

MENO

THE NEW KNOWLEDGE

PLATO's first dialogues were attempts to reach the knowledge of areté by a number of different routes. They all led to the realization that the separate virtues—courage, prudence, piety, and justice—were simply parts of one whole virtue, and that the essence of virtue in itself was knowledge. In *Protagoras* and *Gorgias*, assuming the correctness of that result, Plato proceeded to show that it was the foundation of all education, and to sketch the outlines of the paideia which was to be based on it. In a long and profound dispute with the leading representatives of up-to-date education, he showed that the sophists, the only ones who ascribed great importance to knowledge, were not prepared to draw the inevitable conclusion that moral and political education ought to be founded on knowledge. Meanwhile the old-fashioned educators paid no attention to this idea whatever. In *Protagoras* Socrates tried to enlist the sophists on his side. But, as he strove to work out all the implications of his thesis that virtue must be knowledge, thereby going back on his original statement that it could not be taught, Protagoras on his part had been notably reluctant to recognize that he could not defend his claim to be a teacher of virtue unless he accepted Socrates' thesis that virtue was knowledge.

There it was made clear that this knowledge must be something different from knowledge in the usual sense of the word. But no attempt was made to say what kind of knowledge it was. *Protagoras* stopped with the proof that virtue must be teachable if Socrates were right in saying it was knowledge. There was just a hint that it was an art of measurement; but Socrates postponed the attempt to find out what kind of measuring art it was, and what sort of standards it used.¹ We need not assume that his remark was an allusion to any specific dialogue. Plato often treated the problem of knowledge—indeed, it is a problem which he never permanently solved. But at least that hint of his

makes it clear that after the identity of virtue and knowledge has been proved, and the importance of that knowledge in education has been demonstrated, it is urgently necessary to make a special investigation to find out what kind of knowledge it is. The first dialogue to attack this problem is *Meno*. It is also the closest in date to the dialogues we have already discussed: therefore it is Plato's first answer to the problem posed in *Protagoras*—what kind of knowledge is it which Socrates considers the basis of areté?

Recognizing the importance of this problem in Plato's philosophy, scholars have called *Meno* 'the programme of the Academy'. This is an exaggeration which merely proves that they have misunderstood Plato by applying modern ideas to him. His school could never have accepted a programme which limited philosophy to the problem of knowledge—especially if we take 'knowledge' to mean those modern abstractions, logic and the theory of cognition. Even in *Meno*, the first comparatively independent treatment of the question, Plato takes care to point out that, for him, the problem of knowledge is organically connected with all his ethical enquiries, and derives its importance from them. Here as elsewhere he starts with the problem: How can we get possession of areté? ² Of course he does not work it out in detail, and end by finding that it can be acquired only through knowledge. Instead, he deliberately centres the discussion on the origin of knowledge. But we must remember that, throughout, he means the knowledge of virtue and good—i.e. the new, Socratic knowledge. And that knowledge is inseparable from its object, and incomprehensible without it.

He begins by putting down, in a neat, methodical way, the usual answers to the question 'How do we acquire areté?' Can it be taught? Or is it got by practice? Or is it neither practice nor teaching, but nature that imparts it to us? Or is there some other answer? This was the traditional form of the problem, known to us from the elder poets—Hesiod, Theognis, Simonides, and Pindar—and taken over from them by their successors the sophists. What is new for Plato in this discussion of it is that Socrates begins by asking what areté is itself, before he tries to discover how it is acquired.³

