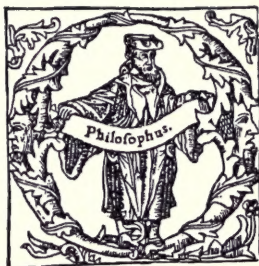


The Philosopher  
as Statesman

W. Owen Jenkins.

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— C. S. G.



# THE PHILOSOPHER AS STATESMAN.

A STUDY IN PLATO'S REPUBLIC.

BY

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

THE essay following was given before the Philosophical Society of the Victoria College, Stellenbosch, as the annual open lecture for 1914. Its immediate purpose is sufficiently indicated in the opening paragraphs, and it was not originally intended for any wider audience. The opinion, however, has been expressed that its subject matter might prove of interest to some among the general public, who have not much time to cultivate a first hand acquaintance with the master thinker of ancient times, by whom so many problems and questions of our own day have been anticipated in a remarkable manner. More particularly, it is hoped that even so slight a sketch as this may be found of some use to University students as a popular introduction to the detailed study of Plato's Republic.

To scholars, the extent of my indebtedness to Jowett's edition of Plato will be so obvious as scarcely to require formal acknowledgment. The fulness of his analysis and commentary, has, in truth, left little that is fresh to be said by humbler students of Plato upon the topics of which the Republic treats.

W. OWEN JENKINS.

Diocesan College,  
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## The Philosopher as Statesman.

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WHEN I received the invitation of the Philosophical Society which has procured for me the honour of being present to-night to lecture to this company, there was more than one reason why I felt considerable hesitation in accepting it.

To begin with, a bare month's notice of the event was a circumstance more flattering to the lecturer's implied powers of impromptu production, than re-assuring to a person of busy life and all too scanty leisure for philosophical research.

The date too upon which the invitation reached me—exactly a month before the first of May—seemed to contain a warning reminder of the proverbial opinion regarding the prudence of those who rush in “where angels fear to tread!” Then, prominently printed on the letter conveying the invitation, there stood out the motto of the Victoria College philosophical society.—“No one has the right to an opinion who has not studied the subject.” A truly admirable motto, and there could not be a more sound principle as the basis of a philosophical society. But in the circumstances it recalled to my mind Dante's ominous warning inscribed over the portals of a certain region in the lower world, “All hope abandon, ye who enter here.” For it seemed to indicate clearly the scant hope of mercy that any lecturer might look for, if he ventured to offer such an audience as this a merely dilettante or casual treatment of any subject of sufficient importance to engage the attention of a

philosophical society at its annual open meeting. Altogether a somewhat formidable combination of deterrent circumstances! and prudence suggested a negative reply. But as I read on, my courage revived, for I found that the secretary's letter contained one or two suggestions, which seemed to offer a loop hole of escape from the reproach of presumption which appeared to encompass the path which I was invited to tread.

The first was that the Society wished to hear a discourse on some aspect of Plato's Republic. Now, while I have no pretension whatever to be regarded as an authority on Plato, it so happens that, of the subjects which my Alma Mater, the University of Oxford, in her wisdom, presses upon the too-often reluctant attention of her sons, the one which I, personally, found the most congenial as a student, and which has for me never lost its fascination and its interest in later life, is this same Plato's Republic. Consequently, the opportunity of addressing a society of students who were disposed to be interested in this famous book was to me a great attraction. The range of discussion in the Republic is so wide that it contains almost an embarrassment of choice to a lecturer in search of a subject, so that one of the perplexities which besets a general invitation to lecture upon an unspecified topic was removed by the considerate explicitness of the committee.

There still remained, however, the problem of the mode of treatment which would be considered appropriate to the occasion: and here too I was not left without guidance, for I was thoughtfully informed by the Secretary that the lecture was desired to be "esoteric enough for the purposes of a philosophical society, while at the same time

admitting of being appreciated by the general public." I doubted very much, and still doubt, if it is possible in one lecture for a fallible human being to succeed in coming up to this two fold and (as it might seem) paradoxical requirement. But then there came the thought: What student of Plato would allow himself to be daunted by a mere paradox? Is not Plato's Republic itself a happy hunting ground of paradoxes—indeed the veritable apotheosis of paradox in the literature of the world?

And, after all, how could a lecturer on Plato better attempt to fulfil a request which might seem to contain something of a paradox, than by choosing for his subject one of the famous paradoxes of the Republic for such an attempt at exposition as time and circumstances might permit? Why not boldly plunge into that one which to Plato himself seemed the most startling of all the paradoxes which he ever formulated viz: the imagined state of society in which philosophers were the guardians of the state and no one was considered competent to bear rule unless he had received the training and education of a philosopher?

Here, it seemed, was a theme which might possibly open up a field of interesting reflection to a society like this, composed of students of philosophy; of whom it would not be extravagant to suppose, from the honourable distinction already attained by the Victoria College as a nursery of Cabinet Ministers, that possibly more than one among the audience might in years to come be called upon to put Plato's theory of the philosopher as statesman to practical proof, and show to the world the value of a course of philosophical study as a preliminary to the exercise of public responsibility in the direction of some weighty office in the government of the country.

By such reflections I was led to the choice of the subject upon which I am embarked this evening. And I should like at the outset to make the confession, quite between ourselves, that I was not a little encouraged to attempt the task by the reflection that when the lecturer became particularly dull, and dry, and abstruse, and generally unintelligible, one part of the audience would be saying to itself, "this is no doubt the *esoteric* treatment of the subject for the benefit of the members of the Philosophical Society." And on the other hand, if the lecturer should occasionally lapse into comparative lucidity, and his remarks might strike some among his audience as being too trivial and commonplace for the serious attention of a critical philosopher, I hoped that they also might be lenient and say to themselves, "this is without a doubt the part of the lecture which is designed to meet the comprehension of the general public."

