

REPORT
of
COMMITTEE ON EXAMINATION

This is to certify that we the undersigned, as a Committee of the Graduate School, have given ~~Sister Teresa Toomey~~ final oral examination for the degree of Master of ~~Arts~~. We recommend that the degree of Master of ~~Arts~~ be conferred upon the candidate.

Minneapolis, Minnesota

June 1 1922

Norman Wilde

Chairman

David F. Swenson

W. B. Rued

G. P. Conger

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Report
of
Committee on Thesis

The undersigned, acting as a Committee of the Graduate School, have read the accompanying thesis submitted by Sister Teresa Toomey for the degree of Master of Arts.

They approve it as a thesis meeting the requirements of the Graduate School of the University of Minnesota, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Norman Wilde

Chairman

J. P. Longes

J. J. [Signature]

Date May 20, 1922

THE PLACE OF CITIZENSHIP IN THE
PLATONIC IDEAL OF LIFE

A THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of the
University of Minnesota

by

Sister Teresa Toomey

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the
degree of

Master of Arts

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THE PLACE OF CITIZENSHIP IN THE PLATONIC IDEAL OF LIFE

1. Problem Stated: How Social was Plato in His Ideal.

Citizenship was so much a part of Greek life that all free men as a matter of course took an active part in the government and defense of their particular city-states. An ethical ideal not connected with the concerns of a social group would, to the Greeks, have been inconceivable. The life of common beliefs, customs, and ceremonies was for long the moral life. But in Plato's day, a change was coming over Hellas. Commerce, wars, and colonization had all made frequent modifications in government necessary. A further break with the past resulted from the gradual development of speculative thought among the cultured class. Plato, in considering the moral life, had necessarily to examine the ground and value of social life. He had also to give some attention to personal and private worth. Even so, his view of the state was largely colored by the traditional attitude. He accepted to some extent the necessity of political life. The question of how social Plato was in his ideal cannot be determined exactly; and this for three reasons. In the first place, Plato had in his character contradictory tendencies which drew him now in one direction and now in another; secondly, he emphasized different phases of a question

according to his varying motive in writing; and, thirdly, he composed most of his separate dialogues without systematic reference to one another.

2. CONTRADICTIONARY TENDENCIES IN PLATO'S CHARACTER

Plato is at one time¹ religious in his attitude; at another time, rationalistic.² Now and again, he is so overwhelmed by the issue of life itself and the need for immediate action of some sort that he simply assumes the value of moral conduct, the glory of personal holiness, and the immortality of the soul. At other times, he seeks a reasoned presentation of the world and some detail of man's place in it. His was the soul of a poet, who firm in his belief in the ideal, proclaims in glowing terms the grandeur of a noble life. His was the soul of a mystic, who, carried away by the love of eternal beauty and goodness, spurns the things of earth. Curiously, also, his was the soul of a lover of wisdom, who, unwilling to go a step further than his premises would permit, declared "the unexamined life not worth living"³; and unreflective goodness, virtue of a secondary order.⁴ The style of his writing, as well as what he says of the beautiful, makes it seem plausible that Plato might have been willing to give himself up to the pursuit of art. He was preeminently a Greek among Greeks, and

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1. Meno 99. Phaedo 59,62. Crito 54. Philebus 12. Theaet. 176. Rep. 425, 427. Timaeus 30, 42, 68, 69. Laws 708,711,713,716, 890, 904, 909.
 2. Rep. 476-484, 507-515, 517; Phil. 58; Tim. 28; Phaedo 429; Prot. 351; Laws 895.
 3. Apol 38.
 4. Phaedo 82.

had the Hellene's love for precision, harmony, and balance.¹
 He sought beauty everywhere--in the world of appearance, of conduct, and of pure thought--and beauty to him meant the embodiment of law,² the mean between extremes, the orderly working together of all the parts of a whole.³ It was one aspect of that eternal beauty which directs all things to their appropriate ends. It was one among the various names which might be given the summum bonum. It was, therefore, much the same as justice, holiness, friendship, harmony, and love.⁴ But for all that Plato was so devoted to the beautiful, there entered into his life some force--perhaps his friendship with Socrates--which made him incline more and more towards a purely moral and philosophic ideal. His choice, however, was not final. During his whole life, he vacillated between his attraction towards communion with divine beauty and his desire to ascertain precisely what a man ought to do here and now. As a consequence, he sometimes allowed his love for the aesthetic to find its way into his ethics. If for him, moral perfection meant the recognition of the principle of restraint and limit,⁵ or the control of the lower by the higher,⁶ it also meant the artistic

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1. Benn: Greek Philosophers I. 194, Ed. 1882.
 2. Phil. 66. Rep. 401; Gorg. 504; Laws 700; Statesman 284.
 3. Phil. 64. Laws 420-421
 4. Rep. 351, 400, 401, 412, 432, 612. Laws 653, 689, 693, 698. Phil. 31-32. Gorg. 504.
 5. Rep. 389, 431, 432. Phil. 25-26.
 6. Laws 690 Rep. 442, 444.

development of all one's inner powers.¹ In The Symposium, he goes so far as to substitute off-hand the word, "good," for the word, "beautiful."²

3. PLATO'S CHANGING PURPOSE IN WRITING

Which of his several tendencies Plato followed in any dialogue was determined by his purpose in writing; and his purpose, in turn, was decided largely by the period at which he wrote. He might, at times, take up the problem of the moral life with the abandon and self-assurance of one who has entire faith in the existence of beauty, absolute, eternal, and divine;³ but, often, he examined closely the nature of this or that particular virtue.⁴ The intellectual and political unrest of his day demanded a remedy; and to find this remedy was one of Plato's tasks. He was troubled because men questioned the possibility of knowledge and the validity of accepted moral principles, because philosophers found delight in the merely novel, and because teachers of opposite school exaggerated whatever elements of truth they did possess. In the social world, Plato saw chaos. All types of political organization were represented by the various city-states throughout Greece, and all shades of social theory were advanced by the wandering teachers of the post-Periclean Age. The country as a whole had just come through the great turmoil of the Peloponnesian Wars; and Athens, in particular, had just had the trying experience of being governed first by a tyrant, and then by an unintelligent demos. Individualism

1. Rep. 444; Laws 689; Rep. 400, 430, 443, 486. Phil 64.

2. Symp. 204.

3. Symp. 211.

4. Laches. Lysis Euthyphro Charmides

in thought and conduct had gone so far that serious men feared for Hellenic culture. The man who might assist Greece in her hour of need was not one of the older generation. He who could save her must indeed have the conservative's reverence for the traditional; but, in addition, he must appreciate what was valuable in the new order. Such a man was Plato. He was fitted by intellect to enter into the mind of his age, and point out what was wrong; and, what was equally important, he was fitted by sympathy to care greatly for the welfare of Athens. When he realized the state of affairs in his native city, he tried to turn the minds of his fellow-citizens to a consideration of ethical questions.

4. PLATO'S UNSYSTEMATIC PROCEDURE

Clear as Plato's aim often was in his moral writings, his method of procedure was seldom straightforward. Repeatedly, he wandered from the main issue, following the whim of his wide curiosity, or the chance association of one theme with another. That he was frequently wanting in definiteness and finality of statement was the result of his diversity of interests. Because all doctrines found a place in his writings, it is difficult to say which are most representative. To many questions which he suggests--such as the relation of the ideal to the real, of the individual to the state, and of the life of thought to that of action--Plato returns an ambiguous answer. He does not seem fully conscious of the problems he raises; he does not set the political over against the ethical, or the practical over against the intellectual. He is frequently inconsistent. His dialogues, composed at different periods dur-

ing his life, reflect the changing beliefs of one who ever sought, but never completely found, an explanation of existence. At best, one can trace only the general tendency of Plato's writings.

