

Plato

The Statesman

INTRODUCTION AND ANALYSIS.

In the *Phaedrus*, the *Republic*, the *Philebus*, the *Parmenides*, and the *Sophist*, we may observe the tendency of Plato to combine two or more subjects or different aspects of the same subject in a single dialogue. In the *Sophist* and *Statesman* especially we note that the discussion is partly regarded as an illustration of method, and that analogies are brought from afar which throw light on the main subject. And in his later writings generally we further remark a decline of style, and of dramatic power; the characters excite little or no interest, and the digressions are apt to overlay the main thesis; there is not the 'callida junctura' of an artistic whole. Both the serious discussions and the jests are sometimes out of place. The invincible Socrates is withdrawn from view; and new foes begin to appear under old names. Plato is now chiefly concerned, not with the original *Sophist*, but with the sophistry of the schools of philosophy, which are making reasoning impossible; and is driven by them out of the regions of transcendental speculation back into the path of common sense. A logical or psychological phase takes the place of the doctrine of Ideas in his mind. He is constantly dwelling on the importance of regular classification, and of not putting words in the place of things. He has banished the poets, and is beginning to use a technical language. He is bitter and satirical, and seems to be sadly conscious of the realities of human life. Yet the ideal glory of the Platonic philosophy is not extinguished. He is still looking for a city in which kings are either philosophers or gods (compare *Laws*).

The *Statesman* has lost the grace and beauty of the earlier dialogues. The mind of the writer seems to be so overpowered in the effort of thought as to impair his style; at least his gift of expression does not keep up with the increasing difficulty of his theme. The idea of the king or statesman and the illustration of method are connected, not like the love and rhetoric of the *Phaedrus*, by 'little invisible pegs,' but in a confused and inartistic manner, which fails to produce any impression of a whole on the mind of the reader. Plato apologizes for his tediousness, and acknowledges that the improvement of his audience has been his only aim in some of his digressions. His own image may be used as a motto of his style: like an inexpert statuary he has made the figure or outline too large, and is unable to give the proper colours or proportions to his work. He makes mistakes only to correct them—this seems to be his way of drawing attention to common dialectical errors. The Eleatic stranger, here, as in the *Sophist*, has no appropriate character, and appears only as the expositor of a political ideal, in the delineation of which he is frequently interrupted by purely logical illustrations. The younger Socrates resembles his namesake in nothing but a name. The dramatic character is so completely forgotten, that a special reference is twice made to discussions in the *Sophist*; and this, perhaps, is the strongest ground which can be urged for doubting the genuineness of the work. But, when we remember that a similar allusion is made in the *Laws* to the *Republic*, we see that the entire disregard of

dramatic propriety is not always a sufficient reason for doubting the genuineness of a Platonic writing.

The search after the Statesman, which is carried on, like that for the Sophist, by the method of dichotomy, gives an opportunity for many humorous and satirical remarks. Several of the jests are mannered and laboured: for example, the turn of words with which the dialogue opens; or the clumsy joke about man being an animal, who has a power of two-feet—both which are suggested by the presence of Theodorus, the geometrician. There is political as well as logical insight in refusing to admit the division of mankind into Hellenes and Barbarians: ‘if a crane could speak, he would in like manner oppose men and all other animals to cranes.’ The pride of the Hellene is further humbled, by being compared to a Phrygian or Lydian. Plato glories in this impartiality of the dialectical method, which places birds in juxtaposition with men, and the king side by side with the bird-catcher; king or vermin-destroyer are objects of equal interest to science (compare Parmen.). There are other passages which show that the irony of Socrates was a lesson which Plato was not slow in learning—as, for example, the passing remark, that ‘the kings and statesmen of our day are in their breeding and education very like their subjects;’ or the anticipation that the rivals of the king will be found in the class of servants; or the imposing attitude of the priests, who are the established interpreters of the will of heaven, authorized by law. Nothing is more bitter in all his writings than his comparison of the contemporary politicians to lions, centaurs, satyrs, and other animals of a feebler sort, who are ever changing their forms and natures. But, as in the later dialogues generally, the play of humour and the charm of poetry have departed, never to return.

Still the Politicus contains a higher and more ideal conception of politics than any other of Plato’s writings. The city of which there is a pattern in heaven (Republic), is here described as a Paradisiacal state of human society. In the truest sense of all, the ruler is not man but God; and such a government existed in a former cycle of human history, and may again exist when the gods resume their care of mankind. In a secondary sense, the true form of government is that which has scientific rulers, who are irresponsible to their subjects. Not power but knowledge is the characteristic of a king or royal person. And the rule of a man is better and higher than law, because he is more able to deal with the infinite complexity of human affairs. But mankind, in despair of finding a true ruler, are willing to acquiesce in any law or custom which will save them from the caprice of individuals. They are ready to accept any of the six forms of government which prevail in the world. To the Greek, *nomos* was a sacred word, but the political idealism of Plato soars into a region beyond; for the laws he would substitute the intelligent will of the legislator. Education is originally to implant in men’s minds a sense of truth and justice, which is the divine bond of states, and the legislator is to

contrive human bonds, by which dissimilar natures may be united in marriage and supply the deficiencies of one another. As in the Republic, the government of philosophers, the causes of the perversion of states, the regulation of marriages, are still the political problems with which Plato's mind is occupied. He treats them more slightly, partly because the dialogue is shorter, and also because the discussion of them is perpetually crossed by the other interest of dialectic, which has begun to absorb him.

The plan of the Politicus or Statesman may be briefly sketched as follows: (1) By a process of division and subdivision we discover the true herdsman or king of men. But before we can rightly distinguish him from his rivals, we must view him, (2) as he is presented to us in a famous ancient tale: the tale will also enable us to distinguish the divine from the human herdsman or shepherd: (3) and besides our fable, we must have an example; for our example we will select the art of weaving, which will have to be distinguished from the kindred arts; and then, following this pattern, we will separate the king from his subordinates or competitors. (4) But are we not exceeding all due limits; and is there not a measure of all arts and sciences, to which the art of discourse must conform? There is; but before we can apply this measure, we must know what is the aim of discourse: and our discourse only aims at the dialectical improvement of ourselves and others.—Having made our apology, we return once more to the king or statesman, and proceed to contrast him with pretenders in the same line with him, under their various forms of government. (5) His characteristic is, that he alone has science, which is superior to law and written enactments; these do but spring out of the necessities of mankind, when they are in despair of finding the true king. (6) The sciences which are most akin to the royal are the sciences of the general, the judge, the orator, which minister to him, but even these are subordinate to him. (7) Fixed principles are implanted by education, and the king or statesman completes the political web by marrying together dissimilar natures, the courageous and the temperate, the bold and the gentle, who are the warp and the woof of society.

The outline may be filled up as follows:—

SOCRATES: I have reason to thank you, Theodorus, for the acquaintance of Theaetetus and the Stranger.

THEODORUS: And you will have three times as much reason to thank me when they have delineated the Statesman and Philosopher, as well as the Sophist.

SOCRATES: Does the great geometrician apply the same measure to all three? Are they not divided by an interval which no geometrical ratio can express?

THEODORUS: By the god Ammon, Socrates, you are right; and I am glad

to see that you have not forgotten your geometry. But before I retaliate on you, I must request the Stranger to finish the argument...

The Stranger suggests that Theaetetus shall be allowed to rest, and that Socrates the younger shall respond in his place; Theodorus agrees to the suggestion, and Socrates remarks that the name of the one and the face of the other give him a right to claim relationship with both of them. They propose to take the Statesman after the Sophist; his path they must determine, and part off all other ways, stamping upon them a single negative form (compare Soph.).

The Stranger begins the enquiry by making a division of the arts and sciences into theoretical and practical—the one kind concerned with knowledge exclusively, and the other with action; arithmetic and the mathematical sciences are examples of the former, and carpentering and handicraft arts of the latter (compare Philebus). Under which of the two shall we place the Statesman? Or rather, shall we not first ask, whether the king, statesman, master, householder, practise one art or many? As the adviser of a physician may be said to have medical science and to be a physician, so the adviser of a king has royal science and is a king. And the master of a large household may be compared to the ruler of a small state. Hence we conclude that the science of the king, statesman, and householder is one and the same. And this science is akin to knowledge rather than to action. For a king rules with his mind, and not with his hands.