So, relying upon these two planks to save me from the fate, which Socrates himself dreaded, of being drowned in the great wave of the paradox which he propounded, with your kind indulgence I will endeavour to put before you in brief outline some of the aspects of Plato's Republic, bearing upon and leading up to the climax of his conclusion that the perfect state of society will only be realized when philosophers are kings and all the rulers of the state are philosophers.

#### THE REPUBLIC AND ITS WRITER.

First, a few preliminary words are necessary on the book itself and its writer.

Plato, as you are aware, was a Greek thinker who lived in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. and lectured in

philosophy at Athens, carrying out and expanding in his teaching the principles of his master, Socrates. (The relation of Socrates to Plato, and of Plato to Aristotle has been well expressed by the simile which describes Socrates as the pregnant germ, Plato the rich bloom, and Aristotle the ripe fruit of Greek philosophy.) Plato lived to the age of 80, and he has been pronounced to be "the greatest metaphysical genius whom the world has seen;" and it has been said that "in him more than in any ancient thinker the germs of future knowledge are contained."

The Republic is, by common consent, the greatest, as it is the longest but one of the numerous philosophical dialogues, which, taken together, make him one of the most voluminous of the classical writers. Dr. Jowett, the most famous of modern English commentators on Plato, says of the Republic: "No other dialogue has the same largeness of view, and the same perfection of style. No other shows an equal knowledge of the world, or contains more of those thoughts which are new as well as old, and not of one age only, but of all. In no other of his writings is the attempt made to interweave life and speculation, or to connect politics with philosophy . . . . In the Republic . . . . philosophy reaches the highest point (especially in Books V, VI and VII) to which ancient thinkers ever attained."

Plato has a preëminent claim upon the attention of the student of philosophy for several reasons, of which a few may be named. The sciences of logic and psychology, which have supplied so many instruments of thought to after ages, are based upon the analyses of Socrates and Plato. The principles of definition, the law of contradiction, the fallacy of arguing in a circle, the distinction between the essence and accidents of a thing; the tripartite division

of the mind into the elements of reason, desire and will—the rational, the concupiscent, and the irascible element—these principles of thought are all to be found in the Republic, and, it is thought, were first discovered and formulated by Plato.

The Republic exhibits him particularly as a political philosopher, sketching an imaginary state in which society is reconstructed upon an ideal plane. In this, he is the forerunner of many famous thinkers who have since endeavoured in the same way to embody their criticisms of the existing order of the world in a concrete form, by setting forth an imagined state of perfection in which all wrongs are redressed, all evils rectified, the crooked is made straight and the rough places plain. Among the best known books in this class, all modelled more or less on Plato, are Cicero's "de Republica" St. Augustine's "City of God," Dante's "De Monarchia," and Sir Thomas More's "Utopia."

Again, the modern intellectual life introduced by the Renaissance in Europe, when the treasures of Greek literature were rediscovered and disseminated through the universities of the XVth and XVIth centuries, has been more influenced by Plato, than by any other Greek writer; an achievement in which, I need hardly remind you, the name of that distinguished son of Holland—Erasmus—holds a foremost place. It is also worth noting that the Republic is the first extant treatise on education, of which the writings of Milton and Locke, Rousseau and Goethe, Spencer and Bain, Herbart and Froebel are the legitimate descendants.

Nor does his influence stop here, but it rises into the higher region of spiritual truth. Like Dante or Bunyan,

Plato has a revelation of another life; his reasoned argument for the immortality of the soul, and the doctrine of reward and retribution in a future life, as set forth in the Vision of Er at the end of the Republic, are well known. Hence it is no wonder that he exercised a real influence upon the theology of the Christian Church. He has been justly called "the father of idealism in politics, in philosophy and in literature." And it has been truly said of him as he said of Socrates, that "even the fragments of his thought when repeated at second hand, have in all ages ravished the hearts of men who have seen reflected in them their own higher nature."

#### ANTICIPATION OF MODERN IDEAS IN PLATO.

But the thing which, I suppose, strikes every modern student of Plato most of all is the astonishing way in which so many of the latest conceptions of present day thinkers and statesmen are anticipated and discussed by him. Problems of Socialism and Syndicalism, of the strength and weakness of democracy and other forms of political organization, the influence of music and art upon education, the equality of the sexes, the argument for women's suffrage, marriage reform on eugenic principles, the co-education of the sexes, the idea of an all round excellence,—physical and moral as well as intellectual—which inspired the ideal of the Rhodes Scholarships, all find a place, at least in the germ, in the storehouse of this remarkable book.

Its "modernness" and freshness surprise us at every step. When, for instance, we read his views upon the community of property and the corrupting influences of wealth upon public life, it is difficult to realize that we are not discussing some of the economic controversies of the present

day. Again, we are forcibly reminded of another vexed question of the age in which we live, when we read the argument in which he maintains the equality of the sexes. Let me quote you an extract from the Fifth Book on the position of women in the ideal state: "There is then nothing" he says "peculiar in the constitution of women which would affect them in the administration of the state; and there is no special faculty of administration in a state which a man is entitled to have by virtue of his sex, but men and women alike possess the qualities which may make a guardian (that is one of the class of rulers and legislators of the state)." Now, I venture to think that, if this quotation as I have read it, were printed in a Saturday newspaper as part of a guessing competition as to its authorship, not many readers would guess that the author was Plato. Even if they were told that the name began with P, I doubt if it would help them much. (Indeed it would be more likely to help to set some on an entirely wrong track!) It is true that Plato seems to make a concession to masculine prejudice, by accepting the dominant view of the time, that on the whole the female sex may be less endowed with the gifts and qualities of eminence than the male sex. Yet he takes care to point out, "that many women are in many ways superior to many men, while in the arts of weaving and the management of pancakes and preserves for a woman to be beaten by a man would be absurd."

