Chapter 6: TOTALITARIAN JUSTICE

The analysis of Plato's sociology makes it easy to present his political programme. His fundamental demands can be expressed in either of two formulæ, the first corresponding to his idealist theory of change and rest, the second to his naturalism. The idealist formula is: *Arrest all political change!* Change is evil, rest divine [1]. All change can be arrested if the state is made an exact copy of its original, i.e. of the Form or Idea of the city. Should it be asked how this is practicable, we can reply with the naturalistic formula: *Back to nature!* Back to the original state of our forefathers, the primitive state founded in accordance with human nature, and therefore stable; back to the tribal patriarchy of the time before the Fall, to the natural class rule of the wise few over the ignorant many.

I believe that practically all the elements of Plato's political programme can be derived from these demands. They are, in turn, based upon his historicism; and they have to be combined with his sociological doctrines concerning the conditions for the stability of class rule. The principal elements I have in mind are:

(*A*) The strict division of the classes; i.e. the ruling class consisting of herdsmen and watch-dogs must be strictly separated from the human cattle.

(*B*) The identification of the fate of the state with that of the ruling class; the exclusive interest in this class, and in its unity; and subservient to this unity, the rigid rules for breeding and educating this class, and the strict supervision and collectivization of the interests of its members.

From these principal elements, others can be derived, for instance the following:

(*C*) The ruling class has a monopoly of things like military virtues and training, and of the right to carry arms and to receive education of any kind; but it is excluded from any participation in economic activities, and especially from earning money.

(*D*) There must be a censorship of all intellectual activities of the ruling class, and a continual propaganda aiming at moulding and unifying their minds. All innovation in education, legislation, and religion must be prevented or suppressed.

(*E*) The state must be self-sufficient. It must aim at economic autarchy; for otherwise the rulers would either be dependent upon traders, or become traders themselves. The first of these alternatives would undermine their power, the second their unity and the stability of the state.

This programme can, I think, be fairly described as totalitarian. And it is certainly founded upon a historicist sociology. But is that all? Are there no other features of Plato's programme, elements which are neither totalitarian nor founded upon historicism? What about Plato's ardent desire for Goodness and Beauty, or his love of Wisdom and of Truth? What about his demand that the wise, the philosophers, should rule? What about his hopes of making the citizens of his state virtuous as well as happy? And what about his demand that the state should be founded upon Justice? Even writers who criticize Plato believe that his political doctrine, in spite of certain similarities, is clearly distinguished from modern totalitarianism by these aims of his, the happiness of the citizens, and the rule of justice. Crossman, for instance, whose critical attitude can be gauged from his remark that 'Plato's philosophy is the most savage and most profound attack upon liberal ideas which history can show' [2], seems still to believe that Plato's plan is 'the building of a perfect state in which every citizen is really happy'. Another example is Joad who discusses the similarities between Plato's programme and that of fascism at some length, but who asserts that there are fundamental differences, since in Plato's best state 'the ordinary man . . achieves such happiness as appertains to his nature', and since this state is built upon the ideas of 'an absolute good and an absolute justice'.

In spite of such arguments I believe that Plato's political programme, far from being morally superior to totalitarianism, is fundamentally identical with it. I believe that the objections against this view are based upon an ancient and deep-rooted prejudice in favour of idealizing Plato. That Crossman has done much to point out and to destroy this inclination may be seen from this statement: 'Before the Great War . . Plato . . was rarely condemned outright as a reactionary, resolutely opposed to every principle of the liberal creed. Instead he was elevated to a higher rank, . . removed from practical life, dreaming of a transcendent City of God.' [3] Crossman himself,

however, is not free from that tendency which he so clearly exposes. It is interesting that this tendency could persist for such a long time in spite of the fact that Grote and Gomperz had pointed out the reactionary character of some doctrines of the *Republic* and the *Laws*. But even they did not see all the implications of these doctrines; they never doubted that Plato was, fundamentally, a humanitarian. And their adverse criticism was ignored, or interpreted as a failure to understand and to appreciate Plato who was by Christians considered a 'Christian before Christ', and by revolutionaries a revolutionary. This kind of complete faith in Plato is undoubtedly still dominant, and Field, for instance, finds it necessary to warn his readers that 'we shall misunderstand Plato entirely if we think of him as a revolutionary thinker'. This is, of course, very true; and it would clearly be pointless if the tendency to make of Plato a revolutionary thinker, or at least a progressivist, were not fairly widespread. But Field himself has the same kind of faith in Plato; for when he goes on to say that Plato was 'in strong opposition to the new and subversive tendencies' of his time, then surely he accepts too readily Plato's testimony for the subversiveness of these new tendencies. The enemies of freedom have always charged its defenders with subversion. And nearly always they have succeeded in persuading the guileless and well-meaning.

The idealization of the great idealist permeates not only the interpretations of Plato's writings, but also the translations. Drastic remarks of Plato's which do not fit the translator's views of what a humanitarian should say are frequently either toned down or misunderstood. This tendency begins with the translation of the very title of Plato's so-called 'Republic'. What comes first to our mind when hearing this title is that the author must be a liberal, if not a revolutionary. But the title 'Republic' is, quite simply, the English form of the Latin rendering of a Greek word that had no associations of this kind, and whose proper English translation would be 'The Constitution' or 'The City State' or 'The State'. The traditional translation 'The Republic' has undoubtedly contributed to the general conviction that Plato could not have been a reactionary.

In view of all that Plato says about Goodness and Justice and the other Ideas mentioned, my thesis that his political demands are purely totalitarian and anti-humanitarian needs to be defended. In order to undertake this defence, I shall, for the next four chapters, break off the analysis of historicism, and concentrate upon a critical examination of the ethical Ideas mentioned, and of their part in Plato's political demands. In the present chapter, I shall examine the Idea of Justice; in the three following chapters, the doctrine that the wisest and best should rule, and the Ideas of Truth, Wisdom, Goodness, and Beauty.

I

What do we really mean when we speak of 'Justice'? I do not think that verbal questions of this kind are particularly important, or that it is possible to make a definite answer to them, since such terms are always used in various senses. However, I think that most of us, especially those whose general outlook is humanitarian, mean something like this: (*a*) an equal distribution of the burden of citizenship, i.e. of those limitations of freedom which are necessary in social life[4]; (*b*) equal treatment of the citizens before the law, provided, of course, that (*c*) the laws show neither favour nor disfavour towards individual citizens or groups or classes; (*d*) impartiality of the courts of justice; and (*e*) an equal share in the advantages (and not only in the burden) which their membership of the state may offer to the citizen. If Plato had meant by 'justice' anything of this kind, then my claim that his programme is purely totalitarian would certainly be wrong and all those would be right who believe that Plato's politics rested upon an acceptable humanitarian basis. But the fact is that he meant by 'justice' something entirely different.

What did Plato mean by 'justice'? I assert that in the *Republic* he used the term 'just' as a synonym for 'that which is in the interest of the best state'. And what is the interest of this best state? To arrest all change, by the maintenance of a rigid class division and class rule. If I am right in this interpretation, then we should have to say that Plato's demand for justice leaves his political programme at the level of totalitarianism; and we should have to conclude that we must guard against the danger of being impressed by mere words.

Justice is the central topic of the *Republic*; in fact, 'On Justice' is its traditional sub-title. In his enquiry into the nature of justice, Plato makes use of the method mentioned[5] in the last chapter; he first tries to search for this Idea in the state, and then attempts to apply the result to the individual. One cannot say that Plato's question 'What is justice?' quickly finds an

answer, for it is only given in the Fourth Book. The considerations which lead up to it will be analysed more fully later in this chapter. Briefly, they are these.