But theoretical science may be a science either of judging, like arithmetic, or of ruling and superintending, like that of the architect or master-builder. And the science of the king is of the latter nature; but the power which he exercises is underived and uncontrolled,—a characteristic which distinguishes him from heralds, prophets, and other inferior officers. He is the wholesale dealer in command, and the herald, or other officer, retails his commands to others. Again, a ruler is concerned with the production of some object, and objects may be divided into living and lifeless, and rulers into the rulers of living and lifeless objects. And the king is not like the master-builder, concerned with lifeless matter, but has the task of managing living animals. And the tending of living animals may be either a tending of individuals, or a managing of herds. And the Statesman is not a groom, but a herdsman, and his art may be called either the art of managing a herd, or the art of collective management:—Which do you prefer? ‘No matter.’ Very good, Socrates, and if you are not too particular about words you will be all the richer some day in true wisdom. But how would you subdivide the herdsman’s art? ‘I should say, that there is one management of men, and another of beasts.’ Very good, but you are in too great a hurry to get to man. All divisions which are rightly made should cut through the middle; if you attend to this rule, you will be more likely to arrive at classes. ‘I do not

understand the nature of my mistake.' Your division was like a division of the human race into Hellenes and Barbarians, or into Lydians or Phrygians and all other nations, instead of into male and female; or like a division of number into ten thousand and all other numbers, instead of into odd and even. And I should like you to observe further, that though I maintain a class to be a part, there is no similar necessity for a part to be a class. But to return to your division, you spoke of men and other animals as two classes—the second of which you comprehended under the general name of beasts. This is the sort of division which an intelligent crane would make: he would put cranes into a class by themselves for their special glory, and jumble together all others, including man, in the class of beasts. An error of this kind can only be avoided by a more regular subdivision. Just now we divided the whole class of animals into gregarious and non-gregarious, omitting the previous division into tame and wild. We forgot this in our hurry to arrive at man, and found by experience, as the proverb says, that 'the more haste the worse speed.'

And now let us begin again at the art of managing herds. You have probably heard of the fish-preserves in the Nile and in the ponds of the Great King, and of the nurseries of geese and cranes in Thessaly. These suggest a new division into the rearing or management of land-herds and of water-herds:— I need not say with which the king is concerned. And land-herds may be divided into walking and flying; and every idiot knows that the political animal is a pedestrian. At this point we may take a longer or a shorter road, and as we are already near the end, I see no harm in taking the longer, which is the way of mesotomy, and accords with the principle which we were laying down. The tame, walking, herding animal, may be divided into two classes—the horned and the hornless, and the king is concerned with the hornless; and these again may be subdivided into animals having or not having cloven feet, or mixing or not mixing the breed; and the king or statesman has the care of animals which have not cloven feet, and which do not mix the breed. And now, if we omit dogs, who can hardly be said to herd, I think that we have only two species left which remain undivided: and how are we to distinguish them? To geometricians, like you and Theaetetus, I can have no difficulty in explaining that man is a diameter, having a power of two feet; and the power of four-legged creatures, being the double of two feet, is the diameter of our diameter. There is another excellent jest which I spy in the two remaining species. Men and birds are both bipeds, and human beings are running a race with the airiest and freest of creation, in which they are far behind their competitors;—this is a great joke, and there is a still better in the juxtaposition of the bird-taker and the king, who may be seen scampering after them. For, as we remarked in discussing the Sophist, the dialectical method is no respecter of persons. But we might have proceeded, as I was saying, by another and a shorter road. In that case we should have begun by dividing land animals into bipeds and quadrupeds, and bipeds into winged and wingless; we should than have taken the

Statesman and set him over the 'bipes implume,' and put the reins of government into his hands.

Here let us sum up:—The science of pure knowledge had a part which was the science of command, and this had a part which was a science of wholesale command; and this was divided into the management of animals, and was again parted off into the management of herds of animals, and again of land animals, and these into hornless, and these into bipeds; and so at last we arrived at man, and found the political and royal science. And yet we have not clearly distinguished the political shepherd from his rivals. No one would think of usurping the prerogatives of the ordinary shepherd, who on all hands is admitted to be the trainer, matchmaker, doctor, musician of his flock. But the royal shepherd has numberless competitors, from whom he must be distinguished; there are merchants, husbandmen, physicians, who will all dispute his right to manage the flock. I think that we can best distinguish him by having recourse to a famous old tradition, which may amuse as well as instruct us; the narrative is perfectly true, although the scepticism of mankind is prone to doubt the tales of old. You have heard what happened in the quarrel of Atreus and Thyestes? 'You mean about the golden lamb?' No, not that; but another part of the story, which tells how the sun and stars once arose in the west and set in the east, and that the god reversed their motion, as a witness to the right of Atreus. 'There is such a story.' And no doubt you have heard of the empire of Cronos, and of the earthborn men? The origin of these and the like stories is to be found in the tale which I am about to narrate.

There was a time when God directed the revolutions of the world, but at the completion of a certain cycle he let go; and the world, by a necessity of its nature, turned back, and went round the other way. For divine things alone are unchangeable; but the earth and heavens, although endowed with many glories, have a body, and are therefore liable to perturbation. In the case of the world, the perturbation is very slight, and amounts only to a reversal of motion. For the lord of moving things is alone self-moved; neither can piety allow that he goes at one time in one direction and at another time in another; or that God has given the universe opposite motions; or that there are two gods, one turning it in one direction, another in another. But the truth is, that there are two cycles of the world, and in one of them it is governed by an immediate Providence, and receives life and immortality, and in the other is let go again, and has a reverse action during infinite ages. This new action is spontaneous, and is due to exquisite perfection of balance, to the vast size of the universe, and to the smallness of the pivot upon which it turns. All changes in the heaven affect the animal world, and this being the greatest of them, is most destructive to men and animals. At the beginning of the cycle before our own very few of them had survived; and on these a mighty change passed. For their life was reversed like the motion of the world, and first of

all coming to a stand then quickly returned to youth and beauty. The white locks of the aged became black; the cheeks of the bearded man were restored to their youth and fineness; the young men grew softer and smaller, and, being reduced to the condition of children in mind as well as body, began to vanish away; and the bodies of those who had died by violence, in a few moments underwent a parallel change and disappeared. In that cycle of existence there was no such thing as the procreation of animals from one another, but they were born of the earth, and of this our ancestors, who came into being immediately after the end of the last cycle and at the beginning of this, have preserved the recollection. Such traditions are often now unduly discredited, and yet they may be proved by internal evidence. For observe how consistent the narrative is; as the old returned to youth, so the dead returned to life; the wheel of their existence having been reversed, they rose again from the earth: a few only were reserved by God for another destiny. Such was the origin of the earthborn men.

‘And is this cycle, of which you are speaking, the reign of Cronos, or our present state of existence?’ No, Socrates, that blessed and spontaneous life belongs not to this, but to the previous state, in which God was the governor of the whole world, and other gods subject to him ruled over parts of the world, as is still the case in certain places. They were shepherds of men and animals, each of them sufficing for those of whom he had the care. And there was no violence among them, or war, or devouring of one another. Their life was spontaneous, because in those days God ruled over man; and he was to man what man is now to the animals. Under his government there were no estates, or private possessions, or families; but the earth produced a sufficiency of all things, and men were born out of the earth, having no traditions of the past; and as the temperature of the seasons was mild, they took no thought for raiment, and had no beds, but lived and dwelt in the open air.

Such was the age of Cronos, and the age of Zeus is our own. Tell me, which is the happier of the two? Or rather, shall I tell you that the happiness of these children of Cronos must have depended on how they used their time? If having boundless leisure, and the power of discoursing not only with one another but with the animals, they had employed these advantages with a view to philosophy, gathering from every nature some addition to their store of knowledge;—or again, if they had merely eaten and drunk, and told stories to one another, and to the beasts;—in either case, I say, there would be no difficulty in answering the question. But as nobody knows which they did, the question must remain unanswered. And here is the point of my tale. In the fulness of time, when the earthborn men had all passed away, the ruler of the universe let go the helm, and became a spectator; and destiny and natural impulse swayed the world. At the same instant all the inferior deities gave up their hold; the whole universe rebounded, and there was a great earthquake, and utter ruin of

all manner of animals. After a while the tumult ceased, and the universal creature settled down in his accustomed course, having authority over all other creatures, and following the instructions of his God and Father, at first more precisely, afterwards with less exactness. The reason of the falling off was the disengagement of a former chaos; 'a muddy vesture of decay' was a part of his original nature, out of which he was brought by his Creator, under whose immediate guidance, while he remained in that former cycle, the evil was minimized and the good increased to the utmost. And in the beginning of the new cycle all was well enough, but as time went on, discord entered in; at length the good was minimized and the evil everywhere diffused, and there was a danger of universal ruin. Then the Creator, seeing the world in great straits, and fearing that chaos and infinity would come again, in his tender care again placed himself at the helm and restored order, and made the world immortal and imperishable. Once more the cycle of life and generation was reversed; the infants grew into young men, and the young men became greyheaded; no longer did the animals spring out of the earth; as the whole world was now lord of its own progress, so the parts were to be self-created and self-nourished. At first the case of men was very helpless and pitiable; for they were alone among the wild beasts, and had to carry on the struggle for existence without arts or knowledge, and had no food, and did not know how to get any. That was the time when Prometheus brought them fire, Hephaestus and Athene taught them arts, and other gods gave them seeds and plants. Out of these human life was framed; for mankind were left to themselves, and ordered their own ways, living, like the universe, in one cycle after one manner, and in another cycle after another manner.