5. HOW A SOLUTION CAN BE APPROXIMATED

No more than a rough solution can be offered to the problem of the value Plato set upon citizenship. This solution can be reached first by considering the importance of civic life in the chief Platonic ideals, and, secondly, by ascertaining which of these ideals Plato most cared for. Plato had two standards of perfection--that for the ideal ruler in the ideal state, and that for the man of contemplation. These two standards, he only partially reconciled. The ideal he treats most fully is that of the perfect ruler, the philosopher-king.

6. QUESTION RAISED: IS STATE OR INDIVIDUAL MORE IMPORTANT

In The Republic, where the philosopher-king is described, it is not evident whether Plato is interested primarily in the just man or in the just state. It is the question of what justice is in the individual which leads to a long description of the perfect society, in which alone justice in its entirety is to be found.¹ Repeatedly, throughout the six books² devoted chiefly to the examination of the ideal republic,³ there are incomplete analyses of the good man. The tenth book, which has the appearance of being an afterthought, treats almost wholly of justice and the destiny of the righteous soul. Plato appears to waver between a desire to formulate an ideal

1. Rep. 540

2. Rep. Bks. II.--VIII.

3. Rep. 417, 441-449, 465-471, 475-480. 535-543, 488-501, 515-522.

of life satisfying to the most earnest, and to justify the state in the eyes of those who could and should strengthen its foundations. At times, these two purpose coalesce, as when Plato recognizes the dependence of morality upon institutional life.¹ Ideally, state and individual work together so harmoniously that neither can be considered apart from the other. Granting this, there is still room for emphasis one way or the other. To determine whether or not Plato employed such emphasis, it is necessary to understand the nature of the society in which the perfect individual lives. For this individual has social obligations in the heavenly city which he does not have in any actual state. In a society which rightly esteems goodness, the man of high principle may become the saviour of the state; whereas, in most cities, men are ruled by caprice, they listen to none who does not conform to their own mediocre standard, and the one man with understanding seeks in vain to serve his fellow men.²

7. ORIGIN, AIM, VALUE, AND STRUCTURE OF IDEAL REPUBLIC

The ideal state, which is so necessary to a completely moral life,³ arises out of the needs of man.⁴ As it becomes more complex, it ministers to the ever higher wants of its members. It secures that peace and order without which no cultural life is possible. The members of this perfect commonwealth are divided into three groups.⁵ Those in whom the life

1. Rep. 465.
 2. Rep. Bks. VIII. and IX. 426-427; Rep. 489.
 3. Rep. 590.
 4. Rep. 369.
 5. Rep. 415.

of desire predominates, and who have no special intellectual ability form the artisan class.¹ Those in whom the spiritual element rules, who have enthusiasm, a passion for righteousness, and a love of action make up the military class.² Those in whom wisdom reigns, and who view all matters in the light of the whole are the ruling class.³ In order that the guardians may give themselves unreservedly to the common good, they have no separate possessions and homes.⁴ They cultivate so earnestly a spirit of solicitude for political well-being that they are unable to find satisfaction in any merely private end.⁵ Within this ideal state, the cardinal virtues are found in their fulness. Where all are agreed as to who shall rule and who obey, there is harmony and temperance;⁶ where each man attends to his own special work, and does not interfere with the function of others, there is justice;⁷ where those deputed to do so make it their duty to distinguish between true and illusory dangers, there is courage;⁸ and where those who understand the nature of reality, assist all men towards their appointed end, there is wisdom.⁹

8. AGENCIES IN PRESERVING STATE-LAWS, EDUCATION, WISE RULERS

The preservation of this city once it comes into existence depends upon the laws, the system of education in force, and the ruler. The laws merely put in concrete form

1. Rep. 415; Rep. 370-372.

2. Rep. 375, 376.

3. Rep. 417.

4. Rep. 417

5. Rep. 421, 465.

6. Rep. 432

7. Rep. 433-434

8. Rep. 429.

9. Rep. 428.

the wisdom of the king, and guard men against the spirit of innovation. Far more important is education which gives men correct ideas of the aim and value of the moral life. The educated man knows that the particular images of beauty or of goodness which he sees here on earth are imperfect copies of one single divine archetype.¹ He knows that before the imprisonment of his soul in a mortal body, he led an existence purely spiritual. At that time, he understood truth, beauty, and goodness in their essence.² The objects of sense now remind him of the world of immutable forms, and thereby help him to re-attain the life of contemplation.³ The educated man does not care about chance opinion or the shadows of reality. Instead, he proceeds from separate studies to a consideration of the inter-relation of all sciences.⁴ His thought becomes ever more unified and abstract, until at last he arrives at the Idea of the Good, which is at once the cause of all things and the source of all knowledge.⁵ He who apprehends the Idea of the Good loves it and all else that is fair. He is prepared both to solve difficult problems and to face arduous tasks.⁶ He sees clearly the nature of the state and the excellence of a virtuous life.⁷

9. KNOWLEDGE: MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE

So important did Plato consider knowledge to be that he even identified it with virtue. But knowledge in Plato's time had a larger conative import than it sometimes has today.

1. Phaedrus 249; Rep. 484, 507; Phaedo 65.
 2. Rep. 534.
 3. Phaedo 66.
 4. Rep. 531, 537.
 5. Rep. 508-509, 517, 534.
 6. Rep. 534.
 7. Laws 661, 727, 728; Rep. 444-445; Crito 48.

The education which Plato believes will make men acquainted with the nature of goodness is not just formal instruction. It is largely a matter of training the will through gymnastic discipline,¹ of early formation of virtuous habits,² and of life-long association with the fair and just.³ When children are imbued with the spirit of law from their earliest years,⁴ and when they are taught to rejoice and sorrow at the proper objects,⁵ they will have within their own heart a watchman sufficient to save them from all moral evil.⁶ If true knowledge is virtue, it is experimental as well as intellectual. If the good life is the rational life, its goodness is apprehended not only by thought, but by the whole man. The good man throws his emphasis more and more on the element of reasonableness in the moral life. He defines the cardinal virtues largely in terms of knowledge. Temperance, for him in the state or individual is the control of the irrational by the rational.⁷ Courage is that constancy in a noble cause which results from a true estimate of what is temporarily pleasing and what is permanently satisfying.⁸ Justice in the state is the citizen's energetic recognition of his proper place;⁹ in the individual, it is the clear conception of the relative importance of his own various tendencies.¹⁰

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1. Rep. 410; Laws 942.
 2. Rep. 377, 401, 410; Laws 810, 942.
 3. Rep. 401.
 4. Laws 752, also 966.
 5. Laws 659.
 6. Rep. 591.
 7. Rep. 431-432, 442.
 8. Rep. 442. Prot. 359; Laches 194.
 9. Rep. 441.
 10. Rep. 443, 587.