The logical meaning of this problem, to which the discussions of separate virtues in the smaller dialogues always brought us,

is explained with particular care and elaboration in *Meno*. More clearly than in any of them, Plato shows the reader exactly what are the implications of the question 'What is virtue in itself?' First of all, Socrates clarifies the distinction between virtue itself and the various forms which it takes. Meno has learnt from Gorgias his teacher to distinguish the virtues of a man and a woman, an adult and a child, a freeman and a slave.⁴ Socrates, however, turns away from this 'swarm of virtues' which Meno brings in instead of the one virtue underlying them all.⁵ For other purposes, he says, it might be useful to differentiate virtue by age, sex, and social position; but that cannot be done without first examining the one single Virtue in relation to the various people who have it and the various ways in which they employ it. That is its relative side, whereas we set out to investigate its absolute nature.⁶ The 'something' through which all the separate virtues can be seen to be not manifold, but one and the same, Socrates calls the *eidos*.⁷ It is 'that through which they are all the same', all virtues.⁸ Plato gives it the name *eidos*, 'shape', because it is only through looking at it that one can explain to an enquirer what virtue really is.⁹ The phrase 'looking at something', 'with one's eye fixed on something', (*ἀποβλέπων εἰς τι*), is common in Plato, and it vividly evokes what he means by *eidos* or *idea*. There is one single *eidos* of areté and one single *eidos* of other similar 'concepts'. (We should call them concepts, but Plato had not realized what that logical 'something' was, nor could he name it: so that we should do better to speak of 'entities'.) Such, then, are the *eidé* or Ideas of health, tallness, and strength.¹⁰ In *Gorgias*, and often elsewhere, these virtues (*aretai*) of the body are mentioned as parallel to the virtues of the soul.¹¹ Therefore these examples are carefully selected, and once more prove that the Platonic *eidos* is always worked out in relation to the problem of virtue. If we want to know what health is, we shall not try to decide if it is different in a man, in a woman, and so forth: we shall try to discover the *eidos* of health, which is identical everywhere. So also with stature and strength, the two other virtues of the body. Therefore the same applies to the virtues of the soul: there is no difference whether justice, for example, or prudence, occurs in a man or in a woman. It is always the same.¹²

The discussion of this problem is deliberately kept within an

elementary range, since its aim is only to explain the essential steps of Socrates' thought. Plato himself calls Socrates' conversation with Meno 'exercise (μελέτη) for answering the question about the nature of areté'.¹³ Its nature is described first as the simple absolute, in contrast to the many different relations in which virtue can stand to various types of men, and secondly as different from what Plato calls the parts of virtue—justice, prudence, and so forth.¹⁴ We have said that it makes no difference to the unity of virtue whether, for instance, it is the virtue of a man or a woman. But is not virtue, in so far as it is justice, different from virtue in so far as it is prudence? And is not the division of virtue into the different forms in which it appears apt to endanger the unity for which we are searching? In other words, is there not a genuine difference between justice, prudence, and courage? The smaller Socratic dialogues and *Protagoras* have shown us that the essential unity of all these parts of virtue is Socrates' fundamental problem.¹⁵ There he said he was looking for 'all virtue' or 'universal virtue'. In *Meno* he identifies the essence of virtue with the sum of all that can be said, not about any part of virtue, but about virtue 'as a whole' (κατὰ ὅλου).¹⁶ This is the first expression of a new logical idea—the universal (καθόλου)—and it makes its meaning incomparably clear. The *eidos* of good or of areté, of which Plato spoke, is quite simply this view of good 'as a whole'.¹⁷ The singular thing here is that Plato also describes this good 'as a whole' as that which really and effectively exists; and that prevents us from identifying it with our logical 'concept', the 'universal'. Neither in the earlier dialogues nor here in *Meno* is a real definition of areté ever given; and it is clear that when he asks for the nature of areté he does not want a definition for an answer. Instead of that, the parts of virtue are once more discussed, and, as always, the discussion leads back to the problem of virtue in itself, i.e. to the Idea. The answer to 'What is virtue?' is not a definition, but an Idea. The Idea is the goal towards which Plato's thought, with its dialectic movement, always proceeds. That is clear enough from his very earliest dialogues, and *Meno* makes it clearer still.¹⁸

