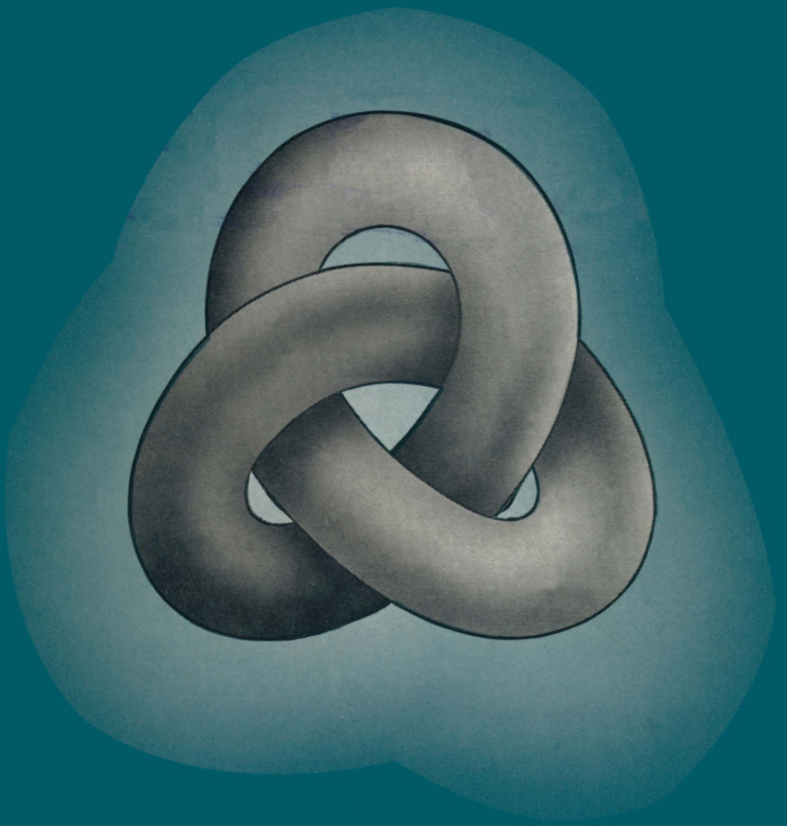
PLATO AND MODERN MORALITY

PAMELA HUBY



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PLATO AND MODERN MORALITY

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PLATO AND MODERN MORALITY

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TO

Adam, Bart

and Priscilla

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Editor's Foreword

Plato's ideas about matters such as family life and education have been for centuries highly influential. Their interest and relevance remain even in modern times. In this book Mrs Huby has presented a clear exposition of Plato's teaching on a number of moral problems and then attempted to show what light this may shed on the particular problems of our age.

Both the student of philosophy and the more general reader will find the following pages full of information and interest.

University of Exeter W. D. HUDSON

Introduction

For centuries Plato has aroused interest, and even passion, in people who are not, or who are not merely, professional scholars and philosophers, like Mr Richard Crossman, the Oxford don who became a minister in a Labour government, and Benjamin Jowett, the nineteenth-century theologian and educational reformer. In recent years these passions have centred on his *Republic*, and many serious works have been written, some to show that he was a fascist, some that he was a communist, and even some that he was, at least at heart, a democrat.[1] But that controversy already seems a little old-fashioned, and this book is not a further contribution to it, but a study of other sides of Plato's teachings which are just as relevant to the issues of today, and were probably nearer to Plato's heart than the purely political matters which have been argued about for so long. For Plato was, I believe, non-political: he wrote about politics when he had to, and he even, with great misgiving, once embarked upon a political adventure, but he had no taste for active political life, and no desire to be a leader of men.

The evidence for this lies in his career. It is usual to say that it was only after, and because of, the execution of Socrates, that Plato at the age of thirty finally turned away from politics and decided to follow a life of study and teaching. Even Plato himself probably believed this. But it is an extraordinary fact that, although he was an Athenian citizen born into a family with a great political tradition, and lived in Athens for nearly the whole of his long life, it is possible to write his biography and not mention a single event in the history of Athens after Socrates' death, except the founding of the Academy by Plato himself. Indeed, A. E. Taylor found it more profitable to connect Plato's life with events in Rome than with those in Athens, though Rome was only at the beginning of her career and Plato never went there.[2] The years during which he lived in Athens were troubled ones, in which many wars were waged,

many diplomatic problems arose, and much muddle and confusion occurred. It would have been easy for him to play an active part in political life if he had wished to do so, and tempting for anyone with a taste for such a life. But he did not. His *Republic* must therefore be seen not as the manifesto of a politician, but as the work of a thinker who stood a little back from affairs, and it must not be related too closely to purely political issues.

It must also be remembered that even in politics there are two distinct kinds of issue. The first are concerned with power, and with the questions of who is to rule, and with what kind of constitution. But power must be used for a purpose, and the second kind of issue is that of detailed laws and policies, and such questions as how to deal with criminals, whether to control prices and wages, and whether to encourage or discourage population growth. It is with matters like these, that are issues partly of law, partly of morality and partly of expediency, that this book is concerned. For law and custom have a moral basis, and when that changes they change too. Plato had a great deal to say on such matters, and on many of them gave arguments for acting in one way rather than another that are still of interest today. By no means all his suggestions are likely to appeal to us, but the important thing is that he gave arguments for his views, and we may consider them before we accept, reject or modify his proposals.

In this book I shall not be concerned primarily with reconstructing Plato's own beliefs, that is, with deciding which of the arguments he sets out he in fact takes seriously, and with deducing from the things he says what he must have thought about other points which he does not consider in detail. Other people have written fascinating books about this problem,[3] but what I want to do is something different. For besides asking whether Plato believed in the arguments he set out, we may also ask whether they are good arguments which we ourselves ought to accept. One of the virtues of the dialogue form which Plato used was that it enabled him to try out various arguments without committing himself to them. But it also had the weakness that these arguments, like most of those used by ordinary people in ordinary conversations, are untidily expressed, and that many of the assumptions made in them are not actually stated. So I shall try to fill in these gaps, with alternative sug-

gestions where necessary, and then consider the value of the reconstructed argument. Direct logical fallacies are rare, but in many cases only probable arguments are used, based on analogy or induction, and metaphysical and moral premises are taken for granted by Plato which could not be taken for granted today. Some of the conclusions he reaches may seem abhorrent, and others strangely sympathetic, but in every case I hope that something may be gained by studying how he reaches his conclusions.

There is one reason why Plato is of peculiar importance today. At present, both within and without the churches, most of the moral issues that have become important in the Western world have arisen because people are not satisfied with the legacy, as it has come down to us, of the Christian past. Plato, on the other hand, is the representative of a civilised and articulate society which, because of its date, was untouched by Christianity, and was also only slightly affected by Jewish and Semitic thought. He may thus act as a 'control' for our moral intuitions.

But from another point of view his importance lies still in the future. For he took seriously, particularly in the *Republic*, the idea of a society in which some men at least had full knowledge of the nature of the universe in which they lived, and of themselves and their place in it, and could guide others by reason of such knowledge.[4] For us, the hope of achieving this kind of knowledge has receded to vanishing-point, and it is difficult for us even to grasp what Plato meant. But, with luck, the human race has millions of years to come in which to increase its understanding, and there may be a time when some of his ideas will seem more appropriate than they ever have in the past.

1 Plato's Life and Writings, and their Historical Background

1. *Plato's Life*

Plato was born in 427 B.C. at the beginning of a period of great trouble that followed one of great confidence. For half a century his home, Athens, had been one of the leading states of Greece, and through her great prosperity had been able to attract the finest thinkers and artists of the time; she had also herself produced an astonishing galaxy of poets and artists to glorify her. Among many other masterpieces, the Parthenon was built and the plays of Aeschylus were written and performed. Under the great statesman Pericles her glory was at its height, but in 431 she became involved in a war with Sparta which dragged on until 404 and, for a while at least, stripped her of all her power. Pericles died in 429, when Athens had already suffered the ravages of a disastrous plague, and Plato was born less than two years later. As he grew up, he saw his city behaving both stupidly and immorally, under the guidance of men whose ambitions exceeded their abilities, and suffering at the same time from strife between factions at home.

He himself had family connections with leading men in both parties, the democrats and the oligarchs, and had been expected to play a full part in public life. But as a young man he became a follower of Socrates, a critic of society whose character and moral fervour charmed many and alienated many more. Because of his independence Socrates suffered at the hands of politicians of both parties, and finally, in 399, when he was already seventy, he was put to death by the democrats on charges of impiety and immorality which his followers indignantly repudiated. Plato devoted the rest of his life to carry-

ing on in his own way what he believed to be Socrates' mission, using his skills as thinker, teacher and writer. He believed that men would be able to live better if they had a better understanding of the world around them. He tried to understand it better himself by his own researches, and to teach others what he knew and help them to discover more by founding his Academy. He also made his views known to a wider public by writing his dialogues.

As far as we know he took no active part in politics until he was sixty, and then not in Athens but in Sicily. And yet there were plenty of problems at home. For although the acute differences between oligarchs and democrats were at an end, there was still much muddle and difficulty. There were wars with Sparta and Thebes; these have been dismissed as footling, because they have been compared with the Peloponnesian War that preceded them, and with the struggle with Alexander the Great that followed. But Plato himself, as is clear from his dialogues, was constantly aware of Athens' great past, and must have felt deeply the contrast with her present position. There was danger too from the east, and Isocrates, Plato's great rival as an educator, spoke out for a Panhellenic union against Persia, under Athens and Sparta as joint leaders, while the resident alien Lysias called for Greek unity against both east and west, and expressed disapproval of the Spartans. In Greece itself great injustices still occurred: the statesman Callistratus was condemned to death by the Athenians for no good reason, and when he returned as a suppliant after a period of exile was in fact put to death. The Thebans, near neighbours of the Athenians, destroyed the little city of Orchomenus, killing the men and enslaving the women, but Plato, as far as we know, raised no voice against them. Even the Sicilian venture was undertaken with reluctance, though that is understandable enough, as will be seen from the facts.

The Greeks had been settled in Sicily for centuries, in a number of prosperous but independent city-states. These were now menaced by the Carthaginians, who also had settlements there, and wanted to extend their power. The most powerful Greek state was Syracuse, which was ruled until 367 by Dionysius I, a strong and skilful leader. His son and successor, Dionysius II, however, although a grown man, was fitted neither by education nor by character for the position he now

occupied. He was, however, very much under the influence of his brother-in-law Dion, who had for many years been a friend and admirer of Plato. Dion invited Plato to Sicily to educate Dionysius for his new task, and Plato, mindful of his own claim that the world might be changed by a ruler who was also a philosopher, accepted the invitation. He knew, however, that Dionysius was unpromising material, lacking the intelligence and virtue that a philosopher needed, and can hardly have been surprised when his enterprise failed. After a second attempt he returned to Athens, where he died at the age of eighty, in 347. The Academy which he had founded survived him for nearly a thousand years, existing as a seat of learning until it was closed by Justinian in A.D. 529.

2. *Plato's Writings*

The works of Plato[1] that have come down to us are nearly all dialogues, containing conversations, almost certainly imaginary, between real characters, who include many of the leading men of Athens and the rest of the Greek world. Some of them Plato must have known well, like his own older brothers, Glaucon and Adeimantus, who appear in the *Republic*. The leading speaker is nearly always Socrates, who is shown not only as the old man Plato loved, but at many other stages of his career. There are a number of dialogues written soon after Socrates' death, which probably reflect his opinions fairly faithfully, but as time went on it is likely that Plato put more and more of his own views into Socrates' mouth, and in some of the later dialogues Socrates gives way to other speakers, presumably because the views expressed were particularly inappropriate to him.

The arguments discussed in the following chapters come from many dialogues, but there are two in particular that stand out, both by their length and by their subject-matter, the *Republic* and the *Laws*. The *Republic* was written probably some time before 380, when Plato was in his forties, and was the longest work he had written until then. It covers a great deal of ground, including questions about art and poetry, and about the immortality of the soul, but the longest part is devoted to the sketch of an ideal state. It is over this that the battles I men-

tioned earlier have raged. Scholars have also written many articles trying to answer the questions it raises but leaves unanswered. These can be of great interest, but I doubt their basic assumption that Plato had in mind a fully worked-out system of which he gives only parts. The loose ends are there because he was interested in only some aspects of the ideal state, and did not stop to consider whether all of his suggestions dovetailed neatly together. Because of this he was free to discuss each separate topic on its merits, without the compromises that are necessary in an actually existing community.

The work begins with a discussion of the nature of justice, in which several suggestions are made and refuted. It is then suggested that it will be better to look first at the state, and sketch an ideal community in which justice is to be found. This is done in two steps. First, there is a very simple community existing at subsistence level. It practises the division of labour, which Plato took to be essential for any real community life, but every man is engaged in providing essential goods and there is no surplus, except for an occasional rustic feast. Plato does not, however, regard this as his ideal community, and goes on to describe one that is more developed economically, and can provide a few luxuries. It is worth our while to ask why Plato reaches his ideal by two stages. The reason may be that he saw that a great many moral problems arise only when there is an economic surplus. At a subsistence level the only thing of importance is the preservation of life, and what is right is what best serves this end. A surplus, however, may be used in many different ways, and Plato wants to know which of these is best. He is not interested in life by itself, but in the good life. So he now considers a number of aspects of the state, including the kind of education that should be given, the possibility of censoring undesirable influences, the size of the city, the position of women, and the division of the citizens into three groups, each with its own function. Considerable space is devoted to the higher education which he thinks the future rulers of the state should have, and he also sets out here much of his own thinking on metaphysical problems, an understanding of which he thought vital to successful statesmanship. There is also a long section on the pathology of the state, in which he develops his belief that politics and psychology are closely related, and that the character of the state will reflect the

character of its citizens. The work ends with an attempt to prove the immortality of the soul and a mythological account of reincarnation, the purpose of which is to underline Plato's view that the paramount end of this life should be the care of the soul in preparation for its existence after death. The *Republic*, then, touches on everything from economics to eschatology, but every part is related to the main theme, that the best life for men is a life of virtue in a virtuous community. The community, at the lowest level, provides the economic basis for the good life, but it can also provide a great deal more, of which education and a suitable niche in society are the most important.

The *Laws*, written in Plato's old age, is much nearer than the *Republic* to being a blueprint for an actual community. Its proposals cover many more matters and are much more detailed. Practical law-giving was an art that had been practised by the Greeks for many centuries, since every new colony sent out by its mother-city had to have a new constitution. It was also often necessary to rewrite the laws of existing cities after a revolution. Solon, a forebear of Plato himself, had been a famous legislator in Athens in the seventh century, and many men known to us now primarily as philosophers or sophists were at one time or another engaged in legislation. In the Academy, Plato himself aimed at equipping his students for this work, and many of them were in fact asked to perform it. Much of the *Laws* may therefore be regarded as a fairly serious exercise in law-giving, though some sections, like that on the use of drunkenness in education, may give us pause. These will remind us that even here Plato is not a practical politician concerned with measures that could be adopted here and now, but is putting forward for consideration ideas that interest him, perhaps for several different reasons.

The dialogue is a discussion between three elderly men, an Athenian, a Cretan and a Spartan. The Cretan and the Spartan argue that the men who framed the laws of their states were correct in trying to make the citizens brave so that they could defeat their enemies, but the Athenian maintains that the legislator should aim primarily at peace and harmony within the community, and that for this purpose wisdom, self-control and justice are more important than courage. These virtues can be fostered by education, which should begin by trying to make children feel pleasure and pain about the right things, and here

Plato considers the value of wine, dancing and music in education.

He then sketches the rise of civilisation from an original primitive pastoral stage, and with it the development of politics and legislation. The misfortunes of the Dorians in the Peloponnese, the Persians since the time of Darius, and the Athenians of the present, are blamed on the fact that their constitutions no longer allow for a division of power between a monarchical and a democratic element. After this discussion of basic principles the three men consider the problem of founding a new city in a deserted part of Crete, on a site where it will neither need nor have much contact with outsiders. Since mortal rulers are fallible, law must be supreme, and people will obey laws more readily if the reasons for having each one are explained. Indeed, the whole book may be seen as a general explanation of the principles of law-giving, followed by a detailed system of laws, each of which has its own justification attached. But there is much else too, for Plato sees that there are many subjects where advice is more appropriate than regulation, and writes freely about the principles of education, art and religion. Book x, for instance, has been described by Shorey[2] as 'the earliest, the most influential, and . . . still the best extant theodicy or treatise on natural religion'. But at the same time no detail is too small for him, and he lays down, and defends, the rule that an epitaph should not consist of more than four lines, and that children should be taught to use their left arm as well as their right.

