

**TITLE OF THE DISSERTATION:  
“PLATO THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE”**



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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work and effort and that it has not been submitted anywhere for any recharge degree or educational award to this university or any other university or institution where other sources of information have been used . they have been acknowledged.

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Place: Salbarci

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## BONAFIDE CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled plato theory of knowledge. The nature of self of God is a bonafide record in department research project work done by Dip Jyoti Boro under my Supervisor session 2018-19 Submitted to the controller of ~~an~~ examination Gauhati University for ~~The~~ B.A. Final in philosophy. The dissertation has not previously formed any kind of research projects.

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I Dip Jyoti Boro by declare that the dissertation entitled "Plato Theory of knowledge". The nature of self of God submitted to the submitted to the controller of examinations Gauhati University for the B.A final in Philosophy and that the dissertation has not previously form any kind of research Project.

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Dip Jyoti Boro

## PREFACE

My Dissertation is submitted to Gauhati University for the B.A final in Philosophy. The title of the Dissertation is Plato Theory of Knowledge the nature of self and God

I have divided my dissertation into Seven chapters. They are 1. Introduction, chapter 2. Plato theory of knowledge, chapter 3. Dialectic, or the theory of idea, Chapter 4. Physics, or the theory of existence, Chapter 5. Ethics, chapter 6. View upon art

In chapter one I discuss the introduction of Plato Theory of knowledge nature of self and God chapter two the nature of self and God Chapter three Religious and spiritual experience and chapter four the doctrine of Rebirth and chapter five God and the ~~absolute~~ absolute and chapter six and chapter seven.

A critical estimate plato's philosophy in five, chapter eight in conclusion.

V

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## Introduction

was one of a most prominent Greek philosopher. He was the disciple of Socrates. He was born in 429 B.C. at Athens. He came of an aristocratic Athenian family, and was possessed of sufficient wealth to enable him to command that leisure which was essential for a life devoted to philosophy. His youth coincided with the most disastrous period of Athenian history. After a bitter struggle, which lasted over a quarter of a century, the Peloponnesian war ended in the complete downfall of Athens as a political power. And the internal affairs of the state were in no less confusion than the external. Here, as elsewhere, a triumphant democracy had developed into mob-rule. Then at the close of the Peloponnesian war the aristocratic party again came into power with the thirty tyrants, among whom were some of Plato's own relatives. But the aristocratic party.

so far from improving affairs plunged at into a reign of blood shed, terror and oppression. These facts have an important bearing upon the history of Plato's life. If he ever possessed any desire to adopt a political career the actual condition of Athenian affairs must have quenched it. An aristocrat both in thought and by birth he could not accommodate himself of the rule of the mob. And if he ever imagined that the return of the aristocracy to power would improve matters, he must have been bitterly disillusioned by the proceedings of the thirty tyrants. Disgusted alike with the democracy and aristocracy he seems to have retired into seclusion. He never once, throughout his long life appeared as a speaker in the popular assembly. He regarded the Athenian Constitution as past help.

Not much is known of the philosopher's youth. He composed poems. He was given the best education that an Athenian citizen of those days could obtain. His teacher, Cratylus, was a follower of Heraclitus.

and plato no doubt learned from him the doctrines of that philosopher. It is improbable that he allowed himself to remain unacquainted with the disputations of the sophists, many of whom were his own contemporaries. He probably read that book *anaxagoras*, which was easily obtainable in athens of the time. But on all these points we have no certain information. What we do know is that the decisive events in his youth, and indeed ~~was~~ in his life, was his association with socrates.

For the last eight years of the life of socrates, plato was his friend and his faithful disciple. The teaching and personality of the master conditioned the supreme ~~an~~ intellectual impulse of his life and the inspiration of his entire thought. ~~And~~ And the devotion and system which he felt for socrates, so far from waning as the years went by, seem, on the contrary, to have grown continually stronger. For it is precisely in the latest dialogue of his long life that seem of the most charming and admiring port

traits of socrates are to be found. Socrates became for him the pattern and exemplar of the true philosopher.

After the death of socrates a second period opens in the life of plato, the period of his travels. He migrated first to megara, where his friend and fellow-disciple Euclid was then founding the megaric school. The megaric philosophy was a combination of the thought of socrates with that of the Elieatics. And it was no doubt here at megara, under the influence of Euclid, that plato formed his deeper acquaintance with teaching of parmendes, which exercised an all-important influence upon his own philosophy. From Megara he travel to cyrene, with the pythagoreans. And to the effects of this journey may be attributed the strong pythagorean elements which permeate his thought.

A similar difficulty attends the question of the division of plato philosophy. He himself has given us no single and certain principle of division. But the principle usually adopted divides his philosophy into Diale

dic physics, and Ethics. Dialectic, on the theory of Ideas, is plato's doctrine of the nature of the absolute reality. physics is the theory of phenomenal existence in space and time, and includes therefore the doctrine of the soul and its migrations since these are happenings in time. Ethics includes politics the theory of the duty of man as a citizen, as well as the ethics of the individual. Certain portions of the system, the doctrine of eros for example do not fall very naturally into any of these divisions. But, on the other hand, though some dialogue are mixed as their subject matter, others and those the most important fall almost exclusively into one or other division. For example the "Timaeus" the "phaedrus," and the "phaedrus," are physical the "philebus" the "Gorgias" and the "republic," are ethical. The "theaetetus" the "sophist" and the "parmenides," are dialectical.