If we take at its face value this analysis of the logical procedure of Socrates' dialectic, as given by Plato, its most distinguished interpreter, step after careful step in *Meno*, we shall

find it almost impossible to fall into the mistake so often made by philosophical students of it in classical and modern times. In a way, Aristotle began it all with his notorious assertion that Socrates was the first who tried to define logical concepts, whereas Plato hypostatized these universals as independent entities, and thus made a superfluous double of the real world.¹⁹ According to this, Plato's Ideas presuppose that logical universals had already been discovered. If so, they really were a bizarre duplication of the concepts existing in the human mind. Most modern logicians have followed Aristotle in this reconstruction of the mental process that led Plato to create the doctrine of Ideas.²⁰ But there is this point. If what we call concepts were already implied in Socrates' question 'What is X?' then Plato, in interpreting Socrates' question, went off in a quite different direction from what seems natural to modern logicians. They find the logical universal perfectly obvious and easy to understand; therefore they feel that what Plato's Ideas contain *over and above* logical concepts is merely a disturbing and enigmatic addition—for they assume that one must first grasp virtue-in-itself as a logical concept before going further and crediting this concept with existence in the ontological sense. However, *Meno* really contains no hint of this double aspect of the word Idea. Although *we* can clearly distinguish two aspects in Plato's Ideas, the logical universal and the ontological entity, the two sides form an absolute unity for him. The question 'What is virtue?' points straight to the οὐσία, to the essence and real being of virtue, and that is just the Idea of virtue.²¹ It is only in the later dialogues that the relation of the Idea to the manifold appearances (which Plato had theretofore rather vaguely called 'participation' of the individual in the universal) becomes a problem for him; and then there appear logical difficulties of which he had not been aware when he originally worked out the Ideas.

Thus, the misunderstandings of modern scholars have not arisen from misinterpreting Plato's words—which would scarcely be possible—so much as from ascribing to him later logical discoveries. Aristotle started with what seemed to him the obvious fact of logical universals. He saw, quite correctly, that Plato's Ideas contained logical universals. He inferred that Plato thought those universals in his Ideas were the only true and effective realities. This second step, Aristotle decided, must be

the reason for the mistakes made by Plato in defining the relation of the universal to the particulars. According to Aristotle, he made universals into ontological realities, and ascribed to them a separate existence apart from the things of sense. But the truth is that Plato did *not* take the second step, and hypostatize the universals: simply because he had not taken the first step—he had not abstracted universal concepts as such. It would be nearer the truth to say that, in his philosophy, the universal is still concealed in the Idea. It is, as Plato describes it, the penetration of thought from the phenomena to the true nature of areté, an act of intellectual vision, which sees the One in the Many. In *The Republic*, he himself calls the dialectic thought-process *synopsis*—seeing all the common characteristics in a number of phenomena which fall under one and the same Idea. That is the best word for the logical act described in *Meno*.²² On the other hand, dialectic method is here defined as ‘giving an explanation and taking it and testing it’.²³ That is an essential point, because it keeps us from believing that when he talks of the act of intellectual contemplation, he is thinking of something entirely unchallengeable by other people. A dialectic answer, he insists, must not only be true, but be supported by some admission which the speaker has obtained from his interlocutor. This presupposes that, through questions and answers, people can reach understanding of that which is seen by the act of intellectual contemplation. Later, in *The Republic* and the seventh Letter, it becomes clear that patient and laborious pursuit of this dialectic search for an agreement is the way to approach ‘vision’ of the Ideas.²⁴

