It will be seen . . ., that the Erewhonians are a meek and long-suffering people, easily led by the nose, and quick to offer up common sense . . . when a philosopher arises among them . . . SAMUEL BUTLER.
PREFACE

If in this book harsh words are spoken about some of the greatest among the intellectual leaders of mankind, my motive is not, I hope, the wish to belittle them. It springs rather from my conviction that if we wish our civilization to survive we must break with the habit of deference to great men. Great men may make great mistakes; and as the book tries to show, some of the greatest leaders of the past supported the perennial attack on freedom and reason. Their influence, too rarely challenged, continues to mislead those on whose defence civilization depends, and to divide them. The responsibility for this tragic and possibly fatal division becomes ours if we hesitate to be outspoken in our criticism of what admittedly is part of our intellectual heritage. By our reluctance to criticize a part of it, we may help to destroy it all.

The book is a critical introduction to the philosophy of politics and of history, and an examination of some of the principles of social reconstruction. Its aim and the line of approach are indicated in the Introduction. Even where it looks back into the past, its problems are the problems of our own time; and I have tried hard to make it as simple as possible, hoping to clarify matters which concern us all.

Although the book presupposes nothing but open-mindedness in the reader, its object is not so much to popularize the questions treated as to solve them. In order to serve this double purpose, all matters of more specialized interest have been confined to the notes collected at the end of the book.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to all my friends who have made it possible for me to write this book. Mr. C. G. F. Simkin has not only helped me with an earlier version, but has given me the opportunity of clarifying many problems in detailed discussions over a period of nearly four years. Miss Margaret Dalziel has assisted me in the preparation of various drafts and of the final manuscript. Her untiring help has been invaluable. Mr. H. Larsen's interest in the problem of historicism was a
great encouragement. Mr. T. K. Ewer has read the manuscript and has made many suggestions for its improvement. Miss Helen Hervey has put a great deal of work into the compilation of the Index.

I am deeply indebted to Professor F. A. von Hayek. Without his interest and support the book would not have been published. Dr. E. Gombrich has undertaken to see the book through the press, a burden to which was added the strain of an exacting correspondence between England and New Zealand. He has been so helpful that I can hardly say how much I owe to him.

K. R. P.
CHRISTCHURCH,
April 1944.

CONTENTS

VOLUME I: THE SPELL OF PLATO

PAOB

PREFACE ............ v

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........ vi

INTRODUCTION .......... i

THE SPELL OF PLATO ... ...... 5

THE MYTH OF ORIGIN AND DESTINY ...... 5

Chapter 1. Historicism and the Myth of Destiny ... 5

Chapter 2. Heraclitus ........ 9

Chapter 3. Plato's Theory of Ideas 15

PLATO'S DESCRIPTIVE SOCIOLOGY ....... 29

Chapter 4. Change and Rest .......... -29

Chapter 5. Nature and Convention ...... 49

PLATO'S POLITICAL PROGRAMME ..>.... 74

Chapter 6. Totalitarian Justice ...... 74

Chapter 7. The Principle of Leadership ....... .106

Chapter 8. The Philosopher King 121
Concerning metaphysics . . , I admit that my formulations may here or there have been insuffi-
ciently conditional and cautious. Yet I do not wish to hide the fact that I can only look with
repugnance . . upon the puffed-up pretentious-
ness of all these volumes filled with wisdom, such as are fashionable nowadays. For I am fully
satisfied that . . the accepted methods must end-
lessly increase these follies and blunders, and
that even the complete annihilation of all these fanciful achievements could not possibly be as
harmful as this fictitious science with its accursed fertility.

KANT.

This book raises a number of issues which may not be apparent from the table of contents.

It sketches some of the difficulties faced by a civilization which aims at humaneness and reasonableness, at equality and freedom; a civilization which is still in its infancy, and which continues to grow in spite of the fact that it has been betrayed by so many of the intellectual leaders of mankind. It attempts | to show that this civilization has not yet fully recovered from the shock of its birth, the transition from the tribal or * closedl society ', with its submission to magical forces, to the * open society ' which sets free the critical powers of man. It attempts to show that the shock of this transition is one of the factors that have made possible the rise of those reactionary movements which have tried, and still try, to overthrow civilization and to return to tribalism. And it suggests that what we call nowadays totalitarianism belongs to these movements, which are just as old or just as young as our civilization itself.

It tries thereby to contribute to our understanding of totali-
tarianism, and of the significance of the perennial Jjtjght againstjlt.

It further tries to examine the application of the critical and
rational methods of science to the problems of the open society. It analyses the principles of democratic social reconstruction, the principles of what I may term *piecemen.* Social engineering *in opposition to c Utopian social engineering ' (as explained in Chapter g). And it tries to clear away some of the obstacles

2 INTRODUCTION

impeding a rational approach to the problems of social reconstruction. It does so by criticizing those social philosophies which are responsible for the widespread prejudice against the possibilities jrf democratic reform. The most powerful of these reactionary philosophies Ts- one which I have called historicism. The story of the rise and influence of some important forms of historicism is one of the main topics of the book, which might even be described as a collection of marginal notes on the development of certain historicist philosophies. A few remarks on the origin of the book will indicate what is meant by historicism and how it is connected with the other issues mentioned.

Although my main interests are the methods of physics (and consequently certain technical problems which are far removed from those treated in this book), I have also been interested for many years in the problem of the backwardness of the social sciences. This is, of course, nothing but the problem of their method. My interest in this problem was greatly stimulated by the rise of totalitarianism, and by the failure of the various social sciences and social philosophies to make sense of it.

In this connection, one point appeared to me particularly urgent.

Too often we hear it suggested that some form or other of totalitarianism is inevitable. Many who because of their **ience** and [ training _should^ be held responsible for what they say, announce that there is no escape from it. They ask us whether we are really naive enough to believe that democracy can be permanent; whether we do not see that it is just one of the many forms of government that come and go in the course of history. They argue that democracy, in order to fight totalitarianism, is forced to copy its methods and thus to become totalitarian itself. Or they assert that our industrial system cannot continue to function without adopting the methods of collectivist planning, and they infer from the inevitability of a collectivist economic system that the adoption of totalitarian forms of social life is also inevitable.

Such arguments may sound plausible enough. But plausibility is not a reliable guide in such matters. In fact, one should not enter into a discussion of these specious arguments before!
having considered the following question of method: Is it within the power of any social science to make such sweeping historical prophecies? Can we expect to get more than the irresponsible reply of the soothsayer if we ask a man what the future has in store for mankind?

INTRODUCTION 3

This is a question of the method of the social sciences. It is clearly more fundamental than any debate on any particular argument offered in support of any historical prophecy.

A careful examination of this question has led me to the conviction that such sweeping historical prophecies are entirely beyond the scope of scientific method. The future depends on ourselves, and we do not depend on any historical necessity. There are, however, influential social philosophies which hold the opposite view. They claim that everybody tries to use his brains to predict impending events; that it is certainly legitimate for a strategist to try to foresee the outcome of a battle; and that the boundaries between such a prediction and more sweeping historical prophecies are fluid. They maintain that it is the task of science in general to make predictions, or rather, to improve upon our everyday predictions, and to put them upon a more secure basis; and that it is the task of the social sciences in particular to furnish us with long-term historical prophecies. They also believe that they have discovered laws of history which enable them to prophesy the course of historical events. The various social philosophies which raise claims of this kind, I have grouped together under the name historicism. Elsewhere, in The Poverty of Historicism (Economic 1944/45), I have tried to argue against these claims, and to show that in spite of their plausible arc based on gross jjsrnJgr f stanHng. jrf scientific method. While engaged in the systematic analysis of that to illustrate its development. The notes collected for that purpose constitute the main part of this book.

The systematic analysis of historicism aims at something like scientific status. This book does not. Many of the opinions expressed are personal. What it owes to scientific method is largely the awareness of its limitations: it does not offer proofs where nothing can be proved, nor does it pretend to be scientific where it cannot give more than a personal point of view. It does not try to replace the old systems of philosophy by a new system. It does not try to add to all these volumes^fille^T with wisdom, to the metaphysics of history and destiny, such as are fashionable nowadays. It rather tries to show that this propheticism is harmful, that the rr^et^hysihistgrjr impede the application—of the "piecein<alj^ sojcjal
It further lines to show how we may become the niaEers of our fate when we have ceased To pose as Tts Tprophets.

4 INTRODUCTION

In tracing the development of historicism, I found that the dangerous liabit^of hutorical prophecy, so widespread among our intellectual leaders, has various^ functions. It is always flattering to belong to the inner circle of the initiated, and to possess the unusual power of predicting the course of history. Besides, there is a tradition that intellectual leaders are giftejd with such powers, and not to possess them may~leadjt o lpss.x>f_a&te. The danger, on the other hand of their being unmasked as charlatans is very small, since they can always point out that it is certainly permissile to make less sweeping predictions ; and the boundaries between these and augury are fluid.

But there are sometimes further motives for holding historicist beliefs. The prophets who announce that certain events are bound to happen make propaganda for them, and help to bring them about. Their stcu^^a^emocracy^ is nqtjq last for ever is as Jtrue, and as little to the point, as the assertion that human reason Is not to last for ever, since only democracy provides an institutional framework that permits reform without violence, and so the use of reason in political matters. But their story te^ids_tc^discpurage those^who fight totalitarianism ; its motive is to support the revolt^against ^ivilization. A further motive, it seems, can~e found if we consider that historicist metaphysics are apt to relieve men from the strain of their responsibilities. If you know that things are b bund to happen whatever you do, then you may feel free to give up the fight against them. Th tendency of historicism to support the revolt against civilization may be due to the fact that it is itself largely a reaction against the strain of our civilization, and its demand for personal responsibility.

These last allusions are somewhat vague, but they must suffice for an introduction. They will later be substantiated by historical material, especially in the chapter ' The Open Society and Its Enemies '. I was tempted to place this chapter at the beginning of the book ; with its topicaj interest, it would certainly have made a more inviting introduction. But I found that the full weight of this historical interpretation cannot be felt unless it is preceded by the material discussed earlier in the book. It seems that one has first to be disturbed by the identity of the Platonic theory of justice with the theory, and j^rajctice of .modern totaHtar^ how urgent it is to interpret these matters.
For the Open Society (about 430 B.C.):

Although only a few may originate a policy, we are all able to judge it.

PERICLES OF ATHENS.

Against the Open Society (about 80 years later):

The greatest principle of all is that nobody, whether male or female, should 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 as well as in the midst of peace to his leader he shall direct his eye and follow him faithfully. And even in the smallest matter he should stand under leadership. For example, he should get up, or move, or wash, or take his meals . . 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 in fact, to become utterly incapable of it.

PLATO OF ATHENS.

THE MYTH OF DESTINY

CHAPTER 1: HISTORICISM AND THE MYTH OF DESTINY

It is widely believed that a truly scientific and philosophical attitude towards politics, and a deeper understanding of social life in general, must be based upon a contemplation and interpretation of human history. While the ordinary man takes the setting of his life and the importance of his personal experiences and struggles for granted, it is said that the social scientist or philosopher has to survey things from a higher plane. He sees the individual as a pawn, as a rather insignificant instrument in
THE MYTH OF DESTINY

the general development of mankind. And the really important! actors on the Stage of History he may find, perhaps, in the Great Nations and their Great Leaders, or perhaps in the Great Classes, or in the Great Ideas. However this may be, he will try to understand the meaning of the play which is performed on that Stage; he will try to understand the laws of historical development. If he succeeds in this, he will, of course, be able to predict future developments. He might then put politics upon a solid basis, and give us practical advice by telling us which political actions are likely to succeed or likely to fail.