The *Laws* has been condemned as cold, as illiberal, and as the maunderings of a man on the verge of senility. There is a particle of truth in these accusations, but anyone with the patience to read it will find that it also contains great humanity based on long and profound observation of the ways of mankind, coupled with the loftiest intelligence and speculative passion.

3. *Historical Background*

The justification for putting a book on Plato in this series must be that Plato's views are relevant to problems that face us today. Why, and to what extent, is this so? The chief reason is that

Plato lived in a time like ours when accepted moral views were under attack in a particularly articulate way, and that he responded to this attack by trying to work out his own moral and political code and to justify it with equal or even greater skill and clarity. Unfortunately we have only fragments of the critical attacks made by advanced thinkers on the institutions of Greece before Plato's time, but it is possible to reconstruct the kinds of arguments used from the fragments we have, and from the evidence of dramatists like Euripides and Aristophanes, and of the historians Herodotus and Thucydides.[3]

Herodotus, the earliest, tells of the great war between Greeks and Persians in the early years of the fifth century B.C. which resulted from the colonisation by the Greeks of the coast of Asia Minor, and the westward expansion of the Persian Empire. The Greeks were victorious in the struggle, and in the course of it they learned a great deal about the ways of the many different peoples who belonged to the Empire, and of others beyond, so that they became acutely aware that their ways were not the only possible ones. They remained convinced that their ways were on the whole superior to those of foreigners, but there were many men among them with inquiring minds who began to ask questions about the differences in moral outlook that they observed. This in its turn led to scepticism about the foundations of morality, and scepticism, in some cases at least, led to the open advocacy of immorality. Expressions of these points of view are very frequent in the plays of Euripides, and many of the comedies of Aristophanes defend old ways against modern criticisms. Thucydides, like Herodotus, wrote the history of a great war, but this time it was a war between Greek and Greek, with the Athenians and their allies ranged against the Spartans and their allies, and it is a tale of increasing brutality and immorality in which the influence of the new thought is made clear. It was in this war that Plato grew up.

Plato advocated neither a simple return to old moral ways nor a complete abandonment of morality, but a new outlook in which men would strive to do what was right, but would at the same time know exactly what they were doing and why they should do it. He took a clear and independent look at man's nature and his place in the universe, and based his arguments on this. But we cannot transfer all his arguments to our times without distorting them. In some ways his world was very

different from ours, and there were things that he took for granted that seem very strange to us. In the following chapters the similarities and differences between him and us on many detailed points will be set out, but here I should like to mention some far-reaching points of difference.

Perhaps the most important is the sheer difference in scale of social and political life. For though Plato knew of the Persian Empire, with its teeming millions, he was not interested in its problems, and confined his attention to the life of men in a small city-state like his own Athens, which was about as large as an English county and had as many inhabitants as a large modern city. He never, therefore, had to think about the problems of a community in which many full citizens are unable to exercise any active political power merely because of their numbers, and in which groups of people with very different traditions, customs and beliefs may find themselves living side by side. In addition he took it for granted that each small state might be engaged in hostilities with its neighbours for considerable periods, and that one of its main purposes was self-defence.

Another difference lies in his thinking on basic economic matters. This covers two main points – the acceptance of slavery, and a certain lack of interest in material possessions. Slavery was taken for granted in the Greek world, and the citizens of Athens and Sparta had time for their full social and political rounds only because there were others to do the necessary work for them. But at the same time the standard of material comfort that the citizens of most states demanded was not very high; even the rich were not very rich, and notions like the Cost of Living Index and the Gross National Product would have seemed vulgar and trivial. In addition, Plato's experience of evil and suffering was quite different from ours. He knew of neither the absolute poverty of a Calcutta slum nor the relative poverty of an unmarried mother in a Western democracy, nor again of the ugliness and narrowness of life that may follow in the wake of large-scale industrialisation.

On some topics, then, he has nothing to say, though even the fact that this is so may sometimes be important. But because he shared the problems of our common humanity there are many other matters on which what he had to say is still worth reading.[4]

It will be noticed that in the following chapters the historical references are mainly to Athens and Sparta. This is necessary

for reasons of space, but is justifiable for a number of reasons. Not only were these two states the most powerful in Greece for a long period up to and including most of Plato's lifetime, but they were of particular interest to Plato himself. He was a citizen of Athens who seldom left her borders, and he loved her even when he criticised her; but he also admired the Spartans, for reasons which are easy to understand. For him, and for many other Greeks, Sparta represented an ideal: her way of life called for courage and self-sacrifice on the part of all her citizens and who had remarkable stability.[5] Plato adopted many of her arrangements in his ideal state, though he recognised that in his time she had many faults. Finally, we know a great deal more about Athens, and rather more about Sparta, than we do about other Greek states.

2 The Inequalities of Mankind

Human beings have been regarded as unequal one to another for a number of different reasons. In Plato, three of these are important, the inequalities based on race, on sex and on the institution of slavery.

1. *Race*

The Greeks were not particularly interested in the colour of a man's skin, but in a different way they were undoubtedly racialists. They took it for granted that mankind could be divided into two groups, Greeks on the one hand and what they called 'barbarians' on the other, all non-Greeks, of whatever degree of culture, being classed as barbarians. This led not only to the fairly harmless exclusivism of the Olympic Games, and other festivals of the same kind, to which only Greeks were admitted – and it is ironic, though perhaps encouraging, that racialism has become an important issue at the modern Olympic Games – but also to a tendency to despise other races and to regard them as natural inferiors who might, for instance, justly be enslaved.

On the whole Plato agreed with this outlook, although he shared the admiration many Greeks felt for the Egyptians, because of their ancient civilisation. As we have seen, one of his reasons for going to Sicily was to help the Greeks in that island against their Carthaginian and 'barbarian' enemies. But there is an important criticism of the accepted division in the *Statesman* (262d–263e). The question of how seriously Plato himself took this passage need not detain us here, though it is one on which scholars have differed.[1] It is, however, interesting to see how Plato came to discuss this problem at all, for it shows how

moral thinking may be affected by technical logical methods which might, at first sight, appear of little practical use.

Plato, at this point, is trying to reach a satisfactory definition of a statesman, using his newly invented Method of Division. Socrates had been the first to search for definitions, but he had no systematic method of reaching them: Plato now put forward a method which, though not foolproof, was a distinct advance because it was systematic. To define the term 'statesman' it was necessary first to find a large class of individuals which included all statesmen and many other beings as well. This large class was to be divided up into smaller classes, one of which again would contain all statesmen as well as other beings. Further divisions would follow, until a class was reached which contained all statesmen and nobody and nothing that was not a statesman. By putting together the names of the successive divisions by which this final class had been reached, it was now possible to give a definition of a statesman. The first one suggested in this dialogue is: 'One who looks after herds of tame animals who live on land, are hornless, do not interbreed with other species, are bipeds, and have no feathers.'

In discussing this division Plato raises the question of the correct way of dividing up mankind. He rejects a simple division into Greeks and barbarians, objecting that one might equally well put Lydians and Phrygians into one class, and all other men into another. The example was probably carefully chosen, for many Athenian slaves were Lydians or Phrygians, and these races were particularly despised. He also points out that the cause of the trouble is the word 'barbarian'. It is used by the Greeks to cover all non-Greek peoples, and leads them to think that all those peoples have something in common. But in fact they are extremely varied, and the only satisfactory – or, we might say, scientific – way to divide up mankind is either into male and female, or into a much larger number of classes of which Greeks, Lydians and Phrygians might each form one.

None of this would exclude the possibility that the Greeks were still superior to all the rest, but it does make the idea considerably less plausible. That it would not necessarily do so is indicated by Plato's next example, where he looks at possible ways of dividing up the class that contains all animals including men. One way is to set man apart at once, but it is also possible to divide animals into tame and wild, and to class men as tame

animals living in herds. It is then only after further division of this class that the class which contains men and only men is reached. In this division men are treated as animals, but it is unlikely that Plato ever seriously considered abandoning the common Greek assumption that man is superior to the rest of the animal kingdom. And since men in this example are related to other animals in exactly the same way as the Greeks are related to other men in the earlier one, he could still have maintained the superiority of the Greeks. So the only solid ground won in the *Statesman* is the discovery of the variety of human types covered by the word 'barbarian'.

Plato approaches the question of Greek superiority in a different way in the *Epinomis*, a work which incorporates much of his material even if it is not entirely by his hand. In it he suggests that the Greeks are indeed intellectually superior to all other races, but that this is due to environment and not to innate capacity. He attributes it to the fact that the climate of Greece is a temperate one, by comparison for instance with those of Egypt and Syria (*Epinomis* 987–8). This view is not developed here, but is in line with opinions held by Plato himself and by other Greeks on the effects of environment.[2]

Both the arguments considered here, from the *Statesman* and the *Epinomis*, are theoretical ones which are not directed immediately to practical moral issues, and to this extent Plato was not an innovator about problems of race. But it could be maintained that if he had put together the views he held he would have reached a consistent view of some interest, combining a justified pride in Greek achievements with the realisation that it was only a favourable environment that had made them possible. But in so doing he would have come into conflict with some of his own views on slavery, to which we must turn next.

2. *Slavery*

We do not know as much as we should like about slavery in Greece,[3] but by careful study of fragmentary evidence of a variety of kinds scholars have estimated that there were a large number of slaves in Athens, reaching the proportion of perhaps one in four of the total population. Many of them were 'barbarians', including the Lydians and Phrygians mentioned

above; some had been born into slavery, but many had been captured in war or by pirates, and then sold. Except for what was done by free women, they did most of the domestic work, and most of the mining, in Athens, but they also undertook work of many other kinds. Indeed, they worked side by side with free Athenians and resident foreigners, and their work was paid for at the same rate as that of freemen, though their wages went partially or even wholly to their owners. Only political activity was barred to them, and they seem, with the exception of those who worked in the mines, to have been treated with humanity. Even so, some Athenians had uneasy consciences about them, and Euripides had a lot to say on the matter.[4] The orthodox view was that it was wrong to enslave Greeks, but all right with barbarians; Aristotle, who was Plato's pupil and Athenian at least by education and domicile, defended the institution as having a natural basis in the inferiority of some men.[5]

Of slavery in Sparta we know even less than we do of Athens, but it is clear that the helots there, who were to all intents and purposes the Spartans' slaves, were even more numerous than slaves were in Athens. By their work their owners were freed from domestic cares, and could concentrate on politics and fighting.

It was generally regarded as a sign of moral decline when Greek cities at the end of the fifth century began to enslave the populations of other Greek cities which they had conquered. But they continued to do it: Athenians enslaved Melians, Syracusans enslaved Athenians, and Thebans enslaved the people of Orchomenus. Enslavement could perhaps be defended as one of the few workable alternatives to the extermination of one's enemies; if so, it was a virtue in the Spartans that when they had conquered the Athenians in 404 they did not enslave them, but were content to destroy their fortifications and impose a fine.

To complete the picture, we must remember that the Greek world contained many grades of status, so that it can be misleading to think in terms of a simple opposition between slavery and freedom. In most communities, for instance, there would be a number of free foreigners – Aristotle in Athens is a distinguished example – who had no political rights. They were usually living in the country of their own free will, though some were refugees from other states. There were also, however, in

some states, groups of people who were native-born but neither slaves nor free, at least in the full sense of having political rights. Such were the *perioikoi* of Sparta, descendants of the inhabitants of states conquered by Sparta in the past, but not absorbed by her either as slaves or as members of her very exclusive citizen body. They were free to control their lives as private individuals in commerce or agriculture, but they had no political power.

Before we look at Plato's views in the rest of his dialogues, there is a particular problem about the *Republic*. Slaves are barely mentioned in it, and scholars have argued at length about whether there were to be any in the ideal state. At first sight it would be surprising if there were not, as every Greek state took slavery for granted. But Plato does not refer to slaves in so many words in talking of this state, and with the organisation that he proposes there would be no obvious need for them. The work normally done by slaves could be done by the free members of the third class. On balance, however, the evidence, slight as it is, is in favour of the view that Plato took it for granted that there would be slaves in it[6].

Outside the *Republic*, in any case, Plato makes many references to slavery which suggest that he accepted it and regarded it as a justifiable institution. He might still, of course, think it wrong in certain cases, and in particular he shared the view that it was wrong for Greek to enslave Greek. There is a story that Plato himself was once sold as a slave after being captured by pirates on a voyage back from Sicily; luckily he was bought and set free by one of his admirers. Whether true or not, the story is a possible one, and reminds us that even the citizens of a powerful state like Athens would be aware that they too might one day be enslaved. Such awareness would powerfully reinforce the popular moral outlook on the subject.

As far as non-Greeks were concerned, Plato's view, like that of Aristotle after him, seems to have been that some men were by nature slaves; they had not the intelligence to lead the lives of free men, but would be better off, and serve a more useful purpose, as the slaves of other, more capable, men. This was, for him, a matter of observable fact. He could point to some of the slaves he had actually met – barbarians from backward parts of the world whose knowledge of Greek was poor, and who would be out of their depth in sophisticated Athenian society.

It seems unlikely, however, that he believed that all non-Greek slaves were like this, and there is one famous passage to be considered here. In it Plato is making epistemological and metaphysical, not sociological, points, and it is unlikely that he himself saw the full implications of his example. If he did not, it shows how difficult it was even for a man of Plato's intelligence and interest in human beings to think clearly on this topic. In the *Meno* (82b–86b) he introduces a slave boy who works out a problem in geometry under the guidance of Socrates. This boy had been born into Greek surroundings, and had picked up the Greek language and Greek ways of thought, but had had no formal education. But by using certain innate capacities, which he shared with all other men, he was able to solve the problem. Plato interprets these innate capacities as memories of pre-natal experience, claiming that the boy has an immortal soul which existed before birth, and which then acquired a knowledge of geometry that can be recalled by suitable questioning.

Without the metaphysical interpretation, Plato has an example of a slave whose intellectual capacity is equal to that of a free man; with it, he has a slave with an immortal soul. If he had considered the implications of this for social theory, he would have had to choose between saying that all men, including the most brutish slaves, had similar intellectual capacities and possessed immortal souls, or that one must distinguish among slaves, and perhaps among free men too, between those that had, and those that had not, such capacities and souls. The former view would have fitted in better with the things he says about racial differences in the *Statesman* and the *Epinomis* which we have considered in the previous section, with their implication that it was only environmental advantages that accounted for the observed superiority of the Greeks in so many fields. The latter view would be more in harmony with his acceptance of some forms of slavery, but would lead to great difficulties in practice. There would have to be some way of deciding whether or not a man had a soul before one could decide whether he could rightly be enslaved.

For good measure, we may bring in the myth of Er at the end of the *Republic*. Here it is suggested that even animals may have souls which had once been incarnated in human beings. If it were taken seriously, the implications would have to be

worked out with great care. But Plato used the myth form to avoid complications of this kind, and we shall be wise to ignore it.

It would anyhow be a mistake to conclude from the example of Meno's slave that Plato believed that all men were equal in their innate capacities. The whole of the *Republic* depends on the view that they differ. Plato had been driven by bitter experience to the conclusion that most people were incapable of running their own lives properly, let alone ruling those of others. Looked at in this way, the third class in his ideal state is a slave class, the members of which are able, like many Athenian slaves, to run a business or earn money in other ways, but are still subject to the decisions of others on matters of great importance. But the important point is that this is ultimately in their own interests, and on these lines Plato could have developed a consistent defence of slavery.

Indeed, using his views as a starting-point, we could work out two different ways of justifying the enslavement of an inferior by a superior. The inferior may be regarded as a soulless *thing*, or 'living tool', to use Aristotle's expression, which may be used by the superior just as any other thing or tool may, solely as the superior wishes. Such an argument would only be acceptable if good reasons were given for holding that some human beings were in fact such soulless things. If the word 'soul' is disliked, the matter may be put thus: it would be necessary to show that in some extremely important respects, hinted at by that word, some men are entirely different from others. The onus is on those who believe that there are such differences to make clear what they are, and I shall say no more about them.