## 21 Plato theory of knowledge.

The theory of ideas is itself based upon the theory of knowledge. What is knowledge? What is

truth? plato opens the discussion by telling us first what knowledge and truth are not. His object here is the refutation of false theories. These must be disposed of to clear the ground preparatory to positive exposition. The first such false theory which he attacks is that knowledge is perception. To refute this is the main object of the "Theaetetus".

His argument may be summarised as follows:-

1/ That knowledge is perception is the theory of protogoras and sophists, and we have seen to what results it leads. What it amounts to is that what appears to each individual ~~time~~ is true for that individual. But, this is at any rate false in its application to ~~our~~ our judgement of ~~refere~~ future events. The frequent mistake which men make about the future show this. It may appear to me that I shall be chief justice next year. But instead of that I find myself, perhaps, in prison. In general, what appears to each individual to be the truth about the future frequently does not turn out so in the event.

2/ Perception yields contradictory impressions. The

same objects appears large when near small when removed to a distance. Compared with same things it is light, with other heavy. In eye light it is white, in another green, and in the dark it has no colour at all. Looked at from one angle this piece of paper seems square, from another it appears to be a rhombus. Which of all these impressions is true? To know which is true we must be able to exercise a choice among these varying impressions to prefer one to another, to discriminate, to accept this and reject that. But if knowledge is perception, then we have no right to give one perception preference over another. For all perceptions are knowledge. All are true.

3/ This doctrine renders all teaching, all discussion, proof, or disproof, impossible. Since all perceptions are equally true, the child's perception must be just as much the truth as those of his teacher. His teachers, therefore, can teach him

nothing. As to discussion and proof, the very fact that two people dispute about anything implies that they believe in the existence of an objective truth. Their impressions, if they contradict each other cannot both be true: For if so there is nothing to dispute about. Thus all proof and refutation are rendered futile by the theory of Protagoras.

4/ If perception as is truth man is the measure of all things in his character as a perceptible being. But since animals are also perceptible beings the lowest brute must be equally with man, the measure of all things.

5/ The theory of Protagoras contradicts itself. For Protagoras admits that what appears to me true is true. It, therefore it appears to me true that the doctrine of Protagoras is false, Protagoras himself must admit that it is false.

6/ It destroys the objectivity of truth, and renders the distinction between truth and falsehood who



lly meaningless. The same thing is true and false at the same time, true for you and false for me. Hence it makes no difference at all whether we say that a proposition is true, or whether we say that it is false. Both statements mean the same thing, that is to say, neither of them means anything. To say that whatever I perceive is true for me is only given a new name to my perception, but does not add any value to it.

7/ In all perception there are elements which are not contributed by the senses. Suppose I say, "This piece of paper is white." This, we might think, is a pure judgement of perception. Nothing is stated except what I perceive by means of my senses. But on consideration it turns out that this is not correct. First of all I must think "this piece of paper" why do I call it paper? My doing so means that I have classified it. I have mentally compared it with other pieces of paper, and decided that it is of a class with them. My thought, then

involves comparison and classification. The object is a compound sensation of whiteness, squareness etc. I can only call it as a piece of paper by identifying these sensations, which I have now, with sensations, received from other similar objects in the past and not only must I recognise the sameness of the sensations but I must recognise their difference from other sensations. I must not confound the sensations. I receive from paper with those which I receive from a piece of wood. Both identities and differences of sensation must know be for I can say "this piece of paper" the same is true when I so onto say that it "is white". This is only possible by classifying it with other with its object. But the senses themselves cannot perform these acts of comparison and contrast. Each sensation is so to speak an isolated dot. It can't go beyond itself to compare itself with others. This operation must be performed by my mind, which acts as a laboratory combining, comparing, and contrasting them. This is particularly

noticeable in cases where we compare sensations of one sense with those of another. Feeling a ball with my fingers, I say it feels round. Looking at it with my eyes, I say it looks round. But the feel is quite a different sensation from the look. Yet I say the same word "round" to describe both. And this shows that I have identified the two sensations. This can't be done by the senses themselves. For my eyes can't feel and my fingers can't see. It must be the mind itself, standing above the senses, which performs the identification. These the ideas of identity and difference are not yielded to me by my senses. The intellect itself introduces them into things. Yet, they are involved in all knowledge, for they are involved even in the simplest acts of knowledge, such as the proposition. "This is white knowledge therefore, can't consist simply of some impressions, as Protagoras thought, for even the simplest propositions contain more than sensation.

If knowledge is not the same as perception, sensations of one sense with those of another. Feeling a ball with ~~my~~ my fingers.

I say it feels round looking at it with my eyes. I say it looks round. But the feels is quite a different sensation from the look. Yet I say the same word "round" to describe both. And this shows that I have identified the two sensations. This can't be done by the senses themselves. For my eyes can't feel and my fingers can't see. It must be the mind itself, standing above the senses, which performs the identification. This the ideas of identity and difference are not yielded to me by my senses. The intellect itself introduces them into things.