This is a brief description of an attitude which I call historicism. It is an old idea, or rather, a connected set of ideas which unfortunately have become so much a part of our spiritual atmosphere that they are usually taken for granted, and hardly, ever questioned. I have tried elsewhere to show that. Jjie historicist approach to the social sciences gives goppr results. I have also tried to outline a method which, I believe, would yield better results.

But if historicism is a faulty method that produces worthless results, then it may be useful to see how it originated, and how succeeded in entrenching itself so successfully. A historical sketch undertaken with this aim can, at the same time, serve to analyse the variety of ideas which have gradually accumulated around the central historicist doctrine that history is controlled by developmental laws whose discovery would enable us to prophesy the destiny of man.

Historicism, which I have so far characterized only in a rather abstract way, can be well illustrated by one of the simplest and oldest of its forms, the doctrine of the chosen people. This doctrine is one of the attempts to make history understandable by a theistic interpretation, i.e. by recognizing God as the author of the play performed on the Historical Stage. The theory of the chosen people, more specifically, assumes that God has selected one people to function as the instrument of His will, and that this people will inherit the earth.

In this doctrine, the law of historical development is laid down by the Will of God. This is the specific difference which distinguishes the theistic form from other forms of historicism. A naturalistic historicism, for instance, might treat the development as a law of nature; a spiritual historicism would treat it as a law of spiritual development; an economic historicism would treat it as a law of economic development.
shares with these other forms the doctrine that there is a developmental law which can be discovered, and upon which predictions regarding the future of mankind can be based.

There is no doubt that the doctrine of the chosen people grew out of the tribal form of social life. Tribalism, i.e. the emphasis on the supreme importance of the tribe without which the individual is nothing at all, is an element which we shall find in many forms of historicist theories. Other forms which are not tribalist may still retain the element of collectivism 1: they may still emphasize the significance of some collective or group without which the individual is nothing at all. Another aspect of the doctrine of the chosen people is the remoteness of what it proffers as the end of history. For although it may describe this end with some degree of definiteness, we have to go a long way before we reach it. And the way is not only long, but winding, leading up and down, right and left. Accordingly, it will be possible to bring every conceivable historical event well within the scheme of the interpretation. Nothing can contradict it. 2 But to those who believe in it, it gives certainty regarding the ultimate outcome of human history.

A criticism of the theistic interpretation of history will be attempted in the last chapter of this book, where it will also be shown that some of the greatest Christian thinkers have repudiated it as idolatry. An attack upon this form of historicism should therefore not be interpreted as an attack upon religion. In the present chapter, the doctrine of the chosen people serves only as an illustration. Its value as such can be seen from the fact that its chief characteristics are shared by the two most important modern versions of Ws^oricism whose analysis will form the major part of this book the historical philosophy of racialism or fascismTon the one (the right) hand ancTne Marxian historical philosophy on the other (the left). For the chosen people racialism substitutes the chosen race (of Gobineau's choice), selected as the instrument of destin^, ultimately to inherit the earth. Marx's historical philosophy substitutes for it the chosen class, the instrument for the creation of the classless society, and at the same time, the class destined to inherit the earth. Both theories base their historical forecasts on an interpretation of history which leads to the discovery of a law of its development. In the case of racialism, this is thought of as a kind of natural law. The biological superiority of the blood of the chosen race explains the course of history, past, present, aijd future; it is nothing

8 THE MYTH OF DESTINY

but the struggle of races for mastery. In the case of Marx's
philosophy of history, the law is economic; all history has to be interpreted as a struggle of classes for economic supremacy.

The historicist character of these two movements makes our investigation topical. We shall return to them in later parts of this book. Each of them goes back directly to the philosophy of Hegel. We must, therefore, deal with that philosophy as well. And since Hegel in the main follows certain ancient philosophers, it will be necessary to discuss the theories of Heraclitus, Plato and Aristotle, before returning to the more modern forms of historicism.

CHAPTER 2: HERACLITUS

It is not until Heraclitus, that we find in Greece theories which could be compared in their historicist character with the doctrine of the chosen people. In Homer's theistic interpretation, history is the product of divine will. But the Homeric

$\text{lay down no general laws for its development. What}$

Homer tries to stress and to explain is not the unity of history, but rather its lack of unity. The author of the play on the Stage of History is not one God; a whole variety of gods dabble in it. What the Homeric interpretation shares with the Jewish is a certain vague feeling of destiny, and the idea of powers behind the scene. But the ultimate destiny, according to Homer, is not disclosed to men. Unlike the Jewish, it remains mysterious.

The first Greek to introduce a more markedly historicist element was Hesiod, when he made use of the idea of a general trend or tendency in historical development. His interpretation of history is pessimistic. He believes that mankind, in their development down from the golden age, are destined to degenerate, both physically and morally. The culmination of the various historicist ideas proffered by the early Greek philosophers came with Plato, who elaborated his theory in an attempt to interpret the history and social life of the Greek tribes, and especially of the Athenians. In his historicism he was strongly influenced by various forerunners, especially by Hesiod. But the most important influence came from Heraclitus.

Heraclitus was the philosopher who discovered the idea of change. Down to his time, philosophers viewed the world as the totality of things, or as a huge edifice built up of these things. The questions they asked themselves were such as these: * What does the world consist of? J or How is it constructed, what is its true ground-plan? ’ 1. They considered philosophy, or physics (the two were indistinguishable for a long time) as the investigation of * nature ', i.e. of the original material out of which this edifice, the world, had been built. As far as any
processes were considered, they were thought of either as going on within the edifice, or else as constricting or maintaining it, disturbing and restoring the stability or balance of a structure which was considered to be fundamentally static. This very...

IO THE MYTH OF DESTINY

natural approach, natural even to many of us to-day, was superceded by the genius of Heraclitus. The view he introduced was that there was no such edifice; that the world was not a more or less stable structure, but rather one colossal process; that it was not the sum-total of all things, but rather the totality of all events, or changes, or facts. c Everything is in flux and nothing is at rest', is the motto of his philosophy. 2

Heraclitus' discovery influenced the development of Greek philosophy for a long time. The philosophies of Parmenides, Democritus, Plato, and Aristotle, can all be appropriately described as attempts to solve the problems of that changing world which Heraclitus had discovered. The greatness of this discovery can hardly be overrated. It has been described as a terrifying one, and its effect has been compared with that of * an earthquake, in which everything . . seems to sway ' 3. And I do not doubt that this discovery was impressed upon Heraclitus by terrifying personal experiences suffered as a result of the social and political disturbances of his day. Heraclitus, the first philosopher to deal not only with ' nature ' but even more with ethico-political problems, lived in an age of social revolution. It was iri his time that the Greek tribal aristocracies were beginning to yield to the new force of democracy.

In order to understand the effect of this revolution, we must remember the stability and rigidity of social life in a tribal aristocracy. Social life is determined by social and religious taboos; everybody has his assigned place within the whole of the social structure; everyone feels that his place is the proper, the c natural ' place, assigned to him by the forces which rule the world; everyone ' knows his place'.

Heraclitus 5 own place was that of heir to the royal family of priest kings of Ephesus, but he resigned in favour of his brother. In spite of his proud refusal to mix himself up with the political life of his city, he supported the cause of the aristocrats who tried in vain to stem the rising tide of the new revolutionary forces. These experiences in the social or political field are reflected in the remaining fragments of his work. 4 * The Ephesians ought to hang themselves man by man, all the adults, and leave the city to be ruled by infants . . .', is one of his outbursts, occasioned, by the people's decision to expatriate Hermodorus, an aristocratic friend of Heraclitus'. His interpretation of the people's motives is most interesting, for it shows that
the stock-in-trade of anti-democratic argument has not changed

CHAPTER 2 I HERACLITUS II

since the earliest days of democracy. * They held: we do not like anyone to excel among us; and if someone is outstanding, then let him be so elsewhere, and among others.' This hostility towards democracy breaks through everywhere in the fragments: c . . the mob fill their bellies like the beasts. . . They take the bards and popular belief as their guides, unaware that the many are mean and that only the few are noble. . . In Priene live.d Bias, son of Tenthamas, whose opinion counts more than most. He said: " Most men are wicked "... The mob does not care, not even about the things they stumble upon; nor can they grasp a lesson though they think they do.' In the same vein he says : * The law can demand, too, that the will of One Man must be obeyed.' Another expression of Heraclitus' conservative and anti-democratic outlook is, incidentally, quite acceptable to democrats in its wording, though not in its intention:

4 A people ought to fight for the laws of the city as if they were its walls.' But Heraclitus' fight for the ancient laws of his city was in vain, and the transitoriness of all things impressed itself strongly upon him. His theory of change gives expression to this feeling 5 : c Everything is in flux ', he said; and ' You cannot step twice into the same river.' Disillusioned, he argued against the belief that the existing social order would remain for ever: c One must not act and talk like those reared with the narrow outlook " As it has been handed down to us ".'

This emphasis on change, arid especially on change in social life, is a noteworthy characteristic not only of Heraclitus' philosophy but of historicism in general. That things, and even kings, change, is a truth which needs to be impressed especially upon those who take their social environment too much for granted. So much is to be admitted. But in the Heraclitean philosophy one of the less commendable characteristics of historicism manifests itself, namely, an over-emphasis upon change, combined with the complementary belief in an inexorable law of destiny. Every process in the world develops according to a definite law, its c measure ' 6 . Heraclitus visualizes this law of destiny in an interesting way. It is inexorable and irresistible, and to this extent it resembles our modern conception of natural law as well as the conception of developmental laws of modern historicists. But it differs from these conceptions in so far as it is enforced by punishments, just as laws imposed by the state.

This failure! to distinguish between legal laws or norms on the
12 THE MYTH OF DESTINY

one hand and natural laws or regularities on the other is characteristic of tribal tabooism: both kinds of law alike are treated as magical, which makes a rational criticism of the man-made taboos as inconceivable as an attempt to improve upon the regularities of the natural world: All events proceed with the necessity of fate. The sun will not outstep the measure of his path; but if he does, then the goddesses of Fate, the handmaids of Justice, will know how to find him. The order of the world, which is the same for all things, has not been made, neither by a god nor by a man. It always was, is, and will be, an eternally living fire, with a law that measures its flaring up and a law that measures its dying down. In its advance, the Fire will judge and convict everything.'

Combined with the historicist idea of a relentless destiny we frequently find an element of mysticism. A critical analysis of mysticism will be given in chapter 24. Here I wish only to show the role of anti-rationalism and mysticism in Heraclitus' philosophy: 'Nature loves to hide,' he writes, and 'The Lord who owns the oracle of Delphi neither reveals nor conceals, but he shows his meaning through signs.' Heraclitus' contempt of the more empirically minded scientists is typical of those who adopt this attitude: Who knows many things need not have many brains; for otherwise Hesiod and Pythagoras would have had more, and also Xenophanes. Along with this scorn of scientists goes the mystical theory of an intuitive understanding which is given to the chosen, to those who are awake, who have the power to see, hear, and speak: One must not act and talk as if asleep. Those who are awake have One common world; those who are asleep, turn to their private worlds. They are incapable both of listening and of talking. Even if they do hear they are like the deaf. The saying applies to them: They are present yet they are not present. One thing alone is wisdom: to understand the thought which steers everything through everything.' The world experienced in common by those who are awake is the mystical unity, the oneness of all things: * One must follow what is common to all. The thought is common to all. All becomes One and One becomes All. The One which alone is wisdom wishes and does not wish to be called by the name of 2eus. It is the thunderbolt which steers everything through everything.'