The city is founded upon human nature, its needs, and its limitations [6]. 'We have stated, and, you will remember, repeated over and over again that each man in our city should do one work only; namely, that work for which his nature is naturally best fitted.' From this Plato concludes that everyone should mind his own business; that the carpenter should confine himself to carpentering, the shoemaker to making shoes. Not much harm is done, however, if two workers change their natural places. 'But should anyone who is by nature a worker (or else a member of the money-earning class) . . manage to get into the warrior class; or should a warrior get into the class of the guardians, without being worthy of it; . . then this kind of change and of underhand plotting would mean the downfall of the city.' From this argument which is closely related to the principle that the carrying of arms should be a class prerogative, Plato draws his final conclusion that any changing or intermingling within the three classes must be injustice, and that the opposite, therefore, is justice: 'When each class in the city minds its own business, the money-earning class as well as the auxiliaries and the guardians, then this will be justice.' This conclusion is reaffirmed and summed up a little later: 'The city is just . . if each of its three classes attends to its own work.' But this statement means that Plato identifies justice with the principle of class rule and of class privilege. For the principle that every class should attend to its own business means, briefly and bluntly, that *the state is just if the ruler rules, if the worker works, and* [7] *if the slave slaves.*

It will be seen that Plato's concept of justice is fundamentally different from our ordinary view as analysed above. Plato calls class privilege 'just', while we usually mean by justice rather the absence of such privilege. But the difference goes further than that. We mean by justice some kind of equality in the treatment of *individuals*, while Plato considers justice not as a relationship between individuals, but as a property of the *whole state*, based upon a relationship between its classes. The state is just if it is healthy, strong, united—stable.

II

But was Plato perhaps right? Does 'justice' perhaps mean what he says? I do not intend to discuss such a question. If anyone should hold that 'justice' means the unchallenged rule of one class, then I should simply reply that I am all for injustice. In other words, I believe that nothing depends upon words, and everything upon our practical demands or upon the proposals for framing our policy which we decide to adopt. Behind Plato's definition of justice stands, fundamentally, his demand for a totalitarian class rule, and his decision to bring it about.

But was he not right in a different sense? Did his idea of justice perhaps correspond to the Greek way of using this word? Did the Greeks perhaps mean by 'justice', something holistic, like the 'health of the state', and is it not utterly unfair and unhistorical to expect from Plato an anticipation of our modern idea of justice as equality of the citizens before the law? This question, indeed, has been answered in the affirmative, and the claim has been made that Plato's holistic idea of 'social justice' is characteristic of the traditional Greek outlook, of the 'Greek genius' which 'was not, like the Roman, specifically legal', but rather 'specifically metaphysical' [8]. But this claim is untenable. As a matter of fact, the Greek way of using the word 'justice' was indeed surprisingly similar to our own individualistic and equalitarian usage.

In order to show this, I may first refer to Plato himself who, in the dialogue *Gorgias* (which is earlier than the *Republic*), describes the view that 'justice is equality' as one held by the great mass of the people, and as one which agrees not only with 'convention', but with 'nature itself'. I may further quote Aristotle, another opponent of equalitarianism, who, under the influence of Plato's naturalism, elaborated among other things the theory that some men are by nature born to slave [9]. Nobody could be less interested in spreading an equalitarian and individualistic interpretation of the term 'justice'. But when speaking of the judge, whom he describes as 'a personification of that which is just', Aristotle says that it is the task of the judge to 'restore equality'. He tells us that 'all men think justice to be a kind of equality', an equality, namely, which 'pertains to persons'. He even thinks (but here he is wrong) that the Greek word for 'justice' is to be derived from a root that means 'equal division'. (The view that 'justice' means a kind of 'equality in the division of spoils and honours to the citizens' agrees with Plato's views in the *Laws*, where two kinds of equality in the distribution of spoils and honours are distinguished—'numerical' or 'arithmetical'

equality and ' proportionate ' equality ; the second of which takes account of the degree in which the persons in question possess virtue, breeding, and wealth—and where this proportionate equality is said to constitute ' political justice '.) And when Aristotle discusses the principles of democracy, he says that ' democratic justice is the application of the principle of arithmetical equality (as distinct from proportionate equality) '. All this is certainly not merely his personal impression of the meaning of justice, nor is it perhaps only a description of the way in which the word was used, after Plato, under the influence of the *Gorgias* and the *Laws* ; it is, rather, the expression of a universal and ancient as well as popular use of the word ' justice '.[10]

In view of this evidence, we must say, I think, that the holistic and anti-equalitarian interpretation of justice in the *Republic* was an innovation, and that Plato attempted to present his totalitarian class rule as ' just ' while people generally meant by ' justice ' the exact opposite.

This result is startling, and opens up a number of questions. Why did Plato claim, in the *Republic*, that justice meant inequality if, in general usage, it meant equality ? To me the only likely reply seems to be that he wanted to make propaganda for his totalitarian state by persuading the people that it was the ' just ' state. But was such an attempt worth his while, considering that it is not words but what we mean by them that matters ? Of course it was worth while ; this can be seen from the fact that he fully succeeded in persuading his readers, down to our own day, that he was candidly advocating justice, i.e. that justice they were striving for. And it is a fact that he thereby spread doubt and confusion among equalitarians and individualists who, under the influence of his authority, began to ask themselves whether his idea of justice was not truer and better than theirs. Since the word ' justice ' symbolizes to us an aim of such importance, and since so many are prepared to endure anything for it, and to do all in their power for its realization, the enlistment of these humanitarian forces, or at least, the paralysing of equalitarianism, was certainly an aim worthy of being pursued by a believer in totalitarianism. But was Plato aware that justice meant so much to men ? He was ; for he writes in the *Republic* : ' When a man has committed an injustice, . . is it not true that his courage refuses to be stirred ? . . But when he believes that he has suffered injustice, does not his vigour and his wrath flare up at once ? And is it not equally true that when fighting on the side

of what he believes to be just, he can endure hunger and cold, and any kind of hardship ? And does he not hold on until he conquers, persisting in his exalted state until he has either achieved his aim, or perished ? ' [11]

Reading this, we cannot doubt that Plato knew the power of faith, and, above all, of a faith in justice. Nor can we doubt that the *Republic* must tend to pervert this faith, and to replace it by a directly opposite faith. And in the light of the available evidence, it seems to me most probable that Plato knew very well what he was doing. Equalitarianism was his arch-enemy, and he was out to destroy it ; no doubt in the sincere belief that it was a great evil and a great danger. But his attack upon equalitarianism was not an honest attack. Plato did not dare to face the enemy openly.

I proceed to present the evidence in support of this contention.

III

The *Republic* is probably the most elaborate monograph on justice ever written. It examines a variety of views about justice, and it does this in a way which leads us to believe that Plato omitted none of the more important theories known to him. In fact, Plato clearly implies [12] that because of his vain attempts to track it down among the current views, a new search for justice is necessary. Yet in his survey and discussion of the current theories, the view that justice is equality before the law (' *isonomy* ') is never mentioned. This omission can be explained only in two ways. Either he overlooked the equalitarian theory [13], or he purposely avoided it. The first possibility seems very unlikely if we consider the care with which the *Republic* is composed, and the necessity for Plato to analyse the theories of his opponents if he was to make a forceful presentation of his own. But this possibility appears even more improbable if we consider the wide popularity of the equalitarian theory. We need not, however, rely upon merely probable arguments since it can be easily shown that Plato was not only acquainted with the equalitarian theory but well aware of its importance when he wrote the *Republic*. As already mentioned in this chapter (in section II), and as will be shown in detail later (in section VIII), equalitarianism played a considerable rôle in the earlier *Gorgias* where it is even defended ; and in spite of the fact that the merits or demerits of equalitarianism are nowhere seriously discussed in the *Republic*, Plato did not change his mind regarding its influence, for the *Republic*

itself testifies to its popularity. It is there alluded to as a very popular democratic belief; but it is treated only with scorn, and all we hear about it consists of a few sneers and pin-pricks [14], well matched with the abusive attack upon Athenian democracy, and made at a place where justice is not the topic of the discussion. The possibility that the equalitarian theory of justice was overlooked by Plato is therefore ruled out, and so is the possibility that he did not see that a discussion of an influential theory diametrically opposed to his own was requisite. The fact that his silence in the *Republic* is broken only by a few jocular remarks (apparently he thought them too good to be suppressed [15]) can be explained only as a conscious refusal to discuss it. In view of all that, I do not see how Plato's method of impressing upon his readers the belief that all important theories have been examined can be reconciled with the standards of intellectual honesty; though we must add that his failure is undoubtedly due to his complete devotion to a cause in whose goodness he firmly believed.

In order to appreciate fully the implications of Plato's practically unbroken silence on this issue, we must first see clearly that the equalitarian movement as Plato knew it represented all he hated, and that his own theory, in the *Republic* and in all later works, was largely a reply to the powerful challenge of the new equalitarianism and humanitarianism. To show this, I shall discuss the main principles of the humanitarian movement, and contrast them with the corresponding principles of Platonic totalitarianism.