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If knowledge is not the same as perception, neither is it on the other hand, the same as opinion. That knowledge is opinion is the second false theory that Plato seeks to refute. Wrong opinion is clearly not knowledge. But even right opinion can't be called knowledge. If I say without

any grounds from the statement, that there  
 will be a thunderstorm next Easter Sunday  
 it may chance that statement turns out  
 to be correct. But it can't be said that, in  
 making this blind guess, I had any knowledge  
 although, as it turned out, I had right opi-  
 nion. Right opinion may also be grounded, not  
 on mere guess work, but on something which  
 though better is still not true understanding.  
 We often feel it inductively, or instinctively  
 that something is true, though we can't give  
 any definite grounds for our belief. The belief  
 may be quite correct, but it is not, accord-  
 ing to Plato, knowledge. It is only right opinion.  
 To pass knowledge, one must not only know  
 that a thing is so, but why it is so. One must  
 know the reasons. Knowledge must be full and  
 complete understanding, rational comprehension,  
 and not mere instinctive belief. It must be  
 grounded on reason and not on faith. Right op-  
 inion may be produced by persuasion and sop-  
 histry, by the arts of the orator and rhet-  
 oric and is therefore unstable and uncertain.  
 But true knowledge can't be thus shaken.

He who truly know and understand can't be robbed of his knowledge by the glamour of words. opinion, lastly, may be true or false knowledge can only be true.

These false theory being refuted, we proceed pass to the positive side of the theory of knowledge. If knowledge is neither perception nor opinion, what is it? Plato adopts without alteration, the socratic doctrine that, all knowledge is knowledge through concepts. This as I explained in the *Republic* socrates, gets rid of the objectionable result of the sophistic identification of knowledge with perception. A concept, being the same thing as a definition is some thing fixed and permanent not liable to mutation according to the subjectively impression of the ~~sub~~ individual. It give an objective truth. This also agrees with plato's view of opinion. knowledge is not opinion, founded on instinct or intuition. knowledge is founded on reason. This is the same as saying that if is founded upon concepts, since reason is the

faculty of concepts.

But if plato, in answering the question, "What is knowledge?" follows implicitly the teaching of socrates, he yet builds up on this teaching a ~~new~~ new and wholly em-socratic metaphysics of his own. The socratic theory of knowledge he now converts into a theory of knowledge he now converts into a theory of the nature of reality. This subject-matter of Dialectic.

3/ Dialectic, on the theory of ideas.

The concept had been for socrates merely a rule of thought. Definitions, like guide rails, keep thought upon the straight path we compare any act with the definition of virtue in order ascertains whether it virtuous. But what was for socrates merely regulative of thought, plato now transforms into a metaphysical substance, His theory of ideas is the theory of the objectivity of the concepts.

that the concepts is not merely idea in the mind but something which has a reality of its own, outside and independent of the mind this is the essence of the philosophy of

pat plato.

How did arrive at this doctrine? It is founded upon the view that truth means the correspondence of one's idea with the facts of existence. If I see a lake of water and if there really is such a lake then my idea is true. But if there is no lake, then my idea is false, It is an hallucination. Truth according to this means that the thought in my mind is a copy of something outside my mind. Falsehood consists in having an idea which is not a copy of anything which really exists. Knowledge, of course, means knowledge of the truth. And when I see that a thought in my mind is knowledge, I must therefore see as that this thought is a copy of something that exists. But we have already seen that knowledge is the knowledge of concepts. And if a concept is true knowledge, it can only be true in virtue of the fact that it corresponds to an objective reality. There must therefore, be general ideas or concepts, outside my mind. It were a contradiction to suppose on the one hand, that the concept is true knowledge, and



on the other that is the corresponds to nothing external to us. This would be like saying that my idea of the like of water is a true idea but that no such like really exists. The concept in my mind must be a copy of the concept outside it.

Now if knowledge by concepts is true, our experiences through sensation must be false ~~our~~ our sense make us aware of many individual horses. Our intellect gives us the concept of the horse in general. If the latter is the safe truth, the former must be false. And this can only mean that the objects of sensation have no true reality. What has reality is the concept; what has no reality is the individual thing which is perceived by the sense. This and particular horse have no true being. Reality belongs only to the idea of the horse in general.

Let us approach this theory from a somewhat different direction suppose I ask you the question, "What is beauty?" You point to a rose, and say, "Here is beauty." And you say the same of a woman's face a piece of wood and scenery, and a clear moonlight night. But I answer that this is not what I want to know I did not ask what things are beautiful,

but what is beauty, I did not ask for many things, but for one thing namely beauty, If beauty is a rose, it can't be moonlight, because a rose and moonlight are quite different things. By beauty we mean, not many things, but one. This is proved by the fact that we use only one word for it. And what I want to know is what this one beauty is which is distinct from all beautiful objects. perhaps you will say that there is no such thing as beauty apart from beautiful objects. and that thought we use one word, yet this is only a manner of speech, and that there are in reality many beauties, each residing in a beautiful object. In that case, I observe that, though the many beauties are all different, yet since you use the one word to describe them all, you evidently think that they are similar to each other. How do you know that they are similar? Your eyes can't inform you of this similarity, because it involves comparison, and we have already seen that comparison is an act of mind, and not of the senses. You must therefore have an idea of beauty in your mind, with which you compare the various beautiful

object and so recognise them as all resembling your idea of beauty and therefore as resembling each other so, that there is at any rate an idea of one beauty in your mind. Either this idea corresponds to something outside your, or it does not. In the latter case, your idea of beauty is a mere invention, a figment of your own brain. If so then in judging it the standard of whether they are beautiful or not, you back again at the position of the sophists. You are making yourself and the fancies of your individual brain the standard of eternal truth. Therefore, the only alternative is to believe that there is not only an idea of beauty in your mind, but that there is such a thing as the one beauty itself, of which your idea is a copy. This beauty exists outside the mind, and it is something distinct from all beautiful objects.

