



PLATO'S
REPUBLIC



K.C. GROSS
AND
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To my teacher,
Hinnrich Bluecher,
With love and thanks
Marquette Fisher
St. Andrews University
1964

PLATO'S
REPUBLIC

A Philosophical Commentary

by

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genuous to suppose that all do. Why, because a man is wicked or a criminal, he should also be more stupid or less skilful than the honest man, Plato makes no attempt to explain.

Finally, the question must be asked whether in drawing this analogy between the just man and the expert musician Plato is not being inconsistent with what he said earlier, in the argument with Polemarchus (cf. Chapter 1, pp. 13-14).

There he had argued that justice could not be a skill (*techné*) by showing the absurdities to which one is forced on the assumption that it is a skill; there (332c7) he had used the example of the doctor as a man who exercises a skill, and here again he mentions the same example (349e8). Consequently, it appears that in this argument designed to establish that injustice is not more profitable than justice by showing that the unjust man will make errors of judgment which the just man will avoid, even as the inexpert musician will make errors of judgment which the expert will avoid, Socrates is himself making the very assumption which he has claimed earlier to have refuted, viz. that justice is a skill. If this is so, we must wonder whether Plato is being intellectually dishonest, or whether he is unaware of his inconsistency, or whether this is a case of his not uncommon practice of making Socrates use in one discussion a line of argument inconsistent with an argument used in another discussion, just to see whether his interlocutors are capable of detecting the inconsistency.

However, it is not entirely clear that he is being inconsistent. The keyword, *techné*, of the earlier discussion with Polemarchus nowhere occurs in the present discussion with Thrasymachus; and the most we could say would be that Socrates's argument here *implies* that justice is a skill or *techné*. But another word does occur here, which did not occur at all in the previous discussion, viz. *epistémé* (350a6); and the difference may be significant. Later in the *Republic*, *epistémé* comes to bear a technical and highly specific meaning, but at this stage and in some of its subsequent occurrences it means, in a quite general sense, 'knowledge'. That is to say, Plato is not yet restricting the sphere of knowledge in the way in which he goes on to restrict it in Books V-VII; and he is here allowing to the expert practitioner of an art such as medicine or music a knowledge

not simply reducible to a skill. On the other hand, in this passage with Thrasymachus he is saying something more in line with his positive view that virtue is knowledge. Not merely does virtue require knowledge (as does expertise in the arts, such as those of medicine or music), but also, if a man really knows what is good, that is how he will try to behave. Conversely, if a man does not try to do what is good, it shows that he does not really know what is good. In the true sense the man getting drunk at the office party does not really know that it is wrong to drink before driving; if he did, he either would not drink or would not insist on driving afterwards. Just as the real musician could not bring himself to try to do something musically wrong, which would be something, not indeed beyond his skill, but contrary to his art, so the virtuous man, possessing real knowledge of what is good, could not act in a way contrary to that knowledge. Plato's thesis that virtue is knowledge is open to dispute, and was immediately afterwards disputed by Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics*, VII. 3), who insisted that succumbing to temptation was the result of weakness of will, and that weakness of will or of character was to be distinguished from ignorance: a man can, from a variety of causes, fail to apply knowledge which he has. But at least it can be maintained that Plato's thesis does explain away the apparent inconsistency between the passage in which he argues against Polemarchus that justice is not a skill and the passage in the argument against Thrasymachus in which *prima facie* he seems to be presupposing that it is.

Plato has a second argument (350d-352b), much more effective than the first, to show that injustice is not more profitable than justice. It is that injustice cannot in itself be a source of strength: it is not a unifying force, but exactly the opposite, a divisive force. The practice of it in a community does not bring men together: it sets them against each other. Here Plato might be said to be making the point of the need for honour among thieves. If a group of men conspire together for some wrong purpose, then within the group they must behave justly; they must be able to rely on each other, and to be relied on; if they cannot rely on each other, the group flies apart, and they will not be able to fulfil whatever purpose

they came together for. Here Plato's point is a good one, although not quite as good as he thinks or wants. What is true is that in a gang of criminals unity must be preserved, and in that sense they must be able to depend on each other. But to say that is to say much less than what is meant by 'honour among thieves'. The latter means that although thieves will not respect the rights of others, will not regard themselves as having duties to others, yet among themselves, within the gang, they will respect rights and regard themselves as having duties to each other. But if this in turn means, and if Plato wants to suggest, that a gang of criminals cannot be kept together unless they recognise duties to each other, it seems patently untrue. A gang can be kept together by mutual fear, or by fear of the boss if he is a strong enough personality; or it can be kept together just by the continuing success of its exploits. In either case, a member has much to gain by staying in, and much to lose by trying to get out; and, as long as that is so, the gang will cohere. When mutual fear, or fear of the boss, ceases to operate, or when successes decline or turn to failures, then the unity of the gang begins to disintegrate. The history of gangsters, whether Chicago racketeers or Nazi war-lords, illustrates that well enough. Still, Plato's main point is fair — that injustice as such is not a unifying but a dividing factor. He later applies it to the individual man, saying that a man who is unjust is at war with himself — the different elements in his soul are fighting against each other.

(3) *The unjust man has a better life than the just man* (352d-354c). One of Thrasymachus's main points of recommendation of injustice was that it gave you a better life, a life for which you might reasonably be envied by others less fortunate. This is not the same thing as saying that the unjust man was happier than the just, although no doubt Thrasymachus would have maintained that too. The Greek word in question, *εὐδαιμονία*, is frequently translated as 'happiness', but misleadingly so. For us, for a man to be happy is for him to be in a certain general condition of enjoying his life, of having a certain outlook on the world, of being free from worry and so on; essentially, to say of a man that he is happy (even more obviously in the case of saying that he is unhappy) is to say something

an admission was inconsistent with, and fatal to, his own general thesis.

If Socrates was making any use at all of criterion (c) of a function, it needs to be pointed out that it has teleological and theological implications. If a thing has a function assigned to it, or has been designed for the performance of a function, the assigning or designing has been done by someone. If living, by this criterion, is said to be the function of the soul, this presupposes the existence of a God who assigned that function to the soul, or designed the soul to perform that function. You cannot, merely by examining a thing and finding out what it can do or what you can do with it, establish that that is its function according to criterion (c). For you cannot, by that method, establish that it *was* designed to perform a function at all. This kind of argument from design cannot therefore be used as an argument for the existence of God (although attempts have often been made to use it so). An argument which, when applied to the function of the human soul, has the existence of God as a presupposition cannot also have the existence of God as a conclusion. To know that the soul has a certain function assigned to it we should need to know independently that God had assigned that function.