But I must resist the temptation to dilate upon this fascinating but somewhat perilous topic, since the subject of Plato's views upon the equality of the sexes and the conclusions to which they lead him in the ideal state, would demand a lecture all to itself. It will be enough to



remark that in the Republic of Plato, as in the Kingdom of Heaven there is to be "no marrying or giving in marriage" in the ordinary sense of the word—no room for sentimental love or the free choice of romantic affection, but all is arranged apart from individual preferences, on strictly eugenic principles, for the supposed good and improvement of the human race. Those who are interested to discover more fully the drift of Plato's views on the suffrage question, may be referred to the Fifth Book of the Republic, where they will find plenty of material for arguments,—some double edged ones perhaps—which can be used either *pro* or *con* according to taste.

#### THE GENERAL ARGUMENT OF THE REPUBLIC.

It is now time to get on to a brief outline of the main argument of the Republic, and to show how the plan of constructing an ideal state originated. The Republic follows Plato's usual method of presenting his subject in the form of a dialogue between Socrates, Plato's master and guide—and a circle of his friends.

Those of you who have read the Republic, will remember the literary art with which the attention of the reader is arrested from the very first. The scene is laid at the Piraeus, the sea port of Athens, which was about eight miles distant from the city itself. Socrates, accompanied by Glaucon, has gone over from the capital to see a pageant and take part as a spectator in a religious festival. He is struck by the effective incidents in the pageant and specially comments upon the procession of the local residents. After performing his devotions to the goddess, he and his friend are already starting to return to Athens at

the end of the afternoon, when Polemarchus, the son of his old friend Cephalus, catches sight of him and sends a slave to run after him and tell him to wait. The slave races after Socrates, who is some distance off and pulls him by the sleeve. Socrates turns round and waits until Polemarchus, Adeimantus and other friends come hurrying up. They tell Socrates and Glaucon that they cannot think of letting them go back to Athens until they have first come along to Cephalus' house for a friendly call. Socrates makes a show of reluctance, but Polemarchus and his friends will take no refusal. Besides, they will miss the chief novelty of the whole pageant if they do not stay to see the torch light procession on horse back that night; and then afterwards they can have a long discussion in the company of several young men who are staying with Cephalus, on some philosophical subject. Socrates could no more resist such an attractive prospect than could the lecturer on the present occasion, and so they wend their way to the house of Cephalus. Greetings are exchanged, and general conversation ensues, in the course of which a question crops up, arising out of a casual remark by Cephalus as to the chief benefit he has found from being comfortably well off in the world. Cephalus says that he has found it useful to have a little money of his own, because he has thereby been saved from the temptation to do anything contrary to justice at another's expense, which would burden his conscience as the time approached for him to leave the world.

#### WHAT IS JUSTICE ?

"Very true," says Socrates, "but speaking of justice, what do you understand by the term?" Polemarchus

interposes with a current definition from Simonides "Justice is to tell the truth and give back what a man has had entrusted to him." But, objects Socrates, there are times when it is a duty to withhold the truth, e.g. from a thief or an enemy; and if your friend has become insane, are you to give him back the lethal weapon he has entrusted to your care?

And so the dialogue is launched forth upon the theme, which at the outset takes the form of a purely ethical enquiry into the nature of justice.

Here is a field upon which Socrates is able to display his characteristic skill in cross examination. With his customary irony he poses as an innocent enquirer, who is only anxious to get at the truth, but the result of his questions is always to expose the ignorance of the self-confident opinions put forward by the others in succession. First, Polemarchus is silenced, and then Thrasymachus is put to rout in the argument. Thrasymachus, the typical sophist or professional philosopher of the day, is particularly severely dealt with. His confident and cynical avowal of the position that "justice is merely the interest of the stronger, that "might is right," "that the rich make the laws to squeeze the poor in their own advantage," is by Socrates' merciless dialectic reduced to a manifest absurdity.

Thrasymachus' personal humiliation is so complete that he who began by blustering, ended by blushing, a thing which had never been known before, and shamefacedly and reluctantly was compelled to own his defeat.

All this while Glaucon and Adeimantus have been listening with such interest. They have followed the argument with close attention and they are glad in their hearts to see Socrates get the upper hand, because they

have a deep conviction that he is in the right in maintaining the supremacy of justice. But, though they are glad to see the blatant sophistry of Thrasymachus silenced, they are not yet satisfied. They feel that there is much to be desired in the current popular explanations of justice, and they are not at all impressed by the shallow arguments commonly employed to commend its pursuit to young men. The maxim, "honesty is the best policy," does not appeal to them at all; it is putting the thing on a low plane to commend justice because it pays, and because of the glories, benefits, and honours which follow in its train.

#### DOES JUSTICE "PAY".

Besides, *does* it always pay? How many a clever and unscrupulous scoundrel is found to flourish as the green bay tree upon his successfully hidden fraud and injustice. Moreover, the height of successful injustice is to wear the garb of outside goodness and to impose upon the world. What of the successful hypocrite described by a poet,

"Who hides so well his sin  
Through earth he seems a saint to go  
Yet dies impure within"? \*

Is it really well with him, and does his mode of life "pay" in the end? On the other hand, Glaucon pictures, in an inspired passage, the case of a really just man, who is misjudged and condemned by popular opinion, who is scourged, racked, bound, imprisoned and at last, after suffering every kind of evil because of his sincerity and fearless

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\*Keble, *Lyra Innocentium*

love of truth, is impaled or crucified, and put to a shameful death. Can Socrates still maintain that justice "pays" in such a case as that? They (Glaucon and Adeimantus) feel in their hearts that even in such a life, "high failure infinitely overleaps the bound of low successes," but they want Socrates to face an extreme case like this and still vindicate the essential superiority of justice over injustice, come what may. Will Socrates undertake this task? They warn Socrates that they will not be put off with any verbal jugglery, that no logical gymnastics will satisfy them, coming from him.

