage is

the use of medicinal force throughout. It is the force of a physician to a diseased patient. Then in the sunlight the natural and unconstrained study of truth can begin as the youth is able (536e). For the meaning of the resistance to the turning see VI. 494e, 492e.

<sup>3</sup> They are truer, because they are what they are, without distortion, not what the shadows make them seem to be.

<sup>4</sup> 234d. A passage from the lost Aristotelian *Protrepticus* (see Bywater, *J. Phil.* II. 55) in Iamblichus' tract of that name might almost be a reminiscence of our passage: Γνώμη δ' ἂν τις τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ ἀπὸ τούτων, εἰ θεωρήσειεν ὑπ' αὐγᾶς τὸν ἀνθρώπειον βίον. εὐρήσει γὰρ τὰ δοκοῦντα εἶναι μεγάλα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πάντα ὄντα σκιαγραφίαν (c. VIII.). Cf. c. X.: αὐτῶν γὰρ ἔστι θεατῆς, ἀλλ' οὐ μιμημάτων, and c. XV., end.

He now knows that the cave is a *γοητεία*,<sup>1</sup> and the showmen mimics and jugglers. As for the firelight which makes the show possible, we are, I think, entitled to call it the light of human opinion. The fire, too, is part of the human machinery to produce shadows.

As the life of the cave disables the prisoner from seeing reality, there is no way but to drag him from his surroundings into the light. The chains, the steep and hard way up, and the struggle, all typify the resistance of formed psychical dispositions and of the institution that has moulded them (494e). It is impossible to reduce all this to a sober educational progress, or to take any part of the cave as an initiation scene. The initiation is into the sunlight.

4. Finally, I suggest that any view which tries to find continuity between the objects in the cave and those outside, or looks for 'complete symmetrical quadripartition' like that in the Line, and criticizes Plato because it is not there, has mistaken the very core of the allegory. The true rhythm of the objects is triple—a parallelism of source of light, originals, and images; a distinction of divine and human lights, of natural and artificial *θεωρίαι*. We must start from this opposition of a 'nocturnal day' with daylight itself, and give full force to the *ἀγών*. Then it will be found that the continuity is not one of objects, but the psychological continuity of a conversion.

We have now substituted for a theory of levels of reality a political allegory, based on the Platonic psychology, and connected with the question whether it is possible to found the ideal state and illustrating the actual education that Plato proposes. But if this is so, the supposed dualism between Becoming and Being vanishes, as in the Line, though for a different reason. There is a dualism; but it is between two divergent lives, neither of which values the *ends* of the other: and the one involves remaining in a state of opinion, the other needs knowledge. The only solution is to drag some votaries of the lower life (if I may apply a noble phrase) *ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem*.

But their rescue is of no avail unless the impulse communicated by the sunlight carries them beyond the images of real things to their originals and to the sun itself. We must next see how Plato expresses this.<sup>2</sup>

#### B. *Prooimion and Nomos.*

οἶον δ' ἐν Μαραθῶνι συλαθεῖς ἀγενεῖων  
μένεν ἀγῶνα πρεσβυτέρων.

1. So far, the moral rather than the intellectual side of the breach with the life of the cave has been discussed. The intellectual means of rescue are the mathematical studies, and the objects answering to them are the

<sup>1</sup> *Soph.* 235a; cf. *Polit.* 291c.

<sup>2</sup> I may add that it is surely impossible for any part of the cave to represent the first education. Anything more unlike a region where the guardians have from childhood breathed the

'air that carries health from happy lands' cannot be imagined; nor is the *ἀγών* consistent with this view. The problem here is purely to find an intellectual means of rescue, and the first question in the *ἀγών* is, 'What is it?'

*φαντάσματα θεία* in the sunlight. They are so removed from the shadows of the cave as to seem at the beginning of a new world. It was necessary to represent the *ἀνθρώπινος βίος* in a system turned the other way, with bonds and obstacles and the recalcitrance of the prisoners themselves to give the full effect of the moral break between the old life and the new. But it has actually led, by a series of misinterpretations, to a theory of levels of experience in the cave and to the vain attempt to smooth over the abrupt severance. Once the prisoner is in the sunlight his eye is led from shadows and reflections to originals, then to minor lights in the heavens, and lastly to the Good. We must now analyze the final summary of the whole simile in order to bring out an essential point in Plato's meaning. Necessarily it has been interpreted in accordance with the view previously taken of the three similes. Let us first recall the problem of the whole simile. It was said that all men desire the Good, but that most seek it blindly. First, its transcendent position was illustrated: then in the Line two successive methods of reaching it were described. The Cave showed men seeking a lower good because they had no knowledge. The intellectual means of their salvation was mathematics. But it must be borne in mind that the end is the Good, and that unless it is reached, the philosopher king cannot rule, and the Kallipolis cannot be founded or maintained. With this in mind we may consider the order of Plato's exposition.