The humanitarian theory of justice makes three main demands or proposals, namely (*a*) the equalitarian principle proper, i.e. the proposal to eliminate 'natural' privileges, (*b*) the general principle of individualism, and (*c*) the principle that it should be the task and the purpose of the state to protect the freedom of its citizens. To each of these political demands or proposals there corresponds a directly opposite principle of Platonism, namely (a^1) the principle of natural privilege, (b^1) the general principle of holism or collectivism, and (c^1) the principle that it should be the task and the purpose of the individual to maintain, and to strengthen, the stability of the state.—I shall discuss these three points in order, devoting to each of them one of the sections IV, V, and VI of this chapter.

IV

Equalitarianism proper is the demand that the citizens of the state should be treated impartially. It is the demand that birth, family connection, or wealth must not influence those who administer the law to the citizens. In other words, it does not recognize any 'natural' privileges, although certain privileges may be conferred by the citizens upon those they trust.

This equalitarian principle had been admirably formulated by Pericles a few years before Plato's birth, in an oration which has been preserved by Thucydides [16]. It will be quoted more fully in chapter 10, but two of its sentences may be given here: 'Our laws', said Pericles, 'afford equal justice to all alike in their private disputes, but we do not ignore the claims of excellence. When a citizen distinguishes himself, then he is preferred to the public service, not as a matter of privilege, but as a reward for merit; and poverty is not a bar. . .' These sentences express some of the fundamental aims of the great equalitarian movement which, as we have seen, did not even shrink from attacking slavery. In Pericles' own generation, this movement was represented by Euripides, Antiphon, and Hippias, who have all been quoted in the last chapter, and also by Herodotus [17]. In Plato's generation, it was represented by Alcidamas and Lycophron, both quoted above; another supporter was Antisthenes, who had been one of Socrates' closest friends.

Plato's principle of justice was, of course, diametrically opposed to all this. He demanded natural privileges for the natural leaders. But how did he contest the equalitarian principle? And how did he establish his own demands?

It will be remembered from the last chapter that some of the best-known formulations of the equalitarian demands were couched in the impressive but questionable language of 'natural rights', and that some of their representatives argued in favour of these demands by pointing out the 'natural', i.e. biological, equality of men. We have seen that the argument is irrelevant; that men are equal in some important respects, and unequal in others; and that normative demands cannot be derived from this fact, or from any other fact. It is therefore interesting to note that the naturalist argument was not used by all equalitarians, and that Pericles, for one, did not even allude to it [18].

Plato quickly found that naturalism was a weak spot within the equalitarian doctrine, and he took the fullest advantage of

this weakness. To tell men that they are equal has a certain sentimental appeal. But this appeal is small compared with that made by a propaganda that tells them that they are superior to others, and that others are inferior to them. Are you naturally equal to your servants, to your slaves, to the manual worker who is no better than an animal? The very question is ridiculous! Plato seems to have been the first to appreciate the possibilities of this reaction, and to oppose contempt, scorn, and ridicule to the claim to natural equality. This explains why he was anxious to impute the naturalistic argument even to those of his opponents who did not use it; in the *Menexenus*, a parody of Pericles' oration, he therefore insists on linking together the claims to equal laws and to natural equality: 'The basis of our constitution is equality of birth', he says ironically. '"We are all brethren, and are all children of one mother; . . and the natural equality of birth induces us to strive for equality before the law."' [19]

Later, in the *Laws*, Plato summarizes his reply to equalitarianism in the formula: 'Equal treatment of unequals must beget inequity' [20]; and this was developed by Aristotle into the formula 'Equality for equals, inequality for unequals'. This formula indicates what may be termed the standard objection to equalitarianism; the objection that equality would be excellent if only men were equal, but that it is manifestly impossible since they are not equal, and since they cannot be made equal. This apparently very realistic objection is, in fact, most unrealistic, for political privileges have never been founded upon natural differences of character. And, indeed, Plato does not seem to have had much confidence in this objection when writing the *Republic*, for it is used there only in one of his sneers at democracy when he says that it 'distributes equality to equals and unequals alike.' [21] Apart from this remark, he prefers not to argue against equalitarianism, but to forget it.

Summing up, it can be said that Plato never underrated the significance of the equalitarian theory, supported as it was by a man like Pericles, but that, in the *Republic*, he did not treat it at all; he attacked it, but not squarely and openly.

But how did he try to establish his own anti-equalitarianism, his principle of natural privilege? In the *Republic*, he proffered three different arguments, though two of them hardly deserve the name. The first [22] is the surprising remark that, since all the other three virtues of the state have been examined, the remaining

fourth, that of 'minding one's own business', must be 'justice'. I am reluctant to believe that this was meant as an argument; but it must be, for Plato's leading speaker, 'Socrates', introduces it by asking: 'Do you know how I arrive at this conclusion?' The second argument is more interesting, for it is an attempt to show that his anti-equalitarianism can be derived from the ordinary (i.e. equalitarian) view that justice is impartiality. I quote the passage in full. Remarking that the rulers of the city will also be its judges, 'Socrates' says [23]: 'And will it not be the aim of their jurisdiction that no man shall take what belongs to another, and shall be deprived of what is his own?'—'Yes', is the reply of 'Glaucon', the interlocutor, 'that will be their intention.'—'Because that would be just?'—'Yes.'—'Accordingly, to keep and to practise what belongs to us and is our own will be generally agreed upon to be justice.' Thus it is established that 'to keep and to practise what is one's own' is the principle of just jurisdiction, according to our ordinary ideas of justice. Here the second argument ends, giving way to the third (to be analysed below) which leads to the conclusion that it is justice to keep one's own station (or to do one's own business), i.e. the station (or the business) of one's own class or caste.

The sole purpose of this second argument is to impress upon the reader that 'justice', in the ordinary sense of the word, requires us to keep our own station, since we should always keep what belongs to us. That is to say, Plato wishes his readers to draw the inference: 'It is just to keep and to practise what is one's own. My place (or my business) is my own. Thus it is just for me to keep to my place (or to practise my business).' This is about as sound as the argument: 'It is just to keep and to practise what is one's own. This plan of stealing your money is my own. Thus it is just for me to keep to my plan, and to put it into practice, i.e. to steal your money.' It is clear that the inference which Plato wishes us to draw is nothing but a crude juggle with the meaning of the term 'one's own'. (For the problem is whether justice demands that everything which is in some sense 'our own', e.g. 'our own' class, should therefore be treated, not only as our possession, but as our inalienable possession. But in such a principle Plato himself does not believe; for it would clearly make a transition to communism impossible. And what about keeping our own children?) This crude juggle is Plato's way of establishing what Adam calls 'a point of contact between his own view of Justice and the popular . . meaning of

the word '. This is how the greatest philosopher of all time tries to convince us that he has discovered the true nature of justice.

The third and last argument which Plato offers is much more serious. It is an appeal to the principle of holism or collectivism, and is connected with the principle that it is the purpose of the individual to maintain the stability of the state. It will therefore be discussed, in this analysis, below, in sections v and vi.

But before proceeding to these points, I wish to draw attention to the ' preface ' which Plato places before his description of the ' discovery ' which we are here examining. It must be considered in the light of the observations we have made so far. Viewed in this light, the ' lengthy preface '—this is how Plato himself describes it—appears as an ingenious attempt to prepare the reader for the ' discovery of justice ' by making him believe that there is an argument going on when in reality he is only faced with a display of dramatic devices, designed to soothe his critical faculties.

Having discovered wisdom as the virtue proper to the guardians and courage as that proper to the auxiliaries, ' Socrates ' announces his intention of making a final effort to discover justice. ' Two things are left ' [24], he says, ' which we shall have to discover in the city : temperance, and finally that other thing which is the main object of all our investigations, namely justice.' —' Exactly ', says Glaucon. Socrates now suggests that temperance shall be dropped. But Glaucon protests and Socrates gives in, saying that ' it would be dishonest if I were to refuse '. This little dispute prepares the reader for the re-introduction of justice, suggests to him that Socrates possesses the means for its ' discovery ', and reassures him that Glaucon is carefully watching Plato's intellectual honesty in conducting the argument which he, the reader himself, need not therefore watch at all [25].

Socrates next proceeds to discuss temperance, which he discovers to be the only virtue proper to the workers. (By the way, the much debated question whether Plato's ' justice ' is distinguishable from his ' temperance ' can be easily answered. Justice means *to keep one's place* ; temperance means *to know one's place*—that is to say, more precisely, to be satisfied with it. What other virtue could be proper to the workers who fill their bellies like the beasts ?) When temperance has been discovered, Socrates asks : ' And what about the last principle ? Obviously it will be justice.'—' Obviously ', replies Glaucon.