"Let others", cries Adeimantus "praise justice and censure injustice, magnifying the rewards and honours of the one and abusing the other; that is a manner of arguing which, coming from them, I am ready to tolerate, but from you, who have spent your whole life in the consideration of this question, unless I hear the contrary from your own lips, I expect something better. And therefore, I say, not only prove to us that justice is better than injustice, but show what they either of them do to the possessor of them, which makes the one to be good and the other an evil, whether seen or unseen by gods and men."

#### THE IDEAL CITY-STATE.

Such a challenge wins Socrates' enthusiastic admiration, and in response to it he sets seriously to work. Justice is the object of the search. What is it? Where is it to be found? It is indeed an elusive virtue and hard to define in the individual; nay, as it implies a number of relations, it cannot be a purely individual virtue taken alone. A happy thought occurs to Socrates. When children are learning to

read or when people are afflicted with dimness of sight, large print is set before them as being easier to decipher than smaller characters. Perhaps justice might be more easily discovered if it were looked for on a larger scale. If you could conceive of an ideal state of society, a perfect state, justice and all the other virtues would assuredly be found in it.

Why not boldly set to work to construct in thought an ideal Republic, building it up from the very foundations and arranging its component parts so as to include all the essentials of a complete and happy human society, which shall be perfect in all its arrangements and ways of life? Surely justice will be found herein on such a large and conspicuous scale that it will be clear for all to see, and will no longer elude our search.

To this proposal the friends of Socrates eagerly assent and Socrates proceeds to lay the foundations of the ideal Republic. With consummate literary art, Plato unfolds through the mouth of Socrates his boldest and most far reaching thought in the elaborate picture that he draws in the construction of the perfect city with its philosopher statesmen. He sketches a division of labour, which contains the germs of the science of political economy, and step by step, the development of the pattern state is set forth before our eyes.

There is, of course, much in the details of the picture which it would be easy to criticise, and which Plato himself pronounces to be visionary and incapable of realization upon earth. For instance, the community of property and the community of wives and children advocated in the Republic, to which I shall have occasion to refer again, is definitely renounced in his latest dialogue "The Laws," as

impracticable. His own disciple Aristotle has not shrunk from the duty of criticising Plato's arguments. "Plato is my friend" he says, "but truth is still more my friend than Plato." But criticism is disarmed in advance by Plato's own emphatic assertion that his views are put forward as ideals, not as actually possible states of society upon earth; and it is in that light we are to regard them; except, indeed, in the event of what he considers the most impossible supposition of all, that rulers should be philosophers and that none but philosophers should be kings. In spite of this admitted Utopianism, however, we are led on so skilfully and imperceptibly by the course of the argument, that, as we fall under the spell of Socrates' matchless dialectic, we hardly know how at any point to refuse assent step by step until we reach the most startling conclusions. The quest for justice soon becomes merged and almost lost sight of in the constructive development of the ideal republic, with its elaborate school of education for the ruling class which is to provide through "gymnastic" and "music"\* for the training of body and mind.

#### JUSTICE IS "TO MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS."

The actual conclusion reached by Plato as to the nature of Justice in the ideal state is almost an anti-climax. He has constituted his society, as we saw, upon the basis of a division of labour, and when this state has been called into being and completeness of symmetry, the virtue of justice is found to reside in the homely principle of each member of the community attending to the work which he understands, without intermeddling with the business of others.

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\* "Music" (*mousiké*), in the Greek sense of the word, includes literature and art.

When the cobbler sticks to his last, and military matters are left to soldiers; when none but doctors practise medicine, when legal decisions are left to those who are learned in law, and educational matters are in the hands of those who have qualified themselves by study and life-long practice to give the best opinions on the aims and methods of teaching; in a word when the skilled worker is regarded as the final authority in his own sphere, there is harmony and health in the state. Each department of life, protected from the ignorant and officious interference of "busybodies in other mens' matters" is at the highest point of efficiency, because each is directed by those who understand it best. This, according to Plato's analysis, fulfils in the perfect state the conception of ideal justice.

Have we in this idea the element of truth, which explains the attractiveness to so many people of the present day theories of Syndicalism—the modernized form of the Guild Socialism of the middle ages? The idea of a Federation of Trades combining in an organized movement to secure the internal freedom of each constituent unit, and to protect it from subjection to unwelcome conditions, is one of those theories which is exerting an immense fascination over large areas of human opinion to-day. It has a superficial symmetry which attracts, and it appeals to the noble principles of justice and sympathy. But we need to remember that symmetry is one of the "idols of the tribe," which, as Bacon has pointed out, often leads men to false conclusions by lending to pleasing notions the semblance of authority.

And although there may be a certain similarity of principle between the Syndicalist theory, and Plato's analysis of the essential nature of Justice, it must not be forgotten



that in Plato's ideal state, the interest of each constituent part is subordinated to the general welfare, and all is administered by the controlling wisdom of the philosopher statesmen, who have been specially trained by years of education and probation to fit them to guide the affairs of the state. In a state of skilled craftsmen the work of government cannot be left to the charlatan and the demagogue. The rulers must be the most competent of all in training, intellect, and character. In this way Plato guards against the clash of opposed interests, with the resultant risk of a deadlock in practical administration, and the anarchy which ensues when sectional interests usurp the control of the whole fabric of society.

Whatever may be thought of Plato's theory of the state, at any rate we can give an unqualified assent to Plato's conclusion about justice, in so far as it enshrines the sound principle contained in the motto of the Victoria College Philosophical Society: "No one has the right to an opinion who has not studied the subject." And we may pause for a moment to take breath at the satisfactory discovery, by a kind of Socratic process of reasoning, that the Philosophical Society is so securely based upon the foundation of Plato's ideal conception of justice. Nor need we be suspected of Syndicalism if we agree that in so far as the Philosophical Society can contribute to a wider recognition of this admirable principle, which is still far from being universally admitted in the common affairs of life, it will be doing a work worthy of philosophers, and helping on the movement of advance towards the perfect state of society.