Enough of the myth, which may show us two errors of which we were guilty in our account of the king. The first and grand error was in choosing for our king a god, who belongs to the other cycle, instead of a man from our own; there was a lesser error also in our failure to define the nature of the royal functions. The myth gave us only the image of a divine shepherd, whereas the statesmen and kings of our own day very much resemble their subjects in education and breeding. On retracing our steps we find that we gave too narrow a designation to the art which was concerned with command- for-self over living creatures, when we called it the 'feeding' of animals in flocks. This would apply to all shepherds, with the exception of the Statesman; but if we say 'managing' or 'tending' animals, the term would include him as well. Having remodelled the name, we may subdivide as before, first separating the human from the divine shepherd or manager. Then we may subdivide the human art of governing into the government of willing and unwilling subjects—royalty and tyranny—which are the extreme opposites of one another, although we in our simplicity have hitherto confounded them.

And yet the figure of the king is still defective. We have taken up a lump of fable, and have used more than we needed. Like statuaries, we have made

some of the features out of proportion, and shall lose time in reducing them. Or our mythus may be compared to a picture, which is well drawn in outline, but is not yet enlivened by colour. And to intelligent persons language is, or ought to be, a better instrument of description than any picture. 'But what, Stranger, is the deficiency of which you speak?' No higher truth can be made clear without an example; every man seems to know all things in a dream, and to know nothing when he is awake. And the nature of example can only be illustrated by an example. Children are taught to read by being made to compare cases in which they do not know a certain letter with cases in which they know it, until they learn to recognize it in all its combinations. Example comes into use when we identify something unknown with that which is known, and form a common notion of both of them. Like the child who is learning his letters, the soul recognizes some of the first elements of things; and then again is at fault and unable to recognize them when they are translated into the difficult language of facts. Let us, then, take an example, which will illustrate the nature of example, and will also assist us in characterizing the political science, and in separating the true king from his rivals.

I will select the example of weaving, or, more precisely, weaving of wool. In the first place, all possessions are either productive or preventive; of the preventive sort are spells and antidotes, divine and human, and also defences, and defences are either arms or screens, and screens are veils and also shields against heat and cold, and shields against heat and cold are shelters and coverings, and coverings are blankets or garments, and garments are in one piece or have many parts; and of these latter, some are stitched and others are fastened, and of these again some are made of fibres of plants and some of hair, and of these some are cemented with water and earth, and some are fastened with their own material; the latter are called clothes, and are made by the art of clothing, from which the art of weaving differs only in name, as the political differs from the royal science. Thus we have drawn several distinctions, but as yet have not distinguished the weaving of garments from the kindred and co-operative arts. For the first process to which the material is subjected is the opposite of weaving—I mean carding. And the art of carding, and the whole art of the fuller and the mender, are concerned with the treatment and production of clothes, as well as the art of weaving. Again, there are the arts which make the weaver's tools. And if we say that the weaver's art is the greatest and noblest of those which have to do with woollen garments,— this, although true, is not sufficiently distinct; because these other arts require to be first cleared away. Let us proceed, then, by regular steps: —There are causal or principal, and co-operative or subordinate arts. To the causal class belong the arts of washing and mending, of carding and spinning the threads, and the other arts of working in wool; these are chiefly of two kinds, falling under the two great categories of composition and division. Carding is of the latter sort. But our concern is chiefly with that part of the art of wool-working which composes, and of

which one kind twists and the other interlaces the threads, whether the firmer texture of the warp or the looser texture of the woof. These are adapted to each other, and the orderly composition of them forms a woollen garment. And the art which presides over these operations is the art of weaving.

But why did we go through this circuitous process, instead of saying at once that weaving is the art of entwining the warp and the woof? In order that our labour may not seem to be lost, I must explain the whole nature of excess and defect. There are two arts of measuring—one is concerned with relative size, and the other has reference to a mean or standard of what is meet. The difference between good and evil is the difference between a mean or measure and excess or defect. All things require to be compared, not only with one another, but with the mean, without which there would be no beauty and no art, whether the art of the statesman or the art of weaving or any other; for all the arts guard against excess or defect, which are real evils. This we must endeavour to show, if the arts are to exist; and the proof of this will be a harder piece of work than the demonstration of the existence of not-being which we proved in our discussion about the Sophist. At present I am content with the indirect proof that the existence of such a standard is necessary to the existence of the arts. The standard or measure, which we are now only applying to the arts, may be some day required with a view to the demonstration of absolute truth.

We may now divide this art of measurement into two parts; placing in the one part all the arts which measure the relative size or number of objects, and in the other all those which depend upon a mean or standard. Many accomplished men say that the art of measurement has to do with all things, but these persons, although in this notion of theirs they may very likely be right, are apt to fail in seeing the differences of classes—they jumble together in one the 'more' and the 'too much,' which are very different things. Whereas the right way is to find the differences of classes, and to comprehend the things which have any affinity under the same class.

I will make one more observation by the way. When a pupil at a school is asked the letters which make up a particular word, is he not asked with a view to his knowing the same letters in all words? And our enquiry about the Statesman in like manner is intended not only to improve our knowledge of politics, but our reasoning powers generally. Still less would any one analyze the nature of weaving for its own sake. There is no difficulty in exhibiting sensible images, but the greatest and noblest truths have no outward form adapted to the eye of sense, and are only revealed in thought. And all that we are now saying is said for the sake of them. I make these remarks, because I want you to get rid of any impression that our discussion about weaving and about the reversal of the universe, and the other discussion about the Sophist and not-being, were tedious and

irrelevant. Please to observe that they can only be fairly judged when compared with what is meet; and yet not with what is meet for producing pleasure, nor even meet for making discoveries, but for the great end of developing the dialectical method and sharpening the wits of the auditors. He who censures us, should prove that, if our words had been fewer, they would have been better calculated to make men dialecticians.

And now let us return to our king or statesman, and transfer to him the example of weaving. The royal art has been separated from that of other herdsmen, but not from the causal and co-operative arts which exist in states; these do not admit of dichotomy, and therefore they must be carved neatly, like the limbs of a victim, not into more parts than are necessary. And first (1) we have the large class of instruments, which includes almost everything in the world; from these may be parted off (2) vessels which are framed for the preservation of things, moist or dry, prepared in the fire or out of the fire. The royal or political art has nothing to do with either of these, any more than with the arts of making (3) vehicles, or (4) defences, whether dresses, or arms, or walls, or (5) with the art of making ornaments, whether pictures or other playthings, as they may be fitly called, for they have no serious use. Then (6) there are the arts which furnish gold, silver, wood, bark, and other materials, which should have been put first; these, again, have no concern with the kingly science; any more than the arts (7) which provide food and nourishment for the human body, and which furnish occupation to the husbandman, huntsman, doctor, cook, and the like, but not to the king or statesman. Further, there are small things, such as coins, seals, stamps, which may with a little violence be comprehended in one of the above-mentioned classes. Thus they will embrace every species of property with the exception of animals,—but these have been already included in the art of tending herds. There remains only the class of slaves or ministers, among whom I expect that the real rivals of the king will be discovered. I am not speaking of the veritable slave bought with money, nor of the hireling who lets himself out for service, nor of the trader or merchant, who at best can only lay claim to economical and not to royal science. Nor am I referring to government officials, such as heralds and scribes, for these are only the servants of the rulers, and not the rulers themselves. I admit that there may be something strange in any servants pretending to be masters, but I hardly think that I could have been wrong in supposing that the principal claimants to the throne will be of this class. Let us try once more: There are diviners and priests, who are full of pride and prerogative; these, as the law declares, know how to give acceptable gifts to the gods, and in many parts of Hellas the duty of performing solemn sacrifices is assigned to the chief magistrate, as at Athens to the King Archon. At last, then, we have found a trace of those whom we were seeking. But still they are only servants and ministers.