' Now, my dear Glaucon ', says Socrates, ' we must, like hunters, surround her cover and keep a close watch, and we must not allow her to escape, and to get away ; for surely, justice must be somewhere near this spot. You had better look out and search the place. And if you are the first to see her, then give me a shout ! ' Glaucon, like the reader, is of course unable to do anything of the sort, and implores Socrates to take the lead. ' Then offer your prayers with me ', says Socrates, ' and follow me.' But even Socrates finds the ground ' hard to traverse, since it is covered with underwood ; it is dark, and difficult to explore . . But ', he says, ' we must go on with it '. And instead of protesting ' Go on with what ? With our exploration, i.e. with our argument ? But we have not even started. There has not been a glimmer of sense in what you have said so far ', Glaucon, and the naïve reader with him replies meekly : ' Yes, we must go on.' Now Socrates reports that he has ' got a glimpse ' (we have not), and gets excited. ' Hurray ! Hurray ! ' he cries, ' Glaucon ! There seems to be a track ! I think now that the quarry will not escape us ! '—' That is good news ', replies Glaucon. ' Upon my word ', says Socrates, ' we have made utter fools of ourselves. What we were looking for at a distance, has been lying at our very feet all the time ! And we never saw it ! ' With exclamations and repeated assertions of this kind, Socrates continues for a good while, interrupted by Glaucon, who gives expression to the reader's feelings and asks Socrates what he has found. But when Socrates says only ' We have been talking of it all the time, without realizing that we were actually describing it ', Glaucon expresses the reader's impatience and says : ' This preface gets a bit lengthy ; remember that I want to hear what it is all about.' And only then does Plato proceed to proffer the two ' arguments ' which I have outlined.

Glaucon's last remark may be taken as an indication that Plato was conscious of what he was doing in this ' lengthy preface '. I cannot interpret it as anything but an attempt—it proved to be highly successful—to lull the reader's critical faculties, and, by means of a dramatic display of verbal fireworks, to divert his attention from the intellectual poverty of this masterly piece of dialogue. One is tempted to think that Plato knew its weakness, and how to hide it.

v

The problem of individualism and collectivism is closely related to that of equality and inequality. Before going

on to discuss it, a few terminological remarks seem to be necessary.

The term 'individualism' can be used (according to the *Oxford Dictionary*) in two different ways: (*a*) in opposition to collectivism, and (*b*) in opposition to altruism. There is no other word to express the former meaning, but several synonyms for the latter, for example 'egoism' or 'selfishness'. This is why in what follows I shall use the term 'individualism' *exclusively* in sense (*a*), using terms like 'egoism' or 'selfishness' if sense (*b*) is intended. A little table may be useful:

(*a*) *Individualism*	is opposed to	(*a'*) *Collectivism.*
(*b*) *Egoism*	is opposed to	(*b'*) *Altruism*

Now these four terms describe certain attitudes, or demands, or decisions, or proposals for codes of normative laws. Though necessarily vague, they can, I believe, be easily illustrated by examples and so be used with a precision sufficient for our present purpose. Let us begin with collectivism [26], since this attitude is already familiar to us from our discussion of Plato's holism. His demand that the individual should subserve the interests of the whole, whether this be the universe, the city, the tribe, the race, or any other collective body, was illustrated in the last chapter by a few passages. To quote one of these again, but more fully [27]: 'The part exists for the sake of the whole, but the whole does not exist for the sake of the part. . . You are created for the sake of the whole and not the whole for the sake of you.' This quotation not only illustrates holism and collectivism, but also conveys its strong emotional appeal of which Plato was conscious (as can be seen from the preamble to the passage.) The appeal is to various feelings, e.g. the longing to belong to a group or a tribe; and one factor in it is the moral appeal for altruism and against selfishness. Plato suggests that if you cannot sacrifice your interests for the sake of the whole, then you are selfish.

Now a glance at our little table will show that this is not so. Collectivism is not opposed to egoism, nor is it identical with altruism or unselfishness. Collective or group egoism, for instance class egoism, is a very common thing (Plato knew [28] this very well), and this shows clearly enough that collectivism as such is not opposed to selfishness. On the other hand, an anti-collectivist, i.e. an individualist, can, at the same time, be an altruist; he can be ready to make sacrifices in order to help other individuals. One of the best examples of this attitude is perhaps Dickens. It would be difficult to say which is the stronger, his passionate

hatred of selfishness or his passionate interest in individuals with all their human weaknesses; and this attitude is combined with a dislike, not only of what we now call collective bodies or collectives [29], but even of a genuinely devoted altruism, if directed towards anonymous groups rather than concrete individuals. (I remind the reader of Mrs. Jellyby in *Bleak House*, 'a lady devoted to public duties'.) These illustrations, I think, explain sufficiently clearly the meaning of our four terms; and they show that any of the terms in our table can be combined with either of the two terms that stand in the other line (which gives four possible combinations).

Now it is interesting that for Plato, and for most Platonists, an altruistic individualism (as for instance that of Dickens) cannot exist. According to Plato, the only alternative to collectivism is egoism; he simply identifies all altruism with collectivism, and all individualism with egoism. This is not a matter of terminology, of mere words, for instead of four possibilities, Plato recognized only two. This has created considerable confusion in speculation on ethical matters, even down to our own day.

Plato's identification of individualism with egoism furnishes him with a powerful weapon for his defence of collectivism as well as for his attack upon individualism. In defending collectivism, he can appeal to our humanitarian feeling of unselfishness; in his attack, he can brand all individualists as selfish, as incapable of devotion to anything but themselves. This attack, although aimed by Plato against individualism in our sense, i.e. against the rights of human individuals, reaches of course only a very different target, egoism. But this difference is constantly ignored by Plato and by most Platonists.

Why did Plato try to attack individualism? I think he knew very well what he was doing when he trained his guns upon this position, for individualism, perhaps even more than equalitarianism, was a stronghold in the defences of the new humanitarian creed. The emancipation of the individual was indeed the great spiritual revolution which had led to the breakdown of tribalism and to the rise of democracy. Plato's uncanny sociological intuition shows itself in the way in which he invariably discerned the enemy wherever he met him.

Individualism was part of the old intuitive idea of justice. That justice is not, as Plato would have it, the health and harmony of the state, but rather a certain way of treating individuals, is

emphasized by Aristotle, it will be remembered, when he says 'justice is something that pertains to persons' [30]. This individualistic element had been emphasized by the generation of Pericles. Pericles himself made it clear that the laws must guarantee equal justice 'to all alike in their private disputes'; but he went further. 'We do not feel called upon', he said, 'to nag at our neighbour if he chooses to go his own way.' (Compare this with Plato's remark [31] that the state does not produce men 'for the purpose of letting them loose, each to go his own way . .'.) Pericles insists that this individualism must be linked with altruism: 'We are taught . . never to forget that we must protect the injured'; and his speech culminates in a description of the young Athenian who grows up 'to a happy versatility, and to self-reliance.'

This individualism, united with altruism, has become the basis of our western civilization. It is the central doctrine of Christianity ('love your neighbour', say the Scriptures, not 'love your tribe'); and it is the core of all ethical doctrines which have grown from our civilization and stimulated it. It is also, for instance, Kant's central practical doctrine ('always recognize that human individuals are ends, and do not use them as mere means to your ends'). There is no other thought which has been so powerful in the moral development of man.

Plato was right when he saw in this doctrine the enemy of his caste state; and he hated it more than any other of the 'subversive' doctrines of his time. In order to show this even more clearly, I shall quote two passages from the *Laws* [32] whose truly astonishing hostility towards the individual is, I think, too little appreciated. The first of them is famous as a reference to the *Republic*, whose 'community of women and children and property' it discusses. Plato describes here the constitution of the *Republic* as 'the highest form of the state'. In this highest state, he tells us, 'there is common property of wives, of children, and of all chattels. And everything possible has been done to eradicate from our life everywhere and in every way all that is private and individual. So far as it can be done, even those things which nature herself has made private and individual have somehow become the common property of all. Our very eyes and ears and hands seem to see, to hear, and to act, as if they belonged not to individuals but to the community. All men are moulded to be unanimous in the utmost degree in bestowing praise and blame, and they even rejoice and grieve about the same things, and at the same time. And all the laws are perfected for unifying the city to the utmost.' Plato goes on to say that 'no man can find a better criterion of the highest excellence of a state than the principles just expounded'; and he describes such a state as 'divine', and as the 'model' or 'pattern' or 'original' of the state, i.e. as its Form or Idea. This is Plato's own view of the *Republic*, expressed at a time when he had given up hope of realizing his political ideal in all its glory.