The other possible method of justifying slavery would be to say that some men were like children, who would benefit from being in a subordinate position, but would still have rights of their own. It would be a master's duty to look after those rights in controlling their lives. A slave owned by a good master would then be better off than if he were free and left to his own devices. This kind of defence is much more complicated than the former one. Not only does it call for a proof that men differ in the relevant respects; it also justifies only one kind of slavery and, to be complete, must set out exactly what the reciprocal rights and duties of masters and slaves are. Here again we might regard the *Republic* as an attempt to do this.[7]

We may sum up by saying that there was as yet in Plato's time no strong feeling in the Greek world that slavery was always wrong, and hence there was no compelling reason for either those who favoured it or those who were uneasy about it to examine their positions and make them crystal-clear. Plato's own position seems to be inconsistent, but there are interesting ways of developing some of the things he said.

3. *Women*

The position of women in his time is well set out by Plato himself in a passage in the *Laws* (805–6). In Athens, the role of a citizen's wife and daughters was limited to housekeeping, and even in Sparta, where girls were educated in both gymnastic and the arts, women were not required to undertake military service – nor, though Plato does not say this, to take part in political life. Beyond the Greek world, the Thracians made their women work on the land like slaves, but the Sarmatians, on the edge of the Black Sea, expected theirs to be able to ride and use bows and arrows just as well as men.

In addition to this variety of customs abroad, Plato was well aware of anomalies at home in Athens itself. For while the wives and daughters of citizens led a retired life, there were women from other parts of Greece who had received a fine education and were able to mix socially on equal terms with men. One of these was Aspasia, the mistress of Pericles, who plays an important part in Plato's dialogue, the *Menexenus*. Further, the plays performed at public festivals, of which some by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides have come down to us, depicted many 'emancipated' female characters – always played by men – drawn from Greek legend, and both Euripides and the comic writer Aristophanes were interested in the equality of women.[8]

Plato himself had clearly made up his mind on the matter, at least on the level of theory. In book v of the *Republic* he proposed that women should be given the same kind of education as men, and he expected them to lead the same kind of life and share the same duties when they were grown up. He saw that the fundamental argument against this proposal was that men and women were different; his reply was that not all differences

between one individual and another are relevant to the kind of work they should do: bald men and hairy men were different in one respect, but both were equally suited to being shoemakers:

> We may just as well ask ourselves, I said, whether bald men and men with plenty of hair have the same natures, or opposite ones, and having agreed that they are opposite, whether, if bald men are shoemakers, we should not let the hairy men be shoemakers too, and if the hairy men are, not allow the others.
>
> But that would be ridiculous, he said.
>
> Is it then ridiculous for any other reason, I said, than that we did not suppose the differences between the two kinds were complete, but were only concerned with the kind of difference and similarity that was relevant to a person's occupation? (*Republic* 454c)

Similarly, one should ask whether the biological differences between men and women, which undoubtedly existed, were relevant to the kind of work they should do or not.

His answer was a sophisticated one. First, he took it as a matter of common knowledge that in nearly all occupations men on the whole are more competent than women on the whole. From this, one negative conclusion is drawn, that there is no important occupation which is naturally a woman's sphere in the sense that women are on the whole better at it than men (weaving and cooking are dismissed as trivialities). The positive argument is that the general superiority of men over women is compatible with a wide overlap of abilities between the sexes, so that in all occupations some women may be expected to be superior to most men. In the particular case under discussion, the membership of the ruling class in the ideal community, it is to be expected that there will be some girls, though fewer girls than boys, who will have the character and intelligence necessary to fit them for training as rulers. These are to be educated in just the same way as the boys, and are later to share in their military and political duties. It is important to note, however, that the justification for this arrangement has nothing to do with the wishes of the women themselves. In the *Republic* the justification is that only in this way will the state get the best possible citizens, and in the *Laws* Plato makes a similar point

by saying that the state will be the loser if it does not employ the talents of half its citizens.

Plato was not entirely unaware, in spite of the arguments employed here, that there were biological problems in the programme of sexual equality that he sketched, and, for the guardian class at least, he made special arrangements for the care and nursing of young children. Here, the need to relieve young mothers of the care of their children dovetailed splendidly with the need to do away with family life. (This is discussed in Chapter 4 below.) The impracticability of the programme of the *Republic* shows itself, however, when we think about the pregnancy of the guardian women. By the arrangement of having mass 'marriages' a large number of female soldiers must have been incapacitated by pregnancy and childbirth at exactly the same time, which would have given a fine opening to an intelligent enemy.

It may strike a modern reader as odd that Plato does not consider, even to reject after deliberation, the possibility that the natural function of a woman is the care of her husband and children and perhaps her aged relatives. This is all the more remarkable because it is clear from a number of passages, even in the *Laws*, that although Plato was a bachelor he had a considerable knowledge of, and interest in, the nurture of children from babyhood onwards. He observes sympathetically, for instance, that little children cannot keep still, and takes advantage of this fact in his educational programme. He also takes it for granted that the care of babies and young children will be in the hands of women and slaves, but does not say why. (Of course, wet-nurses would have to be female.)

Two points may be relevant here. One is that Plato, though convinced of the superiority of men over animals, was still prepared to draw analogies from the animal world. He noted that mares and bitches are used by their owners for the same kind of work as their male counterparts, and that childbirth and the rearing of their young are but an interlude in their lives. The same might be so for women, and indeed was so for some of the non-Greek women of whom he knew. The other point is that his approach to family life was for a number of reasons very different from ours. As we have seen, many domestic duties were carried out by slaves, while, on the other hand, the kind of 'home comforts' that women provide today were not par-

ticularly valued in the public, open-air life of the free man of ancient Greece. There was nothing worth while for a woman to do at home: she should therefore share in man's work outside the home. More will be said about this in Chapter 4 below.

4. *Summing-up*

In this chapter I have considered Plato's attitude to three major types of inequality that were to be found in the world that he knew, that between one race and another, that between citizens and slaves, and that between men and women. In each case he accepted or rejected the prevailing view on the matter on the basis of what he took to be the relevant facts. In considering his views we may, then, ask whether his facts were correct, and whether they were relevant. In all cases the most important facts in his eyes were the relative abilities of the groups being compared. On the basis of a good deal of evidence from inside and outside the Greek world, he believed that men and women were more or less equal in ability, but he either did not have, or ignored, similar evidence about racial differences and slaves. In the case of sex, he also made the value judgement that the differences that did exist between the sexes related to unimportant matters, and that therefore both sexes could and should do the same work. In the other cases his mind was much less clear, but he did at least touch on one further point, that the observed differences of ability might be due to environmental factors, and were therefore capable of being removed.

3 Population Control

In this chapter I shall consider a number of questions connected with the control of the size and quality of the population of a community, including birth control, immigration and emigration, and eugenics.

1. *Historical Background*

Because the states of Greece were small city-states dotted about between the sea and the mountains, the difficulties they most often faced were those of a population that had expanded beyond what the amount of land available could support. The traditional solution for this was to send an organised expedition overseas, to some other part of the coast of the Mediterranean or, later, the Black Sea, to take possession of some land there and set up a new state which would be independent of its mother-community, and bound to it only by ties of sentiment. The lands they chose to occupy were usually fairly sparsely inhabited so that few difficulties arose and it was not necessary to consider limiting the size of the total Greek population. Hence the problem which we face today, of an expanding world population with little spare room for extra numbers, did not trouble them.

They were sometimes, however, faced with the opposite problem of a severely reduced population. Occasionally a state would be hit by a disaster like war, plague or earthquake, and if it were to survive it had to fill the gaps as quickly as possible. This could be done by bringing in outsiders, making it easy for non-citizens to acquire citizenship, and by taking measures to increase the birth-rate. As an example of the latter, it seems likely that in Sparta, which at various times had severe population losses, wives might, with public approval, become pregnant

by men other than their husbands, if the latter were for any reason incapacitated. It was thus possible for most women of child-bearing age in fact to have children.[1] For the manipulation of citizenship laws we may cite the case of Athens in the second half of the fifth century. In 451–450, when she was prosperous and well populated, Pericles had a law passed which limited citizen rights to those whose parents were both Athenians. But during the Peloponnesian War, and in particular after the great plague of 430, the population fell so sharply that it was necessary to relax the qualifications for citizenship, and children of mixed marriages, whose mothers were foreign, were also admitted.[2]

Quality of population was, however, also important, in days when a citizen army was often called upon to defend the borders of the state. One institution which helped in this was the custom of allowing weakly infants to be exposed shortly after birth. It seems, however, that such children were exposed where they might be found and adopted by someone else, and that the right to expose was not limited to weakly children. Hence we may conclude that the prime purpose of this institution was not to ensure a healthy population, but to give each family the power to decide, in the light of its own circumstances, which children it would or would not support. In Sparta, however, as might be expected, the position was stricter. All newly born infants were publicly examined, and weakly ones could not be reared.[3]

Positive measures to improve the population, as distinct from the weeding-out of weaklings, were not to be found in Greece, unless we count the care taken by the Spartans to develop the physique of the girls who would be the mothers of future citizens. We might also add the avoidance of incest, though what counted as incest varied from one state to another and had no obvious eugenic basis. Thus in Athens children of the same father but different mothers were allowed to marry, and in Sparta children of the same mother but different fathers, but not vice versa. Marriages between uncles and nieces were also accepted, and indeed sometimes encouraged. But the tale of Oedipus, who married his mother, clearly horrified the Greek mind, and Plato in the *Laws* (838) makes clear the peculiar detestation in which incest, in the form in which it was recognised, was held.

2. *Plato's Views*

Plato proposed some eugenic measures which must have seemed revolutionary. He aimed at controlling both the numbers and the quality of the citizens, and discussed such matters not only in the *Republic* and the *Laws*, but also in the *Statesman*, which was written in the period between these. With regard to the number of births, his main reason for wishing for control seems to have been the belief that when you had a community that was working well it was undesirable to alter its size, but he must also have been acutely aware, like any Greek, that the size of a population is limited by the amount of land available to provide food. He does not, however, seem to have thought that there was any very great problem here: he provides in the *Laws* for penalties for men who will not marry, and for the supervision of young couples to help them to have children, but the general problem of population size he discusses sensibly in book v as one that has to be dealt with according to circumstances. It is to be the job of the holder of an important office to seek out devices to keep the population constant, and there are, he says, many of them. He is vague about exactly how surplus births are to be prevented, though he says that this can be done.[4]

> There are many methods available for population control. For it is possible both to prevent births when the flood is too great, and, when the opposite happens, to take steps to encourage an increase in the number by using honours and marks of disgrace, and by getting older people to give advice and warning to the younger ones. These things can do what is wanted. But finally, if there is an overwhelming increase in the number of citizens because of the great love felt for one another by married couples, and we cannot cope with it, there is the time-honoured remedy, to which we have often referred, of sending out colonists, in whatever numbers are necessary, maintaining ties of love with them. If again the opposite happens, and there is a wave of disastrous plagues or we suffer the ravages of war, and through such losses the population becomes far too small, we should not be eager to bring in new citizens who have had the wrong kind of education – but, as the saying goes, even God cannot fight against necessity. (*Laws* v, 740d–741a)

Plato's interest in eugenics and the need to improve the quality of the population may derive ultimately from his observation, to which he refers in many dialogues, that the leading politicians of Athens frequently had sons who were by no means the equals of their fathers. His discussions and attempts to explain this point are complicated, but he may very well have supposed that it was partly due to the fact that the children's mothers were not good matches for their fathers. He was also well aware that it was possible to breed animals for particular purposes by careful mating of their parents. This line of thought is fully worked out in the *Republic*, where he lays it down that the future rulers of the ideal state are to be the children of the finest parents, scientifically mated, and are to be given the finest possible education. In this dialogue the aim is to produce an elite of intelligent, brave and self-controlled individuals, but in the *Statesman* (310) the programme is widened to cover almost the whole population. The community is more democratic than that of the *Republic*: really unsuitable characters are to be weeded out and reduced to slavery, but the quality of the rest is to be improved by mating those of brave and energetic temperament with those who are gentle and perhaps a little sluggish. This, Plato suggests, is in opposition to current Greek practice, where matches tend to be arranged between like and like, so that in the course of generations men on the one hand too violent, and on the other too torpid, to be good citizens, are produced in large numbers.

A new feature in the *Laws* (772–3) is that it allows the prospective bridegroom himself considerable choice in the matter, though he is to be guided by a great deal of good advice. In the earlier dialogues the choice was to be made either by the magistrates or by the parents. In the *Laws* the partners are also to be given full knowledge of one another, to the extent that boys and girls are to be encouraged to dance together naked. His actual words are:

> For, with reference to the common life and sharing of marriage, it is necessary to remove the ignorance about the origins of the bride and the family she marries into, making it of paramount importance to ensure as far as possible that no one makes mistakes in these matters. For this import nt reason we must arrange that the recreations of the boys and girls take the form of dances, so that they can see each other

> and be seen, within reason and at the age that provides a suitable occasion, naked, both boys and girls, with due modesty and restraint on both sides.

But here again the most important point for Plato is that unlike should marry unlike, in order to provide the state with the kind of children who will make the best citizens by having the virtues of both their parents – and perhaps also their vices – in moderation.

It is a striking fact, which has often been noted, that in all these passages Plato writes as if his only interest were the welfare of the state. There is considerable difficulty, furthermore, in harmonising what he says here with his teaching elsewhere about the nature of the soul. That, it is true, is usually presented in a tentative form, but it cannot for that reason be ignored entirely. He at least inclined towards the view that the soul was immortal, and existed before birth as well as after death, and in the *Republic* he added the possibility of reincarnation. But the breeding programmes he sketches are designed to produce individuals who are better than, and therefore different from, their ancestors, in numbers decided by political and social considerations alone. It is probable that he did not even try to make his two approaches fit together neatly, but, as we shall see, there are one or two places where he betrays some embarrassment.

3. *Discussion*

Plato had difficulty in relating a single metaphysical viewpoint to his population theories. In most modern states the matter is even more complicated by reason of the fact that there are people in them who hold vastly differing views about the nature of human personality and the soul. It is true that, like Plato, most of them do not relate their metaphysical views very closely to more immediate matters, but even so there will be some effect. Hence, even if all accept that measures like those suggested by Plato are practicable and would have the results expected, few would think the needs of the state the only point to be considered. For different reasons, few would think absolute stability of numbers important. The one hard fact from which all must start is that too large a population leads to

poverty and misery; this point did not trouble Plato, for he always had the easy solution of sending out a colony.

If we accept, however, that too large a population is bad, and that steps of some kind should be taken to keep numbers down, even if they be only to urge parents to have fewer children, there remains a further question, whether it is desirable to have as many people as can live satisfactorily on the resources available, or whether a smaller number is just as good. We are here faced with a baffling question, of which there are several in this book, to which it is difficult even to start to give an answer. A man who was convinced that human life was bad could conclude that it was wrong to produce children, and one who believed that there were countless souls waiting in limbo for the chance to be born might think it right to increase the population to the tolerable limit. But in the absence of such convictions there is no plausible starting-point. It is easier, however, to argue the point solely with reference to living beings. Thus it can be argued that a balance between generations is desirable, and that parents will do well to have sufficient children to support themselves and their contemporaries, parents or not, in their old age.

Let us now turn to eugenics. Eugenic policies may be positive or negative. In our time negative policies range from the legal and moral prohibition of incest to the unpublicised removal from life of infants born with defects so great as to make their lives intolerable. In between come things like the social disapproval of marriages between cousins, contraceptive advice for those likely to transmit congenital defects, and abortion for children likely to be born with such defects. Plato was familiar with, and accepted, another custom, which would not find favour today: the open exposure of infants unlikely to thrive. There is a hint in the *Republic* (615) that on this point he was uneasily aware that there were metaphysical problems involved, for in the tale of Er, the great myth about the fate of souls after death, it is said that Er told also about infants who had died at birth or shortly after, 'but what he said was not worth recording'. This last clause surely indicates some embarrassment, which is entirely justified. If an immortal soul enters each child's body at birth, or perhaps earlier, it is difficult to see the point if it leaves again immediately.