#### THE THREE PARADOXES.

But I am afraid you will think I am a long time in getting to the heart of my subject. I must plead guilty, but please observe that in this I am only following the

windings of the original route by which Plato arrives at his conclusion. As you read the Republic, you will notice the tantalizing reluctance which Socrates shows in coming to the climax of his argument. In framing his ideal Republic he postulates three essential features which he can hardly bring himself to mention for fear of being laughed at. They are so contrary to accepted opinion that they are known as the three great paradoxes of the Republic. He compares these to three great waves which he has to surmount and which threaten to drown him in ridicule if he tries to face them.

#### I.—THE COMMUNITY OF PROPERTY.

The first wave is the community of property among the guardians of the state. "This," says Plato, "will do away with the discords and strife that arise from private ownership."

#### II.—THE COMMUNITY OF WIVES AND CHILDREN.

The second wave is the community of wives and children among the selected guardians, an arrangement in which the brave and the fair, the good and the beautiful, are paired together by lot under the supervision of the rulers at holy marriage festivals; only those being allowed to marry who are perfectly healthy and whose offspring may be expected to be sound in mind and body. The children, immediately after birth, are to be carried to a separate part of the city and reared by the state as children of one family. This is indeed a mighty wave. We do not wonder at Socrates' hesitation in formulating such a scheme. The bare conception of such a plan, apart

from its repugnance to natural and Christian sentiment, is to our minds fantastic and outrageous. Yet we may note that in some of its aspects, it does no more than anticipate the arguments of the modern science of eugenics, and some of the United States of America have already got as far as to allow no marriages without a license after medical examination! It should be borne in mind, too, that under Plato's scheme the state is always a single city like Athens or Sparta, not the complex aggregate of communities spread over a large country, which make the modern state. It is necessary to grasp this fact, in order to appreciate Plato's point of view in supposing that such an arrangement could be regarded as even ideally conceivable as a means to the end he had in view. The contradictions and impossibilities of Plato's scheme it is not worth while to stop to refute. But we cannot do justice to Plato's idealism unless we endeavour to understand the vision which arises before his mind of a Greek city,—possibly not much more populous than Stellenbosch. Plato thought of such a city at unity with itself, not, as Greek cities usually were, rent into factions, weakened by the rival cliques and family feuds and vendettas of the leading citizens opposing and undermining each other and preventing the city from showing a united front in time of war. If such a city could be reconstructed on the basis of an actual blood relationship, Plato conceived that the whole city might become one large united family and the spirit of brotherhood would permeate the whole.

Such was Plato's Utopian vision and these are the first two great waves which come rolling in and, as Jowett says, "We hear the roar of them." But then there comes the last question. Granted for a moment the desirability of

such an ideal state as Plato describes, in which all the citizens, after two generations, will be united in blood kinship, as fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters and sons and daughters, and secondly, in which there will be no law suits and disputes about property because men have all things in common and nothing but their bodies to call their own; granted the benefits of a state in which all citizens shall be free from sordid cares and be a united happy family, the question arises: Is such a state possible? And if so, in what way? The answer to this, says Socrates, is the biggest and most threatening wave of all. He is very reluctant to say what it is, he is so fearful of being drowned in ridicule. But his friends urge him on and do not spare him. So he is forced to face the wave and disclose the momentous condition which is going to make it possible for his ideal state to be realized: and he states it in these terms:—

### III.—THE PHILOSOPHER AS STATESMAN.

“Until philosophers are kings, or 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 who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never rest from their evils,—no, nor the human race, as I believe,—and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day. Such was the thought, my dear Glaucon, which I would fain have uttered if it had not seemed too extravagant; for to be convinced that in no other State can there be happiness, private or public, is indeed a hard thing.”

"Socrates", cries his friend, "all the world will take, off his coat and rush upon you with sticks and stones unless you can justify a statement so contrary to popular prejudice."

"Well with your help," says Socrates, "I will try. But first what do we mean by a Philosopher? We mean as the name implies, the lover of all wisdom, the man who is enamoured of every form of real learning. We must be careful, however, to exclude from our definition the sham philosopher. There is a greedy love of unworthy things, a delight in depraved comedy shown by a man hungry for curious sights and experiences, and he may be said to have the love of a kind of worthless knowledge. But he is not a true philosopher." (This careful distinction suggests that the term philosopher in Plato's day had an ambiguity of connotation, to which a parallel may be found in a term in common use in our own day; this much abused term is frequently used to describe *soi-disant* experts of various kinds, tight rope performers, jugglers, swimming instructors, conjurers and wrestlers, corn curers and patent bill proprietors, who all arrogate to themselves the honoured title which is associated with the exponents of dignified branches of learning in a University.)

#### DESCRIPTION OF A TRUE PHILOSOPHER.

So, Plato here is most careful to explain that by philosopher he means the real not the imitation article, the man who possesses the ability to distinguish between the true and the false; the man whose opinion is based upon knowledge and is something different from the casual and confused impressions of the untrained mind, which may be

true or may be false; in a word the man, to come back once more to your admirable definition, who has "the right to express an opinion," even on the profoundest and weightiest matters, "because he has studied the subject." The philosopher has explored the region of certainty, he is at home in the realm of necessary truth, which, like the axioms of geometry, are intuitively recognized to be true at sight. He sees the ideal perfection as distinct from its accidental and contingent manifestations in mixed or concrete forms. The philosopher is he who has risen to the vision of the absolute and eternal and immutable truth of Being. Such a man will naturally hate all falsehood, he will be absorbed in the higher joys of intellect, and so despising the allurements of the senses, he will have the mastery of his bodily impulses. He will be the reverse of covetous and anything like meanness or illiberality will be foreign to his nature. In a fine phrase Plato says, "he is the spectator of all time and all existence". Great thoughts will occupy his hours of contemplation and so he will be fortified against the fear of death and will not think too highly of life in this world. He will be neither a coward nor a braggart, nor unjust and hard in his dealings.