The second passage, also from the *Laws*, is, if possible, even more outspoken. It should be emphasized that the passage deals primarily with military expeditions and with military discipline, but Plato leaves no doubt that these same militarist principles should be adhered to not only in war, but also 'in peace, and from the earliest childhood on'. Like other totalitarian militarists and admirers of Sparta, Plato urges that the all-important requirements of military discipline must be paramount, even in peace, and that they must determine the whole life of all citizens; for not only the full citizens (who are all soldiers) and the children, but also the very beasts must spend their whole life in a state of permanent and total mobilization[33]. 'The greatest principle of all', he writes, 'is that nobody, whether male or female, should ever be without a leader. Nor should the mind of anybody be habituated to letting him do anything at all on his own initiative, neither out of zeal, nor even playfully. But in war and in the midst of peace—to his leader he shall direct his eye, and follow him faithfully. And even in the smallest matters he should stand under leadership. For example, he should get up, or move, or wash, or take his meals [34] . . only if he has been told to do so. . . In a word, he should teach his soul, by long habit, never to dream of acting independently, and to become utterly incapable of it. In this way the life of all will be spent in total community. There is no law, nor will there ever be one, which is superior to this, or better and more effective in ensuring salvation and victory in war. *And in times of peace, and from the earliest childhood on* should it be fostered—this habit of ruling others, and of being ruled by others. And every trace of anarchy should be utterly eradicated from the life of all men, and even of the wild beasts which are subject to men.'

These are strong words. Never was a man more in earnest in his hostility towards the individual. And this hatred is deeply rooted in the fundamental dualism of Plato's philosophy; he hated the individual and his freedom just as he hated the varying

particular experiences, the variety of the changing world of sensible things. In the field of politics, the individual is to Plato the Evil One himself.

This attitude, anti-humanitarian and anti-Christian as it is, has been consistently idealized. It has been interpreted as humane, as unselfish, as altruistic, and as Christian. E. B. England, for instance, calls [35] the first of these two passages from the *Laws* 'a vigorous denunciation of selfishness'. Similar words are used by Barker, when discussing Plato's theory of justice. He says that Plato's aim was 'to replace selfishness and civil discord by harmony', and that 'the old harmony of the interests of the State and the individual . . is thus restored in the teachings of Plato; but restored on a new and higher level, because it has been elevated into a conscious sense of harmony'. Such statements and countless similar ones can be easily explained if we remember Plato's identification of individualism with egoism; for all these Platonists believe that anti-individualism is the same as selflessness. This illustrates my contention that this identification had the effect of a successful piece of anti-humanitarian propaganda, and that it has confused speculation on ethical matters down to our own time. But we must also realize that those who, deceived by this identification and by high-sounding words, exalt Plato's reputation as a teacher of morals and announce to the world that his ethics is the nearest approach to Christianity before Christ, are preparing the way for totalitarianism and especially for a totalitarian, anti-Christian interpretation of Christianity. And this is a dangerous thing, for there have been times when Christianity was dominated by totalitarian ideas. There was an Inquisition; and, in another form, it may come again.

It may therefore be worth while to mention some further reasons why guileless people have persuaded themselves of the humaneness of Plato's intentions. One is that when preparing the ground for his collectivist doctrines, Plato usually begins by quoting a maxim or proverb (which seems to be of Pythagorean origin): 'Friends have in common all things they possess.' [63] This is, undoubtedly, an unselfish, high-minded and excellent sentiment. Who could suspect that an argument starting from such a commendable assumption would arrive at a wholly anti-humanitarian conclusion? Another and important point is that there are many genuinely humanitarian sentiments expressed in Plato's dialogues, particularly in those written before the *Republic* when he was still under the influence of Socrates. I

mention especially Socrates' doctrine, in the *Gorgias*, that it is worse to do injustice than to suffer it. Clearly, this doctrine is not only altruistic, but also individualistic; for in a collectivist theory of justice like that of the *Republic*, injustice is an act against the state, not against a particular man, and though a man may commit an act of injustice, only the collective can suffer from it. But in the *Gorgias* we find nothing of the kind. The theory of justice is a perfectly normal one, and the examples of injustice given by 'Socrates' (who has here probably a good deal of the real Socrates in him) are such as boxing a man's ears, injuring, or killing him. Socrates' teaching that it is better to suffer such acts than to do them is indeed very similar to Christian teaching, and his doctrine of justice fits in excellently with the spirit of Pericles. (An attempt to interpret this will be made in chapter 10.)

Now the *Republic* develops a new doctrine of justice which is not only incompatible with such an individualism, but utterly hostile towards it. But a reader may easily believe that Plato is still holding fast to the doctrine of the *Gorgias*. For in the *Republic*, Plato frequently alludes to the doctrine that it is better to suffer than to commit injustice, in spite of the fact that this is simply nonsense from the point of view of the collectivist theory of justice proffered in this work. Furthermore, we hear in the *Republic* the opponents of 'Socrates' giving voice to the opposite theory, that it is good and pleasant to inflict injustice, and bad to suffer it. Of course, every humanitarian is repelled by such cynicism, and when Plato formulates his aims through the mouth of Socrates: 'I fear to commit a sin if I permit such evil talk about Justice in my presence, without doing my utmost to defend her' [37], then the trusting reader is convinced of Plato's good intentions, and ready to follow him wherever he goes.

The effect of this assurance of Plato's is much enhanced by the fact that it follows, and is contrasted with, the cynical and selfish speeches [38] of Thrasymachus, who is depicted as a political desperado of the worst kind. At the same time, the reader is led to identify individualism with the views of Thrasymachus, and to think that Plato, in his fight against it, is fighting against all the subversive and nihilistic tendencies of his time. But we should not allow ourselves to be frightened by an individualist bogy such as Thrasymachus (there is a great similarity between his portrait and the modern collectivist bogy of 'bolshevism') into accepting another more real and more dangerous because less

obvious form of barbarism. For Plato replaces Thrasymachus' doctrine that the individual's might is right by the equally barbaric doctrine that right is everything that furthers the stability and the might of the state.

To sum up. Because of his radical collectivism, Plato is not even interested in those problems which men usually call the problems of justice, that is to say, in the impartial weighing of the contesting claims of individuals. Nor is he interested in adjusting the individual's claims to those of the state. For the individual is altogether inferior. 'I legislate with a view to what is best for the whole state', says Plato, '. . for I justly place the interests of the individual on an inferior level of value.' [39] He is concerned solely with the collective whole as such, and justice, to him, is nothing but the health, unity, and stability of the collective body.

VI

So far, we have seen that humanitarian ethics demands an equalitarian and individualistic interpretation of justice; but we have not yet outlined the humanitarian view of the state as such. On the other hand, we have seen that Plato's theory of the state is totalitarian; but we have not yet explained the application of this theory to the ethics of the individual. Both these tasks will be undertaken now, the second first; and I shall begin by analysing the third of Plato's arguments in his 'discovery' of justice, an argument which has so far been sketched only very roughly. Here is Plato's third argument [40]:

'Now see whether you agree with me', says Socrates. 'Do you think it would do much harm to the city if a carpenter started making shoes and a shoemaker carpentering?'—'Not very much.'—'But should one who is by nature a worker, or a member of the money-earning class . . manage to get into the warrior class; or should a warrior get into the guardians' class without being worthy of it; then this kind of change and of underhand plotting would mean the downfall of the city?'—'Most definitely it would.'—'We have three classes in our city, and I take it that any such plotting or changing from one class to another is a great crime against the city, and may rightly be denounced as the utmost wickedness?'—'Assuredly.'—'But you will certainly declare that utmost wickedness towards one's own city is injustice?'—'Certainly.'—'Then this is injustice. And conversely, we shall say that when each class in the city attends to its own business, the money-earning class as well as the auxiliaries and the guardians, then this will be justice.'