It is difficult to say whether, beneath the analysis of the logical content of Socrates’ dialectic given in *Meno*, there is a system of general logical rules; and, if so, how far it is a complete system. It is indeed very probable that there is, even although all the results reached in *Meno* are ultimately produced by study of the one problem of virtue. Two significant facts should be noticed: the highly conscious skill in logic which Plato shows throughout the dialogue; and the large quantity of technical expressions he uses to describe his separate methodical procedures. Before attempting an ‘exercise’ like this,²⁵ one must know the rules that one wants to establish. Particularly notable

in this connexion is the skilful care Plato takes to explain logical processes by examples (*paradeigmata*) and to point out their function again and again. Thus the question 'What is virtue?' is explained by another sample question: 'What is a figure?' And the question whether justice is virtue or a virtue is explained by the parallel question 'Is a circle *the* figure or a figure?'²⁶ When Socrates says that other colours are quite as much colours as white is, and that a curve is a figure quite as much as a straight line is,²⁷ he is giving a logical explanation of what is meant by οὐσία (essence): for essence (as *Phaedo* also shows) does not admit the more or the less, and no figure is any more a figure than any other.²⁸ But in qualities or relations there can be a more and a less. Later, these same facts are laid down in Aristotle's doctrine of categories; but Plato knew them too, and, as *Meno* shows, he knew them from his youth.²⁹ (A logical analysis of his earlier dialogues from this point of view would be profoundly interesting.) It is then quite obvious that *Meno* does not contain his first fumbling attempts to understand the logical character of Socrates' dialectic, but that it is based on a full knowledge of logic. Socrates makes his enquiry with the help of a pupil who is a good average representative of the students at the Academy.³⁰ In this way Plato makes his readers conscious of the elementary logical problems without understanding which they cannot comprehend his dialogues. He knows perfectly well the limits imposed on his explanation of these technical matters by literary form; and still he manages to give even laymen an idea of the difficulty and the charm of this new range of problems.

Mathematics plays a special part in *Meno*. It is certain that Plato was always deeply interested in it, for even his early dialogues show his exact knowledge of mathematical problems. When he sketched the outlines of the new ethical and political techné in *Gorgias*, he modelled it on medicine. Now, in *Meno*, the model is mathematics. That is obviously true of his method. At *Meno*'s very first attempt to define the nature of areté, Socrates suggests that as a model he should try to define what a figure is.³¹ In the second part of the dialogue, when Socrates and Meno make a fresh start to define areté, mathematics is brought in once more. They still have not discovered what areté

is; but since, for educational reasons, they are particularly interested to know if it can be taught, Socrates now poses the problem by asking what sort of thing areté must be to be teachable. For this method of 'hypothesis' he appeals to the geometrician.³² (We can dispense with an analysis of the example he uses—inscribing a triangle within a circle.)

But mathematics is used not only to exemplify right method in details, but as a general illustration of the type of knowledge at which Socrates is aiming. The resemblance between the two is that both start from phenomena perceived by sense, which represent the thing which is really being studied; but that thing itself does not belong to the world of sense. It can be cognized only in the soul, and the organ of cognition is the logos. Socrates makes this clear to Meno by taking his slave, a young man with some talent but no education, and questioning him in front of his master, in such a way that the slave himself, using a rough diagram, discovers the theorem of the square on the hypotenuse.³³ The execution of this educational experiment is the high point of the dialogue. Plato is giving us a glimpse of the meditations which led him to decide that the source of scientific certainty was purely intellectual and apart from sensible phenomena. Of course, without the help of Socrates, the slave would not be capable of making all the steps which led him to understand that complicated mathematical system of facts; and he makes all the mistakes which a naïve person who starts all his thinking with sense-perception must inevitably make, before he grasps the real reason for things. But at last he realizes that things *must* be in this way and no other; and the realization comes solely from his own inner vision. As soon as he has clearly grasped the nature of the fundamental mathematical relations involved, that vision works with absolute and ineluctable conviction. And it is not the instruction he has received which produces his conviction, but his own reason and his insight into the necessity of things.³⁴