What has been said of beauty may equally be said of justice, or of goodness, or of whiteness, or of heaviness. There are many just acts, but only one justice, since we use one word for it. This justice must be a real thing, distinct from all particular just acts. Our idea of ju

stee are copies of it. so, also there are many white objects but also the one whiteness.

Of the above examples, several are very exalted moral ideas, such as beauty, justice, and goodness. But the case of whiteness will serve to show that the theory attributes reality not only to exalted idea but to other also. In fact we might quite well substitute evil for goodness, and all the same arguments would apply. Or we might take a corporeal object such as the horse, and ask what "horse" means. It does not mean the many individual horse, for since one word is used it must mean one thing, which is related to individual horse, just as whiteness is related to individual white thing. It means the universal horse, the idea of the horse in general, and this just as much as goodness or beauty must be something objectively real.

Now beauty, justice, goodness, whiteness, the horse in general, are all concepts. The idea of beauty is formed by including what is common to all beautiful objects. and excluding those points in which they differ and this, as we have seen, is just what is meant by a concept. plato's theory there for is that concepts are objective realities. And he gives to those objective concepts the tea

technical name ideas. This is his answer to the chief question of philosophy, namely, what, among all the appearances and unrealities of things, is that absolute and ultimate reality, from which all else is to be explained? Let us see next what the characteristics of the ideas are. In the first place, they are substance. Substance is a technical term in philosophy, but its philosophical meaning is a more consistent development of its popular meaning. In common talk we generally apply the word substance to material things such as iron, brass, wood, or water, and we say that these substances possess qualities. For example, hardness and shininess are qualities of the substance iron. The qualities cannot exist apart from the substance. They do not exist on their own ~~according~~ account, but are dependent on the substance. The shininess cannot exist by itself. There must be a thing something. But according to popular ideas, though the qualities are not independent of the substance, the substance is independent of the qualities. The qualities derive their reality from the substance. But the substance has reality in itself. The philosophical use of the term substance is simply a more consistent application of this idea. Substance means for the philosopher, that which

has its whole being in itself. Whose reality does not flow into it from anything else, but which is the source of its own reality. It is self caused and self determined. It is the ground of other things but itself has no ground except itself. For example, if we believe the popular Christian idea that God created the world, but it Himself an infinite and uncreated being, then, since the world depends for its existence upon God, but God's existence depends only upon himself, God is substance and the world is not. In this sense the word is correctly used in the creed when it speaks of God as "three persons, but one substance". Again if, with the idealists, we think that mind is a self-existent reality, and the matter owes its existence to mind, then in that case matter is not substance, but mind is. In this technical sense the ~~de~~ ideas are substances. They are absolute and ultimate reality. Their whole being themselves. They depend on nothing, but all things depend on them. They are the first principle of the universe:

Secondly, the ideas are universal. An idea is not any particular thing. The idea of the horse is not this or that horse. It is the general concept of all horses. It is the universal horse. For this reason the ideas are, in modern times often called "universal." Thirdly, the ideas are not things, but thoughts. There is such things as the horse in

general. If there were, we should be able to find it somewhere, and it would then be a particular or things instead of a universal. But in saying that ideas are thoughts these are two mistakes to be carefully avoided.

Fourthly, each idea is a unity. It is the one amid the many, the idea of man is one, although individual men are many. There for can't be more than one idea for each class of ~~each~~ objects. If there were several idea of justice, we should have to seek for the common element among them, and this common element would itself constitute the one idea of justice.

Fifthly, the ideas are immutable and imperishable. A concept is the same as a definition. And the ~~the~~ whole point in a definition is that it should always be the same. Consequently, the ideas can't change. The many beautiful objects arise and pass away, but the one Beauty neither begins nor ends. It is eternal, unchangeable, and imperishable. The many beautiful things are but the fleeting expressions of the one eternal beauty. The definition of man would remain the same, even if all men were destroyed. The idea of man is ~~element~~ eternal, and remains untouched by the birth, old age, decay, and death, of individual men.

Sixthly, the ideas are the Essences of

all things. The definition gives us what is essential to a thing. If we define man as a rational animal, this means that reason is of the essence of man. The fact that this man has a turmed-up nose, and that man red hair, are accidental facts, not essential to their humanity. We do not include them in the definition of man.

Seventhly, each idea is of its own kind, an absolute perfection, and its perfection is the same as its reality. The perfect man is the one universal type - man, which that is the idea of man, and all individual men deviate more or less from this perfect type. In so far as they fall short of it, they are imperfect and unreal.

Eighthly, the ideas are outside space and time. That they are outside space is obvious. If they were in space, they would have to be in some particular place. We ought to be able to find them some where. A telescope or microscope might reveal them. And this would mean that they are individual and particular things, and not universal at all.

Ninthly, the ideas are ~~not~~ rational, that is to say, they are apprehended through reason. The defining of the common element in the manifold is the work of inductive reason and thought. This alone is knowledge of the ideas possible. This should be noted by those persons who imagine



that plato was some sort of benevolent mystic. The imperishable one, the absolute reality, is apprehended, not by intuition, or in any kind of mystic ecstasy, but only by rational cognition and laborious thought.