So much for the more general features of the Heraclitean philosophy of universal change and hidden destiny.* From it
springs a theory of the driving force behind all change; a theory which exhibits its historicist character, by its emphasis upon the importance of a c social dynamics ' as opposed to a * social statics '. Heraclitus' dynamics of nature in general and especially of social life confirms the view that his philosophy was inspired by the social and political disturbances he had experienced. For he declares that strife or war is the dynamic as well as the creative principle of all change, and especially of all differences between men. And being a typical historicist, he accepts the judgement of history as a moral one 9 , holding that the outcome of war is always just 10 : * War is the father and king of all things. It proves some to be gods and others to be mere men, by turning the latter into slaves and the former into masters, . . . One must know that strife is common to everything, and that war is justice, and that all things develop through strife and by necessity/ But if war is just, if c the goddesses of Fate ' are at the same time c the handmaids of Justice ', if history, or more precisely, if success, i.e. success in war, is the criterion of merit, then the standard of merit must itself be c in flux '. Heraclitus meets this problem by his relativism, and by his doctrine of the identity of opposites. This springs from his theory of change. A changing thing must give up some property and acquire the opposite property. It is not so much a thing as a process of transition from one state to an opposite state, and thereby a unification of the opposite states 11 : ' Cold things become warm and warm things become cold; what is moist becomes dry and what is dry becomes moist. . . Disease enables us to appreciate health. . . Life and death, being awake and being asleep, youth and old age, all this is identical; for the one turns into the other and the latter returns into the former. . . The path that leads up and the path that leads down are identical. . . The divergent agrees with itself: it is a harmony resulting from opposite tensions, as in the bow, or in the lyre. . . The opposites belong to each other, the best harmony results^ from discord, and everything develops by strife. . . Good and bad are identical.' But the ethical relativism expressed in the last fragment does not prevent Heraclitus from developing upon the background of his theory of the justice of war and the verdict of history a tribalist and romantic ethic of Fame, Fate, and the superiority of the Great Man, all strangely similar* to some very modern ideas ia : ' Who falls fighting will be glorified by gods and by men. . . ,The greater the fall the more glorious the fate. . .

14 THE MYTH OF DESTINY
The best seek one thing above all others: eternal fame. . . One man is worth more than ten thousand, if he is Great.'
It is surprising to find in these early fragments, dating from about 500 B.C., so much that is characteristic of modern anti-democratic and historianist tendencies. But apart from the fact that many of these ideas have, through the medium of Plato, become part of the main body of philosphic tradition, the similarity of doctrine can perhaps be to some extent explained by the similarity of social conditions at the different periods during which it arises. It seems as if historianist ideas easily become prominent in times of great social change. They appeared when Greek tribal life broke up, as well as when that of the Jews was shattered by the impact of the Babylonian conquest 1S. There can be little doubt, I believe, that Heraclitus 5 philosophy is an expression of a feeling of drift; a feeling which seems to be a typical reaction to the dissolution of the ancient tribal forms of social life. In modern Europe, historianist Ideas were revived during the industrial revolution, and especially through the impact of the political revolutions in America and France 14. It appears to be more than a mere coincidence that Hegel, who adopted so much of Heraclitus’ thought and passed it on to all modern historianist movements, was a mouthpiece of the reaction against the French Revolution.

CHAPTER 3: PLATO’S THEORY OF IDEAS

Plato lived in a period of wars and of political strife which was, for all we know, even more severe than that which had troubled Heraclitus. Before his time, the breakdown of the tribal life of the Greeks had led in Athens, his native city, to a period of tyranny, and later to the establishment of a democracy which tried jealously to guard itself against any attempts to reintroduce either a tyranny or an oligarchy, i.e. a rule of the leading aristocratic families 1. During Plato’s youth, democratic Athens was involved in a deadly war against Sparta, the leading city-state of the Peloponnese, which had preserved many of the laws and customs of the ancient tribal aristocracy. The Peloponnesian war lasted, with an interruption, for twenty-eight years. (In chapter 10, where the historical background is reviewed in more detail, it will be shown that the war did not end with the fall of Athens in 404 B.C., as is sometimes asserted 2.) Plato was born during the war, and he was about twenty-four when it ended. It brought terrible epidemics, and, in its last year, famine, the fall of the city of Athens, civil war, and a rule of terror, usually called the rule of the Thirty Tyrants; these were led by two of Plato’s uncles, who both lost their lives in the course of the civil war. Even the peace and the re-establishment of the democracy meant no respite for Plato. His beloved teacher Socrates, whom he later made the main speaker of most of his dialogues, was tried and executed. Plato himself seems to have been in danger; together with other companions of Socrates, he left Athens.
Later, on a visit to Sicily, Plato became entangled in the political intrigues which were spun at the court of Dionysius I, tyrant of Syracuse, and even after his return to Athens and the foundation of the Academy, Plato continued along with some of his pupils to take an active part in the conspiracies and revolutions that constituted Syracusan politics.

This brief outline of political events may help to explain why, Plato, like Heraclitus, suffered deeply from the instability and the lack of security in the political life of his time. Like Heraclitus, Plato was of royal blood; at least, the tradition claims that his father's family traced its descent from Codrus, the last of the tribal kings of Attica. Plato was very proud of his mother's family which, as he explains in one of his last dialogues, the Timaeus, was related to that of Solon, the lawgiver of Athens. To it belonged also his uncles, Critias and Charmides, the leading men of the Thirty Tyrants. With such a family tradition, Plato could be expected to take a deep interest in public affairs; and indeed, most of his works confirm this expectation. He himself relates that he was from the beginning most anxious for political activity, but that he was deterred by the stirring experiences of his youth. 'Seeing that everything swayed and shifted without plan, I became desperate. From the feeling that society, and indeed everything, was in flux, arose the fundamental impulse of his philosophy as well as of the philosophy of Heraclitus; and as his historicist predecessor had done, so Plato summed up his social experience by proffering a law of historical development. According to this law, which will be more fully discussed in the next chapter, social change was degeneration. Even though in some of Plato's works there is a suggestion of a cyclic development, leading up again after the lowest point of extreme evil was passed, the main trend is one of decay. Our own cosmic period, more particularly, is for a long time to come (its length is 18,000 years) a period of deterioration, and this period is the only one that plays any role in Plato's philosophy of history. The other part of the cycle, the period of the rise, is nowhere clearly referred to, and the few vague hints given are not sufficient to show whether Plato really believed in it. In what follows, I shall therefore confine my analysis to the main doctrine of Plato's historicism, namely, to the doctrine that the law of historical development is one of degeneration or decay.

So far we have seen only similarities between Plato and Heraclitus. But there is an important difference. Plato believed in the possibility of breaking through this fatal circle, and of
putting an end to the process of decay. He believed in the possibility of arresting all political change. Accordingly, this becomes the aim he strives for. He tries to realize it by establishing a state which is free from the evils of all other states, because it does not change. It is the best, the arrested state.

Important as this difference is, it gives rise to a further point of similarity between Plato and Heraclitus. Heraclitus had generalized his experience of social flux by extending it to the world of * all things ', and Plato, I have hinted, did the same. But Plato also extended his belief in a perfect state tlytt does not decay to the realm of * all things '. He believed that to every kind of ordinary or decaying things, there corresponds also a perfect thing that does not decay. This belief in perfect and unchanging things, usually called the Theory of Forms or Ideas 8, became the central doctrine of his philosophy.

Plato's belief that it is possible for us to break the iron law of destiny and to avoid decay by arresting all change, shows that his historicist tendencies had definite limitations. A radical and fully developed historicism does not admit that man, by any effort, can alter the laws of historical destiny even after he has discovered them. He cannot work against them, since all his plans and actions are means by which the inexorable laws of development realize his historical destiny, just as Oedipus met his fate because of the prophecy and the measures taken by his father for avoiding it, and not in spite of them. In order to gain a better understanding of this radical historicist attitude, and to analyse the opposite tendency inherent in Plato's belief that he could influence fate, I shall contrast historicism with a diametrically opposite approach which may be called the attitude of social engineering 9.

The social engineer does not ask any questions about historical tendencies or the destiny of man. He believes that man is the master of his own destiny, and that in accordance with our aims, we can influence or change the history of man just as we have changed the face of the earth. He does not believe that these ends are imposed upon us by our historical background or by the trends of history, but rather that they are freely created by ourselves, just as we create new thoughts or new works of art or new houses or new machinery. As opposed to the historicist who believes that intelligent political action is possible only if the future course of history is first determined, the social engineer! believes that the scientific basis of politics would be very different; it would be the factual information necessary for the construction or alteration of social institutions, in accordance with our wishes and aims. Such a science would have to tell us what steps we
must take if we wish, for instance, to avoid depressions, or else to produce depressions; or if we wish to make the distribution of wealth more even, or less even. In other words, the social engineer conceives as the scientific basis of politics something like a social technology (Plato, as we shall see, compares it with the scientific background of medicine), as opposed to the historicist who understands it as a science of immutable historical tendencies.

18 THE MYTH OF DESTINY

From what I have said about the attitude of the social engineer, it must not be inferred that there are no important differences within the camp of the social engineers. One such difference between what I call 'piecemeal social engineering' and 'Utopian social engineering', will be the main theme of chapter 9, where I shall give my reasons for advocating the former and rejecting the latter. But for the time being, I am concerned only with the opposition between historicism and social engineering. This opposition can perhaps be further clarified if we consider the attitudes taken up by the historicist and by the social engineer towards social institutions.

The historicist is inclined to look upon social institutions mainly from the point of view of their history, i.e. their origin, their development, and their present and future significance. He may perhaps insist that their origin is due to a definite plan or design and to the pursuit of definite ends, either human or divine; or he may assert that they are not designed to serve any clearly conceived ends, but are rather the immediate expression of certain instincts and passions; or he may assert that they have once served as means to definite ends, but that they have lost this character. The social engineer and technologist, on the other hand, will hardly take much interest in the origin of institutions, or in the original intentions of their founders. Rather, he will put his problem like this. If such and such are our aims, is this institution well designed and organized to serve them? As an example we may consider the institution of insurance. The social engineer or technologist will not worry much about the question whether insurance originated as a profit-seeking business; or whether its historical mission is to serve the common weal. But he may offer a criticism of certain institutions of insurances, showing, perhaps, how to increase their profits, or, which is a very different thing, how to increase the benefit they render to the public; and he will suggest ways in which they could be made more efficient in serving the one end or the other. As another example of a social institution, we may consider a police force. Some historicists may describe it as an instrument for the protection of freedom and security, others as an instrument of class rule and oppression. The social engineer or technologist, however, would perhaps suggest measures that would irfoke it a suitable instrument for the protec-
tion of freedom and security, and he might also devise measures by which it could be turned into a powerful weapon for class

CHAPTER 3: PLATO'S THEORY OF IDEAS 19

rule. (In his function as a citizen who has certain ends in which he believes, he may demand that these ends, and the appropriate measures, should be adopted. But as a technologist, he would carefully distinguish between the question of the ends and their choice and questions concerning the facts, i.e. the social effects of any measure which might be taken n.)

Speaking more generally, we can say that the engineer or the technologist approaches institutions rationally as means that servd certain ends, and that as a technologist he judges them wholly according to their appropriateness, efficiency, simplicity, etc. The historian, on the other hand, would rather attempt to find out the *true role* played by these institutions in the development of history, evaluating them, for instance, as *willed by God*, or *willed by Fate*, or *serving important historical trends*, etc.