What Socrates has not brought out is that the notion of function presupposes purpose — the purpose for which we use a thing which we find, or the purpose for which we have the thing designed. We can talk of seeing as being the function of the eyes only because that is the purpose for which we can and do use them (and for which we have nothing else as a possible substitute). Where a thing has been designed to perform a certain function, like a knife or a watch or any artefact, the notion of purpose comes in twice, the purpose for which the designer designed the thing, and the purpose for which the user uses it. If the thing is well designed, these purposes are likely to coincide, for the designer's purpose is to enable the user to meet *his* purpose. But they need not coincide: the user might find that the object better served some other purpose which he had than its designed purpose, or that it served some other purpose which he had more need to satisfy; an ornament used as a doorstop, or a book used to prop up one leg of an

being of some philosophical importance. First, it is striking, in contrast to the Socratic method of Book I, that now it is Glaucon who asks the questions, and that it is Socrates who offers answers to them, a sign that the character "Socrates" is now becoming more of a spokesman for the views of Plato himself. Glaucon outlines the different kinds of good (357), asks Socrates to which kind justice belongs, and receives an unhesitating answer (358a), which is adhered to without modification throughout the rest of the *Republic*. Secondly, Socrates, having concluded Book I by saying that until they have settled what justice is they cannot profitably consider questions about it, immediately does accept such a question and proposes an answer to it. This raises two problems: whether Socrates's practice at the beginning of Book II is inconsistent with his profession at the end of Book I; and whether, apart from the issue of consistency, it is illegitimate to consider questions *about* a concept before considering the central question of the definition or analysis to be given of the concept itself.

The charge of inconsistency can hardly be maintained, for all that Socrates does at this stage is to state his answer without arguing for it. There is nothing objectionable about a philosopher stating at the outset of a discussion what his conclusion is going to be, provided that he then proceeds to develop the argument which leads to that conclusion. As a matter of procedure, it is often clearer to make the order of exposition the reverse of the order of proof, a practice with which we are all familiar from our learning the theorems of Euclidean geometry: there, the theorem to be proved is first stated, then follows the proof, with at the end the formula *quod erat demonstrandum*. This is exactly the procedure which Socrates professes to pursue. He asserts that justice is something which is *both* good in itself *and* good in its consequences. In Book X at 612b he claims that they have now proved that justice is good in itself, and that they may now go on to establish that justice is good in its consequences, the argument for which immediately follows. Had Socrates at the beginning of Book II tried to argue for his conclusion about the goodness of justice, in advance of giving his account of justice itself, he could fairly have been accused of inconsistency with his statement at the end of

is precisely what makes it to be physical training at all; and therefore the training is to be judged good or bad in respect of its results, of the degree of success with which it performs that function which constitutes its being physical training. And the same applies to Plato's two other examples, and to innumerable others that could be added.

This failure to distinguish between result and consequence is slurred over by his use of the word *ophelein* meaning 'benefit'. For a benefit can be something aimed at, and therefore characterised as a result (as in the examples of physical training, etc.), or it can be something, not aimed at, but incidentally received or accruing (as in the examples of honours and rewards). This is relevant to what Plato himself has to say about justice. Here he claims that it is good both in itself and in its consequences. But it is fairly clear from many passages throughout the *Republic* that what Plato really means, by saying that justice is good in itself, is that it is good because of what it *does* to the man who is just. A quite explicit statement of this (admittedly made by Adeimantus, but not objected to by Socrates) comes a little later in the present book, 367b: mentioning justice and injustice, Adeimantus requests Socrates to show "what each does to the man who has it that makes the one bad in itself and the other good in itself". In the course of the same speech, Adeimantus twice repeats the same thing (367d and e); and there are many other such passages in speeches by Socrates himself (e.g. 392c, 457b, 505a), which show that Plato thought that the good which justice *is* must be characterised in terms of the good which it does. It is because of this that he has been hailed by some philosophers and decried by others as the first utilitarian. The answer to the question might have been clearer if Plato himself had recognised the distinction between consequences and results involved in his examples of the third kind of goods, and if he had in turn, with reference to justice, considered what distinction (if any) he should make between saying of something that it is good in itself and saying of something that it is good because of its results.

In order to obtain from Socrates a clear exposition and defence of his thesis, or rather of the first part of it, that justice is good in itself, Glaucon proposes to put forward the case

against it as forcibly as he can (358b). This involves him in a statement of what he believes to be a widely held view of justice, which is a renovated and toughened version of Thrasymachus's view, and which he expounds polemically, not because he believes it to be true, but because he wishes Socrates to show that it is false. The popular view can be given under three headings (358c):

- (1) The origin of justice
- (2) Justice practised as a necessity, not a good
- (3) Such practice quite reasonable.

(1) *The origin of justice* (358c-359b). In themselves, doing wrong is a good thing and being wronged an evil thing. The evil of being wronged outweighs the good of doing wrong, so that men, having had a taste of both, and finding themselves unable to escape the former and secure the latter, make agreements with each other neither to inflict nor to suffer wrong. Starting from this point they begin to make laws and mutual undertakings, and "to call that which is ordained by the law lawful and just; and this is both the origin and the essence of justice, being between the best state, which is to inflict wrong and not pay a penalty for it, and the worst state, which is to suffer wrong but not be able to obtain redress" (359a).

(2) *Justice practised as a necessity, not a good* (359b-360d). Justice, produced as a compromise between the naturally best and the naturally worst condition for man, is regarded and practised as an unavoidable necessity. Men look at it, not as something good in itself, but as the best terms which they can hope to get; and nobody would continue to practise it if he thought he could do better for himself by injustice. Even the most virtuous man would abandon a life of justice if he were suddenly given full power to do whatever he pleased with no risk of being caught and punished.

(3) *Such practice quite reasonable* (360c-362c). We can see that this attitude to justice is reasonable if we imagine the extreme cases: on the one side, the supremely unjust and villainous man who nevertheless, by the skill with which he operates and conceals his operations, retains an untarnished reputation for honesty and justice; and on the other side the

But it is far from clear that the latter is what Glaucon did mean. What he has to say about the basis of obligation is so sketchy, and is about a question in which he was, for the purposes for which he was talking, so little interested anyway, that it is to read far too much into him to maintain that he was advancing a theory of Social Contract. Modern labels are seldom, without adaptation, applicable to Greek thought of the fourth century B.C.; and the present case is a particularly glaring case of their inapplicability. Glaucon was not in the least interested in establishing the basis of political obligation, and well might not have understood what the question there was. What he did want from Socrates was an argument to show that justice was a good of the kind that Socrates had claimed, something that was worth practising quite apart from its incidental consequences, which in any case were the consequences, not of being just, but of that very different thing, of having acquired a reputation of being just.

Glaucon may indeed have misconceived Socrates's remark that justice was good in itself, and may have been wrongly inviting Socrates to show how justice was to the interest of, or profitable for, the man who was just. That is, he may have been confusing the question whether justice is good with the question whether it pays to be just (cf. "Honesty is the best policy"). Socrates was prepared to show that justice was good because of what it was or because of what it did. But there appears no reason to suppose that he was thinking solely in Glaucon's terms of what advantages it brought to the agent. Showing a man that just conduct does also serve self-interest may be, and often is, an effective way of inducing him to behave in the required manner, but it must be distinguished from showing him that justice is good, or what kind of a good it is.