Now if we look at this argument, we find (*a*) the sociological assumption that any relaxing of the rigid caste system must lead to the downfall of the city; (*b*) the constant reiteration of the one argument that what harms the city is injustice; and (*c*) the inference that the opposite is justice. Now we may grant here the sociological assumption (*a*) since it is Plato's ideal to arrest social change, and since he means by 'harm' anything that may lead to change; and it is probably quite true that social change can be arrested only by a rigid caste system. And we may further grant the inference (*c*) that the opposite of injustice is justice. Of greater interest, however, is (*b*); a glance at Plato's argument will show that his whole trend of thought is dominated by the question: does this thing harm the city? Does it do much harm or little harm? He constantly reiterates that what threatens to harm the city is morally wicked and unjust.

We see here that Plato recognizes only one ultimate standard, the interest of the state. Everything that furthers it is good and virtuous and just; everything that threatens it is bad and wicked and unjust. Actions that serve it are moral; actions that endanger it, immoral. In other words, Plato's moral code is strictly utilitarian; it is a code of collectivist or political utilitarianism. *The criterion of morality is the interest of the state.* Morality is nothing but political hygiene.

This is the collectivist, the tribal, the totalitarian theory of morality: 'Good is what is in the interest of my group; or my tribe; or my state.' It is easy to see what this morality implied for international relations: that the state itself can never be wrong in any of its actions, as long as it is strong; that the state has the right, not only to do violence to its citizens, should that lead to an increase of strength, but also to attack other states, provided it does so without weakening itself. (This inference, the explicit recognition of the amorality of the state, and consequently the defence of moral nihilism in international relations, was drawn by Hegel.)

From the point of view of totalitarian ethics, from the point of view of collective utility, Plato's theory of justice is perfectly correct. To keep one's place *is* a virtue. It is that civil virtue which corresponds exactly to the military virtue of discipline. And this virtue plays exactly that rôle which 'justice' plays in Plato's system of virtues. For the cogs in the great clockwork

of the state can show 'virtue' in two ways. First, they must be fit for their task, by virtue of their size, shape, strength, etc.; and secondly, they must be fitted each into its right place and must retain that place. The first type of virtues, fitness for a specific task, will lead to a differentiation, in accordance with the specific task of the cog. Certain cogs will be virtuous, i.e. fit, only if they are ('by their nature') large; others if they are strong; and others if they are smooth. But the virtue of keeping to one's place will be common to all of them; and it will at the same time be a virtue of the whole: that of being properly fitted together—of being in harmony. To this universal virtue Plato gives the name 'justice'. This procedure is perfectly consistent and it is fully justified from the point of view of totalitarian morality. If the individual is nothing but a cog, then ethics is nothing but the study of how to fit him into the whole.

I wish to make it clear that I believe in the sincerity of Plato's totalitarianism. His demand for the unchallenged domination of one class over the rest was uncompromising, but his ideal was not the maximum exploitation of the working classes by the upper class; it was the stability of the whole. The reason, however, which he gives for the need to keep the exploitation within limits, is again purely utilitarian. It is the interest of stabilizing the class rule. Should the guardians try to get too much, he argues, then they will in the end have nothing at all. 'If they are not satisfied with a life of stability and security, . . and are tempted, by their power, to appropriate for themselves all the wealth of the city, then surely they are bound to find out how wise Hesiod was when he said, "the half is more than the whole".'[41] But we must realize that even this tendency to restrict the exploitation of class privileges is a fairly common ingredient of totalitarianism. Totalitarianism is not simply amoral. It is the morality of the closed society—of the group, or of the tribe; it is not individual selfishness, but it is collective selfishness.

Considering that Plato's third argument is straightforward and consistent, the question may be asked why he needed the 'lengthy preface' as well as the two preceding arguments? Why all this uneasiness? (Platonists will of course reply that this uneasiness exists only in my imagination. That may be so. But the irrational character of the passages can hardly be explained away.) The answer to this question is, I believe, that Plato's collective clockwork would hardly have appealed to his readers if it had been presented to them in all its barrenness and meaning-

lessness. Plato was uneasy because he knew and feared the strength and the moral appeal of the forces he tried to break. He did not dare to challenge them, but tried to win them over for his own purposes. Whether we witness in Plato's writings a cynical and conscious attempt to employ the moral sentiments of the new humanitarianism for his own purposes, or whether we witness rather a tragic attempt to persuade his own better conscience of the evils of individualism, we shall never know. My personal impression is that the latter is the case, and that this inner conflict is the main secret of Plato's fascination. I think that Plato was moved to the depths of his soul by the new ideas, and especially by the great individualist Socrates and his martyrdom. And I think that he fought against this influence upon himself as well as upon others with all the might of his unequalled intelligence, though not always openly. This explains also why from time to time, amid all his totalitarianism, we find some humanitarian ideas. And it explains why it was possible for philosophers to represent Plato as a humanitarian.

A strong argument in support of this interpretation is the way in which Plato treated, or rather, maltreated, the humanitarian and rational theory of the state, a theory which had been developed for the first time in his generation.

In a clear presentation of this theory, the *language of political demands or of political proposals* (cp. chapter 5, III) should be used; that is to say, we should not try to answer the essentialist question: What is the state, what is its true nature, its real meaning? Nor should we try to answer the historicist question: How did the state originate, and what is the origin of political obligation? We should rather put our question in this way: What do we demand from a state? What do we propose to consider as the legitimate aim of state activity? And in order to find out what our fundamental political demands are, we may ask: Why do we prefer living in a well-ordered state to living without a state, i.e. in anarchy? This way of asking our question is a rational one. It is a question which a technologist must try to answer before he can proceed to the construction or reconstruction of any political institution. For only if he knows what he wants can he decide whether a certain institution is or is not well adapted to its function.

Now if we ask our question in this way, the reply of the humanitarian will be: What I demand from the state is protection; not only for myself, but for others too. I demand

protection for my own freedom and for other people's. I do not wish to live at the mercy of anybody who has the larger fists or the bigger guns. In other words, I wish to be protected against aggression from other men. I want the difference between aggression and defence to be recognized, and defence to be supported by the organized power of the state. (The defence is one of a *status quo*, and the principle proposed amounts to this —that the *status quo* should not be changed by violent means, but only according to law, by compromise or arbitration, except where there is no legal procedure for its revision.) I am perfectly ready to see my own freedom of action somewhat curtailed by the state, provided I can obtain protection of that freedom which remains, since I know that some limitations of my freedom are necessary; for instance, I must give up my 'freedom' to attack, if I want the state to support defence against any attack. But I demand that the fundamental purpose of the state should not be lost sight of; I mean, the protection of that freedom which does not harm other citizens. Thus I demand that the state must limit the freedom of the citizens as equally as possible, and not beyond what is necessary for achieving an equal limitation of freedom.

Something like this will be the demand of the humanitarian, of the equalitarian, of the individualist. It is a demand which permits the social technologist to approach political problems rationally, i.e. from the point of view of a fairly clear and definite aim.

Against the claim that an aim like this can be formulated sufficiently clearly and definitely, many objections have been raised. It has been said that once it is recognized that freedom must be limited, the whole principle of freedom breaks down, and the question what limitations are necessary and what are wanton cannot be decided rationally, but only by authority. But this objection is due to a muddle. It mixes up the fundamental question of what we want from a state with certain important technological difficulties in the way of the realization of our aims. It is certainly difficult to determine exactly the degree of freedom that can be left to the citizens without endangering that freedom whose protection is the task of the state. But that something like an approximate determination of that degree is possible is proved by experience, i.e. by the existence of democratic states. In fact, this process of approximate determination is one of the main tasks of legislation in democracies. It

is a difficult process, but its difficulties are certainly not such as to force upon us a change in our fundamental demands. These are, stated very briefly, that the state should be considered as a society for the prevention of crime, i.e. of aggression. And the whole objection that it is hard to know where freedom ends and crime begins is answered, in principle, by the famous story of the hooligan who protested that, being a free citizen, he could move his fist in any direction he liked; whereupon the judge wisely replied: 'The freedom of the movement of your fists is limited by the position of your neighbour's nose.'