In order to adumbrate the nature of this intellectual vision, Plato introduces ideas from the world of religious myth. Since the Greeks could not imagine knowledge without an object known, and since, on the other hand, the human mind in its present state (exemplified by the mind of the slave doing the geometrical proof) has never seen or known anything like the

truth seen by the intellect, Plato interprets the potential existence of mathematical knowledge in the soul as a sight seen by it in a previous life.³⁵ The myth of the immortality of the soul and its migration through various bodies gives that supposition the form and colour needed by our mortal and finite imagination.³⁶ In *Meno* Plato cares less about assuming immortality as the necessary foundation for his concept of the moral personality³⁷ than about providing a background for his new theory that we are all born with knowledge in our souls. Without such a background, the innate knowledge would have to remain a vague and colourless supposition. Combined with the doctrine of pre-existence and transmigration, it opens up a number of unexpected avenues for thought and fancy; and the knowledge of good in itself, for which we must always strive, is shown to be perfectly independent of all external experience, and to have an almost religious value. It is mathematically clear; and yet it impinges on our human life like a ray from a higher universe. All through Plato's work mathematics takes this position: it is ancillary to the theory of Ideas. It is always the bridge which we must cross to understand them;³⁸ and it must have been so, even for Plato himself, when he set out to find a logical definition of the knowledge sought by Socrates and of its object.

With this, Plato felt he had fulfilled the purpose of Socrates' life; and at the same time he had taken a long step beyond him. Socrates had always finished by confessing his ignorance. Plato pushed impetuously on towards knowledge. And yet he took Socrates' ignorance to be a sign of his true greatness, for he thought it was the birth-pangs of a new kind of knowledge struggling to be born of Socrates' travailing mind. That knowledge was the vision within the soul, which *Meno* is the first attempt to define and describe, the vision of the Ideas. So it is not mere chance that in *Meno* Plato casts a new, positive light on his master's 'ignorance'. It was not that Plato himself had suddenly seen it in that light for the first time. But it had been impossible for him to show it to others thus until he could expound to them the strange character of that knowledge which drew all its certainty from within. When young Meno, at Socrates' invitation, attempts to define virtue, and ends with a false definition which (as Socrates explains to him) offends against a basic rule of dialectic, he says in his disappointment that others

have told him Socrates possesses the dangerous art of leading people into an impasse, from which they can go neither forward nor back.³⁸ He compares him with the electric eel, which numbs the hand that touches it. But Socrates turns the edge of the metaphor by saying that the eel must electrify itself too, for he himself is the victim of his *aporia*, his helplessness.³⁹ But Plato then uses his mathematical example, in the episode with the slave, to show that that helplessness becomes the true source of learning and understanding.^{39a} Obviously he sought, and found, in mathematics a perfect parallel for Socrates' *aporia*; and the example encouraged him by showing that there can be an *aporia* which is the most important precondition for the real solving of a difficulty.

The mathematical episode in *Meno* serves to show that *aporein*, 'to be helpless', is fertile ground for educational seed. It is the first stage on the way towards the positive knowledge of truth. In this gradual progress of the intellect towards complete self-awareness, the role of sensory experience is to awaken the soul to 'recollection' of the essence of things seen by it from eternity.^{39b} The explanation of that role is that Plato (as he maintains in other passages) thought sensory things were copies of the Ideas. In *Meno* the theory that knowledge in the Socratic sense is recollection is only outlined; so too is the doctrine of immortality and pre-existence, which is worked out in detail in *Phaedo*, *The Republic*, *Phaedrus*, and *The Laws*. The essential thing for Plato is the realization that 'truth about being exists in our soul'.⁴⁰ This realization sets in motion the process of searching and methodical advance to self-awareness. The search for truth is nothing but the opening-up of the soul, with the contents that naturally lie within it.⁴¹ This answers a yearning harboured deep within it, as Socrates hints.⁴² In *The Symposium* and elsewhere Plato elaborated this into his doctrine that Eros is the origin of all spiritual effort. Several times Socrates rejects the word 'teach' (*διδάσκειν*), saying that it does not describe the process correctly, since it seems to imply filling the soul with knowledge poured in from outside.⁴³ The slave recognized the mathematical theorem to be true, not because he was taught it, but because 'he himself produced the knowledge out of himself'.⁴⁴ As Plato in *Protagoras* and *Gorgias* explains the ethical outlines of his new *paideia* by putting it in contrast to the soph-

ists' ideal of education, so here in *Meno* he unfolds the profound conception of knowledge latent in Socrates' thought by contrasting it with the sophists' mechanical conception of the learning process. True learning is not passive reception, but a laborious search, which is possible only if the learner spontaneously takes part in it. Plato's whole description makes it clear that scientific or philosophical enquiry has a moral effect, and steels the character.⁴⁶ The Greek mind was active and energetic; and it looked within itself for the grounds defining its thought and action. These two qualities are perfectly expressed in Plato's *Meno*.