Lastly, towards the end of his life plato identified the ideas with the pythagorean numbers. we know this from aristotle but it is not mentioned in the dialogues of plato himself. It appears to have been a theory adopted in old age, and set forth in the lectures which aristotle attended. It is a retrograde step, and tends to degrade the great and lucid idealism of plato into a mathematical mysticism. In this, as in other respects, the influence of the pythagoreans upon plato was harm the influence of the pythagoreans upon plato was

It result from this whole theory of ideas was that there are two sources of human experience, sense perception and reason. Sense perception has for its object the world of sense, reason has for its object the ideas. the world of sense has all the opposite characteristics to the ideas. The ideas are absolute reality, absolute being. Object of sense are absolute unreality, not being, except in so far as the ideas are in them whatever reality they have they are to the ideas. There

is in plato's system a principle of absolute non-being which we shall consider when we come to deal with his physics. objects of sense partake both in the ideas and in this non-being. They are, therefore, half way between being and non-being. They are half real. Ideas again, are universal; things of sense are always particular and individual. The idea is one, the sense object is always a multiplicity. Ideas are outside space and time, things of sense are both temporal and spatial. The idea is eternal and immovable; sense objects are changeable and in process. Aristotle observes that plato's theory of ideas has three sources, the teaching of the Eleatics, of Heraclitus, and of socrates. From Heraclitus plato took the notion of a sphere of becoming, and it appears in his system as the world of sense. From the eleatics he took the ideas of a sphere of absolute being. From socrates he took the doctrine of concepts, and proceeded to identify the eleatic being with the socratic concepts. This gives him his theory of ideas.

#### 41 Physics, or the theory of Existence

Dialectic is the theory of reality, physics the theory of existence, dialectic of that which lies behind things as their ground, physics of the things

gs which are thus grounded. That is to say, physics is concerned with phenomena and appearances, things which exist in space and time, as opposed to the timeless and non-spatial incorporeal. physics falls therefore into two parts, the doctrine of the outward corporeality, the world, with its incorporeal essence, the world-soul, and the doctrine of the incorporeal.

### (a) The Doctrine of the World.

If, in the dialectic, plato has given an account of the nature of the first principle and ground of all things, the problem now arises of explaining how the actual universe of things arise out of that ground. how it is derived from the first principle. In other words, the ideas being the absolute reality, how does the world of sense and in general the existent universe, arise out of the ideas? Faced with this problem, the system of plato broke down. The things of sense are, we are told "copies" or "imitations" of the ideas. They "participate" in the ideas. so far so good. But why should there be any copies of the ideas? Why should the ideas give rise to copies of themselves, and how is the production of these copies effected? To these questions plato has no answer, and he therefore has recourse to the use of myths. poetic description here

take the place of scientific explanation.

(b) The Doctrine of the Human soul.

The human soul is similar in kind to the world-soul. It is the cause of the body's movements and in it the world of ideas and the world of sense. It is divided into two parts, of which each part is again subdivided into two. The highest part is reason, which is that part of the soul which apprehends the ideas. It is simple and individual. Now all destruction of things means the sundering of their parts. But, the rational part of the soul, being simple has no parts. Therefore it is indestructible and immortal. The irrational part of the soul is mortal, and is subdivided into a noble and an ignoble half. To the noble half belong courage, love of honour, and in general the noble emotions, to the ignoble portion belong the sensuous appetites. The noble half has a certain affinity with reason, in that it has an instinct for what is noble and good. Nevertheless, this is more an instinct, and is not rational. The seat of reason is the head, of the noble half of the lower soul, the breast, of the ignoble half, the lower part of the body. Now alone possesses the three parts of the soul. Animals possess the two lower parts, plants only the appetitive soul.

## 5. Ethics

### (a) The Ethics of the individual

Just as Plato's theory of Knowledge begins with a negative portion designed to refute false theory of what truth is, so does his theory of morals begin with a negative portion intended to refute false theories of what virtue is. These two negative departments of Plato's philosophy correspond in every way. As he was then engaged in showing that Knowledge is not perception, as Protagoras thought, so he now urges that virtue is not the same as pleasure. And as Knowledge is not more right opinion, neither is virtue more right action. The propositions that Knowledge is perception, and that virtue is pleasure, are indeed only the same principle applied to different spheres of thought. For the sophists whatever appeared true to the individual was true for that individual. This is the same as saying that Knowledge is perception. For the sophists, again, whatever appeared right to the individual was right for that individual. This is the same as saying that it is right for each man to do whatever he please. Virtue is defined as the pleasure

of the individual. This consequence of the sophist principles was drawn both by many of the sophists themselves and later by the cyre.

As these two propositions are this in fact only one principle, what plato has said in refutation of the former provides also his refutation of the latter. The theory that virtue is pleasure has the same destruction influence upon moral as the theory that knowledge is perception had upon truth. We may thus shortly summarize plato's arguments.

① As the sophist theory of truth destroys the objectivity of truth so the doctrine that virtue is the pleasure of the individual destroys the objectivity of the good.

② This theory destroys the distinction between good and evil. Good and evil are therefore not distinguished. They are the same.

③ Pleasure as the satisfaction of our desires. Desires are merely feelings. This theory, therefore focuses morality upon feeling. But an objective morality can't be founded upon what is peculiar to individuals.

④ The end of moral activity must fall within and not outside, the moral act itself. Morality must have an intrinsic, not a merely extrinsic value.