The view of the state which I have sketched here may be called 'protectionism'. The term 'protectionism' has often been used to describe tendencies which are opposed to freedom. Thus the economist means by protectionism the policy of protecting certain industrial interests against competition; and the moralist means by it the demand that officers of the state shall establish a moral tutelage over the population. Although the political theory which I call protectionism is not connected with any of these tendencies, and although it is fundamentally a liberal theory, I think that the name may be used to indicate that, though liberal, it has nothing to do with the *policy of strict non-intervention* (often, but not quite correctly, called '*laissez faire*'). Liberalism and state-interference are not opposed to each other. On the contrary, any kind of freedom is clearly impossible unless it is guaranteed by the state [42]. A certain amount of state control in education, for instance, is necessary, if the young are to be protected from a neglect which would make them unable to defend their freedom, and the state should see that all educational facilities are available to everybody. But too much state control in educational matters is a fatal danger to freedom, since it must lead to indoctrination. As already indicated, the important and difficult question of the limitations of freedom cannot be solved by a cut and dried formula. And the fact that there will always be borderline cases must be welcomed, for without the stimulus of political problems and political struggles of this kind, the citizens' readiness to fight for their freedom would soon disappear, and with it, their freedom. (Viewed in this light, the alleged clash between freedom and security, that is, a security guaranteed by the state, turns out to be a chimera. For there is no freedom if it is not secured by the state; and conversely, only a state which is controlled by free citizens can offer them any reasonable security at all.)

Stated in this way, the protectionist theory of the state is free from any elements of historicism or essentialism. It does not say that the state originated as an association of individuals with a protectionist aim, or that any actual state in history was ever consciously ruled in accordance with this aim. And it says nothing about the essential nature of the state, or about a natural right to freedom. Nor does it say anything about the way in which states actually function. It formulates a political *demand*, or more precisely, a *proposal* for the adoption of a certain policy. I suspect, however, that many conventionalists who have described the state as originating from an association for the protection of its members, intended to express this very demand, though they did it in a clumsy and misleading language—the language of historicism. A similar misleading way of expressing this demand is to assert that it is essentially the function of the state to protect its members; or to assert that the state is to be defined as an association for mutual protection. All these theories must be translated, as it were, into the language of demands or proposals for political actions before they can be seriously discussed. Otherwise, endless discussions of a merely verbal character are unavoidable.

An example of such a translation may be given. A criticism of what I call protectionism has been proffered by Aristotle [43], and repeated by Burke, and by many modern Platonists. This criticism asserts that protectionism takes too mean a view of the tasks of the state which is (using Burke's words) 'to be looked upon with other reverence, because it is not a partnership in things subservient only to the gross animal existence of a temporary and perishable nature'. In other words, the state is said to be something higher or nobler than an association with rational ends; it is an object of worship. It has higher tasks than the protection of human beings and their rights. It has moral tasks. 'To take care of virtue is the business of a state which truly deserves this name', says Aristotle. If we try to translate this criticism into the language of political demands, then we find that these critics of protectionism want two things. First, they wish to make the state an object of worship. From our point of view, there is nothing to say against this wish. It is a religious problem; and the state-worshippers must solve for themselves how to reconcile their creed with their other religious beliefs, for example, with the First Commandment. The second demand is political. In practice, this demand would simply mean that

officers of the state should be concerned with the morality of the citizens, and that they should use their power not so much for the protection of the citizens' freedom as for the control of their moral life. In other words, it is the demand that the realm of legality, i.e. of state-enforced norms, should be increased at the expense of the realm of morality proper, i.e. of norms enforced not by the state but by our own moral decisions—by our conscience. Such a demand or proposal can be rationally discussed; and it can be said against it that those who raise such demands apparently do not see that this would be the end of the individual's moral responsibility, and that it would not improve but destroy morality. It would replace personal responsibility by tribalistic taboos and by the totalitarian irresponsibility of the individual. Against this whole attitude, the individualist must maintain that the morality of states (if there is any such thing) tends to be considerably lower than that of the average citizen, so that it is much more desirable that the morality of the state should be controlled by the citizens than the opposite. What we need and what we want is to moralize politics, and not to politicize morals.

It should be mentioned that, from the protectionist point of view, the existing democratic states, though far from perfect, represent a very considerable achievement in social engineering of the right kind. Many forms of crime, of attack on the rights of human individuals by other individuals, have been practically suppressed or very considerably reduced, and courts of law administer justice fairly successfully in difficult conflicts of interest. There are many who think that the extension of these methods [44] to international crime and international conflict is only a Utopian dream; but it is not so long since the institution of an effective executive for upholding civil peace appeared Utopian to those who suffered under the threats of criminals, in countries where at present civil peace is quite successfully maintained. And I think that the engineering problems of the control of international crime are really not so difficult, once they are squarely and rationally faced. If the matter is presented clearly, it will not be hard to get people to agree that protective institutions are necessary, both on a regional and on a world-wide scale. Let the state-worshippers continue to worship the state, but demand that the institutional technologists be allowed not only to improve its internal machinery, but also to build up an organization for the prevention of international crime.

VII

Returning now to the history of these movements, it seems that the protectionist theory of the state was first proffered by the Sophist Lycophron, a pupil of Gorgias. It has already been mentioned that he was (like Alcidamas, also a pupil of Gorgias) one of the first to attack the theory of natural privilege. That he held the theory which I have called ' protectionism ' is recorded by Aristotle, who speaks about him in a manner which makes it very likely that he originated it. From the same source we learn that he formulated it with a clarity which has hardly been attained by any of his successors.

Aristotle tells us that Lycophron considered the law of the state as a ' covenant by which men assure one another of justice ' (and that it has not the power to make citizens good or just). He tells us furthermore [45] that Lycophron looked upon the state as an instrument for the protection of its citizens against acts of injustice (and for permitting them peaceful intercourse, especially exchange), demanding that the state should be a ' co-operative association for the prevention of crime '. It is interesting that there is no indication in Aristotle's account that Lycophron expressed his theory in a historicist form, i.e. as a theory concerning the historical origin of the state in a social contract. On the contrary, it emerges clearly from Aristotle's context that Lycophron's theory was solely concerned with the end of the state; for Aristotle argues that Lycophron has not seen that the essential end of the state is to make its citizens virtuous. This indicates that Lycophron interpreted this end rationally, from a technological point of view, adopting the demands of equalitarianism, individualism, and protectionism.

In this form, Lycophron's theory is completely secure from the objections to which the traditional historicist theory of the social contract is exposed. It is often said, for instance by Barker [46], that the contract theory ' has been met by modern thinkers point by point '. That may be so; but a survey of Barker's points will show that they certainly do not meet the theory of Lycophron, in whom Barker sees (and in this point I am inclined to agree with him) the probable founder of the earliest form of a theory which has later been called the contract theory. Barker's points can be set down as follows: (*a*) There was, historically, never a contract; (*b*) the state was, historically, never instituted; (*c*) laws are not conventional, but arise out of

tradition, superior force, perhaps instinct, etc.; they are customs before they become codes; (*d*) the strength of the laws does not lie in the sanctions, in the protective power of the state which enforces them, but in the individual's readiness to obey them, i.e. in the individual's moral will.

It will be seen at once that objections (*a*), (*b*), and (*c*), which in themselves are admittedly fairly correct (although there have been some contracts) concern the theory only in its historicist form and are irrelevant to Lycophron's version. We therefore need not consider them at all. Objection (*d*), however, deserves closer consideration. What can be meant by it? The theory attacked stresses the ' will ', or better the decision of the individual, more than any other theory; in fact, the word ' contract ' suggests an agreement by ' free will '; it suggests, perhaps more than any other theory, that the strength of the laws lies in the individual's readiness to accept and to obey them. How, then, can (*d*) be an objection against the contract theory? The only explanation seems to be that Barker does not think the contract to spring from the ' moral will ' of the individual, but rather from a selfish will; and this interpretation is the more likely as it is in keeping with Plato's criticism. But one need not be selfish in order to be a protectionist. Protection need not mean self-protection; many people insure their lives with the aim of protecting others and not themselves, and in the same way they may demand state protection mainly for others, and to a lesser degree (or not at all) for themselves. The fundamental idea of protectionism is: protect the weak from being bullied by the strong. This demand has been raised not only by the weak, but often by the strong also. It is, to say the least of it, misleading to suggest that it is a selfish or an immoral demand.

Lycophron's protectionism is, I think, free of all these objections. It is the most fitting expression of the humanitarian and equalitarian movement of the Periclean age. And yet, we have been robbed of it. It has been handed down to later generations only in a distorted form; as the historicist theory of the origin of the state in a social contract; or as an essentialist theory claiming that the true nature of the state is that of a convention; and as a theory of selfishness, based on the assumption of the fundamentally immoral nature of man. All this is due to the overwhelming influence of Plato's authority.