In advocating exposure of infants Plato was therefore less

clear-sighted than those modern opponents of abortion who regard the child in the womb as fully human and who conclude that to kill it is on all fours with killing a child or an adult. This need not be a final argument against abortion, for it might still be held that in some circumstances euthanasia was permissible, and that some forms of abortion counted as euthanasia. But the argument from the pointlessness of the total series of events remains.

Positive eugenic measures tend to be viewed with suspicion in modern democracies, for they involve the supposition that all men (and women) are not equal, and that some are likely to have children of better quality than others. A few hesitant steps have, however, been taken, like the decision in Britain to give children's allowances as well as salaries to men in certain professions, a measure later rescinded. Probably another important factor in our thinking, here as elsewhere, is our knowledge of our limitations. Psychologists are still fiercely divided about how far intelligence is inherited, and in addition we have very little experience in the planned mating of human beings, though we know quite a lot about the breeding of domestic animals. Plato's careful eugenic programme seems therefore impracticable, whether or not it might be desirable.

Since, however, we might at some time in the future have enough knowledge to put such a programme into effect, it is worth considering whether it would be desirable. At once we are faced with questions about the details of the programme. Even Plato considered different ways of going about it. In the *Republic* he allowed the majority to mate and breed as they chose, but at the price of losing all say in their own government. In the *Laws*, on the other hand, all citizens were to be persuaded to choose suitable mates after instruction in the principles of eugenics, and the aim was to breed a population of uniform excellence – or, possibly, mediocrity.

The *Laws* programme seems unexceptionable, but unexciting. The suggestion made in the *Republic*, that it might be possible to breed some 'supermen' of tremendous intellectual powers, raises more exciting, but also more questionable, possibilities. We may add that, while Plato was in the fortunate position of being able to assume that the majority of the citizens of his ideal state would naturally be adapted to the work they were called upon to do, he might, if he had not assumed this, have extended planned breeding to the whole community to obtain

this result. So in the future it might become possible to breed a variety of types tailor-made to carry out different functions in society. It is not enough to mutter 'Brave New World', and pass by on the other side. Plato's ideas were put forward at least partly because he believed that the men of his time were incapable of solving the great political and social problems with which they were faced, and the problems facing our statesmen today are certainly no less. Perhaps without supermen the human race will perish. At the other end of the scale, it could be said that as long as there are dull and unpleasant jobs to be done, it would be a good thing to have people who like doing them. Everyone would then be happy in doing that to which he was suited.

An obvious modern objection to such an arrangement would be that it might give a sort of happiness, but only at the expense of freedom and equality. Some would go further and say that happiness was impossible without freedom, and perhaps without equality. Here the standpoints of Plato and of modern democrats are so far apart that argument becomes very difficult. But it might be observed that there have existed in the past, and still exist today, many human beings who do not enjoy equality, and some not even freedom, as they are conceived by Western democracies, but who could still be said to be happy. This is often because their interests, whether as wives and mothers, mystics, vagrants or shepherds, to name a few examples, are far removed from political matters. Liberty and equality are indeed important as ideals in a world where men may be forced to do things and suffer things which they would very much prefer not to do and suffer. But they are, after all, only political notions, and politics is not for everybody the highest activity in life. In a smoothly running Utopia, it may be argued, each man would be doing what he wanted to do, and freedom would be valueless because it would only be freedom to do what he did not want to do. As for equality, Plato may perhaps be faulted for introducing greater inequality into his ideal state than was necessary. He did this by comparing his guardians to a golden race, and the rest to less precious metals, which was in line with normal Greek thought. But one could think of the guardians as administrators, civil servants or 'planners', and as neither better nor worse than other people doing other jobs.

What would necessarily be missing in such a planned state would be the freedom, much prized today, of anyone to marry as he or she pleases, and to have as many or as few children as is wished. But many societies have flourished in which marriages have been arranged without reference to the wishes of the people most concerned, and family sizes have been controlled by a variety of external factors. Most people seem to be able to live happily with parents, brothers and sisters, and children whom they have not chosen, and many husbands and wives have been unhappy although they have chosen each other freely.

4 The Family and Property

1. *Athens*

The family life[1] of an Athenian citizen resembled in many ways that of a well-to-do Victorian Englishman, with the difference that slaves took the place of servants. The head of the family was the father, and the wife was expected to stay at home and take no part in public life. Most children were reared, but weakly ones, and healthy ones too if it would be difficult to support them, might be rejected at or soon after birth, and exposed to die, or perhaps to be rescued and cared for by some stranger. Property was normally passed down from a father to his legitimate sons, but wives brought their husbands dowries from their father's estate. There was a tendency to think of the family, not the individual, as the primary owner of property, but from the time of Solon onwards the law of inheritance recognised the right of a citizen, at least in some circumstances, to leave his possessions to anyone he liked, and this introduced other elements into the situation. But family ties remained close, and people accepted responsibility for the care of their elderly or sick relatives. Orphans were regarded as the responsibility of the state, if they had no one else to look after them. Children were brought up at home by their mothers until the boys were ready for school, and then their education was paid for by their parents. Slaves could become friends of the family, and might be freed in the end by grateful owners, but their conditions varied considerably.

Monogamy was the rule, but a widow or widower could marry again, and divorce was permitted, apparently at will. Indeed, in certain cases, involving inheritance, it was actually encouraged when a wife had no children. Both marriage and divorce could be arranged entirely by a woman's male connections, and she had no legal say in the matter, though in practice things were probably different, and a wife could

certainly initiate a divorce. A man was not required to be faithful to his wife, but could be in trouble if caught seducing another citizen's wife, mother, sister or daughter, or even his concubine, unless she were a professional harlot. Full marriage was only possible between Athenians, but it was socially acceptable to enter into a permanent union with a foreigner, as Pericles did with Aspasia. Illegitimate children could probably be adopted in certain circumstances, and the offspring of two Athenians who were not married seem to have counted as citizens, though they had diminished rights of inheritance.

2. *Sparta*

In Sparta, for historical reasons, things had developed very differently. The Spartans were surrounded by the enslaved helots who were their permanent enemies, and their life was conducted on a regular war footing. Its prime aim was to produce good soldiers, and as each Spartan had a body of helots to provide him with the necessities of life, he could devote all his time to military training. As a result, Spartans had very little family life. The men lived in camp, eating together and only rarely visiting their wives. The wives had charge of their children in infancy, but at the age of seven they were handed over to the state to be educated, boys and girls alike. But property was not held in common, and descended by inheritance much as it did in Athens. There were few opportunities for a Spartan to increase his wealth by his own efforts, so that the amount of wealth available remained fairly constant. There are highly coloured tales about the sharing of wives and the consequent absence of adultery in Sparta, but the evidence is unreliable and difficult to interpret.[2] In old age a couple could retire and live in a home together.

3. *Plato's Views*

In the *Republic*, book v, Plato introduces one of his most radical reforms, the abolition of the family and private property, at least for the ruling group. This is partly for eugenic reasons, as we have already seen: the guardians who arrange the mating

festivals will have complete freedom to manœuvre if there are no permanent relationships between men and women. But there are two other reasons, one negative and one positive. The negative one is that a man who has to think about his family and property will be distracted from other activities, and the positive one is that all will be like one large family, sharing the same interests and rejoicing and grieving over the same things. (There is at this point a lack of clarity in Plato's account, for he speaks as if this family unity will extend to all the citizens, whereas his former arrangements are for the ruling group only. But the whole section is introduced very tentatively as a form of 'castles in the air'.)

In later dialogues this communism is abandoned, and people are expected to marry in the normal way, though with due regard for eugenics, as we have seen in Chapter 3 above. In the *Laws* there are extremely detailed regulations for almost every aspect of sexual behaviour and family life, and Plato clearly thinks that the chief purpose of marriage and of sexual activities is the procreation of children. He therefore legislates for childless couples to be divorced after ten years, and wants to discourage all extra-marital sex. Divorce is also to be permitted, however, on grounds of incompatibility, when attempts at reconciliation have failed. Property cannot be inherited except by a man's children or, if there are no children, by someone 'adopted' for the purpose of inheritance. If any child is left without inheritance either from a natural or an adoptive father, he has to be sent abroad to a colony, for the population is limited by the amount of land available. Parents are to be both respected and cherished in their old age, and even lunatics are to be cared for at home.

4. *Discussion*

In Athens and Sparta, in Plato, and in most modern states the institution of the family has two very different functions, one economic, and the other emotional. On the one hand it is concerned with the ownership, maintenance and inheritance of property, and on the other with people of different ages, occupations and interests living closely and if possible harmoniously together. A man who loves his children may, as Plato

and Marx both saw, behave anti-socially in trying to increase the amount of property he may bequeath to them, or use on their behalf when alive. Plato's first solution to this problem, in the *Republic*, was to abolish the family and private property completely, but to try to keep the benefits of family affection by extending the ties of blood relationship more widely. So he makes Glaucon say:

> [Each guardian], when he meets anyone, will think he is meeting a brother, or a sister, or a father, or a mother, or a son, or a daughter, or descendants or ancestors of these.

And Socrates replies:

> You are quite right, but now tell me this: will you require them to use the names only of these relationships, or are they to suit all their actions to these words, and to show those they call their fathers the customary respect, love and obedience that is due to parents? (*Republic* 463c)

This proposal seemed as unsatisfactory to most Greeks as it does to most modern readers, judging by Aristotle's criticism that it would lead only to a watery love.[3] Plato himself, in the *Laws*, admitted that his *Republic* programme was impracticable, but claimed at the same time that the new solution he put forward was at least a second-best. That is, he had not completely abandoned his reforming aim, although it might seem at first sight that he had simply returned to traditional Greek practices. The important differences from traditional practice are that spouses are to be chosen not for their economic standing but for their personal qualities and for the probability that the match will produce fine offspring, and that a man's ability to acquire extra property to pass on is to be limited. In this way the advantages of private property and family life may be kept without their evils.

One striking point about Plato's treatment of the family is that it is entirely non-Freudian. Many, perhaps the majority, of those who are concerned about family relationships today, both those who want them improved and those who want them abolished, lay great stress on the psychological effects of family life on the children, and to a lesser extent on the husbands and wives. It is the love and the hate, the dominance and the dependence, the feeling of being wanted or rejected, that are important. But of such things there is scarcely a trace in Plato.

It could of course be that this was solely because, being well pre-Freudian, he had no idea of the importance of such matters. It could also be, as Gouldner has suggested, that the institution of slavery affected family life and personal relationships to an extent which we can hardly grasp. But the evidence from tragedy and from tombstones suggests that family ties were as close as they are among ourselves.[4]

One important difference between real Greek society and Plato's imaginary societies on the one hand, and ours on the other, was that in a sense everyone started life as a citizen by being wanted. Unwanted babies could be exposed, and surplus adults could be sent overseas in an organised way. Secondly, both the smaller size of the political unit and the absence of intermediate nationalist and religious groups to which a child was assigned because of his family ties, meant that everyone had a well-defined place within the city as well as in the family. Thirdly, the diverting of romantic love to homosexual relationships outside the family must also have been a complicating factor.

To some extent it is an empirical matter whether a certain family set-up is satisfactory or not. But two or more arrangements may work in the sense that they may survive through many generations, and the question will still remain whether one is better than another. This seems to be another of those very general questions which it may be impossible to answer, except in particular cases where there are very striking differences, such as a high rate of suicides or child deaths in one, and nothing similar in another.

We are additionally handicapped by the rarity of serious experiments in this field in civilised societies. It is true that there have been monastic communities in Christian lands for thousands of years, but by their emphasis on chastity they have ruled out many of the complications necessary in a complete experiment. Recently in Israel, however, there have been two movements which resemble Plato's ideals and are temporally related in the same way as his. In the *kibbutz* movement all property, even clothes, is held in common within a large group, women and men share equally in the work, and children are reared in a public nursery. There is, however, no community of wives, and the chief work is the tilling of the soil, which is a far cry from the *Republic*. After this some Jews formed the

moshav movement, where individual families rent their own plot of land from the state, and work it themselves, but help their neighbours when they are sick. This limited system of private property resembles in some ways the proposals of the *Laws*.

The *kibbutz* system is now in its third generation, and has been studied by many psychologists and sociologists. They suggest that it tends to produce individuals who differ noticeably from those brought up in close-knit families, but that they may not be either better or worse, but only different. This is hardly surprising, for the reasons I have given.

My conclusion is that there are a number of different problems connected with family life, and a variety of possible solutions. Changes at any one point will have far-reaching effects, large-scale theorising is of limited value, and practical tests are difficult both to set up and to assess.[5]

5. *Note on homosexuality*

Homosexuality was an important factor in Greek life, but it was comparatively unimportant in Plato's proposals. In the *Laws* he wished to do away with it as with any other sexual irregularity, and he may have seen that in a society where men and women were equal there would have been no place for the romantic, non-carnal love of which he writes elsewhere, especially in connection with Socrates and the young men with whom he associated.

5 Education

Plato was not a practising politician, but he was a practising educator, and indeed one of the most important innovators in education that have ever existed. The influence of both his theory and his practice can be traced to the present day. The Academy he founded flourished in Athens for nearly a thousand years, and his *Republic* is still widely read today, as much for its educational as for its political teachings. In one way or another he touched on education at an extraordinary variety of points, from nursery training to higher mathematics, and it will be impossible, in this chapter, to do justice to every side of his teachings.

1. *Education in Athens*

There was no public education in Athens in Plato's time, but every free boy seems in fact to have received an education, and the general standard of culture was high.[1] At school, children learned to read and write and to do simple arithmetic, to recite Homer and other great poets, to play a musical instrument, to dance, and to play a number of games and sports. Over and above this, a man could be educated just by living in Athens and sharing in her life. He was surrounded by beautiful works of architecture, sculpture and painting, he could attend dramatic and religious festivals, and he could meet in the streets and public places men with lively minds ready to discuss everything under the sun. It was also possible, of course, for boys to learn vocational skills. Those who were going to be stonemasons or doctors, for instance, would learn the secrets of their craft from their parents, or by being apprenticed to other practitioners. Finally, the sons of wealthy men would be able to pay for lessons in a variety of subjects from the sophists, the wandering teachers who for obvious reasons spent quite

long periods in Athens, providing the only kind of higher education then available. It was not until about 390, only a few years before the probable date of the foundation of Plato's Academy, that the first permanent school for older students was opened in Athens. This was the school of Isocrates, a pupil of the sophist Gorgias, who was a considerable figure in his own time both in politics and in education, though his fame has since been eclipsed by that of Plato. He favoured a more rhetorical or literary kind of education than that given in the Academy, but it was as successful as Plato's in attracting pupils and turning out successful men.

2. *Education in Sparta*

The situation in Sparta was quite different from that in Athens. Sparta had once had a flourishing artistic and literary culture, but that had been submerged by the needs of war. Sparta was perpetually on the defensive against the helots she had enslaved but not tamed, and the training she gave her citizens was adapted to that end. Both boys and girls were taken from their mothers at the age of seven, and trained to be hardy and athletic, to obey orders and to fight for their country. Nothing else mattered very much.

3. *Plato's Contribution*

Basing his judgement on their political ineptness, Plato believed that there was something seriously wrong with the education that his Athenian contemporaries and predecessors had received. Nearly all of his suggestions for improvement, therefore, were made in view of the political results he expected to follow, and this introduces us at once to one of the most important problems of the philosophy of education, that of its purpose. Two quite different aims are possible in educating a child: either to mould him to fit into a certain position in a given community, or to help him to develop along his own lines as well as possible. A gardening analogy may help here. We may either train a fruit-tree to fit into a particular place and to provide us with the kind of fruit we require, which may be a

small amount of large-sized specimens, or we may feed and water it well but otherwise leave it to grow naturally, with quite different results. Both in gardening and in education there are limits on what we can do. Whether we train and prune it or not, the tree will have to be given water and nourishment, sunlight and protection from wind, if it is to grow well. Similarly there will be many aspects of a child's education that will be the same, whatever our aim is, for without them he could not be educated at all. Again, few gardeners are concerned only with a single tree. Their care for one will be limited by their care for another, and a too vigorous tree may have to be pruned to prevent it from interfering with smaller neighbours. Similarly, however much we may wish to let a child follow his own bent, this can only be done if we can also safeguard the interests of those with whom he lives, and with whom he will live in the future.