Wisdom is the correct valuation of possible ends, together with an understanding of the means incidental to the accomplishment of these ends.¹

10. THE PHILOSOPHER. WHY FITTED TO PRESERVE THE STATE

The highest and most valuable knowledge can be fully grasped only by the philosopher. If the philosopher is true to his own nature, he will become the most fit ruler of the state.² He alone is willing to disregard the passing glory of this world, and to throw himself unreservedly into the work of perfecting the republic he rules. For

"He whose mind is fixed upon true being has no time to look upon the affairs of men, or to be filled with jealousy and enmity in the struggle against them; his eye is ever directed towards fixed and immutable principles; these he imitates, and to these he would, as far as possible, conform himself.... Conversing with the divine and immutable, he becomes a part of that divine and immutable order, as far as nature allows." If now, "a necessity be laid upon him of fashioning not only himself, but human nature generally, whether in states or in individuals," it is unlikely that "he will be an unskillful artificer of justice and temperance, and every civic virtue." On the contrary, "he will look at justice, and beauty, and temperance as they are in nature, and again at the corresponding forms in mankind," and will "so labor as to make the ways of men agreeable to the ways of God."³

1. Rep. 443.

2. Rep. 484, 501.

3. Rep. 500-501.

11. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STATE

Such is Plato's ideal state in its origin, form, and safeguards. Its justification lies in this that in it alone are found health, justice, and earthly peace.¹ In it, harmony reigns,² and each member finds his happiness in attaining that degree of virtue which is possible to him.³

12. GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE PERFECT MAN

If now, it be asked, what is the character of the just citizen in the ideal state, no single answer can be given. Formally, every citizen is good in so far as he does his proper work, and is at peace with himself; and he whose charge is the highest is all that a man can be. But to interpret a Greek ideal of life in terms of duty is to overlook the Hellenic passion for completeness. With that same spirit of high adventure which led them so far into the secrets of art, of politics, and of philosophy, the Greeks tried to solve the meaning of man's life. They valued existence in so far as it meant the possession of a rich and variously interested personality. The best man should be distinguished in civic activity, and in intellectual and aesthetic appreciation. That Plato shared the attitude of his fellow Athenians seems likely on a priori grounds. This presupposition is borne out in Plato's writings as a whole, though not to any great extent in particular passages. Plato's philosopher-king will have great natural endowments--strength, grace, resoluteness, and intellectual vigor.⁴ His early life, which is a preparation for his high

1. Crito 50-51.
2. Laws 693, 875;
Rep. 400-401.

3. Rep. 421, 465.
4. Rep. 475, 476, 484, 487, 535,
540.

vocation, will develop his finest talents; and his later experience in governing will reveal to him the relation between the actual and the ideal. His fulfillment of his duties to the state will make him attain to the stature of a perfect man. His great love for the good will make him bold and self-reliant in his pursuit of justice. He will go beyond ordinary rules of action, and trust to the guidance of his own ardent genius.¹ He is the one man who may be a law unto himself because he is so closely united to the principle of all order.

13. DOES PLATO EMPHASIZE INDIVIDUAL OR SOCIAL
ASPECT OF MORALITY? UEBERWEG'S VIEW

Whether in the perfect ruler the demands of political service or the realization of his own inner powers has precedence is not clear. He is the public minister surely, for he has been trained by the state for the special work of ruling. In this work, he finds great satisfaction; for he understands the nobility of what he is doing. Nevertheless, there is some suggestion that he has an end greater than that of ruling a state.² Ueberweg believes that Plato's philosopher-king has a good beyond the political. He says:

"As Plato's theory of ideas points beyond the sensible phenomena, and sees the truly real only in the absolutely existent essences, exalted above time and space, and figured as dwelling beyond the heavens, so Plato's ethico-political ideal points beyond the terrestrial ends of political society.....to the cognition and realization of a transcendental ideal good."³

1. Rep. 590. Statesman 295-296.

2. Rep. 490, 500, 540, 615 and myth which follows. Laws 770.

3. Ueberweg: Hist. of Phil. I. 131 Note Ed. 1876.

14. OBJECTIONS TO UEBERWEG'S VIEW

Ueberweg in stating thus positively that Plato looked for fulness of life beyond this present-world may be right. Still, it should be noticed that Plato when he speaks of a future life in union with the gods usually does so in myths or in chance remarks. On the other hand, when he treats of political life, he writes at great length. The major part of his ethical discussions is concerned with the function and value of civic life. The good of the whole is always to be considered before that of any individual; ¹ family and possessions belong to the state. ² Social activity is so important that the man who is at once virtuous and beneficent towards others will receive twice the honor of one who is good but indifferent towards his fellow citizens. The philosopher in particular can be most fully ³ himself only in serving.

15. FIRST OBJECTION ANSWERED

These objections to Ueberweg's thesis that Plato's ideal of human life "points beyond the ends of terrestrial political society" are not so serious as they seem. When Plato used myths in connection with supernatural matters, he intended to represent the truth more or less exactly. These myths are to be taken as "tolerably credible and possibly true." ⁴ Commenting on the myth of Rhadamanthus, Plato says:

"Perhaps this may appear to be an old wife's tale which you contemn. And there might be reason in your contemning such

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1. Rep. 420, 465-466; Laws 630, 631, 714, 875, 903.
 2. Rep. 417; Laws 922.
 3. Rep. 412, 415, 421, 521.
 4. Phaedrus 265.

tales if by searching you could find out anything better or truer.¹"

In The Laws, Plato even says that the tradition of the demi-gods is in very fact true.² He is somewhat less positive later in the same dialogue.

"We seem to have spoken opportunely in our former discourses when we said that the souls of the dead have the power after their death of taking an interest in human affairs, there are many tales and traditions long indeed but true; and we must believe the lawgivers who tell us that these things are true if they are not to be regarded as utter fools."³

Still less positive, but by no means incredulous, is Plato's attitude towards his own account of the soul's condition after death.

"I do not mean to affirm that the description which I have given of the soul and her mansions is exactly true--a man of sense would hardly say that. But I do say that inasmuch as the soul is shown to be immortal, we may venture to think that something of the kind is true."⁴

Plato did not always set aside beliefs for which he had no intellectual proof;⁵ he often had recourse to "a kind of spurious reason."⁶ or "dreamlike sense"⁷ of truth. Occasionally--

1. Gorg. 527.

2. Laws 713.

3. Laws 927.

4. Phaedo 114.

There is a similar comment in The Rep. 533.

5. Timaeus 29.

6. Timaeus 52.

7. Timaeus 52.

and this even in his non-ethical discussions--Plato accepted what seemed merely probable. He thought it not unreasonable when certainty could not be obtained "to sail, perhaps not without risk, upon the most irrefragable of human notions,"¹ or "to adduce probabilities as likely as any others, and to accept the tale which is probable, and not inquire further."² One may go so far as to rely upon "a divine instinct which guesses rightly,"³ and, in lieu of knowledge, follow that right opinion which the gods bestow upon the just.⁴ In view, then, of all that Plato concedes to beliefs which only approximate truth, there is justification in taking his myths somewhat seriously.

15 A. SECOND OBJECTION ANSWERED

As for the emphasis Plato appears to throw upon social considerations, it is not so great as one might at first think. It was natural that Plato should discuss ethical questions in connection with practical rather than with speculative philosophy; for the subject of political organization was at once more urgent and more susceptible of rational treatment than the larger subjects of religion or cosmogony. Moreover, as we saw, to the Greek, ethics and politics were inseparable. But that social activity, though important, does not constitute man's final end seems likely from what Plato says of the vanity of any life which does not profit in another world as well as this. Uberweg's interpretation of Plato appears, on the surface, at least, to be correct. It is, moreover, corroborated by Benn,

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1. Phaedo 85.
 2. Timaeus 29.
 3. Laws 950.
 4. Meno 99.

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Nettleship, and Bosanquet.