The Platonic conception of knowledge, after being elucidated in the mathematical episode, illuminates the conclusion of the dialogue, where the old problem, 'What is areté?' is once more attacked.⁴⁶ We have already said that for Plato the problem of the nature of knowledge is nothing but an offshoot of the problem of areté. Therefore it was to be expected that, after the discussion of knowledge was ended, the attempt would be made to learn something from it about the main question.⁴⁷ In the first section, before the discussion of knowledge, areté was defined with deliberate naïveté as the ability to acquire all kinds of good things.⁴⁸ That definition is still on the level of old-fashioned popular morality—and indeed Plato never breaks wholly away from tradition. This provisional definition was then brought closer to the rigorous ethics of philosophy by the addition of 'justly'.⁴⁹ But that does not define the relation of justice to the whole of virtue; it has not made the nature of virtue any clearer, because of the logical error of defining virtue by a part of itself (justice). Thus, it assumes that the object of enquiry is already known.⁵⁰

Socrates' definition that virtue is knowledge is not mentioned at this stage of the investigation; but it has always been obvious that the purpose of the discussion of knowledge in the middle of *Meno* helps to introduce Socrates' conception of knowledge in order to define areté. This definition now follows, in the form of the hypothetical definition mentioned above (p. 167): if virtue is teachable, it must be knowledge.⁵¹ Obviously none of the things so keenly desired by the world—health, beauty, wealth, power—really is good for men, if it is not accompanied by knowledge and reason.⁵² So this reason—phronésis, that tells

us which are true and which are false goods, and which of them we ought to choose—must be the knowledge we are looking for.⁵³ In *The Republic* Plato calls it the science of right choice and declares that the most important thing in life is to get this kind of knowledge.⁵⁴ It is built upon the unshakable foundation of the Ideas, the patterns of the highest values, which the soul finds within itself when it reflects upon the nature of the good, the just, etc.; and it has the power to determine and guide the will. This at least is the direction in which we must look for the answer to Socrates' question 'What is virtue?'

But Plato prefers to end the conversation with a truly Socratic aporia. We recognize in it the old dilemma which was the culmination of *Protagoras*: if virtue is teachable, it must be knowledge; and if so, Socrates alone can reveal the true meaning of education.⁵⁵ But experience seems to show that there are no teachers of virtue, for hitherto even the greatest Athenians, past and present, have been unable to transmit their own ability and character to their sons.⁵⁶ Socrates is perfectly willing to admit that they possess areté. But if it were knowledge, it should have been effective as an educational force. Since it is not, it must be based on 'right opinion',⁵⁷ which comes to men only by 'divine dispensation', *θεία μοῖρα*,⁵⁸ but which does not enable them to give account of their actions, because they do not possess 'understanding of the cause'.⁵⁹

So, at the end of *Meno*, we seem to be no further forward than we were in *Protagoras*. But it only seems so. Really we have come to see more and more of the new conception of knowledge at which we arrived, with the help of mathematical examples, in the central part of *Meno*. It is a new type of cognition, which cannot be learned from anyone else, but, if the thought in the soul of the enquirer is led on in the right way, arises of itself. The charming thing about the skill with which Plato arranges these Socratic dialogues is that, even here, when we have come near enough to grasp the result, he does not hand it to us, but makes us find it ourselves. But if the dilemma he proposed in *Protagoras*⁶⁰ were to find a solution, it would justify the educational claim made by Socrates there and in *Gorgias*. It is true that the new *paideia* is not teachable as the sophists understood teaching: so Socrates was right to say that he did not teach men—not by giving them information. But by asserting