But with these provisos, considerable differences in aims and methods are possible, as indeed the differences between the Spartan and the Athenian systems of education show. Much modern educational theory and practice rests on a confusion of aims which is concealed by the great articulacy with which individual problems may be discussed and by the amount of emotion felt on some points. There is a conflict between the great emphasis put on the self-development of each child, with its accompanying repudiation of the suggestion that education should mould him to fit into his place in the community, and the pressures of many kinds which in fact limit greatly his freedom of choice. First and most obvious, but also most acceptable, are the economic constraints. By various devices, more typists and mathematicians are produced than ballet dancers or Sanskrit scholars. Few people object to this. Other pressures come not so much from the state as from sub-groups within it, for it is a paradox of modern democracies that they allow great power and influence over the lives of their members to many sub-groups. Religious groups, like Roman Catholics or Plymouth Brethren, religious-cum-nationalist groups like the Jews, and nationalist sub-groups like the Welsh in Britain, have tremendous power over the upbringing of children born into their groups, so that a child's religion and language are not chosen by him, but by his parents, and even their choice may not be an entirely willing one. This may help us to understand

Plato's position. In a Greek state sub-groups of this kind did not exist, or, if they did exist among slaves and foreigners, they were of no political importance. The city-state provided not only a political setting, but a religious and nationalist one as well. So in a different way what Plato took for granted was only what nearly everyone today still takes for granted, that a child's parentage and the place in the world it brings with it should have some effect on his upbringing. The kind of influence, and its extent, that this should have is open to discussion, but it is difficult to take seriously the idea of a system in which it had none at all.

The theoretically perfect solution would be to give each child what was absolutely the best education, in terms of language, religion, ethics, culture and everything else. But people differ vastly over what this absolutely best would be – and indeed it seems like nonsense to speak of an absolutely best language. But to be civilised at all a child must learn at least one language, have some code of behaviour, and have some attitude to matters which for many people fall within the sphere of a particular religion. He will probably acquire these most successfully if he follows his parents, and often what he gets in this way is at least not obviously worse than anything he might get in some other way. Problems can arise in modern societies, however, as when a child in a minority group may seem to be placed under a handicap by being brought up in a particular way according to the principles of that group. To preserve the Welsh language, or the gypsy way of life, children have to be taught the Welsh language or be brought up as gypsies. But most English parents would not want their own children to be brought up in either of these ways, arguing plausibly that it would be unfair to the child. Paradoxically, however, many of them do not regard it as wrong that Welsh children or gypsy children should be treated thus, and that not from any hostility to Welsh or gypsy babies. The clue to the paradox lies in the fact that few of us nowadays feel at all sure what the best way of life is, or indeed that any one way of life is better than another. Some of our doubts may be due to nothing more respectable than romantic nonsense, but that is not the whole explanation. For one thing, people who have had the same kind of education may later prefer quite different ways of life, which suggests that different lives are

genuinely better for different people. It also seems that even some men who have found great satisfaction in their own lives may feel, with some justification, that they might have found equal satisfaction in an entirely different way of life. While this does not imply that all ways of life may be equally good, it does suggest that there may at least be several of equal goodness.

Plato's *Republic* may be seen as an attempt, ignoring these possibilities, to work out the best way of life for man, and, consequentially, the best form of education. He adopted, for this purpose, two different starting-points, and tried to harmonise them. I do not think that he entirely succeeded in this, and both the fact that he did not do so, and the fact that he nearly succeeded, may help us to understand some of the difficulties we have been discussing. His two starting-points are the nature of man, seen as an individual, and the nature of a civilised community.

First, let us look at individual men. Men can do, and want to do, a variety of things. Some of these they not only can, but must do, to survive, either as individuals or as a race. These they share with animals, but there are many other things that only men can do, or that men do to an extent and in a way far different from any animals, like amassing wealth, creating and enjoying beautiful things, domesticating animals and doing mathematics. Not all men can do all of these things, and no man can do all of them at the same time. Plato tended to assume that there was one of these activities, or a clearly marked group of them, that was absolutely better than any of the others, and that the best life for man – or at least for all men who were capable of it – was one spent as much as possible in the pursuit of that activity. Not surprisingly, he identified this with the activity he himself enjoyed most, philosophical thought, but he also gave independent and respectable reasons for preferring it, arguing that this was the highest activity of reason, and that it was reason that distinguished men from the animals.

But he was well aware that it was not possible for most men to lead a solitary life of contemplation. Whether they like it or not, they have to live with others. By living in groups the burdens of life can be shared, and this can best be done by specialisation, each man doing one particular job. Specialisation could

be justified solely on the ground that practice makes perfect, and that a man will do anything better the longer he can spend doing it. But Plato also argued that men have different bents, and practice together with innate ability will achieve more than practice alone. Starting from this, he develops the complete outline of a state in which every man has one task. Each child in it is to be tested to find out what it is capable of doing, and then given an education which will enable it to do that job well.

By making a single further assumption Plato is now able to fit together his account of man and his account of the ideal community. This assumption is that the number of children capable of going on to philosophy and then becoming rulers of the state will always be fairly small, and that there will be a larger but still comparatively small number capable of going on to become soldiers to defend and police the rest of the community; the remainder will have various aptitudes by which they will be able to perform all the other necessary tasks. If this is so, the way of life laid down for each individual will be the best that he or she is capable of, and at the same time it will be the best from the point of view of the community as a whole. It follows that the education designed to fit him for his role in the community will also be the one that is best suited to him as an individual. In this way Plato is able to by-pass the problem raised earlier, whether education should be primarily for the sake of the child or primarily for the community. But I have suggested that his solution is not quite perfect, and he seems to admit it himself in various places where he suggests that the best life of all, if it could be achieved, is a godlike life of contemplation remote from human cares and contacts. Even in the *Republic* he admits that the rulers, called upon to undertake political duties when their long education is complete, would prefer not to do so, and regard the 'return to the cave' as an unpleasant duty.

Ultimately, then, Plato's solution is a compromise, as I have suggested all solutions in practice are likely to be. The assumptions involved are that the community has certain needs, that children have different bents related to those needs, that it is possible to discover those bents sufficiently early to use them in planning a child's education, and that it is usually in a child's interests to have an education related to his bent. Each

of these assumptions is here stated in general terms, and the practical implications may be affected very profoundly by technological and psychological advances. The final assumption might even be rejected if it were believed, for instance, that the natural bents of most children were not of the kind that it would be in their interests to have developed. Much more could be said on all these topics, if space allowed.

We must now turn to Plato's detailed educational programme. It may be divided into two parts, which overlap to some extent: the moral and the intellectual. He also discussed physical education, but we may ignore that except in so far as he treated it as a part of moral education or character training. Moral education by conditioning was advocated in the *Republic*, and to an even greater extent in the *Laws*, from quite an early age. The aim was to make children feel pleasure and pain on the appropriate occasions, so that they would naturally try to do what was right and avoid what was wrong. This could be achieved by the careful use of rewards and punishments. It is the only kind of training that can be used with irrational creatures like animals and babies. Human children, however, do not remain completely irrational, and as they grow other methods of moral training become possible. Plato devoted considerable attention to two methods, indoctrination for those whose intellect was inferior and for younger children, and a hard intellectual training, covering moral as well as other matters, for the very intelligent.

The lower type of education raises the question of censorship, which I propose to discuss separately, so I shall begin with the higher. In the *Republic*, and in his own practice both in the Academy and with Dionysius of Syracuse, Plato supported the view that suitable students should be given a rigorous intellectual education in a fixed syllabus to equip them for the task of ruling. There were two reasons for this. The first was the obvious one that a ruler would need quite a considerable grounding in certain kinds of mathematics, because these would be of value in technical matters like warfare or the planning of cities. The second was Plato's strongly held view that a mathematical and philosophical education had moral value as well, and this point we shall have to consider at length.

Plato had taken over from Socrates the rather enigmatic view that virtue is knowledge. In many of his dialogues he

explores and tries to clarify the meaning of this claim, which as it stands is little more than a slogan. Both the word 'virtue' and the word 'knowledge', and also the Greek terms they are here used to translate, have complex meanings which embody a number of assumptions, and clarification of their meanings depends on discovering what these assumptions are. Unfortunately there are two difficulties here: one is that the set of assumptions embodied in the Greek terms are different, and in the case of 'virtue' considerably different, from those embodied in the corresponding English ones – which are, even so, the nearest possible in the language; the second is that even with the Greek terms Plato never succeeded in getting all the hidden assumptions clear. Among other things, he never produced a full account of how different kinds of knowledge, such as knowlege of particular facts, scientific knowledge, knowledge of one's own limitations, and knowledge of right and wrong, are relevant to virtue. For this reason we shall have to ignore some aspects of his thought, and omit some things which he considered very important, but fortunately the points which are most relevant to our present problems can be dealt with independently of the rest.

Plato believed that a man fit to rule others, or even to control his own life satisfactorily, must have an adequate understanding of the nature of the universe and of man, and, further, that this could be achieved by some gifted students, as the climax of a long and hard course of study. It is one of the great differences between his time and ours that nobody today, except possibly a few obscure fanatics, would regard this as a real possibility. Plato criticised even the greatest statesmen of his time because they relied on intuitions and not on true knowledge to guide their actions. The best we can expect of a statesman today is that he should have expert knowledge in one technical field, the capacity to cope with experts in other fields and make good use of their advice, and, most important of all, have the flair and judgement to reach correct decisions in the vastly complicated matters with which he has to deal.

There are a number of reasons for this change of outlook. One obvious, and yet paradoxical one, is the great advances in knowledge that have been made in so many fields since Plato's time, which have brought with them the conviction that the boundaries of knowledge are ever receding, and that however

much we may know, there is very much more that remains unknown. Another is the much greater size and complexity of modern political units, compared with the small city-states with which Plato was familiar, and the accompanying extension of the limits of political activity and influence to the whole surface of the globe and beyond. But there is another reason too. Just as we have given up hope of ever reaching the end of scientific knowledge, so many people, particularly in the Western democracies, have abandoned hope of finding an agreed metaphysical basis for political life. They no longer accept the old certainties of medieval Christendom, and have been unable to accept the large claims of a doctrine like Marxism. People of different religions and of none live and work together, and it has become a common view that a democracy must be able to accommodate them all, or at least all who are willing to extend some kind of tolerance to others. One of the tasks of a modern statesman is to enable many people of different beliefs to live together without friction, and this means taking account of all their beliefs, but knowing at the same time that, where they conflict, not more than one can possibly be true. The pragmatism that follows is a necessary result of religious tolerance.

By contrast, Plato had a firm metaphysical and religious foundation for his ideal state. It is true that we find some difficulties in fitting together his views on these subjects as they are expressed in different dialogues, but they are difficulties for us, and not for him. He had a reasoned belief in the existence of God – or gods, for the question of how many gods there were does not seem to have troubled him very much – and in the immortality of each individual soul. He also believed that God was interested in man's welfare and expected obedience from him. The soul was more real – in a sense which he made clear – and therefore more important than the body, and it followed that each man ought to live in such a way as to put the needs of the soul before those of the body. Plato was not, however, a solitary mystic or a religious revivalist. He accepted with only slight reservations the Greek assumption that men were made for community life, and that the cultivation of the soul must take place in a living community. In the *Republic* he undertook the enormous task of sketching out how this might be done. The leaders of the community must be those who understood man's position in the universe and his relationship

to God, and this they could learn through the rigorous education he wished to give them.

Those who have no hope that such a sure understanding of man's situation may be attained within their own lifetime, or within the foreseeable future, may think that Plato's views are too remote from their own to be of any interest to them. But it is not necessary to give up so easily. Even if final knowledge of this kind is not attainable, we may still accept that it is of such vital importance that any approximation to it is worth having. A life guided by it is more likely to be a staisfactory one than one that is not, and if we may not hope to know all, we can at least try to be less ignorant than we were.

The course of studies laid down by Plato for this purpose included first of all some difficult particular subjects, which certainly included mathematics and astronomy, and may also have covered physical science and biology, and then what he called 'dialectic', which may nowadays fairly be called philosophy. At this stage the students were to argue about ethical and metaphysical problems. In some ways the actual course of the arguments they used would be very different from anything we might encounter today, but both the things discussed and some of the methods used are still of interest. Indeed, we have one specimen of the kind of argument that was conducted in the Academy under Plato's leadership which, with some changes, would not be out of place today. This is the argument about the place of pleasure in a good life, in which the great astronomer Eudoxus, then a member of the Academy, and the young Aristotle, a junior teacher there, took part, as well as the elderly Plato and a number of others. Parts of it are recorded in Plato's *Philebus* and in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. In the *Philebus* the arguments about pleasure are mixed up with some on more general metaphysical matters, and the whole makes very difficult reading, but the arguments can be disentangled, and much of what is left would still be acceptable at the present time. Indeed, some of it has never been superseded by the work of later thinkers. The result of this dialectical discussion is a great clarification of the nature of pleasure, with an account of the many kinds of pleasure that exist, and reasons for classing each kind as good, bad or neutral. This kind of clarification is invaluable to individuals in their private lives, and also to future statesmen who will be able to affect the lives of a whole community.

An objection that might arise at this point in the mind of a modern thinker, is that these questions are partly about matters of fact – what kinds of pleasure there are – and partly about matters of value – whether they are good or bad. Bridge-building between the two is nowadays regarded as a delicate and hazardous matter, and from one point of view it is so. But these questions are outside Plato's system, and need not be raised at particular points within it. Indeed, no serious political programme – as distinct from a mere model – can be put forward unless one already regards some things as good and others as bad: a man who sincerely believed that nothing was either good or bad could have no interest in politics, except perhaps as a spectator. Plato takes for granted a basic moral framework, but works hard to clear away the ignorance and muddle that prevent people from applying it fully to their own lives. It is here that dialectic comes in. Possibly Plato's most distinctive contribution in this field is his view that certainty in political and ethical matters is attainable, though only by good and clever men after long and hard work. If in the *Republic* there is a hothouse atmosphere about this type of study, a glance at the *Laws* will broaden the picture considerably. There Plato requires his rulers to be empiricists, sending out observers – of suitable age and discretion – to find out what is going on abroad:

> No state which had no experience of good and evil among men, because it had kept itself to itself, could ever bring its civilisation to perfection, or again keep its laws intact by habituation alone, without knowing the reasons for them. For there are always, among the multitudes of men, some few godlike beings for whose companionship no price is too high, and they occur no more commonly in states with good laws than in those with bad, so that the citizen of a well-run state must go out on their track over land and sea, provided he is not likely to be corrupted, and seek out what is likely to strengthen customs which are good, or correct what is defective. (*Laws* XII 951)

The rulers' observers are to find out the ideas of serious thinkers everywhere, and how new problems of education or legislation are being tackled. They are then to report back to the legislative council, each member of which will be attended by a younger observer. The new ideas will be discussed, and the younger

men will be encouraged to study suitable topics further, to prepare themselves for their future responsibilities.

If the implications of this programme are considered, it will be seen that only a very wide syllabus would make it possible. Languages, unless the inquiries were limited to Greek states, geography and probably some history would be needed. But the sole justification for studying them would be their usefulness, and Plato does not seem to think that they, as well as mathematics and science, might be studied for their own sakes. We may look here by contrast at Aristotle, a natural polymath himself, who defended at length the study of the creatures of the sea, including the smallest, most unclean and ugliest, on the grounds that scientific understanding in itself can give great pleasure, and also that even in these creatures there is something divine. It is clear that Aristotle felt that studies of this kind needed to be defended, and there is plenty of evidence that from the time of Thales, the first philosopher, onwards, 'useless' studies were viewed with suspicion, even by people so imbued with curiosity as the Greeks.