VIII

There can be little doubt that Plato knew Lycophron's theory well, for he was (in all likelihood) Lycophron's younger contemporary. And, indeed, this theory can be easily identified with one which is mentioned first in the *Gorgias* and later in the *Republic*. (In neither place does Plato mention its author; a procedure often adopted by him when his opponent was alive.) In the *Gorgias*, the theory is expounded by Callicles, an ethical nihilist like the Thrasymachus of the *Republic*. In the *Republic*, it is expounded by Glaucon. In neither case does the speaker identify himself with the theory he presents.

The two passages are in many respects parallel. Both present the theory in a historicist form, i.e. as a theory of the origin of 'justice'. Both present it as if its logical premises were necessarily selfish and even nihilistic; i.e. as if the protectionist view of the state was upheld only by those who would *like* to inflict injustice, but are too weak to do so, and who *therefore* demand that the strong should not do so either; a presentation which is certainly not fair, since the only necessary premise of the theory is the demand that crime, or injustice, should be suppressed.

So far, the two passages in the *Gorgias* and in the *Republic* run parallel, a parallelism which has often been commented upon. But there is a tremendous difference between them which has, so far as I know, been overlooked by commentators. It is this. In the *Gorgias*, the theory is presented by Callicles as one which he opposes; and since he also opposes Socrates, the protectionist theory is, by implication, not attacked but rather defended by Plato. And, indeed, a closer view shows that Socrates upholds several of its features against the nihilist Callicles. But in the *Republic*, the same theory is presented by Glaucon as an elaboration and development of the views of Thrasymachus, i.e. of the nihilist who takes here the place of Callicles; in other words, the theory is presented as nihilist, and Socrates as the hero who victoriously destroys this devilish doctrine of selfishness.

Thus the passages in which most commentators find a similarity between the tendencies of the *Gorgias* and the *Republic* reveal, in fact, a complete change of front. In spite of Callicles' hostile presentation, the tendency of the *Gorgias* is favourable to protectionism; but the *Republic* is violently against it.

Here is an extract from Callicles' speech in the *Gorgias* [47]: 'The laws are made by the great mass of the people which

consists mainly of the weak men. And they make the laws . . in order to protect themselves and their interests. Thus they deter the stronger men . . and all others who might get the better of them, from doing so; . . and they mean by the word "injustice" the attempt of a man to get the better of his neighbours; and being aware of their inferiority, they are, I should say, only too glad if they can obtain equality.' If we look at this account and eliminate what is due to Callicles' open scorn and hostility, then we find all the elements of Lycophron's theory: equalitarianism, individualism, and protection against injustice. Even the reference to the 'strong' and to the 'weak' who are aware of their inferiority fits the protectionist view very well indeed, provided the element of caricature is allowed for. It is not at all unlikely that Lycophron's doctrine explicitly raised the demand that the state should protect the weak, a demand which is, of course, anything but ignoble. (The hope that this demand will one day be fulfilled is expressed by the Christian teaching: 'The meek shall inherit the earth.')

Callicles himself does not like protectionism; he is in favour of the 'natural' rights of the stronger. It is very significant that Socrates, in his argument against Callicles, comes to the rescue of protectionism, and that he even identifies it with his own theory that it is better to suffer injustice than to inflict it. He says, for instance [48]: 'Are not the many of the opinion, as you were lately saying, that justice is equality? And also that it is more disgraceful to inflict injustice than to suffer it?' And later: '. . nature itself, and not only convention, affirms that to inflict injustice is more disgraceful than to suffer it, and that justice is equality.' (In spite of its individualistic and equalitarian and protectionist tendencies, the *Gorgias* also exhibits some leanings which are strongly anti-democratic. The explanation may be that Plato when writing the *Gorgias* had not yet developed his totalitarian theories; although his sympathies were already anti-democratic, he was still under Socrates' influence. How anybody can think that the *Gorgias* and the *Republic* can be both at the same time true accounts of Socrates' opinions, I fail to understand.)

Let us now turn to the *Republic*, where Glaucon presents protectionism as a logically more stringent but ethically unchanged version of Thrasymachus' nihilism. 'My theme', says Glaucon [49], 'is the origin of justice, and what sort of thing it really is. According to some it is by nature an excellent thing to inflict injustice upon others, and a bad thing to suffer it. But

they hold that the badness of suffering injustice much exceeds the desirability of inflicting it. For a time, then, men will inflict injustice on one another, and of course suffer it, and they will get a good taste of both. But ultimately, those who are not strong enough to repel it, or to enjoy inflicting it, decide that it is more profitable for them to join in a contract, mutually assuring one another that no one should inflict injustice, or suffer it. This is the way in which laws were established. . . And this is the nature and the origin of justice, according to that theory.'

As far as its rational content goes, this is clearly the same theory; and the way in which it is represented also resembles in detail [50] Callicles' speech in the *Gorgias*. And yet, Plato has made a complete change of front. The protectionist theory is now no longer defended against the allegation that it is based on cynical egoism; on the contrary. Our humanitarian sentiments, our moral indignation, already aroused by Thrasymachus' nihilism, are utilized for turning us into enemies of protectionism. This theory, whose humanitarian character has been indicated in the *Gorgias*, is now made by Plato to appear as anti-humanitarian, and indeed, as the outcome of the repulsive and most unconvincing doctrine that injustice is a very good thing—for those who can get away with it. And he does not hesitate to rub this point in. In an extensive continuation of the passage quoted, Glaucon elaborates in much detail the allegedly necessary assumptions or premises of protectionism. Among these he mentions, for instance, the view that the inflicting of injustice is 'the best of all things' [51]; that justice is established only because many men are too weak to commit crimes; and that to the individual citizen, a life of crime would be most profitable. And 'Socrates', i.e. Plato, vouches explicitly [52] for the authenticity of Glaucon's interpretation of the theory presented. By this method, Plato seems to have succeeded in persuading most of his readers, and at any rate all Platonists, that the protectionist theory here developed is identical with the ruthless and cynical selfishness of Thrasymachus [53]; and, what is more important, that all forms of individualism amount to the same, namely, selfishness. But it was not only his admirers he persuaded; he even succeeded in persuading his opponents, and especially the adherents of the contract theory. From Carneades [54] to Hobbes, they not only adopted his fatal historicist presentation, but also Plato's assurances that the basis of their theory was an ethical nihilism.

Now it must be realized that the elaboration of its allegedly selfish basis is the whole of Plato's argument against protectionism; and considering the space taken up by this elaboration, we may safely assume that it was not his reticence which made him proffer no better argument, but the fact that he had none. Thus protectionism had to be dismissed by an appeal to our moral sentiments—as an affront against the idea of justice, and against our feelings of decency.

This is Plato's method of dealing with a theory which was not only a dangerous rival of his own doctrine, but also representative of the new humanitarian and individualistic creed, i.e. the arch-enemy of everything that was dear to Plato. The method is clever; its astonishing success proves it. But I should not be fair if I did not frankly admit that Plato's method appears to me dishonest. For the theory attacked does not need any assumption more immoral than that injustice is evil, i.e. that it should be avoided, and brought under control. And Plato knew quite well that the theory was not based on selfishness, for in the *Gorgias* he had presented it not as identical with the nihilistic theory from which it is 'derived' in the *Republic*, but as opposed to it.

Summing up, we can say that Plato's theory of justice, as presented in the *Republic* and later works, is a conscious attempt to get the better of the equalitarian, individualistic, and protectionist tendencies of his time, and to re-establish the claims of tribalism by developing a totalitarian moral theory. At the same time, he was strongly impressed by the new humanitarian morality; but instead of combating equalitarianism with arguments, he avoided even discussing it. And he successfully enlisted the humanitarian sentiments, whose strength he knew so well, in the cause of the totalitarian class rule of a naturally superior master race.

These class prerogatives, he claimed, are necessary for upholding the stability of the state. They constitute therefore the essence of justice. Ultimately, this claim is based upon the argument that justice is useful to the might, health, and stability of the state; an argument which is only too similar to the modern totalitarian definition: right is whatever is useful to the might of my nation, or my class, or my party.

But this is not yet the whole story. By its emphasis on class prerogative, Plato's theory of justice puts the problem 'Who should rule?' in the centre of political theory. His reply to this question was that the wisest, and the best, should rule. Does not this excellent reply modify the character of his theory?