In his manners he will be trained by study to a natural refinement. "So you can discern" says Plato, "whether a man is just and gentle or rude and unsociable. These are the signs which distinguish even in youth the philosophical nature from the unphilosophical."

He will also have a good memory and a well proportioned and gracious mind, which will move spontaneously towards the essence of every subject which he studies, and grasp it in its true relations. This is the character of the man to whom, when perfected by learning and an education

based upon true principles, the guidance of the commonwealth can be safely entrusted, and to such men alone would Plato commit the guardianship of the public weal.

#### THE TRIPARTITE DIVISION OF THE SOUL.

That this is the only sound conclusion, Plato shows by a reasoned argument which may be summarized briefly as follows: In a state, as in the individual soul, there are three principles of activity, each with its own motives and attendant pleasures. There is the principle of appetite in the soul, which contains the strong desires which clamour for gratification in the region of eating and drinking and other pleasures of the senses. This has its counterpart in the state, in the element represented by the love of gain, the lust for heaping up large fortunes, and the craving for the power which they bring. Thus the money making element in a state, in Plato's analogy, corresponds with the appetitive principle in the soul.

Then there is the ambitious or spirited element in the soul, which eagerly seeks after honour and public fame and endows him who is dominated by this spirit with the necessary degree of contentiousness and pugnacity to enable him to succeed and assert his place in public life.

This, as Plato shows, is the motive power of the average politician of his day who looks to a public career as an instrument of his own advancement and fame, and, unlike the philosopher, as we shall see presently, eagerly pushes himself forward in the competition for honours and distinctions.

The third principle is the principle of reason, which contains the love of knowledge for its own sake, from the

pure desire of being in communion with the realities of existence, of understanding the divine order and of being in reverential converse with the Supreme Truth and Light that governs the universe, which Plato describes as the *ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ*, The Idea of Good. Can anyone question which of these three principles, the love of gain, the love of fame, or the love of truth and good, is worthiest to rule the world? Moreover, since the only criterion by which men can judge relative values is the criterion of experience, the philosopher has the advantage over the other two types, as he has of necessity known the taste of the other pleasures from his childhood upward; he knows something of the pleasures of the appetites, and he knows something of the pleasures of honour and fame; for the rich man and the brave man and the wise man alike have their crowd of admirers, and they all have some experience of the pleasures of honour, but the delight which is to be found from the knowledge of absolute Truth is known to the philosopher alone.

#### IF PHILOSOPHERS RULED ALL WOULD BE WELL WITH THE STATE.

He then is the only one qualified to judge because he alone has experience of all three principles. He therefore, is in a position to estimate the relative value to be assigned to each. Hence, if philosophers ruled, and all rulers were men who were trained in noble studies, lovers of wisdom and knowledge and truth for their own sakes, living in close communion with the Divine order of the universe—society would be perfected, and the ideal state would come into being and all would be well with the world.



But Socrates is not allowed to sketch this beautiful ideal without protest. And we half consciously sympathize with Adeimantus when he says:

“To all these statements, Socrates, no one can offer a reply, but when you talk, a strange feeling passes over the minds of your hearers. Owing to their want of skill in asking and answering questions they can hardly tell where the fallacy lies in what they are made to assent to, but at the end of the discussion—like the inferior player at draughts, who is left without a move at the end of the game, they find that they are in a position of helplessness and all their former notions are turned up side down. Yet all the while they feel unconvinced. What you say about philosophers is all very beautiful and fine, but why is it that the people whom we see devoted to philosophy, not only as a youthful exercise when at College, but as the pursuit of their maturer years, are so many of them, utter rogues and humbugs, or else impracticable cranks and useless in ordinary life?” Everybody knows the story of Thales the star gazing philosopher, who was so rapt in contemplation of the heavens above, that he didn't notice where he was walking, and was jeered at by a maid servant as a simpleton because he fell into a muddy ditch! And the common opinion of philosophers held in the world to-day is that the best of them are unpractical and useless to the world by their very devotion to unworldly studies and contemplations.

Socrates admits that this is undoubtedly the popular opinion and that popular opinion is in the main not far wrong. “How then,” cries Adeimantus, in amazement “can you be justified in saying that cities will not cease from

evil until philosophers rule in them, when philosophers are acknowledged to be of no use to them?"

"You ask a question," says Socrates, "to which a reply can only be given in a parable:"

#### THE PARABLE OF THE SHIP.

"Imagine then a fleet or a ship in which there is a captain who is taller and stronger than any of the crew, but he is a little deaf and has a similar infirmity in sight, and his knowledge of navigation is not much better. The sailors are quarrelling with one another about the steering—every one is of opinion that he has the right to steer, though he has never learned the art of navigation and cannot tell who taught him or where he learned, and will further assert that it cannot be taught, and they are ready to cut in pieces anyone who says to the contrary. They throng about the captain, begging and praying him to commit the helm to them; and if at any time they do not prevail, but others are preferred to them, they kill the others or throw them overboard, and having first chained up the noble captain's senses with drink or some narcotic drug, they mutiny and take possession of the ship and make free with the stores; thus, eating and drinking, they proceed on their voyage in such manner as might be expected of them. Him who is their partisan and cleverly aids them in their plot for getting the ship out of the captain's hands into their own, whether by force or persuasion, they compliment with the name of sailor, pilot, able seaman, and abuse the other sort of man, whom they call a good-for-nothing; but that the true pilot must pay attention to the year and the seasons and sky and stars

and winds, and whatever else belongs to his art, if he intends to be really qualified for the command of the ship, and that he must and will be the steerer, whether other people like or not—the possibility of this union of authority with the steerer's art has never seriously entered into their thoughts or been made part of their calling. Now in vessels which are in a state of mutiny and by sailors who are mutineers, how will the true pilot be regarded? Will he not be called by them a prater, a star-gazer, a good-for nothing?"

"Of course," said Adeimantus.

"Then you will hardly need," I said, "to hear the interpretation of the figure, which describes the true philosopher in his relation to the State; for you understand already."