## (b) The State .

We pass from the ethics of individual life to the ethics of the community. Plato's "Republic" is not an attempt to paint an imaginary and unreal perfection. Its object is to formal politics on the theory of ideas by depicting the idea of the state. This state is therefore not unreal, but the only real state, and its reality is the ground of the essence of all carefully estimate real states.

## (c) Views upon Art.

In modern times aesthetics is recognized as a separate division of philosophy. This was not the case in Plato's time, and yet his opinions upon art can't be fitted into ethics, dialectic, physics, or ethics. On the other hand, they can't be ignored and there is nothing for it therefore, but to treat them as a sort of appendix to his philosophy. Plato has no systematic theory of art, but only scattered opinions, the most important of which will now be mentioned.

Most modern theories of art are based upon the ~~view~~ view that art is and in itself, that the beautiful has, as such absolute value, and not value merely as a means to some further end. Upon such a view art is recognized as autonomous within its own sphere, governed only by its own laws, judged only by its own standards. It

can't be judged, as Tolstoj would have us believe, by the standard of morals. The beautiful is not a means to the good. They may be indeed ultimately identical, but their identity can't be recognised till their difference has been admitted. None can be subordinated to the other.

Now this view of art finds no place at all in Plato's thought. Art is for him, absolutely subservient both to morals and philosophy. That is subservient morality we see from the "Republic", where only that poetry is allowed which inculcates virtue, and only because it inculcates virtue, it is no sufficient justification of a poem to plead that it is beautiful or not, if it does not subscribe the ends of morality, it is forbidden. Hence too the preposterous notion that its exercise is to be controlled even in details, by the states. That this would mean the utter destruction of art either did not occur to Plato, or if it did not deter him. If poetry let us next what the characteristics of the ideas are. In the first place, they are substances. Substance is a technical term in philosophy but in its philosophical meaning is merely a more consistent development of its popular meaning. In common talk, we generally apply the word substance to material things such as iron, brass, wood or water. And we say that in these substance possess qualities. For example hardness and shininess are qualities of the substance iron. The qualities are can't exist apart from the:



Substance. They do not exist on their own account, but are dependent on the substance. The accidents can't exist by itself. There must be a ~~shiny~~ something. But, according to popular ideas, though the qualities are not independent of the substance, the substance is independent of the qualities. The qualities derive their reality from the substance. But, the substance has reality in itself. The philosophical use of the term substance is in simple & more consistent application of this idea.

Substance means for the philosopher that which has its whole being in itself, whose reality does not have to be allowed to exist under the yoke of morality, it must not be allowed to exist at all. That art is merely a means to philosophy is even more evident. The end of all education is the knowledge of the ideas, and every other subject, science, mathematics, art, is introduced into the educational curriculum solely as a preparation for that end. They have no value in themselves. This is obvious from the teaching of the "Republic", and it is even more evident in the "Symposium", where the love of beautiful objects is made to end, not in itself, but in philosophy.

(7) Critical Estimate of Plato's philosophy. In order to form a just estimate of the value of Plato's philosophy we must put away our criticism on the minor points, the external details, the mere outer works of the system. We must get at the heart

and governing centre of it all. Amid the mass of thought which Plato has developed, in all departments of speculation, that which stands out as the central thesis of the whole system is the theory of Ideas. All else is but deduction from this. His physics, his ethics, his politics, his views upon art, all flow from this one governing theory. It is here that we must look, alike for the merits and the defects of Plato's system.

The theory of idea is not a something sprung suddenly upon the world out of Plato's brain. It has its roots in the past. It is, as Aristotle showed, the outcome of Eleatic, Heraclitus and Socratic determinations. Fundamentally, however, it grows out of the distinction between sense and reason, which had been the common property of Greek thinkers since the time of Parmenides. Parmenides was the first to emphasize this distinction, and to teach that the truth is to be found by reason, the world of sense being illusory. Heraclitus, and even Democritus, were pronounced adherents of reason, as against sense. The crisis came with the Sophists, who attempted to obliterate the distinction altogether, and to find all knowledge in sensation. Thus calling forth the opposition of Socrates and Plato. As against them Socrates pointed out that all knowledge is through concept reason and Plato added to this that the concept is not a mere rule of thought but a metaphysical reality. This was

the substance of the theory of ideas. Every philosophy which make a systematic attempt to solve the riddle of the universe necessarily begins with a theory of the nature of that absolute and ultimate reality from which the universe is derived. This absolute reality we will call simply the absolute. Plato's theory is that the absolute consist of concepts. To say that the absolute is reason, is thought is concept is the universal. These are merely four different expressions of the same theory. Now this proposition, that that the absolute is reason, is the fundamental thesis of all idealism. Plato's time there have been several great idealistic systems of philosophy. That the absolute is reason is the central teaching of them all. Plato therefore, is the founder and initiator of all idealism. It is this that gives him his great place in the history of philosophy. That the absolute is universal thought. This is what Plato has contributed to the philosophical speculation of the world. This is his crowning merit.

But, we must go somewhat more into details. We must see how far he applied principle successfully to the unravelment of the great problems of philosophy. In teaching upon the Eleatics. I said that any successfully philosophy must satisfy at least two conditions. It must give such an account of the abso

tute, that the absolute is shown as capable of explaining the world. It must be possible to deduce the actual world of facts from the first principle. Secondly, not only must this first principle explain the world, it must also explain itself. It must be reality ultimate, that is we must not in order to understand it, have to refer to anything beyond and outside it. If we have to do so then our ultimate is not an ultimate at all, our first principle is not first. That thing by means of which we explain it must itself be the ultimate reality. And besides being ultimate, our principle must be wholly intelligible. It must not be a mere ultimate mystery for to reduce the whole world to an ultimate mystery is clearly not to explain it. Our first principle must, in a word, be self-explanatory. Let us apply this two-fold test to Plato's system. Let us first whether the principle of ideas explain the world, and secondly, whether it explains itself.