Today we find people asking a number of questions about the content of higher education. These include the value of the traditional syllabus of subjects studied in schools and universities, the right of a student to decide for himself what he is to study, and the distinction between general education and vocational training. In the light of these questions we may perhaps see the education outlined in the *Republic*, and the education Plato in fact gave his students, as a vocational training for future rulers. It was as a vocational training that it was justified. The subjects taught were those that were needed, and a student could not choose to omit some of them and do something different, because these subjects, and only these, were the right ones, needed by rulers just as doctors need anatomy. But it was a training for a very special kind of vocation, and it was not merely vocational; Plato thought that students of the right kind would also derive great enjoyment from their studies. It is perhaps misleading to concentrate on the fact that, as he describes it, it was an education for an elite only. We could change the emphasis by pointing out that he also thought that it was the right education for all who could profit by it. It would appear to follow, although Plato himself did not discuss this possibility, that if all the children in a com-

munity had the required ability, all should be given this kind of education.

At this point we meet the great difference between Plato and ourselves already mentioned, the sheer increase in the bulk of our total knowledge, which means that willy-nilly specialisation of some kind is inevitable. But, given this, various approaches to the problem are possible. First, and easiest, is vocational specialisation. If a man is to become a professional architect or doctor, he will, as Plato also saw, have to spend a large part of his time studying technical subjects related to his calling; otherwise his houses will fall down, or his patients will die. Here the student is supposed to have chosen the end, the career which he wishes to follow, and to be prepared to accept the means to that end. But it is also possible to make choices at an earlier stage, and sometimes in a more negative way. A child may be allowed to decide not to study a certain subject solely because he is not good at it or because it does not appeal to him, and many a young girl may have cut herself off from the chance of becoming a doctor in later life because she is squeamish about cutting up dogfish when she is fourteen. In recent times, views on this point have ranged from the one extreme, actually put into practice in certain schools, that no child should be required to study anything unless he wishes to do so, to the other, which was at one time almost universally accepted, that there are a number of subjects that all must study, unless they are incapacitated by a mental handicap. Even at the highest levels this may be held: for instance, it was recently seriously urged that all undergraduates in British universities should be required to take a course in computing.

In practice, decisions on these matters are usually taken by administrative bodies, and tend to be, and indeed to some extent have to be, pragmatic, related to such things as the availability of teachers and materials, and the willingness of students. In addition, it is only too easy to take it for granted that, since some kind of specialisation is inevitable, any kind of specialisation is acceptable. But a number of principles are involved in these issues, and it is important to try to get them clear.

(*a*) *The principle of competence.* This is obviously a very important factor in purely vocational training, but it is also exemplified in the suggestion that all undergraduates should learn to use a computer. It is argued that in the course of their

lives all of them, or at any rate a majority group the members of which cannot be predicted when they are undergraduates, will need this skill. But this example itself shows that the principle is not one that can be applied without difficulty over a wide range of subjects. The notion of need is imprecise, and, as we all know, in one sense there are many things we need to know that we may reach quite an advanced age without knowing, from how to mend a fuse to how to deal with social security matters. Some help may be got by distinguishing between what one needs to know in order to live at all – such as, in a rhubarb-eating community, that rhubarb leaves are poisonous – and what one needs to live well. But the notion of living well is itself an unclear one, and people differ widely over what living well is, as we saw earlier. Hence, except in relation to vocational needs, the principle of competence seems of limited usefulness.

(*b*) *The principle of freedom of choice.* This principle takes it as a good thing that a child should learn by choice and not by compulsion, so that he will study only what he wants to study. It too has its limitations. Firstly, as we have seen, if a child chooses a certain career, he will have to study the subjects needed for that purpose. Secondly, a student will only be able to study what someone is able and willing to teach him, or at least guide him in his own investigations. Thirdly, he must be put into a position from which he can make a sensible decision, and this cannot be done in complete ignorance. (Those theorists who believe that the child should be free to choose and reject right from the start, but retain sufficient traditional values to feel that some subjects are so important that they cannot be entirely omitted by any child, have to pay a great deal of attention to the teacher's role in making the subject attractive. Plato was with them here. In the *Laws* he has some delightful proposals for teaching little boys mathematics painlessly.) Finally, the workability of a system in which this principle plays a prominent part will depend very much on the educational arrangements that are available to a student. In a society where anyone, at any time, provided he has the necessary prior qualifications, may start to study any subject he chooses, it will not matter very much if he neglects his opportunities earlier in life, but in another setting such neglect might be final and disastrous.

Although this has not always been made clear by its supporters, the principle may be defended in two quite different ways. On the one hand, it may be held that freedom of choice is itself a good thing regardless of consequences; on the other, it may be thought that each person knows his own needs best, so that the best results are in fact achieved by letting a student choose his own courses. On the latter view the principle is judged by its results, on the former it has value in itself. Plato, I think, would have accepted neither of these positions. He would have denied that it had practical value, because most people would not in fact make a correct choice, and he would have said that the freedom to choose badly was a freedom not worth having. He gives a lively picture of the effects he thinks would follow from it in his criticism of the democratic way of life in book VIII of the *Republic* (562e–563d). The democratic young man will go in for wine and song one day, and water and a starvation diet on the next, sometimes for physical training, and sometimes for a life of carefree idleness, followed by a period of philosophical study or political activity or soldiering or business. And in this state fathers will fear their sons, students will despise their teachers, and the very slaves and animals will do exactly as they like. Plato admits that some people may like this kind of thing, with its accompanying variety of personalities and ways of life, but he makes it clear that he himself does not, for reasons which he explains at length. One is that such a situation lacks stability: in his opinion democracy leads to tyranny or dictatorship. But even if it were stable, he would not regard this state of affairs as a good one, and certainly not as the best possible.

(*c*) *The principle of the educated man.* It is often argued that this or that subject must be in the curriculum because without it a person is not properly educated. There is an ideal of 'the educated man' who is the product of a good non-vocational education. It is taken for granted that it is good for people to be educated in this sense, and this is justified because there is a value judgement built into the very notion of 'the educated man'. But just because of this built-in assumption, the nature of the ideal may vary with the ideals as a whole of the people using it. It is not, however, a completely empty notion, but has sufficient content to be capable of being rejected as an ideal in more than one way. It might be rejected, for instance, by a

narrow religious sect on the ground that education interfered with more important matters, or by someone with an overmastering interest in a single subject, such as a great artist or musician might have. The latter might still feel that a general education was a good thing if only he had time for it. Further, those who accepted this ideal, however much they might differ over details, would agree on some things, such as that it would include the study of a variety of subjects, and that among the results of a successful education would be the ability to be critical. Variety of subjects is needed both to supply the critical ability and to provide general culture, and critical ability is needed in order that a man may live well and, so far as he has not the control of his life in his own hands, may judge those who have such control, whether politicians or doctors.

We have here come back to the notion of living well, which was dismissed as unclear in discussing the principle of competence. Linked with the notion of the educated man, which is admitted to be capable of being filled out differently in different situations, it may now become more helpful. We may, for example, ask, in the context of a modern western democracy, what is needed for a man to acquire the critical ability discussed above. He must clearly be able to make sound judgements about a variety of matters on the basis of arguments put forward by other people. Particularly important are arguments on matters which may have serious consequences for himself and for large numbers of other people, like the effects of smoking on health, or the effectiveness of a proposed system of social security. Nowadays a great many of the arguments put forward on political and social matters are very complicated, and involve both mathematical calculations and questions of geography, history, psychology and many other subjects as well. A man may have to judge what is scientifically, economically and politically possible or desirable. On these grounds, it would seem that he needs as much knowledge as he can get in all these fields. But this is not all. The mere mention of economics suggests at once that there are fields where even experts are divided almost hopelessly, and where it can hardly be expected that a layman's opinion will be of any value at all. This applies in many fields where the subject-matter is still poorly explored, whether in the geographical or the scientific sense. Here the best a man can hope to do is to make some judgement of the

experts themselves, and that will not be easy. In these areas even a man's best may not be good enough, but if he is even to try he will need a broadly based education, containing plenty of information and plenty of hard thinking as well.

The educated man is also expected, however, to enjoy the fruits of his education in and for themselves. This brings in the concept of general culture. In any civilised country, children are taught many things not because they are useful, but because they are valued for their own sakes. If they are not useful, the selection of what is to be taught must be made on grounds other than that of utility. It must also be made by someone other than the child, who cannot know what there is to choose from. Some modern thinkers object to the practice of imparting a traditional culture because they think that this involves the perpetuation of false values. This is a form of external criticism, because it claims that the practice is useless or even harmful, but the issues here are so complicated that they will be discussed separately in the following chapter. If such criticism is rejected, the way in which the traditional culture is handed on will be determined by many factors, of which a large number will lie outside the sphere of education proper. The books a child can read will only be those that someone has published, and the pictures and music he may get to know will be those that someone has chosen to make available to him. Any large-scale changes in educational practice in matters like these will be dependent on large-scale changes in society as a whole. As Plato saw when he wanted to start his ideal state with children taken away from their parents, it is not easy to get away from tradition.

Let us now look back at Plato's views on the intellectual content of education. It is quite clear, from many of the things he says, that he expects the students throughout their course to be taught only what is true, or, in the case of dialectic, how to find out the truth for themselves. For a number of reasons this simple ideal has lost its simplicity in modern educational theory. The first reason, chronologically, is the effect of Christianity and the wedge it drove between knowledge and faith. For Plato the best way of finding out the truth about anything, including religion, was by hard reasoning. It is true that he seems to leave room for a kind of non-rational illumination as the culminating

point of a man's studies, but it was to be non-rational and not irrational illumination, and would only confirm what had already been arrived at by simple reasoning. Christians, who had to combine Biblical revelation with reasoning, had to tread a much more difficult path, and while some persevered in the task, to others reason came to appear the enemy of faith and something not to be trusted.

Another, quite different, source of confusion is the recent growth of literary studies in which the emphasis is on criticism of an aesthetic and not a rational kind. Thus it is not sufficient, and not even perhaps necessary, to be able to recite great poetry: you must be able to say something about it, and something far more than who wrote it and when. Here again we are touching on matters which will be dealt with more fully in the next chapter. Some critics claim that this lack of interest in truth carries over into subjects like history and philosophy, which they say are taught for the sake of imparting traditional (and false) values to a new generation, or to encourage a kind of virtuosity in which brilliance is valued more highly than truth. But for Plato there were no such complications. To be educated was, for him, to know the truth about things which a man needed to know in order to live well himself and help others to do the same. He was indeed over-optimistic in thinking it even remotely possible that such knowledge could be acquired, with long and hard work, within a single man's lifetime, and in ignoring the hard problems of choice and specialisation which face us today, but his fundamental assumption that education means learning the truth about important matters is still worth serious consideration.

We can now look at Plato's views on education as character training. Here he departed, whether consciously or not, from the views of his master, Socrates, who had taught that all that was needed for a man to be good was for him to know what was good, and that this knowledge was not very difficult to obtain. Plato, on the contrary, believed that, while attainable, it was so only with difficulty, and by very few people. If other people were to become good, it must be by some other method. In fact he advocated a combination of methods, including propaganda, habituation, experience, and rewards and punishments. Of these, propaganda and what we may call habituation by imitation will be discussed in the next chapter. Habituation

of a different kind was to be used to make children brave. They were to be encouraged to engage in sports and games which would both develop their physique and give them experience of pain and hardship, and in time the ability to withstand them. Children being what they are, this part of the programme raises few difficulties, but Plato recognises that courage and endurance by themselves are not enough, and that a man who is brave may also be foolish, or inconsiderate, or difficult to live with in some other way. In the *Laws* he notes that the Spartans and Cretans train their children very carefully to be brave, but they do nothing to enable them to stand up to the temptations of pleasure; indeed, Spartan leaders were notorious for succumbing to the allurements of more luxurious ways of life if they came into contact with them.

Plato's views here are tantalisingly incomplete, but he seems to want to train children to withstand pleasure by being exposed to it as they were to pain. He has a half-playful suggestion that drinking-bouts should be used educationally, partly as examinations in which a person's true nature is revealed, and partly as training sessions. But he is aware throughout that mere exposure to fearful or to pleasant things is not enough to make children brave or self-controlled; they must have some other incentive to make them stand up to danger and hold out against pleasure, and this, he thinks, can only be achieved, at this lower level of education, by the use of pleasures and pains of a different kind. You may train a child to face pain and danger if you inflict pain as a punishment if he runs away. But as Plato had shown at length in the *Philebus*, there are mental pains as well as bodily ones, and a man may also be made to face danger by making him feel shame – a painful emotion – if he does not. Similarly, one can make a child hold back from one pleasure by the offer of a greater, either bodily or mental, if he resists the first. So far, the programme seems to be a Pavlovian one of mere conditioning: good habits are to be formed by means of reward and punishment. But Plato does not stop here, and he does not expect good habits, once formed, to persist indefinitely without reinforcement. Instead he makes use of propaganda, which takes us on to our next topic.

6 Art, Propaganda and Censorship

By propaganda I mean the use of persuasive devices, other than the simple giving of information and the use of rational argument, in order to affect other people's ideas and behaviour. It ranges from the colourful presentation of useful information to the spreading of falsehoods and the use of illogical rhetorical devices, and includes some, but by no means all, works of art. Plato was one of the first conscious advocates of propaganda, for while there was much in the daily round of a Greek city-state that could be called unconscious propaganda, like the religious and social festivals which were so frequent, and which, among other things, encouraged the Greeks to think of themselves as a superior people, there was little that had been deliberately thought out in this way. Plato, on the other hand, advocates the conscious use of propaganda for a number of purposes.

By censorship I mean the prohibition of such devices, and of other forms of speech or behaviour which might be expected to affect the beliefs and behaviour of others, or which are thought to be offensive, or which are regarded as evil in themselves apart from any effects they may have. In the course of history there have been three main fields of censorship – the sexual, the political and the religious – but it has seldom happened that all three have been important at the same time.[1] In Plato's Greece there was little censorship of things relating to sex, and Aristophanes could only have written his comedies at a time of complete licence in this field. For this reason Plato has little to say that has any direct bearing on our current controversies about this form of censorship, but he says a great deal about censorship in general, and he has interesting views about art which are also relevant to this theme.

1. *Censorship in Athens*

There was no systematic censorship in Athens, but there were several devices available to those who wished to censor the work or teachings of others. As early as 493, the dramatist Phrynicus was fined for producing a play about the capture of the Greek city of Miletus by the Persians, and so causing pain to his fellow-citizens, and the play itself was banned. In later years many residents of Athens, both citizens like Socrates and aliens like Anaxagoras, were tried and punished for publicising views which were regarded as undesirable. They might be expelled or executed, and their books could be burned. Often the motives behind such prosecutions were political rather than strictly moral or religious, but it was by an appeal to the moral and religious convictions of the jurors that a verdict was obtained.

In spite of this, the Athenians prided themselves on their tolerance, and their ideals were expressed by Thucydides, towards the end of the fifth century and in Plato's lifetime, in the words he put into the mouth of Pericles in the famous Funeral Speech:

> There is freedom in our public life, and we are not suspicious of one another in our daily activities. We are not angry with our neighbour when he does what he wants to do; it is not merely that we do not punish him: we do not frown at him either.

But in that same city, less than thirty years after the occasion of the speech, Socrates was condemned to death just because many of his fellow-citizens did not like his activities. Thucydides himself had perhaps seen the difficulty unconsciously, when he wrote the words that come immediately after those quoted above:

> Mixing with our fellows in private without causing pain to one another, it is mainly through reverence that we do not break the laws of the state, having respect for those men who at any one time hold office, and to the laws, especially those that have been passed for the protection of the injured, and to those unwritten laws which all agree it is shameful to break. (Thuc. II 37)

It is interesting that J. B. Bury, the Victorian historian, in quoting at length and with admiration from the Funeral Speech, omits this last sentence without indicating that he has done so (in his *History of Greece*, chap. x, sec. 4). For it gives the game away. In a community in which all members observe the laws and customs already established, tolerance is easy. All are in step together. The testing time comes when innovations threaten the established order. Censorship may then be introduced in a blind and haphazard way. Conspicuous targets, like Socrates in Athens, are attacked, but many others escape.

2. *Censorship in Sparta*

In Sparta censorship was complete. Traditional improving songs were sung, and foreigners were kept at a distance. Its isolation was not, however, complete, and new ideas, which tended to be corrupting, were encountered when the army went abroad. It could be argued that but for this the system might have worked, in the sense that there would have been no innovations, and the existing state of affairs would have lasted indefinitely.