16. ERDMANN'S VIEW. IF TRUE, FOUR NECESSARY
COROLLARIES

Erdmann, however, takes the opposite view, and asserts that Plato looked upon "the good life in the good state as the highest morality conceivable."² Certainly Plato had much to say about the place of social life, and considered it a gain to both citizen and state to center attention upon the general welfare of the group.³ But if--as Erdmann intimates--Plato went so far as to uphold the political ideal as the highest, then he must, as a consequence, have believed first, that the chief aim of the state in education is the training of men for civic life; secondly, that to the state men owe their final allegiance; thirdly, that in citizenship the ideal of perfection resides; and fourthly, that in a well ordered community men find their greatest happiness. Whether or not Plato held these four principles in their entirety is not at all clear.

17. CIVIC ASPECT OF EDUCATION

In education, Plato without doubt recognized a social purpose; but it may be that he did not consider this purpose to be the sole or even the chief aim of study. Owing to his failure

1. Benn: Greek Philosophers I. 194. Ed. 1882. Plato believes in a divinely created order in the world--yet he temperamentally withdraws from it and from the multitude. See also page 181.

Nettleship: Philosophical Lectures and Remains I. 1898.

"Perfect life would be a life of perfect communion with other souls and with the soul which animates the universe." 238.

Bosanquet: Companion to Plato's Republic, 375. Bosanquet here regards Plato as other-worldly.

2. Erdmann. Anc. and Med. Phil. I. 121, Ed. 1891. (Hist. of Phil., Editor Muirhead).

3. Laws 875, Rep. 520.

to distinguish sharply between social and individual interests, he passed unconsciously from the discussion of the civic aim in education to the personal. At times, he seems to regard the two aims as one. "Education," he says, "makes a man pursue the ideal of citizenship," and also "makes him good."¹ And again, "it directs a man towards that right reason which the law affirms to be right,"² and likewise, "makes him hate what he ought to hate and love what he ought to love."³ Plato seems, on first view, desirous to create in the guardian those dispositions which will make him solicitous about the welfare of the community, and, at the same time, to fit the individual citizen to live a truly moral life within the state. Plato's purpose in speaking of education at all is to show how indispensable it is for the preservation of the perfect state. He explicitly says--though in only one passage--that true education is training in citizenship;⁴ and he does not make any other character contradict Protarchus in The Philebus when the latter says that "knowledge which is only superhuman is ridiculous in man."⁵ So social is education that the idea of law is to run through all systematic instruction;⁶ and the child, even in play, is to learn reverence for what is established.⁷ The young man in camp is to have experience in commanding and obeying⁸ so that he may be ready not only for military service, but also for life in the state.

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1. Laws 644.
 2. Laws 659.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Laws 644.
 5. Phil. 62.
 6. Laws 752, 960; Rep. 424.
 7. Laws 643. 656, 657; Rep. 424.
 8. Laws 644.

18. NEED IN FOURTH CENTURY ATHENS OF STRESSING
CIVIC ASPECT OF EDUCATION

It is likely that Plato in thus stressing the civic aspect of education, meant merely to call attention to what in his day was largely ignored. A few generations earlier, the state had been supreme,¹ and obedience was the very law of man's being.² Education, though not obligatory, had been greatly encouraged by the state,³ and had aimed chiefly "at self-culture and worthy citizenship."⁴ Now, in the fourth century, the citizens of Athens, freed from the long strain of the Peloponnesian War, and encouraged by their contact with various types of government and peoples, took pride in disparaging ancient ideals and learning. They asserted their intellectual independence. They preferred expatiating upon the poets or engaging in subtle arguments to laboring for the common good. They more and more lost sight of the moral basis of their political activities. It was to counteract this merely personal viewpoint in education that Plato dwelt at length upon the social value of study.

19. INDIVIDUAL ASPECT OF EDUCATION

He dwelt at even greater length upon the power of education in perfecting the individual soul.⁵ Only those subjects which "insensibly draw the soul towards the unseen"⁶ are of worth.⁷ Music is good when it leads men to love beauty; the chorus, when

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1. De Coulanges: The Ancient City 295. Ed. Eleventh. Translated by W. Small.
 2. Zimmern: The Greek Commonwealth 127. 2nd. Ed. 1915. Mahaffy: What the Greeks Have Done For Modern Civilization. 190, Ed. 1909
 3. Tucker: Life in Ancient Athens, 181-182, Ed. 1914.
 4. *Ibid.* 183.
 5. Rep. Bks. III, VII. "Youth should make "harmony, grace, and rhythm" their continual aim." Rep. 400.
 6. Rep. 401. See also 400.
 7. Laws 659-660.

it shows men the superiority of virtue;¹ and poetry, when it proclaims the happiness of a holy life.² The only knowledge which is "stable, and pure, and true, and unalloyed is that which has to do with the things which are eternal..., and all other things are to be placed in a second or inferior class."³ Though a man may commence to study for the sake of utility, he must, if he would be really learned, care more for theory than for practical application,⁴ for the eternal side of geometry, for instance, than for the transient.⁵ Similarly, the study of numbers is profitable if pursued with a view to the beautiful and good;⁶ otherwise, not. The blindness of the world to this truth, Plato realized. In the person of Socrates he says:

"I am amused at your fear of the world which makes you guard against the appearance of insisting upon useless studies, and I quite admit the difficulty of convincing men that in every man there is an organ which is purified and illumined by these studies, when by other pursuits lost and dimmed; and this eye of the soul is more precious far than ten thousand bodily ones, for this alone beholds the vision of truth."⁷

As a man comes to realize that "the knowledge which has to do with reality and unchangeableness is the truest of all,"⁸ he turns from the world of generation to that of pure being.

1. Rep. 445, 612-621; Laws 664,661; Crito 48.

2. Laws 661; Rep. 580-583.

3. Phil. 59.

4. Rep. 526-533; Phil. 55,58.

5. Rep. 526. See also Rep. 527. "Knowledge, and not il faut vivre is the real object of the whole science."

6. Rep. 531.

7. Rep. 527.

8. Phil. 58.

He loses himself in the world of ideas, where the soul attains to that which is best in existence, and is able, by understanding the essence of all things, "to abstract and define the Idea of the Good."¹ Then, when he has acquired "the power of raising the highest principle in the soul to that which is highest in existence,"² he will have reached "the end of the intellectual world,"³ and will desire wisdom and virtue solely for their own sakes.

20. POLITICAL AUTHORITY IN THE IDEAL STATE

Curiously, when Plato treats of political authority, his individualism is less pronounced. It would be best, he says, for each man to direct his life by his own inner vision of what is rational.⁴ But since most men have not a sufficiently clear grasp of truth, it would be wiser for them to submit to the rule of an enlightened guide.⁵ This guide, or philosopher-king, ought himself to govern not so much by law as by intuition.⁶ Since, by virtue of his unerring insight, he may modify principles to suit particular cases, he is superior to law.⁷ But his superiority is of a special sort. He will never have occasion to stand out boldly against the spirit of the law. For, in the model city, there is no opposition between personal and political well-being. In such a community, the just man acts in a way which leads at once to his own good and that of society.⁸ In the ideal republic,

1. Rep. 534, also 511, 530, 537.

2. Rep. 532. Also 533.

3. Rep. 532 Phaedrus 249.

4. Rep. 590.

5. Ibid. Control through laws is second best. Statesman 297.

6. Rep. 590.

7. Laws 875.

8. Laws 875; Rep. 465.

there could arise no test case concerning the extent of state sovereignty.