And who are these who next come into view in various forms of men and

animals and other monsters appearing—lions and centaurs and satyrs—who are these? I did not know them at first, for every one looks strange when he is unexpected. But now I recognize the politician and his troop, the chief of Sophists, the prince of charlatans, the most accomplished of wizards, who must be carefully distinguished from the true king or statesman. And here I will interpose a question: What are the true forms of government? Are they not three—monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy? and the distinctions of freedom and compulsion, law and no law, poverty and riches expand these three into six. Monarchy may be divided into royalty and tyranny; oligarchy into aristocracy and plutocracy; and democracy may observe the law or may not observe it. But are any of these governments worthy of the name? Is not government a science, and are we to suppose that scientific government is secured by the rulers being many or few, rich or poor, or by the rule being compulsory or voluntary? Can the many attain to science? In no Hellenic city are there fifty good draught players, and certainly there are not as many kings, for by kings we mean all those who are possessed of the political science. A true government must therefore be the government of one, or of a few. And they may govern us either with or without law, and whether they are poor or rich, and however they govern, provided they govern on some scientific principle,—it makes no difference. And as the physician may cure us with our will, or against our will, and by any mode of treatment, burning, bleeding, lowering, fattening, if he only proceeds scientifically: so the true governor may reduce or fatten or bleed the body corporate, while he acts according to the rules of his art, and with a view to the good of the state, whether according to law or without law.

‘I do not like the notion, that there can be good government without law.’

I must explain: Law-making certainly is the business of a king; and yet the best thing of all is, not that the law should rule, but that the king should rule, for the varieties of circumstances are endless, and no simple or universal rule can suit them all, or last for ever. The law is just an ignorant brute of a tyrant, who insists always on his commands being fulfilled under all circumstances. ‘Then why have we laws at all?’ I will answer that question by asking you whether the training master gives a different discipline to each of his pupils, or whether he has a general rule of diet and exercise which is suited to the constitutions of the majority? ‘The latter.’ The legislator, too, is obliged to lay down general laws, and cannot enact what is precisely suitable to each particular case. He cannot be sitting at every man’s side all his life, and prescribe for him the minute particulars of his duty, and therefore he is compelled to impose on himself and others the restriction of a written law. Let me suppose now, that a physician or trainer, having left directions for his patients or pupils, goes into a far country, and comes back sooner than he intended; owing to some unexpected change in the weather, the patient or pupil seems to require a different mode of treatment: Would he persist in his old commands, under

the idea that all others are noxious and heterodox? Viewed in the light of science, would not the continuance of such regulations be ridiculous? And if the legislator, or another like him, comes back from a far country, is he to be prohibited from altering his own laws? The common people say: Let a man persuade the city first, and then let him impose new laws. But is a physician only to cure his patients by persuasion, and not by force? Is he a worse physician who uses a little gentle violence in effecting the cure? Or shall we say, that the violence is just, if exercised by a rich man, and unjust, if by a poor man? May not any man, rich or poor, with or without law, and whether the citizens like or not, do what is for their good? The pilot saves the lives of the crew, not by laying down rules, but by making his art a law, and, like him, the true governor has a strength of art which is superior to the law. This is scientific government, and all others are imitations only. Yet no great number of persons can attain to this science. And hence follows an important result. The true political principle is to assert the inviolability of the law, which, though not the best thing possible, is best for the imperfect condition of man.

I will explain my meaning by an illustration:—Suppose that mankind, indignant at the rogueries and caprices of physicians and pilots, call together an assembly, in which all who like may speak, the skilled as well as the unskilled, and that in their assembly they make decrees for regulating the practice of navigation and medicine which are to be binding on these professions for all time. Suppose that they elect annually by vote or lot those to whom authority in either department is to be delegated. And let us further imagine, that when the term of their magistracy has expired, the magistrates appointed by them are summoned before an ignorant and unprofessional court, and may be condemned and punished for breaking the regulations. They even go a step further, and enact, that he who is found enquiring into the truth of navigation and medicine, and is seeking to be wise above what is written, shall be called not an artist, but a dreamer, a prating Sophist and a corruptor of youth; and if he try to persuade others to investigate those sciences in a manner contrary to the law, he shall be punished with the utmost severity. And like rules might be extended to any art or science. But what would be the consequence?

‘The arts would utterly perish, and human life, which is bad enough already, would become intolerable.’

But suppose, once more, that we were to appoint some one as the guardian of the law, who was both ignorant and interested, and who perverted the law: would not this be a still worse evil than the other? ‘Certainly.’ For the laws are based on some experience and wisdom. Hence the wiser course is, that they should be observed, although this is not the best thing of all, but only the second best. And whoever, having skill, should try to improve them, would act in the spirit of the law-giver. But then, as we have seen, no great number of men, whether poor or rich, can

be makers of laws. And so, the nearest approach to true government is, when men do nothing contrary to their own written laws and national customs. When the rich preserve their customs and maintain the law, this is called aristocracy, or if they neglect the law, oligarchy. When an individual rules according to law, whether by the help of science or opinion, this is called monarchy; and when he has royal science he is a king, whether he be so in fact or not; but when he rules in spite of law, and is blind with ignorance and passion, he is called a tyrant. These forms of government exist, because men despair of the true king ever appearing among them; if he were to appear, they would joyfully hand over to him the reins of government. But, as there is no natural ruler of the hive, they meet together and make laws. And do we wonder, when the foundation of politics is in the letter only, at the miseries of states? Ought we not rather to admire the strength of the political bond? For cities have endured the worst of evils time out of mind; many cities have been shipwrecked, and some are like ships foundering, because their pilots are absolutely ignorant of the science which they profess.

Let us next ask, which of these untrue forms of government is the least bad, and which of them is the worst? I said at the beginning, that each of the three forms of government, royalty, aristocracy, and democracy, might be divided into two, so that the whole number of them, including the best, will be seven. Under monarchy we have already distinguished royalty and tyranny; of oligarchy there were two kinds, aristocracy and plutocracy; and democracy may also be divided, for there is a democracy which observes, and a democracy which neglects, the laws. The government of one is the best and the worst—the government of a few is less bad and less good—the government of the many is the least bad and least good of them all, being the best of all lawless governments, and the worst of all lawful ones. But the rulers of all these states, unless they have knowledge, are maintainers of idols, and themselves idols—wizards, and also Sophists; for, after many windings, the term ‘Sophist’ comes home to them.

And now enough of centaurs and satyrs: the play is ended, and they may quit the political stage. Still there remain some other and better elements, which adhere to the royal science, and must be drawn off in the refiner’s fire before the gold can become quite pure. The arts of the general, the judge, and the orator, will have to be separated from the royal art; when the separation has been made, the nature of the king will be unalloyed. Now there are inferior sciences, such as music and others; and there is a superior science, which determines whether music is to be learnt or not, and this is different from them, and the governor of them. The science which determines whether we are to use persuasion, or not, is higher than the art of persuasion; the science which determines whether we are to go to war, is higher than the art of the general. The science which makes the laws, is higher than that which only administers them. And the science which has this authority over the rest, is the science of the king or

statesman.

Once more we will endeavour to view this royal science by the light of our example. We may compare the state to a web, and I will show you how the different threads are drawn into one. You would admit—would you not?—that there are parts of virtue (although this position is sometimes assailed by Eristics), and one part of virtue is temperance, and another courage. These are two principles which are in a manner antagonistic to one another; and they pervade all nature; the whole class of the good and beautiful is included under them. The beautiful may be subdivided into two lesser classes: one of these is described by us in terms expressive of motion or energy, and the other in terms expressive of rest and quietness. We say, how manly! how vigorous! how ready! and we say also, how calm! how temperate! how dignified! This opposition of terms is extended by us to all actions, to the tones of the voice, the notes of music, the workings of the mind, the characters of men. The two classes both have their exaggerations; and the exaggerations of the one are termed ‘hardness,’ ‘violence,’ ‘madness;’ of the other ‘cowardliness,’ or ‘sluggishness.’ And if we pursue the enquiry, we find that these opposite characters are naturally at variance, and can hardly be reconciled. In lesser matters the antagonism between them is ludicrous, but in the State may be the occasion of grave disorders, and may disturb the whole course of human life. For the orderly class are always wanting to be at peace, and hence they pass imperceptibly into the condition of slaves; and the courageous sort are always wanting to go to war, even when the odds are against them, and are soon destroyed by their enemies. But the true art of government, first preparing the material by education, weaves the two elements into one, maintaining authority over the carders of the wool, and selecting the proper subsidiary arts which are necessary for making the web. The royal science is queen of educators, and begins by choosing the natures which she is to train, punishing with death and exterminating those who are violently carried away to atheism and injustice, and enslaving those who are wallowing in the mire of ignorance. The rest of the citizens she blends into one, combining the stronger element of courage, which we may call the warp, with the softer element of temperance, which we may imagine to be the woof. These she binds together, first taking the eternal elements of the honourable, the good, and the just, and fastening them with a divine cord in a heaven-born nature, and then fastening the animal elements with a human cord. The good legislator can implant by education the higher principles; and where they exist there is no difficulty in inserting the lesser human bonds, by which the State is held together; these are the laws of intermarriage, and of union for the sake of offspring. Most persons in their marriages seek after wealth or power; or they are clannish, and choose those who are like themselves,—the temperate marrying the temperate, and the courageous the courageous. The two classes thrive and flourish at first, but they soon degenerate; the one become mad, and the other feeble and useless. This would not have been the case, if they had

both originally held the same notions about the honourable and the good; for then they never would have allowed the temperate natures to be separated from the courageous, but they would have bound them together by common honours and reputations, by intermarriages, and by the choice of rulers who combine both qualities. The temperate are careful and just, but are wanting in the power of action; the courageous fall short of them in justice, but in action are superior to them: and no state can prosper in which either of these qualities is wanting. The noblest and best of all webs or states is that which the royal science weaves, combining the two sorts of natures in a single texture, and in this enfolding freeman and slave and every other social element, and presiding over them all.