First he divides off the mathematical *τέχναι* from all others (533b 1). This draws a firm line between the arts that are of value for purely human purposes—the arts of the cave—and those that draw to Being, the arts of the sunlight. Next he shows that even the latter do not take the final step; they only place the philosopher on his way. Now this is clearly the place where the Line is relevant; for, if the view taken of it above is right, it had no other purpose than to distinguish between the two stages of the intellectual education, and particularly to show the limitations of the propaedeutic. The exposition at the end of Book VI., an exposition of methods only, is therefore picked up again in the light of the long account of the mathematical sciences in 522-31.

The mathematical sciences, it is said, are but handmaids (533d); we need another name for them, clearer than *δόξα*, less clear than knowledge. (He is comparing them, be it observed, with the arts that are *πρὸς δόξας ἀνθρώπων*, etc., on the one hand and with dialectic on the other. With this sentence the Line is recalled in order to place *διάνοια*. The Line ended, it will be remembered, with the enumeration of four states, which were said to stand to one

May not *πρὸς τὸ φῶς*, which is the keynote of the allegory, always mean 'towards the sunlight,' even in 515c? I take it that the prisoners sit in a sudden dip at the bottom of the cave (see Wright's plan of the cave of Vari), but that on standing up they might be able to see the wide mouth (514a) and the daylight. However that

may be, *πρὸς τὸ φῶς* in 515c and *πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ φῶς* in e 1 must mean the *same* light, as the prisoner has not moved in the meantime: *αὐτό* is used, not in contrast to another light, but to the puppets. The phrase may suggest initiation, as in *Clouds*, 632; but it must be initiation into sunlight.

another in a proportion of truth similar to that of their respective objects. The much-disputed sentence in 533e 4-5 simply picks up the thread of the argument at the point where it was dropped in VI.<sup>1</sup> The new proportion, whatever its meaning, thus continues the Line in the light of the long discussion of propaedeutic and dialectic. I shall now try to analyze it, noting, with Plato, that it is not the words that matter, but the idea.

He first recalls the four states from the end of VI., and groups them under the two states corresponding to the two chief divisions; he then adds the objects of the two main states. It will be remembered that the only proportion actually drawn in VI. was a proportion of the four states, and that its purpose appeared to be to place *διάνοια*. But here the same purpose has just been expressed. In VI., too, he began by giving the ratio that ruled to subordinate ratios. Now here he has recalled all the terms that are necessary to place the proportion that he wishes to draw, though in different language. Then he gives the proportion: *καὶ ὅτι οὐσία πρὸς γένεσιν, νόησιν πρὸς δόξαν, καὶ ὅτι νόησις πρὸς δόξαν, ἐπιστήμην πρὸς πίστιν καὶ διάνοιαν πρὸς εἰκασίαν*. This gives the ruling ratio first in terms of objects, then in terms of states, so that the proportion of the four states can be made. Why does Plato wish to arrive at this particular proportion?—for he has no other purpose than to arrive at it. If *εἰκασία* and *πίστις* were real states, it would be hard to see why a plain proportion should be put in that order. But, as our former analysis has taught us, he is merely saying that *ἐπιστήμη* is certainty, because it can give an account of things, and that *διάνοια* is 'aenigmatical or specular,' because it cannot.<sup>2</sup> This is exactly what we should expect; for the only contention here, after the long discussion of the propaedeutic, is that it is insufficient if the neophyte does not advance from it through dialectic to the Good. In brief: he recalls the four states at the point where the limitations of *διάνοια* are finally stated; after again giving the ground of the proportion, he proceeds to make it in an order that is hard to account for except on the assumption that his sole purpose is to show the greater clearness of *ἐπιστήμη* proper.