21. POSSIBLE CONFLICT WITH AUTHORITY IN
AVERAGE STATE

Conflict with the authority of the state could arise only in the imperfect state. In such a polity, the good citizen will, it is true, reverence the laws.¹ He knows that to them he owes his education and daily sustenance.² He has entered into a compact, at least implicit, to observe them faithfully.³ They are the source of whatever order and amity exists in the ordinary republic.⁴ To violate them would be to overthrow the government, as far as in one's power.⁵ Usually, though not always, the good citizen will honor the laws "more than father or mother or life itself."⁶ In such a way, for example, did Socrates respect the decrees of authority, when, rather than disobey the state,⁷ he refused to escape the penalty of death by flight.

It is interesting to note, however, that Socrates brought the sentence of death on himself by following the guidance of his daemon in defiance of custom and public opinion.⁸ Like Socrates, any good man may oppose the state if his conscience so urge him. In a matter of supreme importance, "anything which may be an impediment," the virtuous person may "utterly disregard." And if, at last, necessity plainly compels him to

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1. Crito 50-53, 54.
 2. Crito 50-51.
 3. Crito 51-52.
 4. Laws 875.
 5. Crito 50.
 6. Crito 51.
 7. Crito 50-54.
 8. Apol. 30, 37-38, 40.

be an outlaw to his native land rather than bow his neck to the yoke and be ruled by inferiors, he must be an exile, and endure all these things rather than accept another form of government which is likely to make men worse."¹

22. MORAL PERFECTION IN THE IDEAL STATE

More fundamental than the question of civic authority is that of the degree of moral perfection possible within the limits of the state. That a wisely organized society at least provides certain necessary conditions of goodness is obvious. The good polity, because it is unique in being a single, and not a divided city,² possesses that peace and harmony requisite for the continuous pursuit of virtue.³ Its citizens "excel all mankind in all virtues as becomes the children and disciples of the gods."⁴ It may be, however, that the perfection attained by all the citizens as such does not represent a complete moral life. True, both the good citizen and the good man must preserve their souls in peace, and must promote the common good. True, also, the good citizen should seek that degree of moral excellence which corresponds to his function in the state; and the philosopher-king in so far as his task is more complex and his inner life nearer the divine than that of other men should follow a higher ideal of perfection than they. But whether this ideal of perfection is social or ultra-social, Plato, as has been said before, nowhere clearly states.

1. Laws 770.

2. Rep. 422.

3. Rep. Bks. VIII, and IX., show discord in inferior states.

4. Tim. 24.

23. SOCIAL DUTIES OF THE PHILOSOPHER

However, this at least is evident: Plato with his respect for proportion ¹ would naturally give a place in his ideal to all aspects of human life, including the civic. Looking upon virtue as the mean ² he could not be entirely individualistic. Just as in The Timaeus, ³ he considered mankind as only a part of a great whole, so in The Republic and The Laws, ⁴ he regarded the citizen largely as a unit of a civic body. The philosopher-king cannot, for any merely personal good, throw aside his obligation of guiding the state, nor be "rude and unsociable." ⁵ Should he be reluctant to rule, he must be compelled to leave "the upper world" in obedience to the voice of that city which has done so much for him. ⁶ He must be made to see that he alone can save the community, ⁷ and give it happiness; ⁸ he must realize that

"Until philosophers are kings, and the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures which follow either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never cease from ill--no, nor the human race, and then only will [the true] ⁹ state have a possibility of life, and behold the light of day."

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1. Rep. 486.
 2. Rep. 619; Laws 792; Statesman 284.
 3. Tim. 90
 4. Laws 739, 903, 904. Phaedrus 279. Rep.
 5. Rep. 486.
 6. Rep. 519.
 7. Rep. 499, 501, 520, 540.
 8. Rep. 421, 501.
 9. Rep. 473.

24. INDIVIDUAL PERFECTION OF THE PHILOSOPHER

MORE IMPORTANT

Although it is for the sake of picturing the good ruler that Plato begins his discussion of the philosophic life, he becomes so enthusiastic in the midst of his discourse as almost to forget his initial purpose. He extols the power of wisdom--"the highest of human things" -- in unifying and elevating all man's tendencies. The philosopher has the brutal part of nature "silenced and humanized; the gentler element, liberated; and the whole soul, perfected and ennobled by the acquirement of justice, temperance, and wisdom." He is more than a guardian; he has "other honors and another and a better life than that of politics." Despising "everything but virtue," he seeks to "become part of the divine and immutable order," and to be all immortal. When he pursues justice, it is with a desire, not of pleasing men or even of benefiting them, but of resembling God, who is altogether righteous. Always, he will make philosophy his chief concern, even though, when the time comes, he will "toil at politics...and rule for the public good." In thus leaving divine contemplation to serve his fellow men, the philosopher forsakes an occupation exalted and satisfying for one less blessed. In this present world, however, necessity will

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1. Rep. 416.
 2. Prot. 352.
 3. Rep. 442, 551, 532, 537.
 4. Rep. 591.
 5. Rep. 499. Also 519.
 6. Critias 120.
 7. Rep. 500.
 8. Tim. 90.
 9. Theaet. 176; Laws 716. (See also Rep. 358).
 10. Rep. 519. (Also 520-522).
 11. Rep. 519-520.

not permit a man to follow unreservedly the intellectual life. Complete detachment from temporal affairs is an ideal for the gods, not for men.¹ But so far as practicable, a man should seek a life of pure thought, and not confine his interests to political matters.

25. GOOD MAN IN AVERAGE STATE OFTEN MUST WITHDRAW
FROM PUBLIC LIFE

That Plato had a preference for personal, private goodness is more clearly shown in what he says of the life of the just man in the average state. The philosopher with his social interests can develop fully only in the ideal city. In any actual state, the virtuous may be obliged to stand aside from public affairs. He is not at home among the unreflective many, and he would only labor in vain in a milieu of political sham. His fellow citizens, lost in the world of generation, have neither wisdom nor virtue. They are taken up with proceedings² in a law court or the trifling actions of their neighbor.³ They estimate a man by his ease of manner, his wealth, his power of persuasion,⁴ or his willingness to comply with their desires. To them, it is a strange truth that the man who would advance in knowledge must withdraw from what is sensible;⁵ or that the sovereign who would govern well must rule according to a divine plan.⁶ Since these men have never been in earnest about inquiring into reality, they necessarily misinterpret what is contin-

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1. Phil. 22
 2. Theaet. 173
 3. Theaet. 173-174.
 4. Gorg. 519.
 5. Rep. 484, 611, 612.
 6. Laws 706, 744, 746. Rep. 501, 519, 592.

gent. The result is for the state political confusion; for the individual, spiritual decay. Ignorance is found to be synonymous with vice.¹

From such associates, the just man will be glad to withdraw, and "to retire under the shelter of a wall"² Then, when, from his seclusion, he "sees the rest of mankind full of wickedness," he will be "content, if only he can live his own life, and be pure from evil and unrighteousness, and depart in peace and good-will."³ If he is a politician at all, it is only "in the city which is within... Beholding the pattern of the heavenly city, he will govern himself according to the laws of that city and no other."⁴

26. THE INNER OR PERSONAL SIDE OF VIRTUE

COMES FIRST

It is with an unobtrusive life of study--often the best under the circumstances--that the good man must at times be content. It was this type of life which Odysseus in the myth at the end of The Republic chose for himself.⁵ It was this type of life that Rhadamanthus, also, in the myth in The Gorgias so highly approved and so richly rewarded.⁶ For both Odysseus and Rhadamanthus understood that if the just man in most states holds himself aloof from public affairs, and so falls short of the ideal, it is more through necessity than

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1. Prot. 360; Meno 77; Laws 689, 691; Tim. 86; Theaet. 176.
 2. Rep. 496.
 3. Rep. 496.
 4. Rep. 591.
 5. Rep. 620.
 6. Gorg. 526.

choice. They knew that the man who leads a stainless life does "a great work, but not the greatest;" that could he find a state "suitable to him," he would have "a larger growth and be the saviour of his country as well as of himself."¹ Even as it is, the man of interior virtue, can, like another Socrates, be the truest politician of his age;² and, by his obedience to the gods, he can confer upon his city the highest blessings it has ever known.³ While Plato only reluctantly recognized the genuineness of secluded goodness, it is significant that he did not insist at all times upon the imperativeness of political duties.⁴

Moreover, his dislike for the multitude,⁵ as well as his reverence for "beauty of the inward soul"⁶ would make him instinctively care first for the preservation of "the divinest of possessions"⁷ from moral evil.⁸ The great combat is the combat of life,⁹ the struggle to bring the soul back to her original splendor.¹⁰ Of all radiant things, the soul gazing upon true being is most radiant.¹¹ In comparison with keeping the soul undefiled, all else is insignificant.