‘Your picture, Stranger, of the king and statesman, no less than of the Sophist, is quite perfect.’

...

The principal subjects in the Statesman may be conveniently embraced under six or seven heads:—(1) the myth; (2) the dialectical interest; (3) the political aspects of the dialogue; (4) the satirical and paradoxical vein; (5) the necessary imperfection of law; (6) the relation of the work to the other writings of Plato; lastly (7), we may briefly consider the genuineness of the Sophist and Statesman, which can hardly be assumed without proof, since the two dialogues have been questioned by three such eminent Platonic scholars as Socher, Schaarschmidt, and Ueberweg.

I. The hand of the master is clearly visible in the myth. First in the connection with mythology;—he wins a kind of verisimilitude for this as for his other myths, by adopting received traditions, of which he pretends to find an explanation in his own larger conception (compare Introduction to Critias). The young Socrates has heard of the sun rising in the west and setting in the east, and of the earth-born men; but he has never heard the origin of these remarkable phenomena. Nor is Plato, here or elsewhere, wanting in denunciations of the incredulity of ‘this latter age,’ on which the lovers of the marvellous have always delighted to enlarge. And he is not without express testimony to the truth of his narrative;—such testimony as, in the Timaeus, the first men gave of the names of the gods (‘They must surely have known their own ancestors’). For the first generation of the new cycle, who lived near the time, are supposed to have preserved a recollection of a previous one. He also appeals to internal evidence, viz. the perfect coherence of the tale, though he is very well aware, as he says in the Cratylus, that there may be consistency in error as well as in truth. The gravity and minuteness with which some particulars are related also lend an artful aid. The profound interest and ready assent of the young Socrates, who is not too old to be amused ‘with a tale which a child would love to hear,’ are a further assistance. To those who were naturally inclined to believe that the fortunes of mankind are influenced by the stars, or who maintained that some one principle, like the principle

of the Same and the Other in the *Timaeus*, pervades all things in the world, the reversal of the motion of the heavens seemed necessarily to produce a reversal of the order of human life. The spheres of knowledge, which to us appear wide asunder as the poles, astronomy and medicine, were naturally connected in the minds of early thinkers, because there was little or nothing in the space between them. Thus there is a basis of philosophy, on which the improbabilities of the tale may be said to rest. These are some of the devices by which Plato, like a modern novelist, seeks to familiarize the marvellous.

The myth, like that of the *Timaeus* and *Critias*, is rather historical than poetical, in this respect corresponding to the general change in the later writings of Plato, when compared with the earlier ones. It is hardly a myth in the sense in which the term might be applied to the myth of the *Phaedrus*, the *Republic*, the *Phaedo*, or the *Gorgias*, but may be more aptly compared with the didactic tale in which Protagoras describes the fortunes of primitive man, or with the description of the gradual rise of a new society in the Third Book of the *Laws*. Some discrepancies may be observed between the mythology of the *Statesman* and the *Timaeus*, and between the *Timaeus* and the *Republic*. But there is no reason to expect that all Plato's visions of a former, any more than of a future, state of existence, should conform exactly to the same pattern. We do not find perfect consistency in his philosophy; and still less have we any right to demand this of him in his use of mythology and figures of speech. And we observe that while employing all the resources of a writer of fiction to give credibility to his tales, he is not disposed to insist upon their literal truth. Rather, as in the *Phaedo*, he says, 'Something of the kind is true;' or, as in the *Gorgias*, 'This you will think to be an old wife's tale, but you can think of nothing truer;' or, as in the *Statesman*, he describes his work as a 'mass of mythology,' which was introduced in order to teach certain lessons; or, as in the *Phaedrus*, he secretly laughs at such stories while refusing to disturb the popular belief in them.

The greater interest of the myth consists in the philosophical lessons which Plato presents to us in this veiled form. Here, as in the tale of Er, the son of Armenius, he touches upon the question of freedom and necessity, both in relation to God and nature. For at first the universe is governed by the immediate providence of God,—this is the golden age,—but after a while the wheel is reversed, and man is left to himself. Like other theologians and philosophers, Plato relegates his explanation of the problem to a transcendental world; he speaks of what in modern language might be termed 'impossibilities in the nature of things,' hindering God from continuing immanent in the world. But there is some inconsistency; for the 'letting go' is spoken of as a divine act, and is at the same time attributed to the necessary imperfection of matter; there is also a numerical necessity for the successive births of souls. At first, man and the world retain their divine instincts, but gradually degenerate. As in the

Book of Genesis, the first fall of man is succeeded by a second; the misery and wickedness of the world increase continually. The reason of this further decline is supposed to be the disorganisation of matter: the latent seeds of a former chaos are disengaged, and envelope all things. The condition of man becomes more and more miserable; he is perpetually waging an unequal warfare with the beasts. At length he obtains such a measure of education and help as is necessary for his existence. Though deprived of God's help, he is not left wholly destitute; he has received from Athene and Hephaestus a knowledge of the arts; other gods give him seeds and plants; and out of these human life is reconstructed. He now eats bread in the sweat of his brow, and has dominion over the animals, subjected to the conditions of his nature, and yet able to cope with them by divine help. Thus Plato may be said to represent in a figure—(1) the state of innocence; (2) the fall of man; (3) the still deeper decline into barbarism; (4) the restoration of man by the partial interference of God, and the natural growth of the arts and of civilised society. Two lesser features of this description should not pass unnoticed:—(1) the primitive men are supposed to be created out of the earth, and not after the ordinary manner of human generation—half the causes of moral evil are in this way removed; (2) the arts are attributed to a divine revelation: and so the greatest difficulty in the history of pre-historic man is solved. Though no one knew better than Plato that the introduction of the gods is not a reason, but an excuse for not giving a reason (*Cratylus*), yet, considering that more than two thousand years later mankind are still discussing these problems, we may be satisfied to find in Plato a statement of the difficulties which arise in conceiving the relation of man to God and nature, without expecting to obtain from him a solution of them. In such a tale, as in the *Phaedrus*, various aspects of the Ideas were doubtless indicated to Plato's own mind, as the corresponding theological problems are to us. The immanence of things in the Ideas, or the partial separation of them, and the self-motion of the supreme Idea, are probably the forms in which he would have interpreted his own parable.

He touches upon another question of great interest—the consciousness of evil—what in the Jewish Scriptures is called 'eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.' At the end of the narrative, the Eleatic asks his companion whether this life of innocence, or that which men live at present, is the better of the two. He wants to distinguish between the mere animal life of innocence, the 'city of pigs,' as it is comically termed by Glaucon in the *Republic*, and the higher life of reason and philosophy. But as no one can determine the state of man in the world before the Fall, 'the question must remain unanswered.' Similar questions have occupied the minds of theologians in later ages; but they can hardly be said to have found an answer. Professor Campbell well observes, that the general spirit of the myth may be summed up in the words of the *Lysis*: 'If evil were to perish, should we hunger any more, or thirst any more, or have any similar sensations? Yet perhaps the question what will or will not be is a

foolish one, for who can tell?' As in the Theaetetus, evil is supposed to continue,—here, as the consequence of a former state of the world, a sort of mephitic vapour exhaling from some ancient chaos,—there, as involved in the possibility of good, and incident to the mixed state of man.

Once more—and this is the point of connexion with the rest of the dialogue—the myth is intended to bring out the difference between the ideal and the actual state of man. In all ages of the world men have dreamed of a state of perfection, which has been, and is to be, but never is, and seems to disappear under the necessary conditions of human society. The uselessness, the danger, the true value of such political ideals have often been discussed; youth is too ready to believe in them; age to disparage them. Plato's 'prudens quaestio' respecting the comparative happiness of men in this and in a former cycle of existence is intended to elicit this contrast between the golden age and 'the life under Zeus' which is our own. To confuse the divine and human, or hastily apply one to the other, is a 'tremendous error.' Of the ideal or divine government of the world we can form no true or adequate conception; and this our mixed state of life, in which we are partly left to ourselves, but not wholly deserted by the gods, may contain some higher elements of good and knowledge than could have existed in the days of innocence under the rule of Cronos. So we may venture slightly to enlarge a Platonic thought which admits of a further application to Christian theology. Here are suggested also the distinctions between God causing and permitting evil, and between his more and less immediate government of the world.