3. *Plato's Views on Censorship*

Both in the *Republic* and in the *Laws* Plato argued in favour of a systematic censorship which could be justified on rational grounds. One of the reasons for his famous attack on Homer and other poets in the *Republic* (books II and III) is that he thought it intolerable that respected men who wrote attractively should tell lies on important matters.[2] Because these poets wrote well they would be read, and because they were respected they would be believed. But the pictures they gave of the gods as all-too-human rascals were demonstrably false, and so their works must be revised or banned. Here is part of his argument, with the dialogue slightly abridged:

> 'God must always be represented as he is, whether he is introduced in epics, or lyrics, or tragedies. And is not God in fact good and to be described as such?'
>
> 'Surely.'

'And surely no good thing is harmful, and what is not harmful cannot harm?'

'By no means.'

'And does what does no harm do any evil? And can what does no evil be the cause of any evil?'

'How could it be?'

'And now, is the good useful? And is it a cause of well-being?'

'Yes.'

'Then the good is not the cause of everything, but it is the cause of what is good, and not of what is evil. And God, since he is good, is not the cause of everything, as the masses say, but is the cause of only a few things in men's lives, and not the cause of the rest. . . . And it is not to be tolerated that Homer or any other poet should make this thoughtless mistake about the gods and say: "There are two jars standing on Zeus's floor, full of fates, the one good and the other wretched." ' (*Republic* 379)

Secondly, Plato believed that children in particular could be affected even more directly by poetry, music and dancing, because an important part of their education consisted in learning to recite poetry, and to perform music and dances. He felt as strongly about the evil effects which some poetry and some music and dances could have, as some people nowadays feel about violence on television and in comics, or pop music – or even the music of Wagner. He thought, for example, that if children were encouraged to act in plays like cowards, they would become cowards. Their poetry, music and dances must therefore be limited to what will improve their characters. This part of his argument, then, has two parts: the first is that children should not be exposed to what will corrupt them, and the second that poetry and music of certain kinds is in fact likely to corrupt them. The second is clearly an empirical matter, and Plato should have been prepared to change his views if he had been given evidence that he was wrong here. He had clearly thought quite hard about this: in the *Laws* (816), for example, he thinks it desirable that the citizens should watch comic works, in order to understand the ridiculous side of life, but they should leave it to slaves and foreigners to perform them, to avoid being corrupted.

The converse of censorship is propaganda, and Plato clearly elt that the poetry and music he permitted to be performed

would have a positive effect on the characters and behaviour of his citizens. He expresses this view in extremely strong terms in the *Laws*, where he praises the Egyptians for having kept their art-forms stable for ten thousand years (656), and later (799) wants to sanctify the dances and music in his own city, once the best have been found, because only so can the whole of society be kept stable. In addition, he advocated various kinds of propaganda in situations where reason alone was insufficient. Thus in the *Laws* he thought it might be possible to control homosexuality and adultery not by reason, because strong passions are involved, but by extending to these activities the same kind of taboo that already exists in the case of incest, and is there almost completely effective (858–859). But the most famous – indeed notorious – example is the 'noble lie', as it is often called, of the *Republic*, by which Plato thought that the members of his ideal state might be persuaded of the correctness of the arrangements he had proposed (414–415). They were to be told that they were children of earth, and all of the same ancestry, but the gods had fashioned them with different metals in their make-up, gold in those suited to be rulers, silver for the class of soldiers, and iron and bronze for the rest. Thus it was right and proper that those with gold in them should rule the rest. Plato has been chided severely for this immoral proposal, but if we look more closely at it it may not seem so terrible after all. The 'lie' or fiction could be seen as a device for putting into simpler terms matters that many people could not understand in their full complexity. For Plato genuinely believed that people were born with differing abilities, which had a rather complicated hereditary basis, and the details of this are exactly mirrored in the myth as he tells it. To this extent he is not lying at all, but telling the truth in a picturesque way adapted to his audience.

4. *Plato's Views on Art*

It will be clear from what has already been said that Plato's views on art are very closely bound up with his views on education and on censorship and propaganda. Before relating the latter to modern problems, we must therefore look at some of the things he said about art.

A great literary artist himself, Plato had tremendous affection for the poets of Greece, but his affection was outweighed by his mistrust of them. They were inspired fools who could neither explain nor defend the views they expressed with such compelling beauty. In his earlier writings he was content to expose their ignorance, but in the *Laws* he goes into detail on a number of points. First, he plunges us into the thick of a contemporary argument about musical standards (700–701), showing how recent innovations and experiments by composers had been accompanied by the belief that the only test of the goodness of a piece of music was the amount of pleasure it gave. He himself distinguished two styles, the austere old one with its time-honoured rules, and the new 'democratic' style in which anything was permitted, saying:

> There arose poets and composers who had natural ability, but were ignorant of what is right and legitimate with regard to the Muse, yielding to frenzy and overcome by pleasure more than is right, mixing up dirges with hymns, and paeans with dithyrambs, and imitating the sound of pipes on the lyre, and mixing everything up. And without meaning it, through their ignorance of music, they imagined that there was no standard of correctness, but that a piece should be judged by the pleasure of the audience, whether they be good or bad.

He maintained that the two types appealed to people of different characters, but this was complicated by the fact that in some people their natural disposition was at variance with their acquired habits, the one being good and the other bad or vice versa. So a man who had acquired good habits in spite of a bad natural disposition would enjoy the unrestrained type of music, but at the same time disapprove of it. The importance of music in education is that when it is both good and pleasant it will train children effectively by making the good habits it encourages also pleasant. This may begin as a mere matter of deportment, but can be carried over into other aspects of living (653–660).

Music and dancing have no direct intellectual content, and it is therefore difficult to lay down rules for judging them. Plato therefore wants to entrust the decision about what works are to be permitted to elderly men of good character who, by virtue of their experience and their moral rectitude, will be capable

of giving the correct opinions.[3] In the case of literary works, an additional factor will be the ideas conveyed by the words, and, as we have already seen in discussing censorship, Plato had quite a lot to say here. Only what is true and conducive to virtue is to be accepted, except in comedy.[4]

In the *Laws* Plato has comparatively little to say about the visual arts, and even the famous passage about the artist who paints a bed in the *Republic* is not very informative. This is probably because the Greeks still accepted that the highest aim of painting and sculpture was to give a faithful representation of something. Plato's older contemporary, the painter Zeuxis, is said to have represented a bunch of grapes so well that birds actually flew at the picture to peck at them. If this aim seems naïve, we must remember that it was compatible with the production of works of art of the highest quality, as we can tell from the sculptures that have survived to our times.

5. *Discussion*

We have already seen that Plato differed profoundly from ourselves in his belief that he already had, or soon might obtain, final knowledge on matters of great importance. This explains a good deal of his views on art and censorship. John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* contains a defence of freedom of speech on the grounds that it is conducive to the discovery of the truth, but this is only valid when we think it possible that we may be ignorant. When we are sure we know, we do not accept it. So we do not let loose in our schools teachers of mathematics who are of the opinion that $24+36=62$, or teachers of geography who believe that the earth is flat. We do indeed let them express there opinions elsewhere, but there they are unlikely to be believed. Teachers are in a special position because they are likely to be believed by their pupils, and the same probably goes for the poets of ancient Greece. Plato may have exaggerated their influence, but it was undoubtedly considerable.

The present situation with regard to censorship is a complicated one. Censorship is practised, at least to a small extent, even in most western democracies, but some people want it abolished completely, while others want it extended. The position of the latter is usually similar to that of Plato: they think

that certain kinds of art and entertainment are corrupting, and that this is a good reason for controlling them. If this is all they are claiming, they should be prepared to change their minds if it can be proved that these things are not corrupting, and so should Plato. It will not do, however, to suppose that it is an easy matter to decide about this. Not only are there grave technical difficulties about providing sociological evidence of this kind, but the very idea of what is involved in 'corrupting' is open to different interpretations. To Plato most modern societies would have seemed unbelievably corrupt, vulgar and trivial, and, in general, one's standard of what is corrupt will depend on one's standard of goodness.

But it is possible, and indeed likely, that some people also hold that some things are in themselves unseemly and evil, and that they should be banned for that reason, whether or not they are likely to corrupt anyone. Plato does not appear to hold such a view, and indeed he might well have considered it incoherent. For we are here talking about things made or done by men. If they are evil in themselves, they cannot have been made or done by good men, and to allow a bad man to behave in this way is to encourage him in his wickedness, and so make him, at least, more corrupt. A possible reply to this would be that some men might in this way get the evil out of their system, so that the ultimate effects would be good. This brings us back to empirical matters, which unfortunately are too complex to be discussed fully here.

We may now look at the views of those who are opposed to censorship. Censorship of any kind whatsoever may be opposed either because it is a limitation of freedom, and because freedom is of such great value that we must have it whatever the effects may be, or because the effects of a removal of censorship are likely to be better than those of having it. Similar issues have already been considered under the heading of education.

A less sweeping attack on the existing system is made by those who want to justify certain publications and activities, that would otherwise be banned as offensive or obscene, on the ground that they are forms of art. We are here faced with a distinction not clearly made by Plato. We have seen that he does distinguish two types of music, but it is not easy to decide whether the distinction is similar to that we might make between classical and romantic music, or between traditional

and *avant-garde* music, or between serious and light music, or whether other classifications again are relevant. The historical situations are totally different, so that none of these quite fits, and yet all may be of some importance. With regard to censorship the only difference of importance today is that between what is regarded as art and what is not. Art has a value which non-art does not have. It is seldom made clear whether the value is a moral one or not: indeed, it is difficult to be sure what is meant by this distinction. For in order to make a practical decision we have to be able to put all values in the same scale. They cannot be incommensurable. It is possible however, to judge a work either for its effects alone, as I think Plato did, or for something else which is intrinsic to it. There are then three factors to be considered: the pleasure derived from such works – and it seems to be agreed that it is possible for both works with artistic merit and those with none to give pleasure; the intrinsic merit of the work; and any effects, other than the giving of immediate pleasure, that it may have.

A serious problem today is to decide what may pass as art. A cynic might say that anything its creator is clever enough to get accepted as art is art. When traditional criteria of form and subject are abandoned, little is left but a man's own claims for his work. Hence much emphasis is laid on questions of sincerity, but this itself is an obscure notion. Plato accepted that artists were both sincere and inspired, but still maintained that they were incapable of judging the value of their work. And if sincerity is the only test, it is not clear why we should prefer the sincere views of the artist who wants to put on public display a controversial sculpture, to the sincere views of someone else who believes it to be obscene. The artist must appeal to something else as well. Many modern artists are unable to claim that they are presenting the truth in anything approaching a literal sense, though certain novelists might do this. They have to make some further claim, and it would take us too far from Plato to follow this issue to the end.

We may, however, go on to another point. Plato had certain clear-cut criteria for censoring literary and musical works, which were independent of whether they were art or not. Today we use the distinction between what is art and what is not as relevant to censorship, but also, independently, we believe that some works of art are better, as works of art, than others.

This brings us back to the question of the intrinsic merit of a work, and to whether the criteria for deciding whether it is good are the same as those for deciding whether it is to count as art at all. Plato would have seen the situation today as one of democratic chaos. This is not the place to try to sort out that chaos, but I hope I have disentangled some of the main questions that need to be answered.[5]

7 Punishment and Responsibility

In this chapter we are concerned solely with problems connected with the punishment of adults by the state for breaches of the law, although Plato was also interested, as we have seen, in the use of punishment and reward in the education of children. Here we deal with types of penalty, questions of guilt, pollution and responsibility, and the general question of obedience to the law.

1. *Background*

We are fortunate in having some record of the history of legislation in Athens. Two early law-givers, Draco and Solon, were called in at times of crisis and asked to revise the existing code and produce a new and integrated system. Draco's name became a byword for severity, because he prescribed death as the penalty for almost every crime, from sacrilege and murder to petty theft. Solon, on the other hand, figures as one of the Seven Sages of Greece, and he introduced a much milder scale of penalties for the less serious offences. This remained the basis of Athenian law until Plato's own period.

The content of these laws need not detain us here, but the penalties prescribed are interesting. A man could be put to death – as Socrates was – by humane poisoning, banished from the country for a fixed term, deprived of the privileges of citizenship, or fined. He could also be imprisoned, but this was imposed in most cases only when he had defaulted on another penalty. Another interesting feature of Athenian law was the custom whereby, when a man had been found guilty, both prosecutor and defendant could propose a penalty, and the jury had to decide between them.

In a civilised community, it is soon realised that it is not

enough to have a set of laws with penalties attached for transgressing them, together with some system for deciding if a man has in fact transgressed. For it is possible for a man to break the laws and yet, for a variety of reasons, be held not to deserve punishment. But even in Plato's day there were vestiges in Athenian law of the extreme view that it is only the deed that matters and not the intention behind it. This is obvious in those laws of homicide which deal not with deaths caused by men, but with those caused by animals or even by falling stones. Even Plato, in the *Laws*, lays it down that an animal which has killed a human being must itself be killed, and thrown out beyond the borders of the country; an inanimate object that is responsible for someone's death, like a tile falling on him, must be cast out in the same way. Similar provisions were to be found in the laws of Athens and elsewhere, but by Plato's time they are anomalous and are limited to very unusual circumstances. It is significant that in his section on wounding, as distinct from killing, Plato does not consider the cases of animals or objects that have merely injured a man; on the other hand, when death has occurred he specifically exempts from punishment lightning and similar 'weapons of God'. This suggests that death brings in an element of pollution which overrides normal considerations of guilt and innocence. But even Plato makes no clear distinction between punishment and the removal of pollution in such cases, and elsewhere, in dealing with some cases of justified homicide, he makes no mention of any need for purification, which suggests that he did not think pollution was involved.

In cases like these, and in the laws against sacrilege, we may see the persistence of a religious element that had once been of far greater importance. It leads to the identification of sin and crime, but its roots are irrational and it would be a waste of time to try to get a clear picture of something in itself so unclear. Plato himself has an interesting attempt to make sense of it in the *Laws*, but his suggestion is itself bizarre and will not fit all the facts. He suggests, drawing on folk-tales, that pollution is due to the fact that the ghost of a free man, killed at the height of his powers, may haunt the killer in anger if he goes to the places formerly frequented by his victim.[1]

For us it is more interesting to see the Athenians slowly distinguishing various ideas connected with guilt and innocence.

Greek legends were full of thorny problems, which provided interesting material for the tragedians of the fifth century: Oedipus had killed his father and married his mother, but he had taken his father for an unknown highwayman and had known nothing of his own relationship to his mother; Orestes had killed his mother to avenge her murder of his father; Antigone had disobeyed the rulers of the state in order to give burial to her dead brother. In all these cases crimes had been committed, but it could be claimed that there were at least mitigating circumstances to be taken into account. In other plays attempts were made to understand the psychology of wrongdoers, like Helen of Troy, who left her husband to run away with her lover, and Medea, who killed her own children in a fit of jealousy. After the playwrights came the orators, who wrote speeches for clients accused in the law-courts, and developed the art of defending them in a variety of ways, some of which centred on questions of responsibility.

For Plato there were in addition the questions raised by the life and death of Socrates, who had spoken out freely against politicians who behaved immorally during his lifetime, and had finally been executed after being found guilty on charges with which Plato could hardly be expected to agree. His accusers had asked for the death penalty, but it was made clear to Socrates and his friends that no attempt would be made to stop him if he tried to escape punishment by fleeing the country. There were many friends outside the borders of Attica who would willingly have given him shelter. But Socrates would have nothing to do with this scheme, and insisted on staying in prison to meet his death.