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1. Rep. 496.
 2. Gorg. 521.
 3. Apol. 30.
 4. Mahaffy in his Hist. of Classical Greek Lit. Prose Writers Vol. II, pt. 1, 1903, Ed. 4, says that Plato regards "the love of God as the ideal of perfection". (Foot-note p.180); and that in The Crito, The Gorgias, and The Politicus, the philosopher remains aloof from society. p. 206.
 5. Rep. 493, 494, 496; Crito 44,47,48,49; Gorg. 474,482,513,521-22
 6. Phaedrus 279.
 7. Laws 726.
 8. Laws 727.
 9. Gorg. 526.
 10. Rep. 611
 11. Rep. 508, 611.

27. DEGREE OF HAPPINESS POSSIBLE IN STATE:
HAPPINESS IN IDEAL STATE ONLY RELATIVE

Logically, Plato should and does, believe that man's happiness, like his moral good, lies without the state. Enthusiastic as are his descriptions of the contentment in the ideal republic, they portray a satisfaction, not absolute, but relative to that of other states.¹ They are pictures of the highest earthly felicity. Only in the city ruled by the philosopher-king is there that unity of aim which is the condition of peace.² In all other polities there is no cessation from evil,³ and no possibility, without divine aid,⁴ of attaining perfection. Yet, even in the perfect state, the several classes possess simply that "proportion of happiness which nature assigns to them."⁵

28. SOCIAL ORDER NOT THE ONLY FACTOR IN INDIVIDUAL
HAPPINESS

Much as Plato insisted upon seeking first the happiness of the state as a whole,⁶ he by no means slighted personal blessedness. He took pains to show that in the well-regulated city where each works for the good of all, not only the philosopher,⁷ but every member is happier than he would be in any other polity.⁸ But the inward peace and joy of a man are dependent only in part upon the social order. One must look to virtue,⁹ which, in addition to being the most excellent of all things,

1. Rep. 465; Laws 697.

2. Laws 962; Rep. 423.

3. Laws 713.

4. Rep. 425.

5. Rep. 421.

6. Rep. 420, 421, 466, 519-520; Laws 697. See above, page 14.

7. Rep. 580. See above, page 13,14.

8. Rep. 445, 465.

9. See above, page 9.

is also the chief condition of contentment. He who would know "the first place in the scale of happiness" should never admit vice into his soul.¹ He should believe that the just alone are "blessed and happy."² The highest joy belongs to the philosopher-kings who lead a life "blessed as Olympic victors, and yet more blessed..... For the victory which they have won is the salvation of the whole state; and the crown with which they and their children are crowned is the fulness of all that life needs."³

29. PRESENT LIFE NOT ENTIRELY SATISFYING

Though at peace, the just man is not entirely satisfied, nor ever can be in this world. He looks forward to the hour which will free him from the exigencies of time, and open to him a life purely spiritual. Not within the short space of "threescore years and ten"⁴ can he attain that moral perfection upon which true happiness depends. Far from regarding any human thing as of importance,⁵ he is anxious to have his soul released from his body that he may enjoy to the full communion with the eternal ideas.⁶ Why a man must first live an earthly existence before he can reach his true end, Plato only partially explained. God, he said, being beneficent,⁷ created the universe because he saw that to do so was good. He desired to embody⁸ in tangible form the heavenly pattern of the ideal world. This

1. Gorg. 478.

2. Rep. 354.

3. Rep. 465, also 580, 587.

4. Rep. 608.

5. Rep. 604. Phaedo 23; Laws 803. Also Rep. 486, 608.

6. Phaedo 67, 79, 80; Gorg. 511-512.

7. Tim. 29.

8. Tim. 29.

embodiment is, therefore, rational and fair.¹ Yet in so far as it is but a copy, it is not reality, but appearance;² an object, not of knowledge, but of opinion.³ Its basic substance, which Plato called necessity, or chaos, or the unlimited,⁴ lies outside of the Divine mind.⁵ The universe made from this given matter will always fall short of full participation in the Divine nature, and must, therefore, ever remain imperfect.⁶ Never, then, can this world be the true home of a rational being.

30. MORAL LIFE MEANS A STRUGGLE TO BREAK AWAY FROM LIMITATIONS OF TIME

The moral life must mean a struggle to get away from the limitations of time. Let men turn away from this world of shadows to gaze into "the heaven of heavens above all sense."⁷ Let them remember the nothingness of man in comparison with God,⁸ and take great care of their souls for eternity.⁹

31. FUTURE REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

Those who go through life adorning the soul with her proper jewels of "courage, justice, temperance, and friendship,"¹⁰ will, after death, dwell forever with the gods.¹¹ Such as these realize that "fair is the prize, and the hope great:"¹² they seek to present themselves "whole and undefiled on that last great

1. Tim. 30, 68.

2. Tim. 37, 38; Phil. 53; Phaedrus 250; Rep. 478, 508-511.

3. Phaedo 65-66, 75-76; Phil 57, 59; Statesman 309; Rep. 476-480, 508-511, 515-518.

4. Tim. 30. Phil. 24-27.

5. Tim. 53.

6. Tim. 53.

7. Phaedrus 247.

8. Laws 804; Rep. 604, 608; Phaedo 62.

9. Phaedo 107.

10. Phaedo 115.

11. Phaedo 83; Gorg. 526.

12. Phaedo 114.

day."¹ Far otherwise is the fate of the many, immersed in the things of earth. They will hereafter be either punished or obliged to become again and again incarnate, until at last they embrace the whole of justice.² The soul's responsibility for its manner of life lies far back in an original choice before birth of a particular destiny.³ If a man selects his lot foolishly with a view to honor, or wealth, or ease,⁴ he is answerable for all that follows from his choice. Eternal blessedness is given only to those who, like the philosopher-king, choose to live by wisdom.⁵

32. CONCLUSION: PHILOSOPHER IS MORE THAN A
SOCIAL UNIT

From whatever point of view the philosopher-king is considered, he is seen to be only half described when he is called a guardian. True, his training for over thirty years is directed largely towards making him a servant of the state.⁶ True, also, for fifteen years, he devotes himself to the task of ruling.⁷ But a political unit solely, he is not. His education, his allegiance to his own conscience, his criteria of goodness, and his final happiness all point beyond the state. This being so, Plato's ideal cannot be defined as chiefly civic, and Erdmann is incorrect in saying that with Plato "the good life in the good state is the highest morality conceivable."⁸

1. Gorg. 526. Also Phaedo 82, 114.

2. Laws 904. Rep. 616-621.

3. Rep. 618-621.

4. Ibid.

5. Temple believes that Plato thought that the state's chief function was to prepare men for eternity. Plato and Chr. 31.