Chapter 4

FORMATION OF THE FIRST CITY

HAVING declared what kind of a good he intends to show justice to be, Plato immediately reverts to his original question "What is Justice?", and proposes a new procedure for answering it (368d). We ascribe justice, not only to an individual man, but also to a whole community, such as a Greek city; that is, it makes sense to characterise Athens as being just, as much as it does so to characterise Socrates. And because a city is larger than an individual, they might find it easier to make out in it what they are looking for, and thereafter identify the corresponding property in the individual. He therefore proposes that they should begin by examining a city coming into being and find justice (and injustice) coming into being with it. Having located and identified justice in it, they can perform the corresponding operation for the individual with more hope of success than if they followed the method of Book I.

Before turning to Plato's account of his city's origin, we must understand what is involved in his proposed procedure. First, it presupposes that there is some degree of similarity between the nature of an individual and the nature of a city, indeed sufficient similarity for findings about a city to be illuminating, or even relevant, for questions about a man. *Prima facie*, we might be inclined to say, the unlikeness between a city (or a nation, or any politically organised community) and an individual man is so great that we could hardly expect to argue by analogy from one to the other. At least we should have to establish that they had a certain number of properties in common, in order to give any degree of reasonability at all to the supposition that what could be said of a city in respect of justice could also be said of a man. And the mere fact that

in some cases the same *word* can be used of both would not establish that it was being used in the same way of each. For instance, in "Torquay is a healthy town" and "Jones is a healthy man" the same word 'healthy' is used both of town and man, but it is used to say a quite different thing of each. Similarly the mere fact (if it be one) that we can say both that Athens is a just city and that Socrates is a just man would not entitle us to conclude that justice in each was the same. In fact, Socrates does not argue by analogy from some known features of identity between city and man to an as yet unknown feature; and he does not argue from the fact that we may use the same word 'just' of both. His procedure is far bolder and less self-critical. As his example of the large and small letters shows (368d), he takes it as unquestioned that justice in a city is the same as justice in a man, and therefore there is nothing doubtful about examining the large-scale model straightaway. At 435b he explicitly asserts that in respect of justice a just man will not differ at all from a just city. But this is not an argument: it is a bare assertion which is accepted without question. He does not propose to establish the presupposition of identity of justice in city and man either by argument from analogy or by considering whether the same word might or might not have the same meaning in the two cases. As a procedure this may strike us as odd, indeed as unwarrantably dogmatic, but it becomes less surprising as the *Republic* proceeds, and as we find how close a parallel Plato draws between the nature of a state and the nature of a man. His initial procedure here, while questionable if regarded on its own, provides the key to his whole political philosophy, which is going to turn out to be that the state is itself an individual, and therefore that many statements which can be made about an individual man's character or psychology can be made literally, and not just metaphorically, about the state as well. This is the theory of the state which has been called the Organic Theory (cf. T. D. Weldon, *States and Morals*, Chapter 2), which sees the state not as a piece of political machinery, but as a political person with a life and a character of its own. Emotionally this view may answer a need, and politically, because of its emotional force, it is of enormous value to a state's govern-

ment, but its intellectual claims are hardly comparable. Still, there is no doubt that in the *Republic* Plato was putting it forward, and in some detail. Consequently, while we may query the presupposition of his proposal to find justice in the large-scale model (the city) instead of looking for it at once in the small-scale model (the individual man), viz. the presupposition that justice will be the same in both, we cannot complain that this was a presupposition of which Plato was unaware, or which he perhaps hoped that his readers would not notice. Nothing could be further from the truth. He was well aware both of the presupposition, and of the need to argue for it. Furthermore, he does later argue for it (435e), when he maintains that the individual man must have the same characteristics as the city, for otherwise the city itself could not possess them: a city cannot derive its characteristics from any source other than the men who are its citizens. And having given his account of justice in the city, he insists (434d) that it must be regarded only as a provisional account until confirmed by the account to be given of justice in the individual man; if any discrepancies appear, the former, rather than the latter, will have to be revised. Therefore, although the assumption made at the beginning of Book II may seem, when taken by itself, an erroneous and implausible assumption, we must recognise that it is seriously meant, and that Plato is going to argue in support of it later. His argument at 435e may or may not be a good argument, but it is there.

Next, we should appreciate that Plato's declared reason for embarking on political philosophy at all is a moral reason, or at least that it is a reason about the individual. He is interested in the search for justice in the city only because it will enable him to make out justice in the individual. The individual is what he cares about, and the examination of a city is a device for solving a problem about him. But, in fact, as the argument proceeds, Plato's interest changes and his emphasis shifts from the individual to the city; not only is the happiness of the city as a whole more important than the happiness of any of the individuals, or any of the classes in it (421b), but also the individual comes more and more to be regarded as an element in the state, described in terms of the function which he performs

and the contribution which he makes to the state's welfare. This indeed is a natural consequence of the organic view of the state which Plato embraces; and to that extent his first introduction of the city, to help solve a problem about the individual, is misleading. It has misled some readers into regarding Plato as the great Liberal, whereas it would be nearer the truth to regard him as the great Totalitarian. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that Plato is not entirely consistent in his view of the individual as subordinated to the state. The only individuals about whom Plato talks in any detail are those comprising the small *elite* class who are to govern the state, the philosopher-rulers, and towards them he adopts an ambivalent attitude: on the one hand, their education and training is determined by their political function, and is designed solely to qualify them for their responsibilities in government. On the other hand, being men of philosophical temperament and wisdom, they will have no political ambitions whatever: they take it in turns to rule, and they do so willingly, if not enthusiastically, partly because as good men they recognise how dangerous and pernicious it is to allow government to fall into the hands of inferior men (347c), partly because they accept the requirement to govern as the price which they must pay for the privilege of spending the rest of their time in the way in which they want to spend it, in the pursuit of philosophy itself. For, as Plato insists, the most worth-while life, if you are capable of living it, is that of contemplation and research; the practical life is, compared with the theoretical life, only a second-best. So we find in Plato's thought this tug-of-war between the two opposing tendencies: when he is writing as a political philosopher, to regard as the ideal for man service to the state in whatever capacity his aptitudes assign him to; and when he is not writing as a political philosopher, to regard as the ideal for man the life devoted to the pursuit of knowledge, with service to the state as a necessary but irksome chore which he must perform as the condition of being allowed to spend the rest of the time on what really matters (520d-e; cf. 582).