Does it explain the world? Is the actual existence of things, horses, trees, stars, men, explained by it? What, in the first place, is the relation between things and the ideas? Things, says Plato, are "copies" or "imitations" of the ideas. They "participate" in the ideas. The ideas are "archetypal" of things. Now all these phrases. ~~The Ideas~~ are more poetic metaphors. They do not really tell us how things are rela

ted to ideas. But suppose we ignore this, and  
 assume, for the sake of argument, that we  
 understand what is meant by "participation" and  
 that things are in the literal sense "copies" of ideas.  
 The question still remains, why do such copies exist,  
 how do they arise? Now, if this problem is to be  
 solved, it is not enough to show, merely as a fact,  
 that, by some mysterious act, copies of ideas come  
 into existence. There must be a reason for it, and  
 this reason it is the business of philosophy to  
 explain. This reason, too, must exist in the nature  
 of the ideas themselves, and not outside them. There  
 must be, in the very nature of the ideas some  
 inner necessity which forces them to reproduce them-  
 selves in things. This what we mean by saying that  
 the ideas are a sufficient explanation of the existence  
 of things. But there is in Plato's ideas no such nec-  
 essity. The ideas are defined as being the sole reality.  
 They have already all validity in themselves. They are  
 self-sufficient. They lack nothing. It is not neces-  
 sary for them further to realize their being in  
 the concrete manifestation of things, because they  
 as wholly real need no realization. Why then should  
 they not remain for ever simply as they are.  
 Why should they not remain in themselves and by  
 themselves? Why should they need to reproduce th

emselves? Why should they ~~be~~ in objects? There are  
 we, know white objects in the universe. Their exis-  
 tence, we are told, ~~is~~ explained by the ideas of  
 whiteness? But why should the ideas of whiteness?  
 But why should the ideas of whiteness produce whi-  
 te thing? It is itself the perfect whiteness. Why  
 should it stir itself? Why should it not remain b-  
 y itself, apart, sterile, in the world of ideas, for  
 all eternity? We can't see. There is in the ideas ~~an~~  
 of necessity ~~we~~ urging them towards reproduction  
 of themselves, and this means that they possess  
 no principle for the explanation of things.

Nevertheless plato has to make some at-  
 tempt to meet the difficulty. And as the ideas  
 are themselves ~~un~~ import and to produce things,  
 plato, unable to solve the problem by reason, at-  
 tempt to solve it by violence. He drags in the  
 notion of God from ~~now~~ nowhere in particular,  
 and uses him as a *deus ex machina*. God fashi-  
 on matter into the images of ideas. They very fa-  
 ct that plato is forced to introduce a creator sh-  
 ow that, in the ideas themselves, there is no gro-  
 und of explanation. Things ought to be explain by  
 the ideas themselves, but but as they are incapa-  
 ble of explaining anything thing, God is called up  
 on to do their work for them. This plato, faced with

the problem of existence, practically deserts his theory of idea, and falls back upon a crude theism. or if we say that the term God is not to be taken literally, and that plato uses it merely as a figurative term for the ideas of God, then this saves plato from the charge of introducing, a theism altogether inconsistent with his philosophy, but it brings us back to the old difficulty. For in this case, the existence of things must be explained by means of the idea of the other ideas.

In this connection, too the dualism of plato's system become evident. If everything is grounded in the one ultimate reality, the ideas, then the entire universe must be clasped together in a system, all parts of which flow out of the ideas. If there exists in the universe any things which stands aloof from this system, remain isolated, and can't be reduce to a manifestation of the ideas, then the philosophy has failed to explain the world, and we have before us a confessed dualism. Now not only has plato to drag in God for the explanation of things, he has also to drag in matter. God to ke matter and forms it into copies of ideas. But what is this matter, and where does it spring from? Clearly, if the sole reality is the ideas,

matter, like all else, must be grounded in the ideas. But this is not the case in Plato's system. matter appears as a principle quite independent of the ideas. As its being is self derived and original, it must be itself a substance. But this is just what Plato denies, calling it absolute not being. Yes since it has not source in the ideas or in anything outside itself, we must say that though Plato calls it absolute not being, it in fact is absolute being. The ideas and matter stand face to face in Plato's system, neither derived from the other equally ultimate, co-ordinate, absolute reality. This is ~~the~~ sheer dualism.

The source of this dualism is to be found in the absolute separation which Plato makes of sense on one side, the world of reason on the other, as things radically different and apposed. Hence it is impossible for him ever to bridge the ~~gap~~ gulf that he has himself created between them. we may expect the dualism of a philosophy which builds upon such premises to break out at numerous points in the system. And so indeed it does. It exhibits itself as the dualism of ideas and matter of the sense world and the thought-world, of body and soul. Not, of course that it



is not quite right to recognise the distinction between sense and reason. Any genuine philosophy must recognise that. And no doubt too it is right to place truth and reality on the side of ~~reason~~ reason rather than sense. But although sense and reason are distinct, they must also be identical. They must be divergent streams flowing from one source. And means that a philosophy which considers the absolute reality to be reason must exhibit sense as a lower form of ~~reason~~ reason. Because plato fails to see the identity of sense and reason as well as their difference, his philosophy becomes a continual fruitless effort to overreach the dualism thus generated.