The two attitudes, historicism and social engineering, occur sometimes in rather typical combinations. The earliest and probably the most influential example of these is the social and political philosophy of Plato. It combines, as it were, some fairly obvious technological elements in the foreground with background ofa number of social and political philosophers who produced what have been later described as Utopian systems. All these systems recommend some kind of social engineering, since they demand the adoption of certain institutional means, though not always very realistic ones, for the achievement of their ends. But when we proceed to a consideration of these ends, then we frequently find that they are determined by historicism. Plato's political ends, especially, depend on a considerable extent on his historicist doctrines. First, it is his aim to escape the Heraclitean flux, manifested in social revolution and historical decay. Secondly, he believes that this can be done by establishing a state which is so perfect that it does not participate in the general trend of historical development. Thirdly, he believes that the model or original of his perfect state can be found in the distant past, in the dawn of history; for if the world decays in time, then we must find increasing perfection the further we go back into the past. The perfect state is something like the first ancestor, the primogenitor, of the later states, which are, as it were, the degenerate offspring of this perfect, or best, or *ideal* state ia; an ideal state which is not a mere phantasm, nor a dream, but
which is in its stability more real indeed than all those decaying societies which are in flux, and liable to pass away at any moment.

Thus even Plato's political end, the best state, is largely dependent on his historicism; and what is true of his philosophy of the state can be extended, as already indicated, to his general philosophy of *all things*.

The things in flux, the degenerate and decaying things, are (like the state) the offspring, the children, as it were, of perfect things. And like children, they are copies of their original primogenitors. The father or original of a thing in flux is what Plato calls its 'Form' or its 'Pattern' or its 'Idea'. As before, we must insist that the Form or Idea, in spite of its name, is no *idea in our mind*; it is not a phantasm, nor a dream, but a real thing. It is, indeed, more real than all the ordinary things which are in flux, and which, in spite of their apparent solidity, are doomed to decay; for the Form or Idea is a thing that is perfect, and does not perish.

The Forms or Ideas must not be thought to dwell, like perishable things, in space and time. They are outside space, and also outside time (because they are eternal). But they are in contact with space and time; for since they are the primogenitors of the things which develop and decay in space and time, they must have been in contact with space, at the beginning of time. Since they are not with us in our space and time, they cannot be perceived by our senses, as can the ordinary changing things which interact with our senses and are therefore called *sensible things*. Those sensible things which are copies or children of the same original, resemble not only this original; their Form or Idea, but also one another, as do children of the same family; and as children are called by the name of their father, so are the sensible things, which bear the name of their Forms or Ideas; 'They are all called after them', as Aristotle says 15.

This comparison between the Form or Idea of a class of sensible things and the father of a family of children is developed by Plato in the Timaeus, one of his latest dialogues. It is in close agreement with much of his earlier writing on which it throws considerable light. But in the Timaeus, Plato goes one step beyond his earlier teaching when he represents the contact of the Form or Idea with the world of space and time by an extension of his simile. He describes the abstract *space* in which the sensible things move (originally the space or gap...
between heaven and earth) as a receptacle, and compares it with
the mother of things, in which at the beginning of time the
sensible things are created by the Forms which stamp or impress
themselves upon pure space, and thereby give the offspring their
shape. c We must conceive ', writes Plato, c three kinds of
things : first, those which undergo generation ; secondly, that
in which generation takes place, and thirdly, the model in whose
likeness the generated things are born. And we may compare
the receiving principle to a mother, and the model to a father,
and their product to a child/ And he goes on to describe first
the fathers, the unchanging Forms or Ideas : * There is first the
unchanging Form, uncreated and indestructible, . . invisible and
imperceptible by any sense, and which can be contemplated only
by pure thought.' To any single one of these Forms or Ideas
belongs its offspring or race of sensible things, ' another kind of
things, bearing the name of their Form and resembling it, but
perceptible to sense, created, always in flux, generated in a place
and again vanishing from that place, and apprehended by opinion
based upon perception '. And the abstract space which is
likened to the mother, is described thus : * There is a third kind,
which is space, and is eternal, and cannot be destroyed, arid
which provides a home for all generated things. . .' 15

It may contribute to the understanding of Plato's theory of
Forms or Ideas if we compare it with certain Greek religious
beliefs. As in many primitive religions, some at least of the
Greek gods are nothing but idealized tribal primogenitors and
heroes. Accordingly, certain tribes and families traced their
ancestry to one or other of the gods. (Plato's own family is
reported to have traced its descent from the god Poseidon ie .)
We have only to consider that these gods are immortal or eternal,
and perfect (or very nearly so) while men are involved in the
flux of all things, and subject to decay (which indeed is the
ultimate destiny of every human individual), in order to see that
these gods are related to men in the same way as Plato's Forms
or Ideas are related to those sensible things which are their
copies 17 (or his perfect state to the various states now existing).
There is, however, an important difference between Greek
mythology and Plato's Theory of Forms or Ideas. While the
Greek venerated many gods as the ancestors of various tribes or
families, the Theory of Ideas demands that only one Form or Idea of man (or perhaps one Form or Idea of the
Greek man, and one each of the various Barbarian races 18 );

22 THE MYTH OF DESTINY

for it is one of the central doctrines of the Theory of Forms that
there is only one Form of every * race ' or c kind ' of things. The
uniqueness of the Form which corresponds to the uniqueness of
the primogenitor is demanded if the theory is to perform one of
its most important functions, namely, to explain the similarity
of sensible things, by proposing that the similar things are copies
or imprints of one Form. Thus if there were two equal or similar
Forms, their similarity would force us to assume that they are
both copies of a third original, which therefore would be the only
true and single Form. Or, as Plato puts it in the Timaeus :
cThe resemblance would thus be explained, more precisely, not
as one between these two things, but in reference to that superior
thing which is their prototype.' 10 In the Republic, which is
earlier than the Timaeus, Plato had explained his point even
more clearly, using as his example the j essential bed ', i.e. the
Form or Idea of a bed : c God . . has made one essential bed,
and only one ; two or more he did not produce, and never will . .
For . . even if God were to make two, and no more, then another
would be brought to light, namely the Form exhibited by those
two ; this, and not those two, would then be the essential bed/ 20

This argument shows that the Forms or Ideas provide Plato
not only with an origin or starting point for all developments in
space and time (and especially for human history) but also with
an explanation of the similarities between sensible things of the
same kind. If things are similar because of some property
which they share, for instance, r whiteness, or hardness, or goodness,
then this property must be one and the same in all of them ;
otherwise it would not make them similar. According to Plato,
they all participate in the one Form or Idea of whiteness, if they
are white ; of hardness, if they are hard. They participate in
the sense in which children participate in their father's possessions
and gifts ; just as the many particular reproductions of an etching
which are all impressions from one and the same plate, and
hence similar to one anotherâ€”may participate in the beauty of
the original.

The fact that this theory is designed to explain the similarities
in sensible things does not seem at first sight to be in any way
connected with historicism. But it is ; and as Aristotle tells us,
it was just this connection which induced Plato to develop the
Theory of Ideas. I* stall attempt to give an outline of this
development, using Aristotle's account together with some
indications in Plato's own writings.

CHAPTER 3 : PLATO'S THEORY OF IDEAS 23

If all things are in continuous flux, then it is impossible to
say anything definite about them. We can have no real know-
ledge of them, but, at the best, vague and delusive ' opinions '.
This point, as we know from Plato and Aristotle 21 , worried
many followers of Heraclitus. Parmenides, one of Plato's
predecessors who influenced him greatly, had taught that the
pure knowledge of reason, as opposed to the delusive opinion of experience, could have as its object only a world which did not change, and that the pure knowledge of reason did in fact reveal such a world. But the unchanging and undivided reality which Parmenides thought he had discovered behind the world of perishable things was entirely unrelated to this world in which we live and die. It was therefore incapable of explaining it.

With this, Plato could not be satisfied. Much as he disliked and despised this empirical world of flux, he was, at bottom, most deeply interested in it. He wanted to unveil the secret of its decay, of its violent changes, and of its unhappiness. He hoped to discover the means of its salvation. He was interested in Parmenides' doctrine of an unchanging, real, and perfect world behind this ghostly world in which he suffered, but it did not solve his problems as long as it remained unrelated to the world of sensible things. What he was looking for was knowledge, not opinion; the pure rational knowledge of a world that does not change; but, at the same time, knowledge that could be used to investigate this changing world, and especially, this changing society, political change, with its strange historical laws. Plato aimed at discovering the secret of the royal knowledge of politics, of the art of ruling men.

But an exact science of politics seemed as impossible as any exact knowledge of a world in flux; there were no fixed objects in the political field. How could one discuss any political questions when the meaning of words like 'government' or 'state' or 'city' changed with every new phase in the historical development? Political theory must have seemed to Plato in his Heraclitean period to be just as elusive, fluctuating, and unfathomable as political practice.

In this situation Plato obtained, as Aristotle tells us, a most important hint from Socrates. Socrates was interested in ethical matters; he was an ethical reformer, a moralist who pestered all kinds of people, forcing them to think, to explain, and to account for the principles of their actions. He used to question them and was not easily satisfied by their answers. The typical reply, we

24 THE MYTH OF DESTINY

act so, because it is 'wise' to act in this, way (or 'efficient', or *just', or 'pious', etc.) only incited him to continue his questions by asking what is wisdom; or efficiency; or justice; or piety. So he discussed, for instance, the wisdom displayed in various trades and professions, in order to find out what is common to all these various and changing wise 'ways of behaviour, and so to find out what *wisdom* really means, or (using Aristotle's way of putting it) what its essence is. *It was natural*', says Aristotle, *that Socrates should search for the essence '23, i.e.
for the real, the unchanging or essential meaning of the terms. ' In this connection he became the first to raise the problem of universal definitions. 3

These attempts of Socrates to discuss ethical terms like 'justice' or 'modesty' or 'piety' have been rightly compared with modern discussions on Liberty (by Mill 24 , for instance), or on Authority, or on the Individual and Society (by Catlin, for instance). There is no need to assume that Socrates, in his search for the unchanging or essential meaning of such terms, personified them, or that he treated them like things. Aristotle's report at least suggests that he did not, and that it was Plato who developed Socrates' method of searching for the meaning or essence into a method of determining the real nature, the Form or Idea of a thing. Plato retained ' the Heraclitean doctrines that all sensible things are ever in a state of flux, and that there is no knowledge about them ', but found in Socrates' method a way out of these difficulties. Though there * could be no definition of any sensible thing, as they were always changing ', there could be definitions and true knowledge of things of a different kind. ' If knowledge or thought were to have an object, there would have to be some different, some unchanging entities, apart from those which are sensible ', says Aristotle 25 , and he reports of Plato that ' things of this other sort, then, he called Forms or Ideas, and the sensible things, he said, were distinct from them, and all called ^after them. And the many things which have the same name as a certain Form or Idea exist by participating in it /

This account of Aristotle's corresponds exactly to Plato's own arguments proffered in the Timaeus * 8 , and it shows that Plato's fundamental problem was to find a scientific method of dealing with sensible things. He wanted to obtain purely rational knowledge, and not merely opinion ; and since pure knowledge of sensible things could not be obtained, he insisted, as mentioned

CHAPTER 3 : PLATO'S THEORY OF IDEAS 25

before, on obtaining at least such pure knowledge as was in some way related, and applicable, to sensible things. Knowledge of the Forms or Ideas fulfilled this demand, since the Form was related to its sensible things like a father to his children who are under age. The Form was the accountable representative of the sensible things, and could therefore be consulted in important questions concerning the world of flux.