II. The dialectical interest of the Statesman seems to contend in Plato's mind with the political; the dialogue might have been designated by two equally descriptive titles—either the 'Statesman,' or 'Concerning Method.' Dialectic, which in the earlier writings of Plato is a revival of the Socratic question and answer applied to definition, is now occupied with classification; there is nothing in which he takes greater delight than in processes of division (compare Phaedr.); he pursues them to a length out of proportion to his main subject, and appears to value them as a dialectical exercise, and for their own sake. A poetical vision of some order or hierarchy of ideas or sciences has already been floating before us in the Symposium and the Republic. And in the Phaedrus this aspect of dialectic is further sketched out, and the art of rhetoric is based on the division of the characters of mankind into their several classes. The same love of divisions is apparent in the Gorgias. But in a well-known passage of the Philebus occurs the first criticism on the nature of classification. There we are exhorted not to fall into the common error of passing from unity to infinity, but to find the intermediate classes; and we are reminded that in any process of generalization, there may be more than one class to which individuals may be referred, and that we must carry on the process of division until we have arrived at the infima species.

These precepts are not forgotten, either in the Sophist or in the Statesman. The Sophist contains four examples of division, carried on by regular steps, until in four different lines of descent we detect the Sophist. In the Statesman the king or statesman is discovered by a similar process; and we have a summary, probably made for the first time, of possessions appropriated by the labour of man, which are distributed into seven classes. We are warned against preferring the shorter to the longer method;—if we divide in the middle, we are most likely to light upon species; at the same time, the important remark is made, that ‘a part is not to be confounded with a class.’ Having discovered the genus under which the king falls, we proceed to distinguish him from the collateral species. To assist our imagination in making this separation, we require an example. The higher ideas, of which we have a dreamy knowledge, can only be represented by images taken from the external world. But, first of all, the nature of example is explained by an example. The child is taught to read by comparing the letters in words which he knows with the same letters in unknown combinations; and this is the sort of process which we are about to attempt. As a parallel to the king we select the worker in wool, and compare the art of weaving with the royal science, trying to separate either of them from the inferior classes to which they are akin. This has the incidental advantage, that weaving and the web furnish us with a figure of speech, which we can afterwards transfer to the State.

There are two uses of examples or images—in the first place, they suggest thoughts—secondly, they give them a distinct form. In the infancy of philosophy, as in childhood, the language of pictures is natural to man: truth in the abstract is hardly won, and only by use familiarized to the mind. Examples are akin to analogies, and have a reflex influence on thought; they people the vacant mind, and may often originate new directions of enquiry. Plato seems to be conscious of the suggestiveness of imagery; the general analogy of the arts is constantly employed by him as well as the comparison of particular arts—weaving, the refining of gold, the learning to read, music, statuary, painting, medicine, the art of the pilot—all of which occur in this dialogue alone: though he is also aware that ‘comparisons are slippery things,’ and may often give a false clearness to ideas. We shall find, in the Philebus, a division of sciences into practical and speculative, and into more or less speculative: here we have the idea of master-arts, or sciences which control inferior ones. Besides the supreme science of dialectic, ‘which will forget us, if we forget her,’ another master-science for the first time appears in view—the science of government, which fixes the limits of all the rest. This conception of the political or royal science as, from another point of view, the science of sciences, which holds sway over the rest, is not originally found in Aristotle, but in Plato.

The doctrine that virtue and art are in a mean, which is familiarized to us by the study of the Nicomachean Ethics, is also first distinctly asserted in

the Statesman of Plato. The too much and the too little are in restless motion: they must be fixed by a mean, which is also a standard external to them. The art of measuring or finding a mean between excess and defect, like the principle of division in the Phaedrus, receives a particular application to the art of discourse. The excessive length of a discourse may be blamed; but who can say what is excess, unless he is furnished with a measure or standard? Measure is the life of the arts, and may some day be discovered to be the single ultimate principle in which all the sciences are contained. Other forms of thought may be noted—the distinction between causal and co-operative arts, which may be compared with the distinction between primary and co-operative causes in the Timaeus; or between cause and condition in the Phaedo; the passing mention of economical science; the opposition of rest and motion, which is found in all nature; the general conception of two great arts of composition and division, in which are contained weaving, politics, dialectic; and in connexion with the conception of a mean, the two arts of measuring.

In the Theaetetus, Plato remarks that precision in the use of terms, though sometimes pedantic, is sometimes necessary. Here he makes the opposite reflection, that there may be a philosophical disregard of words. The evil of mere verbal oppositions, the requirement of an impossible accuracy in the use of terms, the error of supposing that philosophy was to be found in language, the danger of word-catching, have frequently been discussed by him in the previous dialogues, but nowhere has the spirit of modern inductive philosophy been more happily indicated than in the words of the Statesman:—‘If you think more about things, and less about words, you will be richer in wisdom as you grow older.’ A similar spirit is discernible in the remarkable expressions, ‘the long and difficult language of facts;’ and ‘the interrogation of every nature, in order to obtain the particular contribution of each to the store of knowledge.’ Who has described ‘the feeble intelligence of all things; given by metaphysics better than the Eleatic Stranger in the words—‘The higher ideas can hardly be set forth except through the medium of examples; every man seems to know all things in a kind of dream, and then again nothing when he is awake?’ Or where is the value of metaphysical pursuits more truly expressed than in the words, —‘The greatest and noblest things have no outward image of themselves visible to man: therefore we should learn to give a rational account of them?’

III. The political aspects of the dialogue are closely connected with the dialectical. As in the Cratylus, the legislator has ‘the dialectician standing on his right hand;’ so in the Statesman, the king or statesman is the dialectician, who, although he may be in a private station, is still a king. Whether he has the power or not, is a mere accident; or rather he has the power, for what ought to be is (‘Was ist vernünftig, das ist wirklich’); and he ought to be and is the true governor of mankind. There is a reflection in this idealism of the Socratic ‘Virtue is knowledge;’ and, without idealism,

we may remark that knowledge is a great part of power. Plato does not trouble himself to construct a machinery by which 'philosophers shall be made kings,' as in the Republic: he merely holds up the ideal, and affirms that in some sense science is really supreme over human life.

He is struck by the observation 'quam parva sapientia regitur mundus,' and is touched with a feeling of the ills which afflict states. The condition of Megara before and during the Peloponnesian War, of Athens under the Thirty and afterwards, of Syracuse and the other Sicilian cities in their alternations of democratic excess and tyranny, might naturally suggest such reflections. Some states he sees already shipwrecked, others foundering for want of a pilot; and he wonders not at their destruction, but at their endurance. For they ought to have perished long ago, if they had depended on the wisdom of their rulers. The mingled pathos and satire of this remark is characteristic of Plato's later style.

The king is the personification of political science. And yet he is something more than this,—the perfectly good and wise tyrant of the Laws, whose will is better than any law. He is the special providence who is always interfering with and regulating all things. Such a conception has sometimes been entertained by modern theologians, and by Plato himself, of the Supreme Being. But whether applied to Divine or to human governors the conception is faulty for two reasons, neither of which are noticed by Plato:—first, because all good government supposes a degree of co-operation in the ruler and his subjects,—an 'education in politics' as well as in moral virtue; secondly, because government, whether Divine or human, implies that the subject has a previous knowledge of the rules under which he is living. There is a fallacy, too, in comparing unchangeable laws with a personal governor. For the law need not necessarily be an 'ignorant and brutal tyrant,' but gentle and humane, capable of being altered in the spirit of the legislator, and of being administered so as to meet the cases of individuals. Not only in fact, but in idea, both elements must remain—the fixed law and the living will; the written word and the spirit; the principles of obligation and of freedom; and their applications whether made by law or equity in particular cases.

There are two sides from which positive laws may be attacked:—either from the side of nature, which rises up and rebels against them in the spirit of Callicles in the Gorgias; or from the side of idealism, which attempts to soar above them,—and this is the spirit of Plato in the Statesman. But he soon falls, like Icarus, and is content to walk instead of flying; that is, to accommodate himself to the actual state of human things. Mankind have long been in despair of finding the true ruler; and therefore are ready to acquiesce in any of the five or six received forms of government as better than none. And the best thing which they can do (though only the second best in reality), is to reduce the ideal state to the conditions of actual life. Thus in the Statesman, as in the Laws, we have

three forms of government, which we may venture to term, (1) the ideal, (2) the practical, (3) the sophistical—what ought to be, what might be, what is. And thus Plato seems to stumble, almost by accident, on the notion of a constitutional monarchy, or of a monarchy ruling by laws.