6. Rep. 537, 539.

7. Rep. 540.

8. See above page 17.

33. THE CONTEMPLATIVE IDEAL. CHARACTERISTICS OF MYSTICS IN GENERAL

Besides the carefully thought-out plan of the good life described in The Republic, Plato has hovering in the background of his writings, a mystical ideal. His predilection for a life of divine communion he neither definitely set aside nor fully provided for. His mysticism was never thorough-going; it was mainly an undeveloped tendency which colored all his thought. Mysticism, in the strict meaning of the term, is an intimate personal union with God, in which the soul realizes divine truths through intuition. This union is achieved mainly through prayer and self-renunciation. The mystic, because of the peculiarly convincing character of his own experiences, often attaches little importance to the truths discoverable by reason. He may understand them well enough, but he passes them by. His religious attitude transforms his ordinary experiences. To him, the supernatural world is much more vivid than it is to the average person; and for him, the sensible world in all its details proclaims its divine author. Enthusiastic, a lover of the beautiful, he frankly prefers divine folly to human wisdom. With an air of insouciance, he courts suffering that he may prove himself in very fact the minister of the Most High.

34. PLATO'S GENERAL RESEMBLANCE TO THE MYSTICS

Plato in his occasional asceticism,¹ his reliance upon

1. Rep. 585, 590.
Phaedo 66-67.

intuition,¹ and his poetic temperament showed himself by nature allied to the mystics. He has some hint of that gaiety which characterizes many contemplatives.² Socrates who regards himself as "the consecrated servant of God" refuses to leave the world less merrily than the swans.³ Like him, all men should remember they are the "playthings of the gods,"⁴ and live "singing, dancing, and sacrificing."⁵ Something of the mystic's abandonment to the ideal, Plato also had. For what is imperfect, and can never be the measure of anything,⁶ he had only scorn. Eagerly, he entered upon the quest for the ideal, and sought God by "sacrifice, prayer, and every kind of service."⁷

35. ASCETISM OF PLATO'S CONTEMPLATIVE

Plato's mystic ignores earthly joys. Rapt in divine contemplation, he "despises this present life."⁸ Even should he be willing to give some place to the higher pleasures, "the

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1. Meno 99; Phaedo 63, 114; Phaedrus 249, 265; Rep. 518-519; Laws 811, 875; Tim. 52, 71; Euthyphro 54.
Temple says Plato is an intuitionist in regard to the end of action. Plato and Christianity, 38, Ed. 1916.
 2. A. Even in The Phaedo which pictures the last hours of Socrates, Plato draws the portrait of his master with great lightness of touch. Socrates says playfully to Phaedo, "I will be your Iolaus, until the sun goes down." 89. He remarks off-hand, "Me already, as the tragic poet would say, the voice of fate calls." 115. At the very last moment, he wishes to pour out some of the poison hemlock as a libation to the gods.
B. Notice Plato's bantering tone in Apol. 17; Euthyphro 5, 6; Gorg. 487, 494; Rep. 336-337, 344-345; Phil. 34; whole of The Euthydemus.
C. Notice, too, his half humorous use of quotations-- Phil. 29; Symp. 174.
 3. Phaedo 85.
 4. Laws 803.
 5. Laws 803.
 6. Rep. 504. Also Laws 716.
 7. Laws 716.
 8. Critias 120.

greatest and most vehement," he will not admit. To mingle with wisdom in the ideal of human life those enjoyments "which are always found in the company of folly and vice" would show "a great want of sense."¹ Knowing the insignificance of human things,² "he leads a dying life,³ and seeks to get rid, as far as he can, of eyes, ears and the whole body, which he conceives as only a disturbing element."⁴ To leave a world where chance legislates⁵ and corrupting evils are attached to the most noble things,⁶ can give the mystic no regret. Well he knows that

"All experience shows that if we would have pure knowledge of anything, we must be quit of the body, and the soul in herself must behold all things in themselves..... In the present life we make the nearest approach to knowledge when we have the least possible concern for the body,.....but remain pure until the hour when God is pleased to release us. And then the foolishness of the body will be cleared away, and we shall be pure and hold converse with pure souls, and know of ourselves the pure light everywhere; and this is truly the light of truth."⁷

36. ABSORPTION IN THE DIVINE

It is by dwelling in thought upon the divine that the soul grows in holiness,⁸ It is by employing aright memories of

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1. Phil. 64
 2. Laws 804, 923.
 3. Phaedo 67. Phaedrus 250.
 4. Phaedo 86.
 5. Laws 708, 709.
 6. Laws 937.
 7. Phaedo 66,67. Also 80.
 8. Phaedrus 249, 250.

the eternal, that a man "is initiated into perfect mysteries, and becomes truly perfect. But as he forgets earthly interests, and is rapt in the divine, the vulgar deem him mad, and rebuke him; they do not see that he is inspired..... When he sees the beauty of earth, he is transported with the recollection of true beauty," and shows himself to be "a lover of the beautiful."¹ To escape from this world in order more and more to resemble God,² to ascend "by fair forms and noble thoughts" to the knowledge of the "single science of beauty everywhere, beauty only, absolute, separate, single, and everlasting"³--such is the aim of the Platonic contemplative.⁴

37. INTUITIVE APPREHENSION OF THE SUPERNATURAL WORLD

With something of the mystic's intensity, Plato feels the reality of the super-sensible world. If the mystic has visions of changeless being, wonderful, but not admitting of exact description, Plato, too, has a slight intuition of supernatural truths, which he sets forth gloriously, but vaguely, in his myths. Too finely wrought and too poetical are these myths to bear paraphrasing. They hint at what is too elusive for precise expression. They call for the same sort of sympa-

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1. Phaedrus 249.
 2. Laws 716; Theaet. 176-177; Rep. 613.
 3. Symp. 210. Though The Symposium is pagan, the above quotation may be used in this connection to show Plato's attitude towards ideal beauty.
 4. See Muirhead, Chapters from Aristotle's Ethics, 157-159, Ed. 1900, where the author says that at least one of Plato's ideals was that of seclusion or withdrawal from ordinary business. See also Temple Plato and Christianity 31, Ed. 1916.

thetic interpretation as do the mystical accounts of the Interior Castle or the Ascent of Mount Carmel. To appreciate them, one must catch the enthusiasm and inner vision of their author. To Plato at least, they had something of the inspired character of the finest poetry and prophecy.¹ He believed himself not unlike those who, in giving expression to the highest truths, are possessed by God,² moved by "a divine madness,"³ and enlightened by a clear insight into the eternal world.

38. MYSTICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE WORLD

As the mystic interprets all things, visible and invisible, in the light of a single principle--that of divine love--so Plato's contemplative interprets the whole of existence in terms of harmony or friendship.⁴ That inner concord which is of a piece with the cosmic spirit of rhythm and grace, he ever seeks. His soul is temperate, and so reflects the fairness of the orderly external world;⁵ it possesses that balance and measure which are "everywhere reckoned as beauty and virtue."⁶ Having achieved the glory of following the better throughout life,⁷ he expects shortly to be united to the God whom he resembles.

39. TRACES OF PYTHAGOREANISM

Sometimes, Plato, under the influence of Pythagoras' teachings, spoke obscurely of the principle which holds the universe together as some mysterious power in number. The fascination which Pythagoreanism had for Plato manifested itself in

1. Ion 536; Meno 99. Also Phil 44,65; Laws 719,792,804,950.

2. Ion 534.

3. Phaedrus 244. Also 245.

4. Tim. 90; Gorg. 504; Laws 628,653,693; Rep. 351,440,484,554,591,604. Muirhead. Chap. From Aristotle's Ethics. 174, Ed. 1900.