According to our analysis, the theory of Forms or Ideas has at least three different functions in Plato's philosophy, (i) It is an important methodological device, for it makes possible pure scientific knowledge, and even knowledge which could be applied to the world of changing things of which we cannot immediately
obtain any knowledge, but only opinion. Thus it becomes possible to enquire into the problems of a changing society, and to build up a political science. (2) It provides the clue to a theory of change and decay, to a theory of generation and degeneration, and especially, the clue to history. (3) It opens a way, in the social realm, towards some kind of social engineering; and it makes possible the forging of instruments for arresting social change, since it suggests designing a 'best state' which so closely resembles the Form or Idea of a state that it cannot decay.

Problem (2), the theory of change and of history, will be dealt with in the next two chapters, 4 and 5, where Plato's descriptive sociology is treated, i.e. his description and explanation of the changing social world in which he lived. Problem (3), the arresting of social change, will be dealt with in chapters 6 to 9, treating Plato's political programme. Problem (i), that of Plato's methodology, has with the help of Aristotle's account of the history of Plato's theory been briefly outlined in the present chapter. To this discussion, I wish to add here a few more remarks.

I use the name methodological essentialism to characterize the view, held by Plato and many of his followers, that it is the task of pure knowledge or science to discover and to describe the true nature of things, i.e. their hidden reality or essence. It was Plato's peculiar belief that the essence of sensible things can be found in their primogenitors or Forms. But many of the later methodological essentialists, for instance, Aristotle, did not altogether follow him in this, although they all agreed with him in determining the task of pure knowledge 'as the discovery of the hidden nature or Form or essence of things. All these methodological essentialists also agreed with Plato in maintaining O.S.I.E. VOL. i B

26 THE MYTH OF DESTINY

that these essences may be discovered and discerned with the help of intellectual intuition; that every essence has a name proper to it, the name after which the sensible things are called; and that it may be described in words. And a description of the essence of a thing they all called a definition. According to methodological essentialism, there can be three ways of knowing a thing: * I mean that we can know its unchanging reality or essence; and that we can know the definition of the essence; and that we can know its name. Accordingly, two questions may be formulated about any real thing. . . : A person may give the name and ask for the definition; or he may give the definition and ask for the name.' As an example of this method, Plato uses the essence of c even ' (as opposed to c odd ') : ' Number . . may be a thing capable of division into equal parts. If it is so divisible, number is named "even"; and the
definition of the name "even" is "a number divisible into equal parts"... And when we are given the name and asked about the definition, or when we are given the definition and asked about the name, we speak, in both cases, of one and the same essence, whether we call it now "even" or "a number divisible into equal parts" 5 V After this example, Plato proceeds to apply this method to a 'proof concerning the real nature of the soul, about which we shall hear more later 27.

Methodological essentialism, i.e. the theory that it is the aim of science to reveal essences and to describe them by means of definitions, can be better understood when contrasted with its opposite, methodological nominalism. Instead of aiming at finding out what a thing really is, and at defining its true nature, methodological nominalism aims at describing how a thing behaves, and especially, whether there are any regularities in its behaviour. In other words, methodological nominalism sees the aim of science in the description of the things and events of our experience, and in an *explanation* of these events, i.e. their description with the help of universal laws 28. And it sees in our language, and especially in the rules which distinguish properly constructed sentences and inferences from a mere heap of words, the great instrument of scientific description 29; words it considers rather as subsidiary tools for this task, and not as names of essences. The methodological nominalist will never think that a 'question like 'What is energy?,' or *What is movement? ' or *What is an atom?' is an important question for physics; but he will consider important a question like: 'How can the energy of

CHAPTER 3 : PLATO'S THEORY OF IDEAS 27

the sun be made useful?' or c How does a planet move?' or c Under what conditions does an atom radiate light?' And to those philosophers who tell him that before having answered the c what' question he cannot hope to give exact answers to any of the c how' questions, he will reply, if at all, by pointing out that he much prefers that modest degree of exactness which he can achieve by his methods to the pretentious muddle which they have achieved by theirs.

As indicated by our example, methodological nominalism is nowadays fairly generally accepted in the natural sciences. The problems of the social sciences, on the other hand, are still for the most part treated by essentialist methods. This is, in my opinion, one of the main reasons for their backwardness. But many who have noticed this situation 30 judge it differently. They believe that the difference in method is necessary, and that it reflects an 6 essential 'difference between the *natures' of these two fields of research.

The arguments usually offered in support of this view
emphasize the importance of change in society, and exhibit other features of historicism. The physicist, so runs a typical argument, deals with objects like energy or atoms which, though changing, retain a certain degree of constancy. He can describe the changes encountered by these relatively unchanging entities, and does not have to construct or detect essences or Forms or similar unchanging entities in order to obtain something permanent of which he can make definite pronouncements. The social scientist, however, is in a very different position. His whole field of interest is changing. There are no permanent entities in the social realm where everything is under the sway of historical flux. How, for instance, can we study government? How could we identify it in the diversity of governmental institutions, found in different states at different historical periods, without assuming that they have something essentially in common? We call an institution a government if we think that it is essentially a government, i.e. if it complies with the intuition of what a government is, an intuition which we can formulate in a definition. The same would hold good for other sociological entities, such as *civilization*. We have to grasp their essence, and to lay it down in the form of a definition.

These modern arguments are, I think, very similar to those Deported above which, according to Aristotle, led Plato to his doctrine of Forms or Ideas. The only difference is that Plato

28 THE MYTH OF DESTINY

(who did not accept the atomic theory and knew nothing about energy) applied his doctrine to the realm of physics also, and thus to the world as a whole. We have here an indication of the fact that in the social sciences, a discussion of Plato's methods may be topical even to-day.

Before proceeding to Plato's sociology and to the use he made of his methodological essentialism in that field, I wish to make it quite clear that I am confining my treatment of Plato to his historicism, and to his *best state*. I must therefore warn the reader not to expect a representation of the whole of Plato's philosophy, or what may be called a c fair and just ' treatment of Platonism. My attitude towards historicism is one of frank hostility, based upon the conviction that historicism is futile, and worse than that. My survey of the historicist features in Platonism is therefore strongly critical. Although I admire much in Plato, especially those parts which I believe to be Socratic, I do not think it my task to add to the countless tributes to his genius. I am, rather, bent on destroying what is in my opinion most mischievous in this philosophy. This is Plato's political totalitarianism, the criticism of which is here, I believe, carried considerably further than by those other recent critics 31 who first pointed out the distinctly fascist flavour of Plato's politics.
Plato was one of the first social scientists and undoubtedly by far the most influential. In the sense in which the term sociology was understood by Comte, Mill, and Spencer, he was a sociologist; that is to say, he successfully applied his method to an Analysis of the social life of man, and of the laws of its development as well as the laws and conditions of its stability. In spite of Plato's great influence, this side of his teaching has been little noticed. This seems to be due to two factors. First of all, much of Plato's sociology is presented by him in such close connection with his ethical and political demands that the descriptive elements have been largely overlooked. Secondly, many of his thoughts were so far taken for granted that they were simply absorbed unconsciously and therefore uncritically. It is mainly in this way that his sociological theories became so influential.

Plato's sociology is an ingenious blend of speculation with acute observation of facts. Its speculative setting is, of course, the theory of Forms and of universal flux and decay, of generation and degeneration. But on this idealist foundation Plato constructs an astonishingly realistic theory of society, capable of explaining the main trends in the historical development of the Greek city-states as well as the social and political forces at work in his own day.

The speculative or metaphysical setting of Plato's theory of social change has already been sketched. It is the world of unchanging Forms or Ideas, of which the world of changing things in space and time is the offspring. The Forms or Ideas are not only unchanging, indestructible, and incorruptible, but also perfect, true, real, and good; in fact, e good 3 is once, in the Republic 1, explained as everything that preserves ', and ' evil ' as * everything that destroys or corrupts '. The perfect and good Forms or Ideas are prior to the copies, the sensible things, and they are something like primogenitors or starting points 2 of all the changes in the world of flux. This view is used for evaluating the general trend and main direction of all changes in the world of sensible things. For if the starting point of all change is perfect and good, then change can only be a movement that leads away from the perfect and good; it must be directed towards the imperfect and the evil, towards
This theory can be developed in detail. The more closely a sensible thing resembles its Form or Idea, the less corruptible it must be, since the Forms themselves are incorruptible. But sensible things are not perfect copies; indeed, no copy can be perfect, since it is only an imitation of the true reality, only appearance and illusion, not the truth. Accordingly, no sensible things resemble their Forms sufficiently closely to be unchangeable. *Only the most divine things remain unchanged' says Plato. A sensible thing, if it is a good copy, may change only very little at first. But every change, however small, must make it different from what it has been before, and must thus make it less perfect by reducing its resemblance to its Form. In this way, the thing becomes more changeable with every change, and more corruptible, since it becomes further removed from its Form, which is its *cause of immobility and of being at rest', as Aristotle says. Thus we can understand why Plato teaches in the Laws, the last of his great dialogues, that any change whatever, with the possible exception of the change of an evil thing, is the most terrible danger that can be imagined ', adding for the sake of emphasis: 'And this is true of all things, except the evil ones, as mentioned before.' In brief, Plato teaches that change is evil, and rest divine.

We see now that Plato's theory of Forms or Ideas implies a certain trend in the development of the world in flux. It leads to the law that the corruptibility of all things in that world must continually increase. It is not so much a rigid law of universally increasing corruption, but rather a law of increasing corruptibility; that is to say, the danger or the likelihood of corruption increases, but exceptional developments in the other direction are not excluded. Thus it is possible, as the last quotation indicates, that very evil things, for instance a very evil city, may be improved by change. (In order that such an improvement should be of any value, we would have to try to make it permanent, i.e. to arrest all further change.)

In full accordance with this general theory is Plato's story, in the Timaeus, of the origin of species. According to this story, man, the highest of animals, is generated by the god^; the other species originate from him by a process of corruption and degeneration. First, certain men degenerate into women. Later, step by step, they degenerate into the lower animals. Birds, we hear, came into being through the transformation of harmless but too easy-going people who would trust their senses too much; 'land animals came from men who had no interest in philosophy' ; and fishes, including shell-fish, c degenerated.
from the most foolish, stupid, and . . . unworthy ' of all men 4 .

It is clear that this theory can be applied to human society, and to its history. It then explains Hesiod's 5 pessimistic developmental law, the law of historical decay. If we are to believe Aristotle's report outlined in the last chapter, then the theory of Forms or Ideas was originally introduced in order to meet a methodological demand, the demand for pure or rational knowledge which is impossible in the case of sensible things in flux. We now see that the theory does more than that. Over and above meeting these methodological demands, it explains the general direction of the flux of all sensible things, and thereby the historical tendency to degenerate shown by man and human society. (And it does still more; as we shall see in chapter 6, the theory of Forms determines the trend of Plato's political demands also, and even the means for their realization.) If, as I believe, the philosophies of Plato as well as Heraclitus sprang from their social experience, especially from the experience of class war and from the abject feeling that their social world was going to pieces, then we can understand why the theory of Forms came to play such an important part in Plato's philosophy when he found that it was capable of explaining the trend towards degeneration. He must have welcomed it as the solution of a most mystifying riddle. While Heraclitus had been unable to pass a direct ethical condemnation upon the trend of the political development, Plato found, in his theory of Forms, the theoretical basis for a pessimistic judgement in Hesiod's vein.