Plato's account of the formation and character of his first city is quite short (369-372) and very clear. And the funda-

mental fact about it, as he indicates in the opening words of his description, is that it is an economic community. "A city comes into being, in my opinion, when each of us happens not to be self-sufficient, but lacks many things" (369b). That is to say, he imagines men coming together, not because they have any need of each other in social terms, for friendship or company, but because they have needs of economic goods such as food, housing and clothes which each man is unable to provide adequately or efficiently by himself. The minimum community will be one catering for these needs, with each man specialising in one trade, bringing the products of his work surplus to his own needs to a common stock, where they are exchanged for other producers' goods of which he has need. Thus the principle of division and specialisation of labour is brought in right from the start, for, as Socrates says, it is obviously more efficient for each of the four or five basic tradesmen to produce four or five times as much of his own commodity as he requires himself and to exchange with others, than for each one to try to be his own farmer, house-builder, clothes-maker, shoe-maker, etc. (369e). Not merely is this more efficient in terms of expenditure of time and energy, but it takes into account that different men have different aptitudes. This smallest imaginable community must expand immediately, and on the same principle as before: the primary producers will need tool-makers, cattlemen, shepherds, then importers and exporters (which in turn calls for a greater surplus of production, so that exports may pay for imports), merchants, sailors, shopkeepers and labourers. Although the resulting community will be enormously larger than the first group of four or five producers, it has, for Plato, altered only in size, not at all in character. It still consists of a number of individuals, each doing his own specialised job, selling his products and services and in turn buying those of others. It is still thought of wholly in material terms as a community devoted solely to production and consumption; and although Socrates says that such a life as it provides will be pleasant enough in a simple, bucolic kind of way, he does not object to the suggestion that what he has described is a "city of swine" (372d).

that he engages in economic exchange "thinking that it will be better for himself" if he does, is to attribute some purpose to him.

Whether the "beehive" interpretation will do for beehives and ant-colonies or not, it will not do for human society, even of the most primitive kind, because it ignores the facts that human beings as agents are both purposive and self-conscious. Usually, a man knows what he is doing, and if asked what he is doing can give the answer — which makes him a self-conscious agent. And usually a man knows what he is trying to achieve, and if asked why he is doing what he is will give the answer in terms of what he is trying to achieve — which makes him a purposive agent. Neither of these statements is universally true, for a man can be doing something without being aware what it is that he is doing, or even that he is doing anything, and he *can* be doing something without any purpose at all. But these are the exceptional, not the normal, cases and do not invalidate the proposition that human agency is characterised by the two features of purposiveness and self-consciousness. It may not be clear whether we can attribute these features to bees or ants, but it is clear that, while we cannot attribute them to the function of bodily organs such as heart and liver, we must attribute them to men as agents. And therefore we must suppose that the men in Socrates's city, each producing his surplus of goods and exchanging it with others' surplus, know what they are doing and are doing it with a purpose. If men knowingly and purposively engage in the exchange of goods, are they entering into agreements or contracts? Again, it is just possible that they are not, that they are simply adapting their conduct to the conduct of others so as to achieve their own ends with the maximum of efficiency which that makes possible. But it is an implausible suggestion, particularly when we remember that man is also a speaking animal. Bees may or may not communicate with each other, heart and liver certainly do not, men certainly do. The notion of men as self-conscious, purposive agents, and able to communicate with each other by speech, entering into economic exchange, without entering into agreements for the conduct of that exchange, appears too unlikely to be acceptable. How,

the soldier's secondary; not that it is less important, but that it has to be defined in relation to the producer's job, as that of protecting it and preserving the conditions of its continuance.

After a brief section (375a-376b) on the character and temperament required of the Guardians, and a long section (376c-412b) on their school education, Plato proceeds to the more detailed organisation of his city, in the course of which it undergoes significant changes in form from anything to be found in either of the earlier cities. (In passing, it should be noticed that at this stage Plato introduces two points, which, although they are here just mentioned, anticipate important elements in his later elaboration. Comparing a good Guardian to a good watch-dog he says first that he must be *spirited* (375a) so that he will be a good fighter; and secondly, so that he may be fierce only to his enemies and gentle to his friends, he must be *philosophical* in nature (375e), which Plato elucidates, so far as he does, in terms of a contrast between *knowledge* and *ignorance* (376b): the good watch-dog discriminates between friends and foes as being those whom he does and does not know respectively. These distinctions, between being spirited and being philosophical, and again between knowledge and ignorance, while here being made in an entirely general and non-technical way, foreshadow the two main themes of Plato's general argument throughout the rest of the *Republic*.)

With his account of school education complete, Plato returns to the Guardians, and makes a distinction between the older and wiser men who are to rule and the more energetic younger men who are to be ruled (412c), by which he means that the latter in obedience to the former are to carry out their instructions for the preservation and maintenance of the city. And at 414b he introduces a new term to designate these younger men, *ἐπίκουροι* (usually translated as 'Auxiliaries'); and from this point on, the two terms *φύλακες* and *ἐπίκουροι* are used in a technical and contrasted sense. Those who have hitherto been referred to in general as *phylakes* or Guardians are now subdivided into two grades, the *phylakes* or Guardians proper and the *epikouroi* or Auxiliaries who have the job of carrying out the rulers' will and are to be regarded as performing the functions of the military, the police, and the executive of the Civil

becomes more and more engrossed in political philosophy. The city, from being a large-scale model for helping us to solve a problem about the smaller-scale man, is becoming the thing which matters; the individual man is now primarily regarded in respect of the performance of his function of contributing to the life and unity of the city. The third class, consisting of everybody not engaged administratively or executive in the tasks of government, might be called Subjects, which is what they are. But a better name would be the Economic Class. (Plato himself usually refers to them in this kind of way, as money-makers or men in business, e.g. 434a, 434c, 581d.) For it is the function of everybody in it to pursue his particular job of providing goods, distribution or services in a way which will ensure the city's economic survival and such limited degree of prosperity as is desirable; excessive prosperity, indeed, is as much to be avoided as excessive poverty, for either is equally corrupting (421d). When it comes to a war a comparatively poor and small but united city is a match for one which is wealthier and larger but internally divided (423a-b).

The third and most far-reaching difference between the final city and either of its predecessors is marked by the basis of its class-division. Merely to divide a community into classes, whether grounded on differences in social status or on differences in earning and purchasing power, would not by itself represent any major change of principle from a more primitive single-class community. But this is not how in fact Plato does it. What he does is to introduce the entirely new principle of *political* classification. The basis of the first two cities had been entirely economic. Every man pursued his own trade, the results of which by mutual interchange of goods and services kept life going. And the consequent unity of the city might be called a *natural* unity, in that life was made tolerable or even enjoyable by the mutual give-and-take of the individuals concerned. But there was no provision whatever for ensuring and maintaining its unity, for warding off threats and dangers to it, or for repairing and restoring it if damaged by the selfishness of individuals. Nobody was in charge of anybody else; there were no punishments or provisions for the infringement of

in governing, but who conscientiously accept it as their responsibility, Plato endeavours to insure against the risk of political degeneration. He was well aware that the inherent defect of the politician is that he enjoys politics.

Given that the city is established in a perfect condition, and that it is then ruled by men who, understanding that condition, make it their business to maintain it, it is natural that Plato should think of his Guardians as high-grade administrators rather than as legislators and as policy-makers; the legislating and policy-making have already been done by the founders. Plato does refer to the Guardians as legislators in one passage (425e), but he is clearly speaking of detailed regulations governing commercial conduct, and he insists that they should be as few as possible. In a bad city a host of regulations are useless, in a good city they are either unnecessary or obvious. In the one passage (502b) where he does identify ruler with legislator, he is not talking about his particular city, but about government in general, and making a point not about governors but about subjects, that as a rule they are prepared to obey the laws.