"Certainly."

"Then suppose you now take this parable to the gentleman who is surprised at finding that philosophers have no honour in their cities; explain it to him and try to convince him that their having honour would be far more extraordinary."

"I will."

This is indeed a scathing indictment of the politics of Plato's day.

But, though Plato laments that in existing states there is little love of wisdom, a state of things is conceivable in which the opposite state of things might prevail, and to this vision of regeneration Plato clings as the hope of the world. He saw dimly a vision of a possible Saviour of mankind. Of this vision it has been truly remarked: "Plato's ideal has a place in the home and heart of every believer in the religion of Christ. In it men seem to find a nearer and more familiar truth, the Divine man, the Son of man, the Saviour of mankind, Who is the first-born and head of the whole family in heaven and earth, in Whom the Divine and human, that which is without and that

which is within the range of our earthly faculties, are indissolubly united. Neither is this divine form of goodness wholly separable from the ideal of the Christian Church, which is said in the New Testament to be "His body," or at variance with those other images of good which Plato sets before us. We see Him in a figure only, and of figures of speech we select but a few, and those the simplest, to be the expression of Him. We behold Him in a picture, but He is not there. We gather up the fragments of His discourses, but neither do they represent Him as He truly was. His dwelling is neither in heaven or earth, but in the heart of man. This is that image which Plato saw dimly in the distance, which, when existing among men, he called in the language of Homer, 'the likeness of God' (Rep. VI. 501 B,) the likeness of a nature which in all ages men have felt to be greater and better than themselves, and which in endless forms, whether derived from Scripture or nature, from the witness of history or from the human heart, regarded as a person or not as a person, with or without parts or passions, existing in space or not in space is and will always continue to be to mankind the Idea of Good." [*Jowett, Introduction p. ccxxxi.*]

Time presses and forbids a fuller reproduction of the whole argument, but I should be glad to think that some of those present may have heard enough of Plato's methods of discussion, to make them wish to deepen their acquaintance with him by studying the Republic for themselves.

Whatever view we may take of practical politics, and however much people may differ in their theories of government and the policy of the state, I think no one will hesitate to admit that Plato sketches a noble and elevating ideal of public life, when he draws for us the picture of the philosopher as statesman in such words as these:

*Erratum.*

p. 29, line 13, for "evil" read "civil."



“He, Adeimantus, whose mind is fixed upon true being, has no time to be filled with malice and envy as he looks upon the affairs of earth; his eye is ever directed towards things fixed and immutable, which he sees neither injuring nor injured by one another, but all in order, moving according to the Divine. These he imitates, and to these he will as far as he can, conform himself.

And the philosophers holding converse with the divine order, become orderly and divine, as far as the nature of man allows: and if necessity be laid upon him of fashioning not only himself, but human society on the same pattern, which he beholds in the heavens, he will not be an unskilful artificer of justice, temperance and every evil virtue.”

He will, “while filling in the details of his reconstructed state,” often turn his eyes upwards and downwards. He will first look at absolute justice and beauty and temperance, and again at the human copy: and will mingle and temper the various elements of life into the image of a man; and this they will conceive according to that other image which when existing among men, Homer calls the form and likeness of God.

And one feature they will erase and then they will put in another, until they have made the ways of men as far as possible agreeable to the ways of God.

If the world perceives that what we are saying is the truth, will they be angry with philosophers? Will they still disbelieve us when we tell them that no state can be happy, which is not designed by artists who imitate the heavenly pattern?”

The bulk of mankind, to Plato, are like the dwellers in an underground cave, living in a world of dim shadows.

The philosopher rises to the light and sees the world of reality and then returns to instruct the dwellers in the twilight as to the true nature of things as they exist in the light of day.

As we read the expression of Plato's lofty idealism we are irresistibly reminded of the inspired injunction to the great Lawgiver of Israel, when he returned after his forty days communion with God on the mountain top, to embody in the religious observances of the Chosen People the principles divinely revealed to him in that upper region, "see that thou make all things according to the pattern shown to thee in the mount."

#### THE EDUCATION OF THE PHILOSOPHER.

There is no time to do more than briefly glance at the details of Plato's scheme of special education for his statesman-philosopher. The course of study which he lays down, namely, the five mathematical sciences, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, solid geometry, and harmonics, without any disparagement of these important realms of truth, would seem to the modern mind altogether narrow and one-sided as a training in regard to statesmanship. It is true that he adds "dialectic," which is what we should call metaphysics, as the coping stone of the whole arch, but we note the absence of "the humanities," which, according to modern conceptions, play so important a part in the training of administrators. We can appreciate Aristotle's description of the feeling of surprise which a student of Plato's lectures experienced who went on one occasion to hear a discourse on the idea of good, expecting to be instructed on moral truth, and received instead a dissertation on arithmetical



and mathematical formulæ. We may wonder, with Jowett, why Plato does not prescribe any study of finance or military tactics in which mathematics are applied to practical purposes, instead of restricting study to the region of pure mathematics. One need not share the famous Professor Blackie's uncomplimentary opinion of mathematics—for it is reported of that distinguished man, as you may have heard, that he once publicly thanked God that he was not endowed with the low cunning which made a man good at arithmetic! in order to share Jowett's expression of inability to understand how Plato's legislators are to be fitted for their work by the study of abstract mathematical science. And Plato himself says that he has hardly ever known a mathematician capable of reasoning!