that virtue must be knowledge and making his way towards that knowledge, he took the place of those false prophets of wisdom, as the only real educator. In the concluding section of *Meno* he is deliberately put in contrast with this background of sophistic paideia, because a new figure, Anytus, enters the conversation, and the talk turns to the right method of education. The problem with which the dialogue begins, and through which it develops Socrates' conception of knowledge, is, 'How does man acquire areté?' From the very beginning the discussion of it has been moving towards education. Like *Protagoras*, *Meno* ends with a dilemma. Since the sophists' teaching cannot make men virtuous, and since the areté of the statesmen who possess virtue naturally (φύσει) is incapable of being transmitted to others, areté seems to exist only by divine dispensation—unless a statesman (πολιτικός) can be found who can make someone else a statesman too. But that 'unless', so easily overlooked, really holds the solution of the dilemma: for we know from *Gorgias* that Plato paradoxically thought Socrates was the only true statesman, the statesman who made his fellow-citizens better. *Meno* has shown how his type of knowledge is evoked in the human soul. And so, at the end, it is evident that Socrates believes areté is *both* natural *and* teachable. But if these words are taken in the usual pedagogical sense, then it is *neither* teachable *nor* naturally implanted—unless it is innate like a talent or a disposition which cannot account for itself.

But Socrates' educational mission does not depend only on the methodical character of knowledge as he conceives it and as Plato explains it in *Meno*, with the assistance of dialectics and mathematics. The philosophical knowledge of the Ideas, born from the mind's reflection on its own inner cosmos, is shown in Plato's dialogues to be always the same thing in different lights: it is the true fulfilment of man's natural disposition. In *Euthydemus* Socrates' phronésis is described as the way to perfect happiness and to true success.⁶¹ There his gospel has an almost universal import, and it is certainly unthinkable without his consciousness that he is giving men a firm foothold in life by knowledge of the highest goods. In *Phaedo* its strength, rising above and looking beyond the world, appears in the serene, mystical, last hours of the master. There it is shown to be the philosopher's daily and nightly preparation for death.⁶² But this con-

stant intellectual arming of himself for dissolution leads to his highest triumph: his death is a sort of apotheosis, and he leaves his pupils with calm cheerfulness, like a truly free man. There knowledge is described as the soul's collecting itself ⁴³—one of the immortal psychological images invented by Plato: it 'concentrates' itself from among the dispersed senses, all pressing outwards to the sensory world, and bends to its own proper inward activity. *Phaedo* is the clearest expression of the contrast between man's spirit and his senses.

But the philosopher's 'practice' (his *askésis*), his surrender of his whole life to knowledge and to permanent concentration, was not meant by Plato as a symbol of a devoted but one-sided life. Because of the hugely preponderant importance which it gives to man's spiritual side over his corporeal, it is the most natural kind of life. The man who has accustomed his soul to leave his body in this life, and has thereby become sure of the eternity which he carries in his spirit, has lost all fear of death. In *Phaedo*, the soul of Socrates, like the swan of Apollo, soars up to the fields of pure Being before it leaves his body.⁴⁴ In *The Symposium* Plato shows him as the highest type of Dionysiac man. The knowledge of eternal beauty to whose vision he rises is the highest fulfilment of Eros, the basic impulse of human life, the great daemon which holds the cosmos together internally and externally. And finally, in *The Republic*, the philosopher's knowledge is revealed to be the source of all the legislative and social powers of the soul. So Socrates' philosophy is not only a new theory of cognition, but the most perfect vision, *θεωρία*, of the cosmos of human and daemonic powers. Knowledge is central in that picture, because knowledge of its meaning is the creative force which leads and orders everything. For Plato, knowledge is the guide to the realm of the divine.