It seems reasonable, therefore, to infer that Plato regarded the Guardians as administrators rather than legislators. But it is reasonable also to suppose that this was because legislation would not be required of them, not because they were incompetent to engage in it. At the present stage of the argument the Guardians are treated as being the older and wiser men who possess knowledge of political requirements, whereas even their assistant Auxiliaries possess only correct belief; but the precise distinction between knowledge and correct belief has not yet been worked out, so that these terms are not yet being used in the technical sense which in the course of Books V-VII they come to acquire. But when, as a result of the argument in these books, the contrast between knowledge and belief is made clear, providing the justification for insisting that only a philosopher is qualified to be a Guardian, the situation thereafter is different. The Guardians are then to be selected not merely on the general ground that they are the wisest members of the community, but on the specific ground that, possessing the philosopher's knowledge, they will know what form is to

be imposed on the city, i.e. what form *has* been imposed on it by the founders, and which it is their own business to preserve. As philosophers, therefore, they would be competent to legislate and lay down policy for the city, were it necessary, i.e. if the latter had not already been performed by the founders (484d). And if the city were to send out men to form a colony elsewhere, the Guardians of the mother city could act as founder-legislators of that.

But it needs to be emphasised that that belongs to a later stage in the *Republic*. Proof that at the stage so far reached the knowledge which the Guardians possess is not at all what Plato later means by *episteme* is provided by the extraordinary insertion of the foundation myth (414c-415d), about which he explicitly says both that it is false, and that it is desirable that everybody, especially the Guardians, should be taken in by it. This is not a case of supposedly enlightened or well-informed rulers guiding their ignorant subjects by misinformation, as when in time of war military defeat and enforced retreat becomes a tactical withdrawal to prepared positions. Here it is a case of the rulers themselves being persuaded of something by being deceived. It is inconceivable that Plato would have proposed such treatment of his rulers, if the "knowledge" which at this stage they possess (cf. 428d) were at all what it becomes in Book VII. It is, in any case, difficult to understand why he supposed that the most intelligent members of the community were more likely to be able to grasp, and to be prepared to believe, the proposition that men are unequal in ability if, instead of being presented with that proposition and with the evidence for it, they were offered an allegory so simple-minded that Plato admitted his own embarrassment in producing it, to the effect that some men have gold in their souls, others silver, and others iron and bronze. As a figurative way of putting across a literal, possibly unpalatable, truth to the intellectually undeveloped or to the emotionally immature it might be effective. As a way of convincing those who have been picked out to rule because they are men of outstanding wisdom and good judgment, that they *are* men of outstanding wisdom and good judgment, it seems little less than insulting.

With the city now founded, Socrates proposes that they

virtues, reside in a single class, but is more like a kind of "concord or harmony" (430e); and later he asserts that it actually is a "unanimity and concord" (432a). Just as an individual man is self-restrained, if he is master of himself, i.e. if the better side of him is in control of the worse side (431a), so the city will possess self-restraint if the better part of it is in control of the worse (431b). But while control of the worse by the better part is necessary to self-restraint, it is not yet sufficient, for it does not yet constitute the harmony and concord of which Plato speaks. One party might be better than another, and able to keep it in control, simply by having greater power and being able to exercise severe discipline, keeping the worse party in its place by sheer regimentation, with no element of concord present at all; for example, a prison or a police state might be kept in order in such a way. For concord to exist, there must be some measure of agreement between those in power and those under them that this is the way things should be done. Self-restraint therefore requires not only that the better should control the worse, but also that they should agree that the better should be in control (431e). It consists in fact, in the case of the city, in rulers and subjects agreeing who are to do the ruling. This factor is important to an understanding of Plato's political philosophy, for it seems to imply the attribution to the subjects (i.e. the Economic Class) both of some degree of rationality and understanding of how the city should be run (of which Plato nowhere else makes any mention at all), and of some degree of freedom in accepting their place as subjects. Were it not for the elements of rationality and freedom in self-restraint, the distinction between the virtues of self-restraint and justice would turn out to be somewhat tenuous. (Plato also insists that the same account is to be given of an individual man: his self-restraint will consist of the control of his worse side by his better side, *with the consent of his worse side* (432a). It is open to question whether this claim makes sense at all in terms of individual psychology, as he describes it later in Book IV; but the fact that he makes the claim, here and again at 442c-d, cannot be denied.)

To what extent rationality and freedom in the Economic Class will reach Plato does not make explicit. Is he saying

is that a man should not presume to undertake the functions of a class higher than that to which he belongs. In other words, instead of the requirement that each man should stick to his own job, we now have the requirement that he should stick to his own class. Justice is now specified not in terms of each individual *man* performing his proper job, but of each of the three *classes* performing its proper job (434c). Whether or not Plato did clearly recognise the difference between the economic principle of division and specialisation of labour and the political principle of division of classes, it is certainly the latter with which he has ended up. Justice in the city consists in each of the classes performing its own function and not usurping that of either of the others. This will correspond to what he is shortly going to say about the virtue of justice in the soul, that it is (or is produced by) the harmony of the three elements in the soul when each discharges its proper function. Plato's not wishing to abandon entirely the proposition that justice consists (in some sense) in each man doing his job might be a reflection of something else which he says when talking of justice in the individual. There he contrasts a man's acting justly with his being a just man or possessing the virtue of justice: the former, consisting of outward conduct or the externals of justice is only an "image" of the latter, which is the real justice, the state of his soul or character (443c-d). So here he might say that men will be acting justly if they stick to their jobs, but that this is only an image of the real virtue of justice in the city, which consists in the classes remaining in their proper relationship to each other. This can only be conjecture, for Plato makes no definite statement on the matter, but it is reasonable conjecture in view of the close parallel which at all points Plato wishes to draw between city and individual. The whole operation of trying to identify justice in the individual by first identifying it in the city would have been quite pointless unless Plato genuinely believed in the closeness of the parallel. Furthermore he explicitly says that "a just man will not differ at all from a just city in respect of the essence of justice, but be like it" (435b). And he maintains, as his final point on this topic of justice in the city, that the account now given of it must be regarded as provisional until

another longer way round" (504b, our italics). It is reasonably clear from the context that the "them" here mentioned are not, as might be supposed from 435d, the three elements of the soul but the four virtues. The "this question" of the earlier passage is not then, as it appeared to be when that passage was considered in isolation, whether the three elements are to be found in the soul, but whether it has the four virtues; or rather it was "this whole question" about the soul, not only about the elements but about the virtues as well. And the difference between the "short" and the "long" methods is immediately afterwards stated. It could not have been stated in the earlier passage, for an understanding of it depends on the thesis which forms the major part of the intervening discussion in Books V and VI. We, in our turn, can only indicate the difference here, leaving it to be made clear when we reach that part of the *Republic* (v. Chapter 9, p. 200). Plato's point is that there is something even above justice itself, which is greater than justice, which is the object of the highest form of knowledge, and by relation to which justice itself derives its value, viz. what he calls the Form of the Good (505a): and later, comprehension of this Form is claimed to be the culmination of a philosopher's training (517b and 534c). The two methods then which Plato is contrasting are those of psychological inquiry and of philosophical inquiry. The former, which he adopts in Book IV, is an empirical exercise in what might be called moral psychology, examining the nature of the soul and its virtues by means of the introspection which is available to any of us. But the conclusions of such an inquiry are necessarily incomplete and inadequate, as long as they lack the basis of a philosophical knowledge of the concepts involved and of their interrelation. Corresponding to the contrast between the two methods is the condition of the Guardians in Books IV and VI respectively. In Book IV they are marked out from other men simply by being wiser, but the discussion of Books V-VI, in which Plato develops his thesis that to be Guardians they must be philosophers, reveals that being wiser is not simply a matter of being more intelligent or of sounder judgment than other men; it is a virtue which arises from the possession of *knowledge* of the truth, as contrasted