But Plato's greatness as a sociologist does not lie in his general and abstract speculations about the law of social decay. It lies rather in the wealth and detail of his observations, and in the amazing acuteness of his sociological, intuition. He saw things which not only had not been seen before him, but which were rediscovered only in our own tinte. As an example I may mention his theory of the primitive beginnings of society, of tribal patriarchy, and, in general, his attempt to outline the

32 PLATO'S SOCIOLOGY

typical periods in the development of social life. Another example is Plato's sociological and economic historicism, his emphasis on the economic background of political life and historical developments; a theory revived by Marx under the name 'historical materialism'. A third example is Plato's most interesting law of political revolutions, according to which all revolutions presuppose a disunited ruling class; a law which forms the basis of his analysis of the means of arresting political change and creating social equilibrium, and which has been recently rediscovered by the theoreticians of totalitarianism, especially by Pareto.
I shall now proceed to a more detailed discussion of these points, especially the third, the theory of revolution and of equilibrium.

The dialogues in which Plato discusses these questions are, in chronological order, the Republic, a dialogue of much later date called the Statesman (or the Politicus), and the Laws, the latest and longest of his works. In spite of certain minor differences, there is much agreement between these dialogues, which are in some respects parallel, in others complementary to one another. The Laws 6, for instance, present the story of the decline and fall of human society as an account of Greek pre-history merging without any break into history; while the parallel passages of the Republic give, in a more abstract way, a systematic outline of the development of government; the Statesman, still more abstract, gives a logical classification of types of government, with only a few allusions to historical events. Similarly, the Laws formulate the historicist aspect of the investigation more clearly than any of the other dialogue^ 
' What is the archetype or origin of a state ? ' asks Plato there, linking this question with the other : * Can the evolution of a state change in both directions, towards the good as well as towards the evil ? ' But within the sociological doctrines, the only major difference appears to be due to a purely speculative difficulty which seems to have worried Plato. Assuming as the starting point of the development a perfect and therefore incorruptible state, he found it difficult to explain the first change, the Fall of Man, as it were, which sets everything going 7. We shall hear, in the next chapter, of Plato's attempt to solve this problem; but first I shall give a general survey of his theory of social development.

According to the Republic, the original or primitive form of

CHAPTER 4 : CHANGE AND REST 33

society, and at the same time, the one that resembles the Form or Idea of a state most closely, the ' best state ', is a kingship of the wisest and most godlike of men. This ideal state is so near perfection that it is hard to understand how it can ever change. Still, a change does take place ; and with it enters Heraclitus' strife, the driving force of all movement. According to Plato, internal strife, class war, fomented by self-interest and especially material or economic self-interest, is the main force of ' social dynamics '. The Marxian formula * The history of all hitherto existing societies is a history of class struggle 9 8 , fits Plato's historicism nearly as well as that of Marx. The four most conspicuous periods or ' landmarks in the history of political degeneration ', and, at the same time, ' the most important .. varieties of existing states ' 9 , are described by Plato in the
following order. First after the perfect state comes * timarchy ', the rule of the noble who seek honour and fame; secondly, oligarchy, the rule of the rich families; ' next in order, democracy is born ', the rule of liberty which means lawlessness, and last comes e tyranny . . the fourth and final sickness of the city ' 10 .

As can be seen from the last remark, Plato looks upon history, which to him is a history of social decay, as if it were the history of an illness; the patient is society; and, as we shall see later, the statesman ought to be a physician (and vice versa). Just as the description of the typical course of an illness is not always applicable to every individual patient, so is Plato's historical theory of social decay not intended to apply to the development of every individual city. But it is intended to describe both the original course of development by which the main forms of constitutional decay were first generated, and the typical course of social change 11 . We see that Plato aimed at setting out a system of historical periods governed by developmental law, i.e. at a historicist theory of society; an attempt which was revived by Rousseau, and was made fashionable by Comte and Mill, and by Hegel and Marx. And considering the historical evidence then available, Plato's system of historical periods was just as good as that of any of these modern historicists. (The main difference lies in the evaluation of the course taken by history. While the aristocrat Plato hated the development he described, these modern authors loved it,*believing as they did in a law of historical progress.)

Before discussing Plato's perfect state in any detail, I shall

34 PLATO'S SOCIOLOGY

give a brief sketch of the role played by economic motives and the class struggle in the process of transition between the four decaying forms of the state. The first form into which the perfect state degenerates, timocracy, the rule of the ambitious noblemen, is said to be in nearly all respects similar to the perfect state itself. It is important to note that Plato identifies this best and oldest among the existing states with the Dorian constitution of Sparta and Crete, and that these two tribal aristocracies did indeed represent the oldest existing form of political life within Greece. Most of Plato's excellent description of their institutions is given in his description of the best or perfect state, to which timocracy is so similar. The main difference is that the latter contains an element of instability; the once united patriarchal ruling class is now disunited, and it is this disunity which leads to the next step, to its degeneration into oligarchy. Disunion is brought about by ambition. ' First ', says Plato, speaking of the young timocrat, ' he hears his mother complaining that her husband is not one of the rulers . . .' 12
Thus he becomes ambitious and longs for distinction. But decisive in bringing about the next change are competitive and acquisitive social tendencies. * We must describe ', says Plato, * how timocracy changes into oligarchy . . Even a blind man must see how it changes . . It is the treasure house that ruins this constitution* They ' (the timocrats) ' begin by creating opportunities for showing off and spending money, and to this end they twist the laws, and they and their wives disobey them . . ; and they try to outrival one another.' In this Way arises the first class conflict ; that between virtue and money, or between the old-established ways of feudal simplicity and the new ways of wealth. The transition to oligarchy is completed when the rich establish a law that c disqualifies from public office all those whose means do not reach the stipulated amount. This change is imposed by force of arms, should threats and blackmail not succeed . .' 9

With the establishment of the oligarchy, a state of potential civil war between the oligarchs and the poorer classes is reached: 'just as a sick body . . is sometimes at strife with itself . .', so is this sick city. It falls ill and makes war on itself on the slightest pretext, whenever the one party or the other manages to obtain help from outside, the one from an oligarchic city, or the other from a democracy. And does not this sick state sometimes break into civil war even without any such help from outside ? ' 13 This civil war begets democracy : ' Democracy is^ born . . when the poor win the day, killing some . ., banishing others, and sharing with the rest the rights of citizenship and of public offices, on terms of equality . .'

Plato's description of democracy is a vivid but intensely hostile and unjust parody of the political life of Athens, and of the democratic creed which Pericles had formulated in a manner which has never been surpassed, about three years before Plato was born. (Pericles' programme is discussed in chapter 10, below 14 .) Plato's description is a brilliant piece of political propaganda, and we can appreciate what harm it must have done if we consider, for instance, that a man like Adam, an excellent scholar and editor of the Republic, is unable to resist the rhetoric of Plato's denunciation of his native city. 6 Plato's description of the genesis of the democratic man ', Adam 16 writes, * is one of the most royal and magnificent pieces of writing in the whole range of literature, whether ancient or modern.' And when the same writer continues : ' the description of the democratic man as the chameleon of the human society paints him for all time ', then we see that Plato has succeeded in turning one man at least against democracy, and we may wonder how much damage his poisonous writing has done
when presented, unopposed, to lesser minds...

As usual when Plato's style, to use a phrase of Adan^'s 16,' becomes a 'full tide of lofty thoughts and images and words', it does so because he urgently needs a cloak to cover the intellectual nakedness of his arguments, or rather, the total absence of any rational thought whatever. He uses invective instead, identifying liberty with lawlessness, freedom with licence, and equality before the law with disorder. Democrats are described as profligate and niggardly, as insolent, lawless, and shameless, as fierce and as terrible beasts of prey, as gratifying every whim, as living solely for pleasure, and for unnecessary and unclean desires. (c They fill their bellies like 'the beasts', was Heraclitus' way of putting it.) They are accused of calling reverence a folly...; temperance they call cowardice...; moderation and orderly expenditure they call meanness and boorishness ' 17, etc. c And there are more trifles of this kind ', says Plato, when the flood of his rhetorical abuse begins to abate,' the school-master fears and flatters his pupils... , and old men condescend to the young... in order to avoid the appearance of being sour and despotic.' (It is Plato the Masjer of the Academy

36 PLATO'S SOCIOLOGY

who puts this into the mouth of Socrates, forgetting that the latter had never been a schoolmaster, and that even as an old man he had never appeared to be sour or despotic. He had always loved, not to 'condescend' to the young, but to treat them, for instance the young Plato, as his comrades.) c But the height of all this abundance of freedom... is reached ',' Plato continues, c when slaves, male as well as female, who have been bought on the market, are every whit as free as those whose property they are... . And what is the cumulative effect of all this? That the citizens' hearts become so very tender that they are irritated at the mere sight of slavery and do not suffer anybody to submit to it, not even in its mildest forms/ Here, after all, Plato pays homage to his native city, even though he does it unwittingly. It will for ever remain one of the greatest triumphs of Athenian democracy that it treated slaves humanely, and that in spite of the inhuman propaganda of philosophers like Plato himself and Aristotle it came, as he witnesses, very close to abolishing slavery. 18

Of much greater merit, though it too is inspired by hatred, is Plato's description of tyranny and especially of the transition to it. He insists that he describes things which he has seen himself 19; no doubt, the allusion is to his experiences at the court of Dionysius I, tyrant of Syracuse. The transition from democracy to tyranny, Plato says, is most easily brought about by a popular leader who knows how to exploit the class antagonism between the rich and the poor within the democratic
state, and who succeeds in building up a bodyguard or a private army of his own. The people who have hailed him first as the champion of freedom are soon enslaved; and then they must fight for him, in 'one war after another which he must stir up. . . in order to make people feel the need of a general' 20. With tyranny, the most abject state is reached.

A very similar survey of the various forms of government can be found in the Statesrtian, where Plato discusses 'the origin of the tyrant and king, of oligarchies and aristocracies, and of democracies' 21. Again we find that the various forms of existing governments are explained as debased copies of the true model or Form of the state, of the perfect state, the standard of all imitations, >which is said to have existed in the ancient times of Cronos, fa&er of Zeus. One difference is that Plato here distinguishes six types of debased states; but this difference is unimportant, especially if we remember that Plato says in

CHAPTER 4 I CHANGE AND REST 37

the Republic 22 that the four types discussed are not exhaustive, and that there are some intermediate stages. The six types are arrived at, in the Statesman, by first distinguishing between three forms of government, the rule of one man, of a few, and of the many. Each of these is then subdivided into two types, of which one is comparatively good and the other bad, according to whether or not they imitate * the only true original ' by copying and preserving its ancient laws 23. In this way, three conservative or lawful and three utterly depraved or lawless form; are distinguished; monarchy, aristocracy, and a conservative form of democracy, are the lawful imitations, in order of merit. But democracy changes into its lawless form, and deteriorates further, through oligarchy, the lawless rule of the few, into a lawless rule of the one, tyranny, which, just as Plato has said in the Republic, is the worst of all. " v

That tyranny, the most evil statej need not be the end of the development is indicated in a passage in the Laws which partly repeats, and partly 24 connects with, the story of the Statesman. ' Give me a state governed by a young tyrant ', exclaims Plato there, c . . who has the good fortune to be the contemporary of a great legislator, and to meet him by some happy accident. What more could a^od do for a city which he wants to make happy ? ' Tyranny, the most evil state, ma) be reformed in this way. (This agrees with the remark in the Laws, quoted above, that all change is evil, ' with the possible exception of the change of an evil thing '. There is no doubt that Plato, when speaking of the great lawgiver and the young tyrant, must have been thinking of himself and his various ill-fated experiments with young tyrants which will be dealt with later, and especially of his attempts at reforming the younger
One of the main objects of Plato's analysis of political developments is to ascertain the driving force of all historical change. In the Laws, the historical survey is explicitly undertaken with this aim in view: * Have not uncounted thousands of cities been born during this time . . and has not each of them been under a! kinds of government ? . . Let us, if we can, get hold of the cause of so much change. I hope that we may thus reveal the secret both of the birth of constitutions, and also of their changes or revolutions.' 25 As the result of these investigations he discovers the sociological law that internal disunion, class war fomented by the antagonism of economic class interests,

38 PLATO'S SOCIOLOGY

is the driving force of all political revolutions. But Plato's formulation of this fundamental law goes even further. He insists that only internal sedition within the ruling class itself can weaken it so much that its rule can be overthrown. ' Changes in any constitution originate, without exception, within the ruling class itself, and only when this class becomes the seat of disunion ' 26, is his formula in the Republic ; and in the Laws he says (possibly referring to this passage of the Republic) : ' How can a kingship, or any other form of govern- ment, ever be destroyed by anybody but the rulers themselves ? Have we forgotten what we said a while ago, when dealing with this subject, as we did the other day ? ' This sociological law, together with the observation that economic interests are the most likely causes of disunion, is Plato's clue to history. But it is more. It is also the clue to his analysis of the conditions necessary for the establishment of political equilibrium, i.e. for arresting political change. He assumes that these conditions were realized in the best or perfect state of ancient times.