There are thus three states described in the allegory. First, the *φιλότιμοι* (and indeed all who seek goods other than the supreme Good) have their hearts set on the shadow-play:

<sup>1</sup> "Ἄλλ' ὁ ἂν μόνον δηλοῖ πρὸς τὴν ἔξιν σαφήνεια λέγει ἐν ψυχῇ (λέγειν, FM; λέγεις, A<sup>2</sup>). Adam, who expels the clause from the text, considers ἔξιν to be a trace of Stoic influence in an interpolation. But the word is simply a reminiscence of 511d 4, which introduces the four *παθήματα* there. Ἐξίς is of course *διάνοια*, as in 511d. Nor can one reject a mutilated text on grounds of style. There is, I suggest, no reference to the Platonic doctrine of thought as the conversation of the soul—that is irrelevant—nor does Plato mean that we should be content if the word expresses our meaning clearly. The test of *σαφήνεια* is applied, as in the Line, to the ἔξίς of *διάνοια*. The question is, as in the Line, how clear is the ἔξίς in comparison with *ἐπιστήμη*.

Then the proportion that is to determine this is at once begun. Does not *πρὸς τὴν ἔξιν*, when combined with *σαφήνεια*, suggest that the other term in a comparison has dropped out?

<sup>2</sup> See *Poetics* 1457b 16, quoted above, Part I., p. 149. There is, I think, no reason why Plato should repeat the proportion in terms of the objects. All is said when the states are given, and it would only be multiplying *λόγοι* to repeat the same proportions over again. But it may be remarked that if the difference between the objects of *διάνοια* and *ἐπιστήμη* is not of kind, but of limitation, then a proportion of objects would involve explanations which would render brevity difficult (see Glaucon's difficulty in 511c 4 sqq.).

Death in their prison reaches them,  
Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest.

Then there are those who have been dragged to the sunlight and set before the shadows of real things. But their study is valuable because it draws them to reality. In the cave they were forced to look at shadows only; now they have no excuse if they resist the *nisus* that carries the eye to the head of the system. For the end of the conversion is to see the Good. The whole allegory turns on the desire of men for the Good, on their perversion in the cave, and on the untrammelled advance to the greatest study in the sunlight. Any one who has not grasped the Form of the Good and is unable to argue through all tests with flying colours cannot know the Good or any other good. 'The Good or any other good': for the last test of the philosopher-king must be this power to discriminate between the ends of the cave and the true end. This is why the strong words *δόξα* and dreaming are applied to the mathematician.<sup>1</sup> He dreams in the sunlight; but still he remains among the 'beardless company,' incapable of the *man's* work of ruling the Kallipolis, because he has not desired ardently enough to be married to Being. With his incomparable felicity Plato has echoed here that poem<sup>2</sup> of Pindar in which Epharmostas, after a round of victories (cf. *διὰ πάντων ἐλέγχων*), wins first the lads' prize at Marathon and then enters into competition with the grown men:

οἶον δ' ἐν Μαραθῶνι συλαθείς ἀγενεῖων  
μένεν ἀγῶνα πρεσβυτέρων ἀμφ' ἀργυρίδεσσι·  
φῶτας δ' ὄξυρεπεῖ δόλω  
ἀπτῶτι δαμάσσαις  
διήρχετο κύκλον ὄσσα βοᾶ  
ῶραῖος ἔων καὶ καλὸς κάλλιστά τε ῥέξαις.

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<sup>1</sup> 533b, 534c. It is the same insistence on the limitations of the mathematical disciplines that gives its point to the pun in 534d—Glaucou would not allow his spiritual children, *ἀλόγους ὄντας ὡς περ γραμμάς*, to have control of the greatest issues as rulers in the city. There is a topical allusion to Theaetetus' doctrine of irrationals (compare the stress laid on stereometry

earlier). See Miss Sachs' dissertation, *De Theaeteto Atheniensi Mathematico*. As Theaetetus died only in 469, the reference may well be to a discovery just made.

<sup>2</sup> *Olymp.* IX. Cf. 534c: *καὶ ὡς περ ἐν μάχῃ διὰ πάντων ἐλέγχων διεξιῶν . . . ἐν πᾶσι τοῦτοις ἀπτῶτι τῷ λόγῳ διαπορεύηται, ὅστε αὐτὸ τὸ ἀγαθὸν φήσεις εἶδέναι, κ.τ.λ.*

ADDENDA.—In Part I, p. 131, l. 17, and p. 133, l. 29, for *a material cause* read *an efficient cause*. The immediate reference is to Natorp. In the *Postscript* for p. 142 read p. 139. I should like to add that on pp. 141-2 the criticism of Dr. Shorey is directed solely at the attempt to establish a parallelism between line and cave.

In the questioning of the released prisoner by the rescuer, the most helpful parallel is perhaps the protreptic discourse in *Euthydemus*, 278d, ff. There is no space to point out the affinities between the allegory and protreptic literature.