important, desire of reason, viz. the desire of reason to control a man's soul, and consequently his life, as a whole in the way that is best. In this respect, it is the function of reason to "care for the whole soul" (441e). This is important for Plato, because, if reason just had its particular desires, they, while they might be more elevated than the desires of appetite or of spirit, would simply be in competition with them, with no authority for resolving or harmonising the competing interests. It is in its second capacity, as the overruling authority, caring for the whole soul, that reason has the function of controlling and harmonising the particular desires of all the elements (including its own). This is reflected in the life of the philosopher-Guardians, as eventually described, which is divided between the activities of philosophical research on the one hand, and on the other taking their turns in governing the city and maintaining its unity, i.e. caring for it as a whole. As philosophers they would prefer to devote their whole lives to the task of understanding reality, but as conscientious men they recognise that such activity must not be allowed to override the supreme task of harmonising all men's lives (their own included) in the life of the city. Reason is self-reflexive in a way in which appetite and spirit, just because they are not reason, cannot be.

Plato's definition of the appetitive element of the soul as that element to which bodily desires belong enables him to make a clear contrast between it and the rational element, but it does appear to be inconsistent with his belief, for which he argues in Book X, for the immortality of the soul. It is impossible to see what he can mean by 'soul', if he wishes both to say that the soul survives the death and decomposition of the body and to specify one of the elements of the soul as that which desires bodily pleasures. At one point in the *Republic* (518d-e) he shows some awareness of this difficulty himself, for he says that three of the four virtues are related to the body, wisdom or the virtue of pure reason being the only one that is free of it, although even it may be adversely affected by the soul's temporary conjunction with the body. But even there he does not seem to recognise the extent of the difficulty. It is one thing to say that the soul is separable from the body, while

a just man : he may be sticking to his job because he can make more money out of it than at any other, because of fear of unemployment if he leaves it, because he will lose his house if he leaves it, or because it has been made a legal offence to leave it. He will be a just man, or his conduct will display justice, only if it is the manifestation of his inner self or character, and only if that inner self consists of the three elements in their correct relationship ; real justice, then, characterises, not a man's behaviour, but the state of his soul, which will naturally manifest itself in his behaviour. This raises the question whether, on Plato's account, everybody, no matter what kind of man he is (i.e. to which class in the city he belongs), is capable of being just. Although Plato has so far given no direct indication that justice is attainable only by a few, and although he even suggests in the present passage that it is obtainable by all (443e), the answer must surely be that, on his account, only very few men are capable of achieving it. For a man can be just only when each element in his soul keeps in its place under the overall rule of the rational element, the wisdom of which comes from the knowledge which it possesses. Therefore only that man can be just in whom the rational element is fully developed and possesses knowledge. This means that, in terms of the city, only the Guardians are capable of justice ; and as will be seen later, they are capable of it, not because they are Guardians, but because they are philosophers. That true justice is the monopoly of philosophers may seem a surprising conclusion for Plato to reach, but it is inescapable. He cannot explicitly state it here, because he has not yet made his point that rulers must be philosophers, let alone given his reasons for making it. He therefore leaves us at this stage with the conclusion unstated, and perhaps with the vague impression that anybody can be just who has sufficient reason in him to keep his appetites and spirit in check, just as so far any city would be acceptable in which the wisest men wielded effective government. But later he has no hesitation in accepting the conclusion. When he returns to the question whether the just man will have the happiest life (583-587), his answer that he will depends on arguments from the claims of philosophy as a way of life. Commentators who complain that

page 237. It is enough for us to note the point as an instance of how careful one must be to try to grasp what exactly Plato is saying without either over-idealising him or equally (as perhaps Popper is somewhat prone to do) under-idealising him. There is a further illustration of this within the present passage. After Plato in 473d has said that political power and philosophy must be combined, he goes on to say that the many people who now pursue either philosophy or politics to the exclusion of the other must be forcibly debarred from doing so. That is, in Plato's state there will be no "pure" philosophers: there is only a place for the philosopher ruler, and anyone who wishes to pursue a life of pure philosophical study will be forcibly prevented from doing so. Here again it is easy to miss the implications of this passage, or alternatively to minimise them. But what Plato does in fact say is that the exclusive pursuit of knowledge just will not be allowed in his state. We may set against this a passage from Kant (as rendered by Popper on p. 133 of his book referred to above): "That kings should become philosophers, or philosophers kings, is not likely to happen; nor would it be desirable, since the possession of power invariably debases the free judgment of reason. It is, however, indispensable that a king, or a kingly, i.e. self-ruling people, should not suppress philosophers, but leave them the right of public utterance". Plato has his reasons for his differing view, and these should become clearer as we proceed. What is important is that what his actual view is should be plainly stated — in the present case, no pursuit of knowledge independently of taking part in the governing of the state — so that we may then go on to ask ourselves what merit or otherwise the view may have.

The Distinction between the Philosopher and the non-Philosopher (474b-480). This is an important (and difficult) section in itself, and it also marks the beginning of the discussion of important philosophical topics that continues through Books VI and VII. Socrates recognises that on the popularly accepted view of what is meant by a philosopher his proposition that philosophers must be kings can only incur ridicule. He must then make clear what he himself means by a philosopher. The Greek word *φιλόσοφος* (*philosophos*) is made up from two

in a dream, the genuine philosopher who distinguishes clearly between reality and appearance leads a waking life (476d). He, then, and he alone, has knowledge, since he knows the reality (the Forms) of which the many particulars are appearances. The non-philosopher, on the other hand, who is content with the many particulars does not have knowledge. His state of mind is one of belief. Beginning thus with two sorts of objects, Forms and particulars, Plato correlates with them two different states of mind, knowledge and belief, and then in terms of the latter distinguishes the genuine philosopher, the *philosophos* who has knowledge of the Forms, from the non-philosopher, the *philodoxos*, or lover of belief, who never rises above belief about particulars. The Greek word *δόξα* (*doxa*) which Plato uses to describe the state of mind of the non-philosopher, is a difficult word to translate. It is connected with the Greek verb *δοκεῖν* (*dokein*) 'to appear' or 'seem', which often occurs in constructions such as 'it appears or seems to me', 'it's my opinion or belief that', and with the verb *δοξάζειν* (*doxazein*), 'to believe or think or hold an opinion', which in 476d Plato directly associates with his use of the noun *doxa* — "so then would we not be right in saying that the state of mind of the philosopher is knowledge because he knows, while the state of mind of the other is belief (*doxa*) because he believes" (*doxazontos* from the verb *doxazein*). As Cornford points out on p. 176 of his translation, *doxa* is used in connection with seeming. It can be used of what seems to exist, sensible appearances, etc., or again of what seems true, beliefs, etc. It is often translated 'opinion', but again to follow Cornford, 'belief' is better, since the corresponding verb 'to believe' is in common use, whereas this is hardly so of the verb 'to opine'; and as we have seen we want a verbal form available as well as the noun. In fact, perhaps neither 'opinion' nor 'belief' are really adequate translations of what Plato means here by *doxa*. It will be noted that the verb 'to believe' regularly has a 'that' construction after it, i.e. I believe that such and such is the case, whereas Plato seems to be using the noun *doxa* to describe a state of mind that is concerned, in some cases anyhow, simply with an immediate apprehension of, for example, particular sounds, colours, etc. (476b — the lover of sights and sounds