Plato's description of the perfect or best state has usually been interpreted as the Utopian programme of a progressivist. In spite of his repeated assertions, in the Republic, Timaeus, and Critias, that he is describing the distant past, and in spite of the parallel passages in the Laws whose historical intention is obvious, it is assumed that it was his whole intention to give a veiled description of the future. But I think that Plato meant what he said, and that many characteristics of his best state, especially as described in Books Two to Four of the Republic, are intended (like his accounts of primitive society in the Statesman and the Laws) to be historical 27, or perhaps pre-historical. It is different with some other features, especially with the kingship of the philosophers (described in Books Five to Seven of the Republic); features of which Plato himself says that they may belong only to the timeless world of Forms or Ideas, to the * City in Heaven '. These intentionally unhistorical features will be discussed later,
together with Plato's ethico-political demands. It must, of course, be admitted that he did not intend even in his description of the primitive or ancient constitutions to give an exact historical account; he certainly knew that he did not possess the necessary data for achieving anything like that. But I believe that he made a very serious attempt to reconstruct the ancient tribal forms of social life as well as he could. There is no reason to doubt this, especially since the attempt was, in a good number of its details, very successful. It could hardly be otherwise, since Plato arrived at his picture by an idealized description of the ancient Cretan and Spartan tribal aristocracies. With his acute sociological intuition he had seen that these forms were not only old, but petrified, arrested; that they were relics of a still older form. And he concluded that this still older form had been even more stable, more securely arrested. This very ancient and accordingly very good and very stable state he tried to reconstruct in such a way as to make clear how it had been kept free from disunion; how class war had been avoided, and how economic interests had been reduced to a minimum, and kept well under control. These are the main problems of Plato's reconstruction of the best state.

How does Plato solve the problem of avoiding class war? Had he been a progressivist, he might have hit at the idea of a classless, equalitarian society; for, as we can see for instance from his own parody of Athenian democracy, there were strong equalitarian tendencies at work in Athens. But he was not out to construct a state that might come, but a state that had been the father of the Spartan state, which was certainly not a classless society. It was a slave state and accordingly, Plato's best state is based on the most rigid class distinctions. It is a caste state. The problem of avoiding class war is solved, not by abolishing classes, but by giving the ruling class a superiority which is unchallenged, and which cannot be challenged. For, as in Sparta, the ruling class alone is permitted to carry arms, it alone has any political or other rights, and it alone receives education, i.e. a specialized training in the art of keeping down its human sheep or its human cattle. (In fact, its overwhelming superiority disturbs Plato a little; he fears that 'they may worry the sheep', instead of merely shearing them, and act as wolves rather than dogs.' 28. This problem is considered later in the chapter.) As long as the ruling class is united, there can be no challenge of their authority, and consequently no class war.

Plato distinguishes three classes in his best state, the guardians, their armed auxiliaries or warriors, and the working class. But actually there are only two castes, the armed and trained rulers
and the unarmed and uneducated ruled, for the guardians are old and wise warriors who have been promoted from the ranks of auxiliaries. That Plato divides his ruling caste into two classes, the guardians and the auxiliaries, without elaborating

40 PLATO'S SOCIOLOGY

similar subdivisions within the working class, is largely due to the fact that he is interested only in the rulers. The workers do not interest him at all, they are only human cattle whose sole function is to provide for the material needs of the ruling class; and Plato even forbids his rulers to legislate for them and their petty problems. For this reason, our information about the workers is extremely scanty; but Plato's silence is not wholly uninterrupted. 'Are there not drudges?', he asks once, c who possess not a spark of intelligence and are unworthy to be admitted into the community, but who have strong bodies for hard labour?' 29 Since this nasty remark has given rise to the comforting comment that Plato does not admit slaves into his city, I may here point out that this view is mistaken. It is true that Plato does not state explicitly that there are slaves in his best city. But in his description of timocracy, the second best state, and the one directly following the best, he says of the timocratic man: c He will be inclined to treat slaves cruelly, for he does not despise them as much as a well-educated man would.' But since only in the best city can education be found which is superior to that of timocracy, we are bound to conclude that there are slaves in Plato's best city, and that they are properly despised. Plato's righteous contempt for them is probably the reason why he does not elaborate the point. This conclusion is fully corroborated by the Laws, and the most inhuman attitude towards slaves adopted there.

Since the ruling class alone has political power, including the power of keeping the number of the human cattle within such limits as to prevent them from becoming a danger, the whole problem of preserving the state is reduced to that of preserving the internal unity of the master class. How is this unity of the rulers preserved? By training and other psychological influences, but otherwise mainly by the elimination of economic interests which may lead to disunion. This economic abstinenence is achieved and controlled by the introduction of communism, i.e. by the abolition of private property, especially in precious metals, which were forbidden in Sparta too. (This communism is confined to the ruling class, which alone must be kept free from disunion; quarrels among the ruled are not worthy of consideration.) Since all property is common property, there must also be a common ownership of women and children. No member of the ruling class must be able to identify his children, or his parents. The family must be
CHAPTER 4 : CHANGE AND REST 41

destroyed, or rather, extended to cover the whole warrior class. Family
loyalties might otherwise become a possible source of
disunion; therefore ' each should look upon all as if belonging
to one family 9 30 . (That this suggestion was neither so novel
nor so revolutionary as it sounds is clear if we consider, Vfor
instance, the Spartan restrictions on the privacy of family life,
such as common meals, etc., constantly referred to by Platp.)
But even this common ownership of women and children is riot
quite sufficient to guard the ruling class from all economic
dangers. It is important to avoid prosperity as well as poverty.
Both are dangers to unity; poverty, because it drives people
to adopt desperate means to satisfy their needs; prosperity,
because most change has arisen from abundance, from an
accumulation of wealth which makes dangerous experiments
possible. Only a communist system which has room neither
for great want nor for great wealth can reduce economic interests
to a minimum, and guarantee the unity of the ruling class.

The communism of the ruling caste can thus be derived
from Plato's fundamental sociological law of change; it is a
necessary condition of the political stability of his class state.
But although an important condition, it is not a sufficient one.
In order that the ruling class may feel really united, that it
should feel like one tribe, i.e. like one big family, pressure from
without the class is as necessary as are the ties between the
members of the class. This pressure can be secured by empha-
sizing and widening the gulf between the rulers and the ruled.
/ The stronger the feeling that the ruled are a different and an
altogether inferior race, the stronger will be the sense of unity
among the rulers. We arrive in this way at the fundamental
principle, announced only after some hesitation, that there must
be no mingling between the classes 31 : * Any meddling or
changing over from one class to another *, says Plato, c is a great
crime against the city and may rightly be denounced as the
basest wickedness.' But such a rigid division of the classes
must be justified, and an attempt to justify it can only be based
on the claim that the rulers are much superior to the ruled.
Accordingly, Plato tries to justify his class division by the three-
fold claim that the rulers are vastly superior in three respects
in race, in education, and in their scale of values. Plato's
moral valuations, which are, of course, identical with those of
the rulers of his best state, will be discussed in chapters 6 to 8;
I may therefore confine myself here to describing some of his
his ruling class. (Before proceeding to this description, I wish
to express my antagonism to the opinion that any kind of
superiority, whether racial or educational or moral, would
establish a claim to political prerogatives, even if such superiority
could be ascertained. Most people in civilized countries nowa-
days admit racial superiority to be a myth; but even if it were
an established fact, it should not create special political rights,
though it might create special moVal responsibilities for the
superior persons. Analogous demands should be made of those
who are educationally and morally superior; and I think that
the opposite claims of certain intellectualists and moralists only
show how utterly unsuccessful their education has been, since
it has not even made them aware of their own limitations, and
of their Pharisaism.)

If we want to understand Plato's views about the origin,
breeding, and education, of his ruling class, we must not lose
sight of the two main points of our analysis. We must keep
in mind, first of all, that Plato is considering a city of the past,
although one connected with the present in such a way that
certain of its features are still discernible in existing states, for
instance, in Sparta; and secondly, that he is reconstructing his
city with special care for the conditions of its stability, and
that he seeks the guarantees for this stability solely within the
ruling class itself, and more especially, in its unity and strength.]

Regarding the origin of the ruling class, it may be mentioned
that Plato speaks in the Statesman of a time, prior even to that
of his best state, when e God himself was the shepherd of men,
ruling over them just as man . . still rules over the beasts.
There was . . no ownership of women and children '32. This
is not merely the simile of the good shepherd; in the light of
what Plato says in the Laws, it must be interpreted more literally
than that. For there we are told that this primitive society,
which is prior even to the first and best city, is one of nomad
hill shepherds under a patriarch: c Government originated '^
says Plato there of the period prior to the first settlement, c . . as^ the rule of the eldest who inherits authority from his father or
mother; all the others followed him like a flock of birds, thus
forming one troop ruled by a patriarchal authority, which is
the most just of all "claims to royal power." These nomad
tribes, we hear, settled in the cities of the Peloponnese, especially
in Sparta, under the name of c Dorians f. How this happened

CHAPTER 4 : CHANGE AND REST 43

is not very clearly explained, but we understand Plato's reluctance
when we get a hint that the * settlement ' was in fact a violent
subjugation. Since this is, for all we know, the true story of
the Dorian settlement in the Peloponnese, we have every reason
to consider that Plato intended his story as a serious description
of prehistoric events; describing not only the origin of the Dorian master race but also the origin of their human cattle, i.e. the original inhabitants. In a parallel passage in the Republic, Plato gives us a mythological yet very pointed description of the conquest itself, when dealing with the origin of the *earthenborn*, the ruling class of the best city. (The Myth of the Earthborn will be discussed from a different point of view in chapter 8.) Their victorious march into the city, previously founded by the workers, is described as follows: e After having armed and trained the earthenborn, let us make them advance, under the command of the guardians, till they arrive in the city. Then let them look round to find out for their camp the spot that is most suitable for keeping down the inhabitants, should anyone show unwillingness to obey the law, and for holding back external enemies, who may come down like wolves on the fold. 5 This short but triumphant tale of the subjugation of a sedentary population by a conquering war horde (who are identified, in the Statesman, with the nomad hill shepherds of the period before the settlement) must be kept in mind when we interpret Plato's reiterated insistence that good rulers, whether gods or demigods or guardians, are patriarch shepherds of men, and that the true political art, the art of ruling, is a kind of herdsmanship, i.e. the art of managing and keeping down the human cattle. And it is in this light that we must consider his description of the breeding and training of c the auxiliaries who are subject to the rulers like sheep-dogs to the shepherds of the state *.