The divine foundations of a State are to be laid deep in education (Republic), and at the same time some little violence may be used in exterminating natures which are incapable of education (compare Laws). Plato is strongly of opinion that the legislator, like the physician, may do men good against their will (compare Gorgias). The human bonds of states are formed by the inter-marriage of dispositions adapted to supply the defects of each other. As in the Republic, Plato has observed that there are opposite natures in the world, the strong and the gentle, the courageous and the temperate, which, borrowing an expression derived from the image of weaving, he calls the warp and the woof of human society. To interlace these is the crowning achievement of political science. In the Protagoras, Socrates was maintaining that there was only one virtue, and not many: now Plato is inclined to think that there are not only parallel, but opposite virtues, and seems to see a similar opposition pervading all art and nature. But he is satisfied with laying down the principle, and does not inform us by what further steps the union of opposites is to be effected.

In the loose framework of a single dialogue Plato has thus combined two distinct subjects—politics and method. Yet they are not so far apart as they appear: in his own mind there was a secret link of connexion between them. For the philosopher or dialectician is also the only true king or statesman. In the execution of his plan Plato has invented or distinguished several important forms of thought, and made incidentally many valuable remarks. Questions of interest both in ancient and modern politics also arise in the course of the dialogue, which may with advantage be further considered by us:—

a. The imaginary ruler, whether God or man, is above the law, and is a law to himself and to others. Among the Greeks as among the Jews, law was a sacred name, the gift of God, the bond of states. But in the Statesman of Plato, as in the New Testament, the word has also become the symbol of an imperfect good, which is almost an evil. The law sacrifices the individual to the universal, and is the tyranny of the many over the few (compare Republic). It has fixed rules which are the props of order, and will not swerve or bend in extreme cases. It is the beginning of political society, but there is something higher—an intelligent ruler, whether God or man, who is able to adapt himself to the endless varieties of circumstances. Plato is fond of picturing the advantages which would result from the union of the tyrant who has power with the legislator who has wisdom: he regards this as the best and speediest way of reforming mankind. But institutions cannot thus be artificially created, nor can the

external authority of a ruler impose laws for which a nation is unprepared. The greatest power, the highest wisdom, can only proceed one or two steps in advance of public opinion. In all stages of civilization human nature, after all our efforts, remains intractable,—not like clay in the hands of the potter, or marble under the chisel of the sculptor. Great changes occur in the history of nations, but they are brought about slowly, like the changes in the frame of nature, upon which the puny arm of man hardly makes an impression. And, speaking generally, the slowest growths, both in nature and in politics, are the most permanent.

b. Whether the best form of the ideal is a person or a law may fairly be doubted. The former is more akin to us: it clothes itself in poetry and art, and appeals to reason more in the form of feeling; in the latter there is less danger of allowing ourselves to be deluded by a figure of speech. The ideal of the Greek state found an expression in the deification of law: the ancient Stoic spoke of a wise man perfect in virtue, who was fancifully said to be a king; but neither they nor Plato had arrived at the conception of a person who was also a law. Nor is it easy for the Christian to think of God as wisdom, truth, holiness, and also as the wise, true, and holy one. He is always wanting to break through the abstraction and interrupt the law, in order that he may present to himself the more familiar image of a divine friend. While the impersonal has too slender a hold upon the affections to be made the basis of religion, the conception of a person on the other hand tends to degenerate into a new kind of idolatry. Neither criticism nor experience allows us to suppose that there are interferences with the laws of nature; the idea is inconceivable to us and at variance with facts. The philosopher or theologian who could realize to mankind that a person is a law, that the higher rule has no exception, that goodness, like knowledge, is also power, would breathe a new religious life into the world.

c. Besides the imaginary rule of a philosopher or a God, the actual forms of government have to be considered. In the infancy of political science, men naturally ask whether the rule of the many or of the few is to be preferred. If by 'the few' we mean 'the good' and by 'the many,' 'the bad,' there can be but one reply: 'The rule of one good man is better than the rule of all the rest, if they are bad.' For, as Heracleitus says, 'One is ten thousand if he be the best.' If, however, we mean by the rule of the few the rule of a class neither better nor worse than other classes, not devoid of a feeling of right, but guided mostly by a sense of their own interests, and by the rule of the many the rule of all classes, similarly under the influence of mixed motives, no one would hesitate to answer—'The rule of all rather than one, because all classes are more likely to take care of all than one of another; and the government has greater power and stability when resting on a wider basis.' Both in ancient and modern times the best balanced form of government has been held to be the best; and yet it should not be so nicely balanced as to make action and movement impossible.

The statesman who builds his hope upon the aristocracy, upon the middle classes, upon the people, will probably, if he have sufficient experience of them, conclude that all classes are much alike, and that one is as good as another, and that the liberties of no class are safe in the hands of the rest. The higher ranks have the advantage in education and manners, the middle and lower in industry and self-denial; in every class, to a certain extent, a natural sense of right prevails, sometimes communicated from the lower to the higher, sometimes from the higher to the lower, which is too strong for class interests. There have been crises in the history of nations, as at the time of the Crusades or the Reformation, or the French Revolution, when the same inspiration has taken hold of whole peoples, and permanently raised the sense of freedom and justice among mankind.

But even supposing the different classes of a nation, when viewed impartially, to be on a level with each other in moral virtue, there remain two considerations of opposite kinds which enter into the problem of government. Admitting of course that the upper and lower classes are equal in the eye of God and of the law, yet the one may be by nature fitted to govern and the other to be governed. A ruling caste does not soon altogether lose the governing qualities, nor a subject class easily acquire them. Hence the phenomenon so often observed in the old Greek revolutions, and not without parallel in modern times, that the leaders of the democracy have been themselves of aristocratic origin. The people are expecting to be governed by representatives of their own, but the true man of the people either never appears, or is quickly altered by circumstances. Their real wishes hardly make themselves felt, although their lower interests and prejudices may sometimes be flattered and yielded to for the sake of ulterior objects by those who have political power. They will often learn by experience that the democracy has become a plutocracy. The influence of wealth, though not the enjoyment of it, has become diffused among the poor as well as among the rich; and society, instead of being safer, is more at the mercy of the tyrant, who, when things are at the worst, obtains a guard—that is, an army—and announces himself as the saviour.

The other consideration is of an opposite kind. Admitting that a few wise men are likely to be better governors than the unwise many, yet it is not in their power to fashion an entire people according to their behest. When with the best intentions the benevolent despot begins his regime, he finds the world hard to move. A succession of good kings has at the end of a century left the people an inert and unchanged mass. The Roman world was not permanently improved by the hundred years of Hadrian and the Antonines. The kings of Spain during the last century were at least equal to any contemporary sovereigns in virtue and ability. In certain states of the world the means are wanting to render a benevolent power effectual. These means are not a mere external organisation of posts or telegraphs, hardly the introduction of new laws or modes of industry. A change must

be made in the spirit of a people as well as in their externals. The ancient legislator did not really take a blank tablet and inscribe upon it the rules which reflection and experience had taught him to be for a nation's interest; no one would have obeyed him if he had. But he took the customs which he found already existing in a half-civilised state of society: these he reduced to form and inscribed on pillars; he defined what had before been undefined, and gave certainty to what was uncertain. No legislation ever sprang, like Athene, in full power out of the head either of God or man.

Plato and Aristotle are sensible of the difficulty of combining the wisdom of the few with the power of the many. According to Plato, he is a physician who has the knowledge of a physician, and he is a king who has the knowledge of a king. But how the king, one or more, is to obtain the required power, is hardly at all considered by him. He presents the idea of a perfect government, but except the regulation for mixing different tempers in marriage, he never makes any provision for the attainment of it. Aristotle, casting aside ideals, would place the government in a middle class of citizens, sufficiently numerous for stability, without admitting the populace; and such appears to have been the constitution which actually prevailed for a short time at Athens—the rule of the Five Thousand—characterized by Thucydides as the best government of Athens which he had known. It may however be doubted how far, either in a Greek or modern state, such a limitation is practicable or desirable; for those who are left outside the pale will always be dangerous to those who are within, while on the other hand the leaven of the mob can hardly affect the representation of a great country. There is reason for the argument in favour of a property qualification; there is reason also in the arguments of those who would include all and so exhaust the political situation.