"delights in beautiful tones and colours" . . .), i.e. he seems to be using it of a state of mind that is simply an awareness of something (a sound, etc.) and not an awareness *that* something or other is the case. Hence the point made by Murphy (*The Interpretation of Plato's Republic*, p. 103) that "It seems quite inadequate to take it (*doxa*) as 'belief' or 'opinion' since it is chiefly represented here as a faculty of apprehending objects rather than of assent or dissent". He thus suggests that in certain parts of this section of the *Republic* Plato is using *doxa* in a specialised sense, "so that it no longer goes on all fours with the verbs *dokein* and *doxazein*", and translates 'acquaintance', 'unreflective acquaintance with'; yet at the same time he agrees that in this same section it is associated by Plato with these verbs, and that in this association "it seems to mean an unreflective intellectual condition not so much of acquaintance with objects as of uncritical belief about them". It is best then to retain our own translation 'belief' for *doxa*; and it should be added that behind these difficulties about translation there lurks an important philosophical point which is dealt with in the discussion of knowledge and belief in the next chapter (cf. especially p. 176). One thing that is clear about *doxa* is that when Plato uses it in contrast with knowledge it is always in some sense or other an inferior state of mind; in the present section it is inferior because, as we have seen, its objects are mere appearances or copies of the Forms, which are the objects of knowledge; and thus it itself is a dreaming state while the man who possesses knowledge is truly awake.

Plato then has distinguished to his own satisfaction and that of Glaucon the genuine philosopher who possesses knowledge from the non-philosopher who possesses only belief. This has, however, been done only to his own satisfaction and that of Glaucon, in that both of them accept the theory of Forms and the distinction has hinged upon that theory. At the beginning of the discussion it is simply accepted that there are Forms as well as particulars, and the rest of the argument, which establishes the correlations, Forms and knowledge, particulars and belief, depends on this. Anyone who rejects or doubts the theory of Forms will remain unsatisfied, and for this reason, in the second part of his discussion of the difference

ceived theories, we consider knowledge and belief, which are the two powers with which Plato is especially concerned here, we might well be inclined to think that criterion (i) causes a serious difficulty. Granted that we agree that knowledge and belief are different powers, it follows on criterion (i) that their objects are different, and this would imply that we cannot have belief and knowledge about the same object or thing. In fact, however, we tend to think that we can have first a belief, and then later knowledge, about the same object or thing, or that two different people can have one of them belief and the other knowledge about the same thing. We might want to say that the difference lies in the way of apprehending, and there is no necessary difference in the objects apprehended; indeed, it would seem that Plato himself was committed to the view that his Auxiliaries had true belief about the same things or objects of which his Guardians had knowledge, namely the maintenance of the ideal state. It is obvious that there is a trickiness here in the word 'object' of which we shall have more to say in the next chapter; but, even allowing for that, it seems a fair conclusion that Plato would have to produce arguments not present in this passage if he were to convince us that different powers must be concerned with different objects, or, more specifically, that the objects of knowledge must be different from the objects of belief. He himself, however, assumes that his readers accept that it is so and, in the third stage of the argument ((c) above), he claims to discover the appropriate objects for belief, namely the many beautiful things, just acts, etc., which occupy a midway status between what is completely real or existent and the completely unreal or non-existent, and which thus both are (exist) and are not (do not exist). He does this in the obscure and puzzling arguments which, it will be recalled, begin with the allegation that the world of the lover of belief, the *philodoxos*, is full of contradictions, that there is no particular beautiful thing that will not also appear ugly, and so on. What precisely is Plato saying in these arguments?

The predicates actually discussed at the opening of stage (c) of the argument (479a) at first sight fall into two groups. First there is the group consisting of predicates such as beautiful and ugly, just and unjust, holy and unholy, and secondly the

Plato's writings that he was much influenced by the views of Heraclitus and Cratylus, two of his predecessors in Greek philosophy. They held that everything is in a state of flux, of constant change; and when this view is pushed far enough it would mean that we can apprehend none of the things around us, since in the very moment when we are trying to apprehend them they are themselves changing, and thus any knowledge of them would be impossible. One of the best places to see an exposition of this view is in Plato's own dialogue, the *Theaetetus*. The influence of the doctrine is clear in the dialogues he wrote earlier than the *Republic*, but it is in the *Theaetetus*, which is probably slightly later than the *Republic*, that he examines it at length. For example, at 157 in the *Theaetetus*, in discussing a form of the flux theory, he points out that it implies that "the verb 'to be' must be totally abolished" and that "we should refer to things as 'becoming', 'acting', 'passing away', 'changing', for if you speak in such a way as to make things stand still you will easily be put in the wrong", and again, when later he returns (182d) to an extreme form of the theory, he remarks, taking colour as an example, that on this extreme view "there is flux even of the whiteness itself, which is passing over into another colour", and he asks, "is it possible to give any name to a colour which will properly apply to it?", to which Theodorus answers, "I don't see how one could, Socrates, nor yet surely to anything else of that kind, if, being in flux, it is always quietly slipping away as you speak". Plato himself is strongly influenced by this Heraclitean view in his own attitude to the sensible world, i.e. the world revealed to us through sense perception. He regards sensible things as constantly changing, as unstable, as coming into being, and passing out of being, as not genuinely existing. Two of his favourite ways of describing this changing world of sensible particulars is to call it a world of 'appearances' (*phainomena*) or of 'things that are becoming' or 'coming into being' (*gignomena*) — 'things that are becoming' in contrast to the Forms which 'are', i.e. are fully real. Is it then this feature of constant and radical change that Plato has in mind in the present passage, when he says that there is no beautiful thing that does not also appear ugly, and so on? It is true that very shortly afterwards