Thus the answer to our first question, whether the theory of ideas explains the world of things must be answered in the negative. Let us pass on to the second test. Is the principle of ideas a self-explanatory principle? Such a principle must be understood purely out of itself. It must not be a principle like that of the materialist, which merely reduces the whole universe to an ultimate mysterious fact. For ever if it be shown that the reason of everything is matter, it is still open to us to ask what the reason of matter is. we can't see any reason why

matter should exist. It is a mere fact, which dogmatically forces itself upon our consciousness without giving any reason for itself. our principle must such that we can't ask a further reason of it. It must be its own reason, and so in itself satisfy the demand for a final explanation. Now there is only one such principle in the world, namely, ~~the~~ reason itself. You can ask the reason of everything else in the world. You can ask the reason of the sun, the moon, stars, the soul God or the evil. But you can't ask the reason of reason, because reason is its own reason. let us put the same thought in another way. When we demand the explanation of anything, what do you mean by explanation? What is it we want? Do we not mean that the thing appears to us ~~is~~ intentional, and we want it shown that it is ~~is~~ rational? when this is done, we say it is explained. Think for ~~ex~~ example, of that is called the problem of evil. people of ten take of it as the problem of the "origin of ~~evil~~ evil" as if what we want to know is, how evil began. But even if we know this. it would not explain anything. suppose that evil began because some one ate an apple. Does this make the matter any clearer? Do we feel that all our difficulties

about the existence of evil are solved? No. This is not what we want to know. The difficulty is that evil appears to us something irrational. The problem can ~~even~~ any be solved by showing that evil should exist, show us this, and evil is explained. Explanation of thing, then means showing that the thing is rational. Now we can ask that every thing else in the world should be shown to be rational. But we can't demand that the philosophy etc shall show that reason is rational. This absurd. Reason is that what is already absolutely rational. It is what explains itself. It is its own reason. It is a self explanatory principle. This then must be the principle of which we are in search. The absolute, we said must be a self explanatory principle, and there is only one such namely reason. The absolute absolute, therefore is reason.

This, though Plato named reason as the absolute, and thought reason is a self-explanatory principle, his account of the detailed content of reason is so unsatisfactory that none of the concepts which he includes in it are really shown to be rational. His philosophy breaks down upon the second test as it did upon the first. There has neither

r explained the world from the ideas, now has  
he made the ideas explain themselves.

## Conclusion

There is no other defects in plato's system which is of capital ~~import~~ ~~ance~~ importance. There runs throughout it a confusion between the notions of reality and existence. To distinguish between existence and reality is an essential feature of all idealism of the Eleatics, we shall see this zero we saw, denied motion, multiplicity, and the world of sense. But he did not deny the existence of the world. That is an impossibility. Even if the world is delusion, the delusion exists. What he denied was the reality of existence. But if reality is not existence, what is it? It is being, replied the Eleatics. But being does not exist. What ever exists is this or that particular sort of being, Being itself is not anywhere to be found. Thus the Eleatics first denied that existence is reality and then that reality exists. They did not themselves draw this conclusion, but it is involved in their whole position.

With a fully developed idealism like plato's this ought to be still clearer. And in a sense, it is. The individual horse is not real. But it certainly exists. The universal horse is real. But it does not exist. But, upon this last point, pl

ato wavered and fell. He can't resist the temptation to think of the absolute reality as existing. And consequently the idea are not merely thought as the real universal in the world, but as having a separate existence in a world of their own. Plato must have realised what is, in truth, involved in his whole position, that the absolute reality has no existence. For he tells us that it is the universal, and not any particular individual thing. But everything that exists is an individual thing. Again he tells us that the ideas is outside time. But whatever exists must exist at some time. Here then this central idealistic thought seems well fixed in Plato's mind. But when he goes on to speak of recollection and re-incarnation, when he tells us that the soul before birth dwelt apart in the world of ideas, to which after death it may hope to return, it is clear that Plato has forgotten his own philosophy, that he is now thinking of the idea as individual existence in a world of their own. This is a world of ideas having a separate existence and place of its own. It is not this world. It is a world beyond. Thus the Platonic philosophy which began on a high level idealistic thinking, proclaimed

turning the soul reality of the universal, and  
 by turning the universal itself into nothing  
 but an existent particular. It is the old story of  
 trying to form mental pictures of that which no  
 picture is a adequate to compare. Since all pictu-  
 res are formed out of senseless materials, and  
 since we can form no picture of anything that  
 is not an individual thing, to form a picture  
 of the universal necessarily means thinking of it  
 as just what it is not, an individual, so, Plato  
 commits the greatest sin that can be ascribed to a  
 philosopher, He treats thought as a thing.

To sum up. Plato is the great founder  
 of idealism, the initiator of all subsequent  
 work in philosophy. But, as always with pioneers  
 his idealism is crude. It can't explain the world,  
 it can't explain itself. It can't even keep  
 true to its own principle, because, having for  
 the first time in history definitely enunciated the  
 truth that reality is the universal, it straightway  
 forgets its own creed and plunges back into a pa-  
 rticularism which regards the ideas as existent in  
 individuals. It was these defects which Aristotle