The true answer to the question is relative to the circumstances of nations. How can we get the greatest intelligence combined with the greatest power? The ancient legislator would have found this question more easy than we do. For he would have required that all persons who had a share of government should have received their education from the state and have borne her burdens, and should have served in her fleets and armies. But though we sometimes hear the cry that we must 'educate the masses, for they are our masters,' who would listen to a proposal that the franchise should be confined to the educated or to those who fulfil political duties? Then again, we know that the masses are not our masters, and that they are more likely to become so if we educate them. In modern politics so many interests have to be consulted that we are compelled to do, not what is best, but what is possible.

d. Law is the first principle of society, but it cannot supply all the wants of society, and may easily cause more evils than it cures. Plato is aware of the imperfection of law in failing to meet the varieties of circumstances: he is also aware that human life would be intolerable if every detail of it were

placed under legal regulation. It may be a great evil that physicians should kill their patients or captains cast away their ships, but it would be a far greater evil if each particular in the practice of medicine or seamanship were regulated by law. Much has been said in modern times about the duty of leaving men to themselves, which is supposed to be the best way of taking care of them. The question is often asked, What are the limits of legislation in relation to morals? And the answer is to the same effect, that morals must take care of themselves. There is a one-sided truth in these answers, if they are regarded as condemnations of the interference with commerce in the last century or of clerical persecution in the Middle Ages. But 'laissez-faire' is not the best but only the second best. What the best is, Plato does not attempt to determine; he only contrasts the imperfection of law with the wisdom of the perfect ruler.

Laws should be just, but they must also be certain, and we are obliged to sacrifice something of their justice to their certainty. Suppose a wise and good judge, who paying little or no regard to the law, attempted to decide with perfect justice the cases that were brought before him. To the uneducated person he would appear to be the ideal of a judge. Such justice has been often exercised in primitive times, or at the present day among eastern rulers. But in the first place it depends entirely on the personal character of the judge. He may be honest, but there is no check upon his dishonesty, and his opinion can only be overruled, not by any principle of law, but by the opinion of another judging like himself without law. In the second place, even if he be ever so honest, his mode of deciding questions would introduce an element of uncertainty into human life; no one would know beforehand what would happen to him, or would seek to conform in his conduct to any rule of law. For the compact which the law makes with men, that they shall be protected if they observe the law in their dealings with one another, would have to be substituted another principle of a more general character, that they shall be protected by the law if they act rightly in their dealings with one another. The complexity of human actions and also the uncertainty of their effects would be increased tenfold. For one of the principal advantages of law is not merely that it enforces honesty, but that it makes men act in the same way, and requires them to produce the same evidence of their acts. Too many laws may be the sign of a corrupt and overcivilized state of society, too few are the sign of an uncivilized one; as soon as commerce begins to grow, men make themselves customs which have the validity of laws. Even equity, which is the exception to the law, conforms to fixed rules and lies for the most part within the limits of previous decisions.

IV. The bitterness of the Statesman is characteristic of Plato's later style, in which the thoughts of youth and love have fled away, and we are no longer tended by the Muses or the Graces. We do not venture to say that Plato was soured by old age, but certainly the kindness and courtesy of the earlier dialogues have disappeared. He sees the world under a harder

and grimmer aspect: he is dealing with the reality of things, not with visions or pictures of them: he is seeking by the aid of dialectic only, to arrive at truth. He is deeply impressed with the importance of classification: in this alone he finds the true measure of human things; and very often in the process of division curious results are obtained. For the dialectical art is no respecter of persons: king and vermin-taker are all alike to the philosopher. There may have been a time when the king was a god, but he now is pretty much on a level with his subjects in breeding and education. Man should be well advised that he is only one of the animals, and the Hellene in particular should be aware that he himself was the author of the distinction between Hellene and Barbarian, and that the Phrygian would equally divide mankind into Phrygians and Barbarians, and that some intelligent animal, like a crane, might go a step further, and divide the animal world into cranes and all other animals. Plato cannot help laughing (compare Theaet.) when he thinks of the king running after his subjects, like the pig-driver or the bird-taker. He would seriously have him consider how many competitors there are to his throne, chiefly among the class of serving-men. A good deal of meaning is lurking in the expression—‘There is no art of feeding mankind worthy the name.’ There is a similar depth in the remark,—‘The wonder about states is not that they are short-lived, but that they last so long in spite of the badness of their rulers.’

V. There is also a paradoxical element in the Statesman which delights in reversing the accustomed use of words. The law which to the Greek was the highest object of reverence is an ignorant and brutal tyrant—the tyrant is converted into a beneficent king. The sophist too is no longer, as in the earlier dialogues, the rival of the statesman, but assumes his form. Plato sees that the ideal of the state in his own day is more and more severed from the actual. From such ideals as he had once formed, he turns away to contemplate the decline of the Greek cities which were far worse now in his old age than they had been in his youth, and were to become worse and worse in the ages which followed. He cannot contain his disgust at the contemporary statesmen, sophists who had turned politicians, in various forms of men and animals, appearing, some like lions and centaurs, others like satyrs and monkeys. In this new disguise the Sophists make their last appearance on the scene: in the Laws Plato appears to have forgotten them, or at any rate makes only a slight allusion to them in a single passage (Laws).

VI. The Statesman is naturally connected with the Sophist. At first sight we are surprised to find that the Eleatic Stranger discourses to us, not only concerning the nature of Being and Not-being, but concerning the king and statesman. We perceive, however, that there is no inappropriateness in his maintaining the character of chief speaker, when we remember the close connexion which is assumed by Plato to exist between politics and dialectic. In both dialogues the Proteus Sophist is exhibited, first, in the

disguise of an Eristic, secondly, of a false statesman. There are several lesser features which the two dialogues have in common. The styles and the situations of the speakers are very similar; there is the same love of division, and in both of them the mind of the writer is greatly occupied about method, to which he had probably intended to return in the projected 'Philosopher.'

The Statesman stands midway between the Republic and the Laws, and is also related to the Timaeus. The mythical or cosmical element reminds us of the Timaeus, the ideal of the Republic. A previous chaos in which the elements as yet were not, is hinted at both in the Timaeus and Statesman. The same ingenious arts of giving verisimilitude to a fiction are practised in both dialogues, and in both, as well as in the myth at the end of the Republic, Plato touches on the subject of necessity and free-will. The words in which he describes the miseries of states seem to be an amplification of the 'Cities will never cease from ill' of the Republic. The point of view in both is the same; and the differences not really important, e.g. in the myth, or in the account of the different kinds of states. But the treatment of the subject in the Statesman is fragmentary, and the shorter and later work, as might be expected, is less finished, and less worked out in detail. The idea of measure and the arrangement of the sciences supply connecting links both with the Republic and the Philebus.

More than any of the preceding dialogues, the Statesman seems to approximate in thought and language to the Laws. There is the same decline and tendency to monotony in style, the same self-consciousness, awkwardness, and over-civility; and in the Laws is contained the pattern of that second best form of government, which, after all, is admitted to be the only attainable one in this world. The 'gentle violence,' the marriage of dissimilar natures, the figure of the warp and the woof, are also found in the Laws. Both expressly recognize the conception of a first or ideal state, which has receded into an invisible heaven. Nor does the account of the origin and growth of society really differ in them, if we make allowance for the mythic character of the narrative in the Statesman. The virtuous tyrant is common to both of them; and the Eleatic Stranger takes up a position similar to that of the Athenian Stranger in the Laws.

VII. There would have been little disposition to doubt the genuineness of the Sophist and Statesman, if they had been compared with the Laws rather than with the Republic, and the Laws had been received, as they ought to be, on the authority of Aristotle and on the ground of their intrinsic excellence, as an undoubted work of Plato. The detailed consideration of the genuineness and order of the Platonic dialogues has been reserved for another place: a few of the reasons for defending the Sophist and Statesman may be given here.

1. The excellence, importance, and metaphysical originality of the two dialogues: no works at once so good and of such length are known to have

proceeded from the hands of a forger.

2. The resemblances in them to other dialogues of Plato are such as might be expected to be found in works of the same author, and not in those of an imitator, being too subtle and minute to have been invented by another. The similar passages and turns of thought are generally inferior to the parallel passages in his earlier writings; and we might a priori have expected that, if altered, they would have been improved. But the comparison of the Laws proves that this repetition of his own thoughts and words in an inferior form is characteristic of Plato's later style.

3. The close connexion of them with the Theaetetus, Parmenides, and Philebus, involves the fate of these dialogues, as well as of the two suspected ones.

4. The suspicion of them seems mainly to rest on a presumption that in Plato's writings we may expect to find an uniform type of doctrine and opinion. But however we arrange the order, or narrow the circle of the dialogues, we must admit that they exhibit a growth and progress in the mind of Plato. And the appearance of change or progress is not to be regarded as impugning the genuineness of any particular writings, but may be even an argument in their favour. If we suppose the Sophist and Politicus to stand halfway between the Republic and the Laws, and in near connexion with the Theaetetus, the Parmenides, the Philebus, the arguments against them derived from differences of thought and style disappear or may be said without paradox in some degree to confirm their genuineness. There is no such interval between the Republic or Phaedrus and the two suspected dialogues, as that which separates all the earlier writings of Plato from the Laws. And the Theaetetus, Parmenides, and Philebus, supply links, by which, however different from them, they may be reunited with the great body of the Platonic writings.

Last updated on Sat Nov 18 17:32:26 2006 for eBooks@Adelaide.