as we noted earlier (Chapter 7, p. 140), English commentators speak of the 'idea' of Beauty, etc., in Plato, and more generally of Plato's Theory of Ideas. This, however, is an unfortunate rendering of the Greek. The English word 'idea' tends to carry with it the notion that ideas exist only in the mind, that they are only thoughts of ours, that questions can be raised about how far they represent reality, that they are only "subjective", what we think, as opposed to what is "objective", what is really the case independently of our thinking, and so on. It should be clear from what we have already seen, and it should be still clearer from what will be said later, that all these notions are quite alien to Plato's intentions when he talks, for example, of the *eidos* or *idea* of Beauty. This is for him another way of referring to Beauty itself and for him it is Beauty itself that is truly real, that is the object of knowledge; and whatever ideas (in the familiar use of that word) we may have about Beauty, there is a real unchanging Beauty there for us to grasp if we can, and which is what it is quite independently of any ideas of ours. If we are still to use the word 'idea' in connection with Plato's theory, then it must be neutralised and these familiar associations it has must be forgotten; and since it is not easy to do this the translation 'idea' is undesirable. In fact, though there has been controversy over the precise reasons which influenced Plato in his choice of the Greek words *eidos* or *idea* in this context, the words themselves meant originally 'visible shape' or 'form' and, more widely, 'form', 'nature', and then 'form', 'type' (as for instance in the phrase 'forms or types of disease'). The English word 'form' keeps near to the meaning of the Greek words, and is also free from the misleading associations of the word 'idea'. For these reasons then it is proposed to keep to the terminology we have already been using and to refer to Plato's theory as the Theory of Forms.

The second preliminary point is concerned with what is known as the 'Socratic problem', i.e. the question whether we are to take the views attributed to Socrates by Plato in the dialogues as having been actually held by Socrates himself, or whether Plato attributes to Socrates views which the historical Socrates never expressed and which are in fact Plato's own. In particular, there has been much dispute as to whether the

As we indicated, the best place to see this aspect of the Forms is in the *Phaedo*, 74-75. It is connected there with the doctrine that learning is recollection, that we had knowledge of the Forms before we were born into this world, but lost it at birth, and then are reminded of it again by our experience of the sensible world, so that we are enabled to judge the latter against the standard of the perfect Forms. A short quotation from 75b of the dialogue sums up this role of the Forms: "I suppose then that we must have acquired knowledge of the nature of the Equal itself before we began to see and hear and to use our other senses, if we were going to refer to that criterion things that appeared to the senses equal, on the ground that they all do their best to be like it, though they are inferior". And Plato makes it clear immediately after (75c-d) that the same holds also for the Forms generally, for the Beautiful itself, the Good itself, and so on. The doctrine of recollection is in itself an interesting link in Plato's whole attempt to account for *a priori* knowledge. For our immediate purposes, however, what we have to note especially in this section of the *Phaedo* is how the Forms function as criteria or standards — Justice itself (the Form Justice) is the perfect exemplar or instance of justice against which we must measure the imperfection of our own just acts. The latter "do their best to be like" perfect justice but fall short, fail to be themselves perfectly just.

(iv) *Forms as universals.* What we mean by this should become clear as we proceed. Let us illustrate this function of the Forms by two quotations. The first is from Book X of the *Republic*, where at 596a Plato says, "Well then, shall we proceed as usual and begin by assuming the existence of a single essential nature or Form for every set of things which we call by the same name?" The second is from the earlier dialogue, the *Meno*, 72a ff. Meno has been asked to say what he thinks virtue is and has replied by giving a list of particular manifestations of virtue — the virtue of a man is to administer the state, of a woman to order her house, and so on. Socrates then goes on, "How fortunate I am, Meno! When I ask you for one virtue you present me with a swarm of them, which are in your keeping. Suppose that I carry on the figure of the swarm, and ask of you, What is the nature of the bee? and

later. Meantime it may be useful to say a little about the theory under the three heads listed by Professor Cherniss.

(a) First, then, from our list above we can see that the theory of Forms is an ontological theory, i.e. a theory concerned with being or existence. This is clear from (ii), (iii) and (v) above and is also involved in (iv). In its ontological aspect, what the theory of Forms is maintaining is that there is a world of permanent, unchanging and perfect entities which are unaffected by variations in circumstances or conditions and which comprise reality. It is they that are "real" or, as Plato sometimes says, "completely real" or "truly existent". The ordinary, everyday, sensible world, on the other hand, is not completely real: it is only semi-real: it is the world of appearance as opposed to the world of reality, namely the Forms; and further, it owes such reality as it does have to the Forms. The theory of Forms then is a metaphysical theory, in that it claims to be telling us something that is true about what there is independently of human beings and minds. To use a phrase used by Socrates in the later dialogue, the *Parmenides* (132d), the Forms are "as it were patterns fixed in the nature of things", i.e. they are the permanent furniture of the universe. There are various difficulties in this ontological aspect of the theory of Forms, but one word of caution may be relevant. The theory maintains that our ordinary, everyday objects, for example the chair I am sitting in, are not "real" or "really real", but are in a sense only appearances; and the unphilosophical reader may be tempted to reject out of hand a theory which denies the full reality of the chairs he sits in, the houses he sees when he goes out into the street, and so on. Now Plato may be mistaken in what he is saying, but his view cannot be rejected in this out-of-hand way. For one thing, many philosophers besides Plato have held that the everyday world is a world of appearances, and have contrasted it with a reality beyond appearances; and if the unphilosophical reader is unmoved by this consideration, he must be asked why he himself calls the chair he sits in real, as opposed to a hallucinatory or dream chair. In fact he will find that the word 'real' is a very tricky word. It might be suggested that when he calls the chair he is sitting in real, as distinct from a hallucinatory or a dream

under the influence of Socrates, the former were Plato's primary concern, though mathematical Forms (Equality, etc.) had also already become prominent in certain of the dialogues earlier than the *Republic*. Now granted that there are Forms of moral qualities, when we look at our list of the various jobs the Forms do, we can see how Plato regarded his theory as providing an answer to any relativist view of morals. For example, in our list the Forms again function as objects in the case of our knowledge of moral truths (i); they are real, are what they are quite independently of what we may think or say (ii); and they are perfectly that to which imperfect particulars only approximate (iii). Thus, for example, the Form Justice is a perfect, unchanging pattern or model or standard, there to be known, given that men, or some men at least, can be brought to know it, and just conduct then is no matter of convention, but a matter of conforming to the ideal standard of Justice which like the other Forms is part of the nature of things. It can be seen then that Plato's ethical theory is interlocked with his epistemology and his metaphysics; his is certainly an ethics that has a metaphysical basis. It can also be seen how his political theory in the *Republic* in turn interlocks with these. For Plato absolutely certain knowledge is possible, in morals as elsewhere. As we shall see, it requires men of special ability to reach it, and even they can only do so after a long and arduous training. When they have reached it, however, they have arrived at absolute truth: in the moral-political sphere they just know wherein the good life consists. On Plato's view then they alone are fit to rule and it is plainly to the benefit of the mass of the citizens that the few who have this knowledge should guide their lives for them. It is this interlocking of different facets of his thinking that makes Plato's political theory especially important. If we find the political theory repellent, it is not merely enough to dismiss it as a product of anti-democratic bias. If we think it is mistaken, we have to show why it is mistaken; and just because, in Plato's thinking, it is tied in with, amongst other things, his ethical, epistemological and metaphysical views, we have to have them too under consideration if we are criticising his political theory. There is one further point we ought to add. This relates to a develop-