5. Tim. 90.

7. Laws 728.

6. Phil.64.

most illogical ways. He tried to estimate the motion of heavenly bodies by a process of squaring and dividing "perfect numbers;"¹ and he spoke of the universe as originating in the union of the finite and the infinite.² It is significant that the Neoplatonists--Plotinus, Iamblichus, and Proclus--centered their attention upon Plato's fantastic account of the origin of the universe and the influence of number as set forth in The Timaeus.

40. CONTEMPLATIVE PROBABLY HAS NO CIVIC DUTIES

The contemplative ideal of Plato gives no specific place to civic authority. The lover of beauty is in much the same position as is the philosopher in the average city.³ Each sees how ineffectual would be his labors in any existing state. There is this difference between them, however: even in the perfect republic, the mystic probably would not have the onerous duties of the philosopher-king. This point is not certain, for Plato treated the life of divine union in so incidental and unconscious a manner that one can assert nothing positively about the social side of the contemplative man.

41. WHICH IDEAL IS MORE REPRESENTATIVE--THE PHILOSOPHIC OR CONTEMPLATIVE. SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THEM.

The mystic, though less fully described than the philosopher,⁴ yet stands for a true Platonic ideal. He is most in

1. Rep. 546; Tim. 35-37. Also Laws 738; Phil. 16-19.

2. Phil. 27 to the end.

3. See above, pages 26,27.

4. Mahaffy calls Plato a mystic. What the Greeks Have Done For Modern Civilization, p. 241, Ed. 1907. See also Ueberweg Hist. of Phil. I., 128, Ed. 1876, where he says that man's highest good, according to Plato, is to resemble God; and Nettleship: Philosophical Lectures and Remains. I. 392. Ed. 1897.

accord with the emotional side of Plato's nature. As to which of these two types of life Plato considered more worthy of emulation, only a probable answer can be given. If one takes into consideration the age in which Plato lived--an age prior to that of the great mystics, and one in need of intelligent reform--it is quite likely that the philosopher best represents Plato's ideal. He has the hardihood in intellectual pursuits which Plato would never set to one side, and he has also the strong mystical bent which Plato so greatly prized. Indeed, the philosopher is not far from being a mystic.¹ At times, Plato allowed his pattern of the man of wisdom to coincide with that of the man of sanctity. According to either standard, the good man looks upon human learning and earthly concerns as nothing; he apprehends pure being and knowledge;² his chief aim is to please God,³ and he has a firm hope of immortality. In The Phaedrus, where the lover of heavenly beauty is portrayed, there is insistence upon the value of wisdom. Conversely, in The Republic, where the philosopher is described, there is recognition of the splendor of fair forms. Plato even went so far as to declare beauty and wisdom identical. The Idea of the Good, which is the goal of philosophic study,⁴ is at once the "source of beauty" and "the author of reason." In The Phaedo, speaking of the man who has dedicated himself to the pursuit of perfect justice, Plato made this pertinent remark:

1. Somewhat the view of Nettleship: Philos. Lectures and Remains. I. 384, 392. Ed. 1897.

2. Phil. 64.

3. Laws 716, 803; Rep. 613.

4. Rep. 509.

"As they say in the mysteries, ... 'Few are the mystics'¹--meaning, as I interpret the words, the true philosophers."

In his myths in particular Plato seems to confuse his philosophic and his religious ideal. In the description in The Republic of the dwellers in the cave² who have known only shadows all their lives, and who treat as a fool the one man who has seen the light of day, Plato means by the sole enlightened man, the pursuer of wisdom; but he could just as well mean the lover of beauty. This account suggests the mystical figure in The Phaedrus of the soul mounting ever upward towards the highest heaven.³ With Plato indeed, as Nettleship says, "the love of wisdom is very near to the love of God."⁴

42. PHILOSOPHIC LIFE IS SUPERIOR. IT IS BOTH
PRAYERFUL AND PRACTICAL

But though the philosopher, like the man of contemplation looks upon the life of divine communion as the best abstractly considered, he seeks here and now a rule of life fuller in its content than that of the mystic. Far from seeking only personal holiness, he earnestly promotes the moral welfare of

1. Phaedo 69.

2. Rep. 515-519.

3. Phaedrus 246-457.

4. Nettleship: Philos. Lectures and Remains I. 376, Ed. 1897.

See also Temple: Plato and Christianity, 29, Ed. 1916.

Mahaffy says that with Plato the love of Ideal Beauty is coincident with the Good and True. Hist. of Greek Classical Lit. V. II, pt. 1, p. 192. Ed. 1903. Similarly, Erdmann says that Plato identified justice and holiness. Anc. and Med. Phil. 121, Ed. 1891. See also P. Shorey, The Unity of Plato's Thought 135. Dec. Pub. U. of Chicago, 1903. Vol. VI.

others.¹ He is as idealistic as any visionary, but he is also as practical and hard working as any artisan in the state. He has no hope of entering into a life of unending union with God until after he has fulfilled the duties of a guardian.

43. THE PHILOSOPHIC IDEAL IS THE ONE PLATO MOST
PERSISTENTLY HOLDS TO

It was this ideal of combined personal perfection and social ministry which Plato held to most persistently. In one of his first writings, he had declared the philosopher alone² worthy of everlasting happiness; in his last writings, he called him inspired³ and divine,⁴ a being "whose acquaintance is beyond price."⁵ Similarly, his intention in his declining years of writing a dialogue entitled The Philosopher, to be the last of a trio--Sophist, Statesman, and Philosopher--and his allusions within the first two dialogues of this series to the preëminence⁶ of the philosopher, show how much Plato cherished to the end the ideal of The Republic. At a time when he had lost much of his ease, subtlety, and brilliancy of style, and when his mind was taken up more than formerly with purely intellectual problems, Plato showed a sustained enthusiasm for the philosophic life. His last great work, The Laws, which deals with the state and its guardians, gives no hint of having been written by a man of mystical bent. In it, the picturesqueness of The Phaedo,

1. Statesman 297.

2. Phaedo 83.

3. Phil. 65.

4. Soph. 216.

5. Laws 951.

6. Statesman 257. Also 285,286. Sophist 216,268.

The Phaedrus, and parts of The Republic is out of the question. What is left is the reflection of a serious and solid character. However much, at one time, Plato may have wavered between different moral patterns, in his last days he cared almost exclusively for a life of study and political responsibility. The mystical ideal drops out of his mind. The philosophic, somewhat modified, remains. It is Plato's final standard in the moral life.

44. CONCLUSION: IDEAL OF PHILOSOPHER-KING MORE REPRESENTATIVE. EMPHASIS EVEN HERE ON INNER SIDE.

In conclusion, it may be said that Plato on the whole-- though not invariably--cared most for that life in which there is frequent reflection on the eternal together with preparation for political duties and concern for the welfare of the state. The second element, civic responsibility, Plato was unwilling to waive, except in extreme cases; for the state is happiest when each man does his appointed work, and the individual is most completely himself when he is an integral part of a social whole. But should a man be so circumstanced that he can take no effective part in the life of his city, he may yet attain perfection of a sort. The fairest part of virtue is internal, and accessible to all. It is the embracing of absolute truth and beauty. Goodness is first the love of virtue because of its own great worth, and, afterwards, the communication of this love to others.¹

1. Laws 730-731; Gorg. 515.

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