Jowett goes so far as to say that we vainly search Plato's writings for an explanation of this seeming absurdity. It should be remembered, however, that in Plato's day very little beyond the sciences named had been already mapped out and classified in the domain of knowledge. The science of history was in its infancy. Thucydides was Plato's older contemporary, and he was the first to formulate the purpose of historical study—and to frame a philosophy of history—which was to the end that men might learn from the study of the past what the future was likely to be, his theory being that the situations which arise out of the permanent motives and passions of human nature are continually recurring in the experience of mankind. Similarly, the sciences of ethics and psychology, logic and economics, which include so much of what we call philosophy in the modern sense of the term, virtually began with Plato himself and were largely codified and

systematized by his pupil and successor, Aristotle. It would be misplaced criticism to blame the ancient geographers of the Mediterranean Sea for not including the ocean routes to America, Australia, or the Cape in their early treatises on navigation; similarly we may understand why Plato's scheme of training was restricted to the exact sciences as they were known in the day when he, himself, was unconsciously mapping out new realms of knowledge for the study of the ages to come after him.

No one in our modern day would question the necessity of including a wider course of study in the ideal training of our legislators. Perhaps the most pressing of all at the present stage of the world's history is the study of the social problems of political economy. The questions concerned with the production and distribution of material wealth, are entering upon new phases, owing to the transformation of industrial conditions and the growing complications and inter-dependence of human society. A recent appeal of President Wilson—who may be taken as a conspicuous contemporary instance of the statesman as philosopher—is worthy to be noted here. He declares that the problems of modern production and industry have become so transformed and complicated that the economic formulæ which applied twenty years ago are obsolete to-day; and that the most urgent need of the present day, if the revolutionary ruin which threatens to break up society is to be averted, is for a calm effort of constructive statesmanship, irrespective of party politics, to think out and devise new machinery which shall be equal to the strain of modern human conditions for the general welfare. Here is a line of research which I would venture to suggest as one of great possibilities for the men of the younger generation.

The question might be asked how far are Plato's principles to be regarded as applicable to our own times? To this it is not easy and it might be somewhat hazardous to give a very definite reply. Upon the general point I may quote here the reflections of Jowett who, as master of Balliol, influenced the training of more statesmen of our generation than any other man. He says: "the question whether the ruler or statesman should be a philosopher is one that has not lost interest in modern times. In most countries of Europe and Asia there has been some one in the course of ages who has truly united the power of command with the power of thought and reflection, as there have also been many false combinations of these qualities. Some kind of speculative power is necessary both in practical and political life; like the rhetorician in the Phaedrus, men require to have a conception of the varieties of human character, and to be raised on great occasions above the commonplaces of ordinary life. Yet the idea of the philosopher-statesman has never been popular with the mass of mankind; partly because he cannot take the world into his confidence, or make them understand the motives from which he acts; and also because they are jealous of a power which they do not understand. The revolution which human nature desires to effect step by step in many ages, is likely to be precipitated by him in a single year of life. They are afraid that in the pursuit of his greater aims he may disregard the common feelings of humanity. He is too apt to be looking into the distant future, or back into the remote past, and unable to see actions or events which, to use an expression of Plato's, "are tumbling out at his feet." Besides, as Plato would say, there are other corrup-

tions of these philosophical statesman. Either "the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," and at the moment when action above all things is required he is undecided, or general principles are enunciated by him in order to cover some change of policy; or his ignorance of the world has made him more easily fall a prey to the arts of others; or in some cases he has been converted into a courtier, who enjoys the luxury of holding liberal opinions, but was never known to perform a liberal action. No wonder that mankind have been in the habit of calling statesmen of this class pedants, sophisters, doctrinaires, visionaries. For, as we may be allowed to say, a little parodying the words of Plato, "they have seen bad imitations of the philosopher-statesman." But a man in whom the power of thought and action are perfectly balanced, equal to the present, reaching forward to the future "such a one" ruling in a constitutional state, "they have never seen." But as the philosopher is apt to fail in the routine of political life, so the ordinary statesman is also apt to fail in extraordinary crises. When the face of the world is beginning to alter, and thunder is heard in the distance, he is still guided by his old maxims, and is the slave of his inveterate party prejudices; he cannot perceive the signs of the times; instead of looking forward he looks back; he learns nothing and forgets nothing; with "wise saws and modern instances" he would stem the rising tide of revolution. He lives more and more within the circle of his own party, as the world without him becomes stronger. This seems to be the reason why the old order of things makes so poor a figure when confronted with the new, why churches can never reform, why most political changes are made blindly and convulsively. The

great crises in the history of nations have often been met by an ecclesiastical positiveness, and a more obstinate reassertion of principles which have lost their hold upon a nation. The fixed ideas of a reactionary statesman may be compared to madness; they grow upon him, and he becomes possessed by them; no judgment of others is ever admitted by him to be weighed in the balance against his own."

These are the opinions of one whose judgment is entitled to respect, and they leave little more to be said. But I may be allowed to conclude with a practical thought.

No one, I suppose would be so ignorant or pedantic as to assert that the large vision, the wide outlook upon affairs, the instinct of true statemanship and broad, enlightened patriotism are only to be found among those who have graduated with academic honours at a university. Some of the greatest statesmen known to history have received their training at times of national crisis in the stern school of hardship and endurance. President Lincoln in America, is a conspicuous example of the power of a real genius for statesmanship to emerge from an unpropitious environment in childhood and youth, and by sheer force of character and principle to vindicate an inherent right to be the leader of his fellow men. The same remark might be made in regard to almost every other modern state, not excluding our own South Africa. But it is none the less beyond question that the training of the picked minds of any nation upon a broad and comprehensive scale of education is one of the most vital concerns of the State. It is equally a truism to say that, ordinarily speaking, a University course is the likeliest means of training and developing the latent qualities which make a man likely to be fit in later life to be trusted with

the guidance of his country's destinies. From this point of view the problem of University education is one of the widest national importance, and its wise solution will have an incalculable influence upon the future destinies of our country.

May this College and the other Colleges of South Africa that have contributed so much already to the beginnings of the organized intellectual life of our country, in the future more and more abundantly demonstrate the soundness of the Platonic ideal of the man of clear vision, wide outlook and trained intellect, united to practical wisdom and judgment in everyday affairs, which should be the mark of the statesman philosopher, the safe guardian of the destinies of his country!

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