2. *Plato's Views*

Plato devoted a number of works to the trial and death of Socrates. It is not easy to tell how far they reflect Socrates' views, and how far they only tell us what Plato thinks he ought to have said. But this problem is not of primary importance to us. In the *Crito* (50–54), Socrates is shown defending his decision to stay and face execution when he might have escaped by going into exile. He says that he has lived in Athens all his life, and enjoyed the benefits of being a citizen. It would ill

become him, then, to run away in his old age, and refuse to accept the decision of those laws under which he has lived satisfactorily for so long. His argument is that a man ought to accept punishment if it is inflicted according to the due process of law, even if it may not seem on some particular occasion to be deserved. This can be seen as one aspect of a more general argument that a man ought to obey the laws of the state of which he is a citizen, whether they are good or bad. In this context Plato does not work out the argument fully, but he does bring in the idea of tacit consent by making Socrates say that he has enjoyed the benefits of the state for many years without protesting against it, and so must accept decisions that go against him as well. Behind all this lies a simple acceptance of the rightness of gratitude and loyalty which makes it very different from the more cynical or Hobbesian view sketched in the first book of the *Republic*, where Glaucon says that after experiencing the free-for-all of a life without laws, men make a compact with one another and set up a system of laws which each is prepared to obey as long as others do the same. These are Plato's own words:

> They say that in nature it is good to do wrong and bad to suffer it, but suffering it is a greater evil than doing it is a good, so that when they hurt one another and are hurt in turn, and have a taste of both, it seems best to those who are unable to escape the bad, and have only the good, to agree with one another neither to do wrong nor to suffer it; and then they begin to lay down laws and agreements with one another, and to call what is laid down by the law lawful and just. And this is the origin and essence of justice, which is between the best thing, to do wrong and not be punished, and the worst, to suffer wrong and not be able to get one's revenge. (*Republic* I 358–9)

But for each man this is only a second-best alternative, and anyone who could ignore the laws and do wrong with impunity would be regarded as an idiot if he did not do so. There is no ethical basis to this state.

Interesting as these two arguments are, they both take us away from the central problems of punishment, the first because Socrates was unjustly put to death, and the problem is why he should submit to punishment he has not deserved, and the

second because it deals with a situation prior to, and therefore necessarily outside, normal judicial procedure. In other places Plato deals directly with more central issues. Just as in the *Republic* he had put Hobbes's theory of the basis of political authority in a nutshell, so in the *Protagoras* (324) he deals succinctly with what have since become the traditional theories of punishment. He makes Protagoras say this:

> Nobody punishes those who have done wrong with this thought in mind, and for this reason, that they have done wrong, unless like a wild beast he is taking vengeance without thought; but the man who tries to punish in a rational way does not seek vengeance for past wrongdoing – for he cannot make undone what has been done – but for the sake of the future, so that the criminal may not himself do wrong again, and others who see him punished may also refrain.

That is, he considers, and rejects, the retributive theory, but accepts the reformative and deterrent theories.

Such a view is clearly far removed from the kind of theory that holds that a man who has done wrong must be purified from the pollution of guilt, and it has been suggested that when Plato talks of purification in the *Laws* in connection with homicide he is merely offering a sop to religious sentiment. However that may be, it is in the *Laws* (particularly book IX, 859–864) that he works out most fully his theory of punishment. It may be summed up thus: when a criminal is capable of being reformed, he should receive treatment, which may or may not take the form of punishment; but there are cases where we must despair of reform, and then the welfare of the rest of the community requires that the criminal should be prevented from doing further harm. Thus the cynical kind of atheist who profits from playing on other people's superstitions is to be imprisoned for life, but the sincere atheist is to be sent to a reform centre to be argued out of his convictions. But if the latter, after being released, falls once again into his old errors, he is to be put to death. (This is because Plato was convinced that the gods existed, and that atheism was not only false but pernicious. What we have here may also be seen as an extreme form of censorship.) The death penalty is also prescribed for a number of other offences, where it seems clear that the criminal cannot

be reformed. Sometimes this is presumed from the very nature of the offence: no sane man who assaults one of his parents can be regarded as capable of being reformed; he must therefore be outlawed, and put to death if he returns to the community.[2]

It is worth pausing to ask why it is that Plato recommends the death penalty so frequently. His reasons are complex. Sometimes he seems to see it primarily as a deterrent: he thinks that men will not in fact commit certain crimes if they know that this penalty is attached. It is also sometimes a long-stop for some other kind of punishment: for instance, if a man is sent into exile but comes back, there may be nothing for it but to execute him. But here again Plato may have thought that knowledge of this fact would deter most exiles from returning. On other occasions again he seems to view it as the most merciful way of dealing with a man who was doomed to unhappiness in life because of his depravity. Thus he may well have thought the lifelong incarceration in an unpleasant prison which he prescribes for the cynical atheist a far worse penalty than mere death.

Plato's recommendations for dealing with criminals who can be reformed are remarkably uninhibited. Such people are to be given remedial treatment for psychological weaknesses in the same way that people who are physically ill are given treatment for their maladies. And just as the cures for physical troubles may be nice or nasty, and the doctor does not mind much which they are, provided they are successful, so the treatment meted out to criminals may or may not take the form of punishment. There might at first sight appear to be a conflict between what he suggests here and what he does when he actually sets out his legal code, for there he prescribes traditional forms of punishment, or occasionally new ones of his own devising, as penalties for breaches of each law in turn. Thus the man who insults another in public is to be disqualified from public honours, and anyone who burns his own wood without taking care to protect his neighbour's is to be fined. But clearly it would hardly be possible to do anything else when setting out a criminal code, for the prime aim in so doing is deterrence. Thus in the examples quoted Plato hopes that people will not in fact abuse one another in public or burn wood carelessly, and believes that the majority are more likely to behave as he wants if they know that there is some penalty for disobedience.[3]

But he also recognises that some people will do wrong even when they know what the law is, and what are the penalties for transgression, and even when, as in his state, all the citizens have the benefit of being instructed by the preambles to be affixed to each of the laws in the reasons for having such a law. In spite of all this, it is to be expected that some will still do wrong. Such people are to be regarded as mentally sick, and if they are thought to be curable any method whatsoever that is likely to be effective may be used, 'actions or arguments, pleasures or pains, honours or marks of infamy, fines or rewards, or anything else at all' that is likely to succeed (*Laws* 862d). The one thing that marks out the pleasanter kinds of treatment as akin to punishment is that they are compulsory: the criminal is not free to reject them, and their nature in each case is to be determined by the wisdom of the guardians in charge.

Plato recognised, however, that in many cases the reform of the criminal is not all that is required of the law, for many criminal acts affect other people, who are injured or suffer loss by what is done. Hence he makes a distinction between restitution, or atonement, to the injured person, and punishment or treatment of the criminal. But this leads on to a further point: we normally believe that many injuries done by one man to another are caused unintentionally or by accident, and that while it is fitting that the man who has caused an injury should make some redress for what he has done, no further intervention by the law is called for. In other cases, however, we think that the action was deliberate, and hold the man who has done it guilty, and deserving punishment, or in need of reforming treatment. Plato's problem here is that while he fully accepts this common-sense distinction, he is also impressed by Socrates' dictum that no one does wrong willingly, with its accompanying doctrine that all wrongdoing is due to some kind of ignorance. From this it would seem to follow that all injuries are caused equally unintentionally, which would run counter to the views of common sense. Within his own system Plato is, however, able to give a perfectly satisfactory solution to this problem, using his reformative approach. He assumes that those whom we would normally regard as having injured others by accident are not likely to do the same thing again, and so need no treatment, whether in the form of punishment or anything else. On

the other hand a man who has acted intentionally might be expected to repeat his behaviour, and so steps should be taken to prevent this, and these may be by way of punishment.

3. *Discussion*

With some important but limited exceptions, Plato recognised only two types of justification for punishment, that it should deter potential wrongdoers and reform actual ones. Having accepted the reform theory, he was clear-headed enough to accept it with all its consequences. There is a tendency in modern times to expect this theory to be a kinder one than its rivals, and to shrink from applying it on occasions when it would lead to harsher treatment. A drug-addict or an alcoholic, for instance, may be convicted of a trivial offence, which can be attributed to his addiction. The penalty for the crime, on both the retributive and the deterrent view, would be a small one. Reform, on the other hand, is only possible by means of cure, and a cure is only possible after a long period of compulsory and unpleasant treatment. This, in many countries, would seem a 'punishment' too harsh for the crime. Only serious offenders would get a chance of being cured against their will. Plato would have insisted on treatment for all alike. On the other hand, Plato also had the courage of his convictions in supposing that some people might be beyond hope of reform. Hence a sane and well-educated man who committed a particularly heinous crime was to be put to death or outlawed for ever because no treatment was likely to make him better.

It is not enough, however, to say that Plato was more clear-headed than modern law-givers, because there are several other factors in the total situation. The first is that in modern western democracies there is what Plato would have regarded as an excessive and perhaps even obsessive concern with personal freedom, to the extent that we think it better that a man should suffer almost any kind of physical or mental trouble than that he should be cured against his will. Even the freedom of choice of criminals may be curtailed only in proportion to the magnitude of their crime. Secondly, Plato had much greater faith than we have in the possibility of making an accurate assessment of a criminal's difficulties and the prospects of a cure,

and he even thought it was possible to know sometimes that a cure was impossible. Without confidence of this kind we have to move far more cautiously. Finally, there is Plato's belief that a quick death may be better than a lifetime of vice and misery. Not only is suffering in this life avoided, but also the risk of doing further evil for which there will be a greater punishment after death. Those who differ from him on any of these points will be justified in rejecting some of his conclusions.

Epilogue

Two themes have recurred in this book. The first is the contrast between Plato's optimistic view that all knowledge was, by the use of intelligence and industry, within man's grasp, and our own certainty that this goal, if attainable at all, lies far, far in the future. Because of this difference there are many subjects where we cannot follow Plato's guidance, because we cannot easily foresee the results of our actions. It is better to leave each man free to make his own decisions, than to make him conform to a rigid programme which may turn out disastrously.

The second theme is the recognition of certain questions of value which are so general as to seem unanswerable, like that of the best way to educate a human child, given only that it is a human child. It is unlikely that it is just our ignorance that prevents us from answering them; rather, it is that for each child there are many particular facts that have to be taken into account, like its geographical and historical situation and its own interests and abilities, so that general answers to general questions can go at best but a little way towards helping us with particular cases. Here again we must part company with Plato, but his sketch of an ideal way of life is still valuable in pointing out one very important set of possibilities.

Notes and Bibliography

Introduction

1. The following books emphasise the political side of Plato:

R. H. S. Crossman, *Plato Today*, 2nd ed. (London, 1959; paperback ed., 1963).

K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, vol. 1, 5th ed. (London, 1966).

R. B. Levinson, *In Defense of Plato* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953; New York, 1970).

T. L. Thorson (ed.), *Plato: Totalitarian or Democrat?* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963).

R. Bambrough (ed.), *Plato, Popper, and Politics* (Cambridge, 1967).

There are also some useful discussions in

J. N. Claster (ed.), *Athenian Democracy: Triumph or Travesty?* (New York and London, 1967), and in G. Vlastos (ed.), *Plato, A Collection of Critical Essays* vol. ii (London 1972), especially the articles by W. A. R. Leys and F. E. Sparshott.

2. A. E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and his Work*, 6th ed. (London, 1952; paper back ed., 1960) p. 9. This book contains a valuable survey of all of Plato's works.

3. Recent works include:

H. D. Rankin, *Plato and the Individual* (London, 1964; paper back ed., 1969).

A. W. Gouldner, *Enter Plato* (London, 1967). Gouldner is a professional sociologist.

4. For a similar approach, see 'Plato and Practical Politics', in M. I. Finley, *Aspects of Antiquity* (London, 1968).

Chapter 1: Plato's Life and Writings

1. All Plato's dialogues were translated by Benjamin Jowett, and have recently been republished as paperbacks (London, 1970). In addition the *Republic* has been translated frequently. I may mention *The Republic of Plato* by F. M. Cornford (Oxford, 1941) and *Plato: Republic* by H. D. P. Lee (Harmondsworth, 1955). The *Statesman* has been translated with notes by J. B. Skemp (London, 1952; paperback ed., 1961) and the *Laws* by A. E. Taylor (London, 1960) and T. J. Saunders (Harmondsworth, 1970). See also *Plato: Protagoras and Meno* by W. K. C. Guthrie (Harmondsworth, 1956) and *Plato: Philebus and Epinomis* by A. E. Taylor (London, 1956).

2. P. Shorey, *What Plato Said* (Chicago, 1933; abridged ed., 1965). The

quotation is on p. 343 of the abridged edition. This book is also a valuable survey of Plato's dialogues.

3. For accounts of the 'new thought' see W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Sophists* (Cambridge, 1971) and P. M. Huby, *Greek Ethics* (London, 1967) chap. ii.

4. Books on specific topics will be listed below. The following are of general interest:

G. R. Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City* (Princeton, 1960), a study of the factual background of the *Laws*.

A. Andrewes, *Greek Society* (Harmondsworth, 1971), originally published as *The Greeks* (London, 1967).

A. Zimmern, *The Greek Commonwealth*, 5th ed. (Oxford, 1931).

H. D. F. Kitto, *The Greeks* (Harmondsworth, 1951).

5. Kitto, *The Greeks*, pp. 88–95, puts this point well. See also E. Rawson, *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought* (Oxford, 1969).

Chapter 2: The Inequalities of Mankind

1. For details see Skemp's translation, p. 131, n.1.

2. Another point left undeveloped is the remark in the *Theaetetus* (175) that every man has thousands of ancestors, who include both Greeks and barbarians. The immediate target of this is pride in ancestry.

3. It is discussed in M. I. Finley (ed.), *Slavery in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1960).

4. See Guthrie, *The Sophists*, p. 157.

5. *Politics*, book 1, chap. 5.

6. For a review of the discussion and a contribution to it, see G. Vlastos, 'Does Slavery Exist in Plato's *Republic*?', *Class. Philol.*, LXIII (1968) 292–5.

7. Remembering that, as suggested above, from some points of view the third class can be seen as slaves. The matter is complicated by the probability that there were also true slaves.

8. There is still some controversy among scholars about the exact position of women in Athens. The matter is well discussed by Kitto, *The Greeks*, 219–36. C. Seltman, *Women in Antiquity* (London, 1956) has useful material on women in many parts of the Greek world. See also W. K. Lacey, *The Family in Classical Greece* (London, 1968) chap. vii.

Chapter 3: Population Control

1. For this obscure matter see Lacey, *The Family in Classical Greece*, p. 199.

2. For a discussion of population problems see V. Ehrenberg, *The Greek State*, 2nd ed. (London, 1969) chap. ii, sec. 1, with notes.

3. Scholars have argued at length about how common exposure of infants was. For a recent discussion see Lacey, *The Family in Classical Greece*, pp. 164–7.

4. Rankin, *Plato and the Individual*, pp. 45–6, thinks that at *Republic* 461b, Plato is referring to induced abortion, which may also be relevant here.

Chapter 4 : The Family and Property

1. For general treatment see Lacey, *The Family in Classical Greece*. For the legal side see A. R. W. Harrison, *The Law of Athens: The Family and Property* (Oxford, 1968).
2. See Chapter 3, n. 1 above.
3. *Politics* 1262b.
4. For a discussion in which psychoanalytical themes are prominent see Seltman, *Women in Antiquity*.
5. For a discussion of communism in the *Republic* see E. Barker, *Greek Political Theory* (London, 1918; paperback ed., 1960) chap. x.

Chapter 5: Education

1. For the facts about Greek education, see K. J. Freeman, *Schools of Hellas*, 3rd ed. (London, 1932); H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (New York, 1956; paperback ed., 1964) part 1; F. A. G. Beck, *Greek Education*, 450–350 B.C. (London, 1964).

Chapter 6: Art, Propaganda and Censorship

1. For much interesting information see J. Chandos (ed.) '*To Deprave, and Corrupt*' (London, 1962).
2. For a controversial account see E. A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Oxford, 1963).
3. On Plato and music, see W. D. Anderson, *Ethos and Education in Greek Music* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966) chap. iii.
4. See, for this and other topics, G. M. A. Grube, *The Greek and Roman Critics* (London, 1968; paperback ed., 1968) chap. 4.
5. See also W. J. Verdenius, 'Plato's Doctrine of Artistic Imitation' in Vlastos (ed.), *Plato*, pp. 259–73.

Chapter 7: Punishment and Responsibility

1. The references are to the *Laws*: killing by animal or object (873–4); justifiable homicide (874); pollution (865). For more on pollution see A. W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility* (Oxford, 1960) chap. v.
2. Adkins, op. cit., discusses Plato's views on punishment in chap. xiv.
3. Plato anyhow regarded his laws only as models; see *Laws* 876.