The breeding and the education of the auxiliaries, i.e. of the ruling class of Plato's best state, is, like their carrying of arms, a class symbol and therefore a class prerogative 33. And like arms, breeding and education are not empty symbols, but instruments of class rule, and necessary conditions of the stability of this rule. They are treated by Plato solely from this point of view, i.e. as powerful political weapons, as means for the herding of the human cattle as well as for the unification of the' ruling class.

To this end, it is important that the master class should feel

44 PLATO S SOCIOLOGY

as one superior master race. * The race of the guardiansj nast be kept pure * 34, says Plato (in defence of infanticide), when developing the racialist argument that we breed animals with great care while neglecting our own race, an argument which has been repeated ever since. (Infanticide was not an Athenian institution; Plato, seeing that it was practised at Sparta for eugenic reasons, concluded that it must be ancient and therefore good.) He demands that the same principles be applied to the breeding of the master race as an experienced breeder
applies to dogs, horses, or birds. * If you did not breed them in this way, don't you think that the race of your birds or dogs would quickly degenerate? 9 argues Plato; and he draws the conclusion that c the same principles apply to the race of men '. The racial qualities demanded from the guardian or an auxiliary are, more specifically, those of a sheep-dog. * Our warrior-athletes . . must be vigilant like watch-dogs \ demands Plato, and he asks : ' Is there any difference, so far as their natural fitness for keeping guard is concerned, between a gallant youth and a well-bred dog? ' In his enthusiasm and admiration for the dog, Plato goes so far as to discern in him a fi genuine philosophical nature '; for ' is not the love of learning identical with the philosophical attitude? ' The main difficulty which besets Plato is that guardians and auxiliaries must be endowed with a character that is fierce and gentle at the same time. It is clear that they must be bred to be fierce, since they must c meet any danger in a fearless and unconquerable spirit '. Yet c if their nature is to be like that, how are they to be kept from being violent against one another, or against the rest of the citizens? ' 35 Indeed, it would be * simply monstrous if the shepherds should keep dogs . . who would worry the sheep, behaving like wolves rather than dogs \ The problem is important from the point of view of the political equilibrium, or rather, of the stability of the state, for Plato does not rely on an equilibrium of the forces of the various classes, since that would be unstable. A control of the master class and its arbitrary powers through the opposing force of the ruled is out of question, for the superiority of the master class must remain unchallenged. The only admissible control of the master class is therefore self-control. Just as the ruling class must exercise economic* abstinence, i.e. refrain from an excessive economic exploitation of the ruled, so it must also be able to refrain from too great fierceness in its dealings with the ruled.

CHAPTER 4 : CHANGE AND REST 45

But this can only be achieved if the fierceness of its nature is balanced by its gentleness. Plato finds this a very serious problem, since * the fierce nature is the exact opposite of the gentle nature '. His speaker, Socrates, reports that he is per-plexed, until he remembers the dog again. c Well-bred dogs are by nature most gentle to their friends and acquaintances, but the very opposite to strangers ', he says. It is therefore proved c that the character we try to give our guardians is not contrary to nature '. The aim of breeding the master race is thus established, and shown to be attainable. It has been derived from an analysis of the conditions which are necessary for keeping the state stable.

Plato's educational aim is exactly the same. It is the purely
political aim of stabilizing the state by blending a fierce and a
gentle element in the character of the rulers. The two disciplines
in which children of the Greek upper class were educated,
gymnastics and music (the latter, in the wider sense of the word,
included all literary studies), are correlated by Plato with the
two elements of character, fierceness and gentleness. ' Have you
not observed ', asks Plato 36 , ' how the character is affected by
an exclusive training in gymnastics without music, and how it
is affected by the opposite training ? . . . Exclusive preoccu-
pation with gymnastics produces men who are fiercer than they
ought to be, while an analogous preoccupation with music makes
them too soft . . But we maintain that our guardians must
combine both of these natures . . This is why I say that some
god must have given man these two arts, music and gymnastics;
and their purpose is not so much to serve soul and body
respectively, but rather to tune properly the two main strings ',
i.e. the two elements of the soul, gentleness and fierceness.
4 These are the outlines of our system of education and training ',
Plato concludes his analysis.

In spite of the fact that Plato identifies the gentle element
of the soul with her philosophic disposition, and in spite of the
fact that philosophy is going to play such a dominant role in
the later parts of the Republic, he is not at all biased in favour
of the gentle element of the soul, or of musical, i.e. literary,
education. His impartiality in balancing the two elements is
the more remarkable as it leads him to impose the most severe
restrictions on literary education, compared with what was cus-
tomary in the Athens of his day. This, of course, is only part
of his general tendency to prefer Spartan customs to those of

46 PLATO'S SOCIOLOGY

Athens. (Crete, his other model, was even more anti-musical
than Sparta 37 .) Plato's political principles of literary education
are based upon a simple comparison. Sparta, he saw, treated
its human cattle just a little too harshly ; this is a symptom or
even an admission of a feeling of weakness 38 , and therefore a
symptom of the incipient degeneration of the master class.
Athens, on the other hand, was altogether too liberal and slack
in her treatment of slaves. Plato took this as proof that Sparta
insisted just a little too much on gymnastics, and Athens, of
course, far too much on music. This simple estimate enabled
him readily to reconstruct what in his opinion must have been
the true measure or the true blend of the two elements in the
education of the best state, and to lay down the principles of
his educational policy. Judged from the Athenian viewpoint,
it is nothing but the demand that all literary education be
strangled 39 by a close adherence to the example of Sparta with
its strict state control of all literary matters. Not only poetry
but even music in the ordinary sense of the term are to be con-
trolled by a rigid censorship and they are to be devoted entirely to increasing the stability of the state by making the young more conscious of class discipline 40, and thus more ready to serve class interests. Plato even forgets that it is the function of music to make the young more gentle, for he demands such forms of music as will make them braver, i.e. fiercer. (Considering that Plato was an Athenian, his arguments concerning music proper appear to me almost intolerable in their reactionary and superstitious intolerance, especially if compared with a more enlightened contemporary criticism 41. But even now he has many musicians on his side, possibly because they are flattered by his high opinion of the importance of music, i.e. of its political power. The same is true of educationists, and even more of philosophers, since Plato demands that they should rule; a demand which will be discussed in chapter 8.)

The political principle that determines the education of the soul, namely, the preservation of the stability of the state, determines also that of the body. The aim is simply that of Sparta. While the Athenian citizen was educated to a general versatility, Plato demands that the ruling class shall be trained as a class of professional warriors, ready to strike against enemies from without or from Within the state. Children of both sexes, we are told twice, 'must be taken on horseback within the sight of actual war; and provided it can be done safely, they

CHAPTER 4 : CHANGE AND REST 47

must be brought into battle, and made to taste blood; just as one does with young hounds 42. The description of a modern writer who characterizes contemporary totalitarian education as *an intensified and continual form of mobilization*, fits Plato's whole system of education very well indeed.

This is an outline of Plato's theory of the best or most ancient state, in which the human cattle were treated just as a wise but hardened shepherd treats his sheep; not too cruelly, but with the proper contempt. . . As an analysis both of Spartan social institutions and of the conditions of their stability and instability, and as an attempt at reconstructing more rigid and primitive forms of tribal life, this description is excellent indeed. (Only the descriptive aspect is dealt with in this chapter. The ethical aspects will be discussed later.) I believe that much in Plato's writings that has been usually considered as mere mythological or Utopian speculation can in this way be interpreted as sociological description and analysis. If we look, for instance, at his myth of the triumphant war hordes subjugating a settled population, then we must admit that from the point of view of descriptive sociology it is most successful. In fact, it could even claim to be an anticipation of an interesting (though possibly too sweeping) modern theory of the origin of
the state, according to which centralized and organized political power generally has its origin in such a conquest 43. There may be more descriptions of this kind in Plato's writings than we can at present estimate.

To sum up. In an attempt to understand and to interpret the changing social world as he experienced it, Plato was led to develop a systematic historicist sociology in great detail. He thought of existing states as decaying copies of an unchanging Form or Idea. He tried to reconstruct this Form or Idea of a state, or at least to describe a society which resembled it as closely as possible. Along with ancient traditions, he used as material for his reconstruction the results of his analysis of Spartan and Cretan social institutions, the most ancient forms of social life he could find in Greece, which he acutely recognized as arrested forms of even older tribal societies. But in order to make a proper use of this material, he needed a principle for distinguishing between the good or original or ancient features of existing institutions, and their, symptoms of decay. This principle he found in his law of political revolutions, according to which disunion in the ruling class, and their pre*

48 PLATO'S SOCIOLOGY

occupation with economic affairs, are the origin of all social change. His best state was therefore to be reconstructed in such a way as to eliminate all the germs and elements of disunion and decay as radically as this could be done; that is to say, it was to be constructed out of the Spartan state with an eye to the conditions necessary for the unbroken unity of the master class, guaranteed by its economic abstinence, its breeding, and its training. >J

Interpreting existing societies as decadent copies of an ideal state, Plato furnished Hesiod's somewhat crude views of human history at once with a theoretical background and with a wealth of practical application. He developed a remarkably realistic historicist theory which found the cause of social change in Heraclitus' disunion, and in the strife of classes in which he recognized the driving as well as the corrupting forces of history. He applied these historicist principles to the story of the Decline and Fall of the Greek city-states, and especially to a criticism of democracy which he described as effeminate and degenerate. And we may add that later, in the Laws 44, he applied them also to a story of the Decline and Fall of the Persian Empire, thus making the beginning of a long series of Decline-and-Fall dramatizations of the histories of empires and civilizations. (O. Spengler's notorious Decline of the West is perhaps the worst but not the last 45 of them.) All this, I think, can be interpreted as an attempt, and a most impressive one, to explain, and to rationalize, his experience of the breakdown of the tribal society;
an experience analogous to that which had led Heraclitus 'to develop the first philosophy of change.

But our analysis of Plato's descriptive sociology is still incomplete. His stories of the Decline and Fall, and with it nearly all the later stories, exhibit at least two features which we have not discussed so far. He conceived these declining societies as some kind of organism, and the decline as a process similar to ageing. And he believed that the decline is well deserved, in the sense that moral decay, a fall and decline of the soul, precedes that of the social body. This aspect of Plato's sociology plays an important role in his theory of the first change, in the Story of the Number and of the Fall of Man. This theory, and its connection with the doctrine of Forms or Ideas, will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5 : NATURE AND CONVENTION

Plato was not the first to approach social phenomena in the spirit of investigation. The beginning of social science goes back at least to the generation of Protagoras, the first of the great thinkers who called themselves * Sophists '. It is marked by the distinction between two different elements in man's environment his natural environment and his social environment. This is a distinction which is difficult to make and to grasp, as can be inferred from the fact that even now it is not clearly established in our minds. It has been questioned ever since the time of Protagoras. Most of us, it seems, have a strong inclination to accept the peculiarities of our social environment as if they were 'natural'.

It is one of the characteristic features of the magical attitude of a primitive tribal or 'closed' society that it lives in a charmed circle x of unchanging taboos, of laws and customs which are felt to be as inevitable as the rising of the sun, or the cycle of the seasons, or similar obvious regularities of nature. And it is only after this magical 6 closed society ' has actually broken down that a theoretical understanding of the difference between *nature' and *society' can develop. An analysis of this development presupposes a clear grasp of the distinction between (a) natural laws, or laws of nature, or positive laws, such as the laws of the apparent motion of the sun, or the law of gravity; and (b) normative laws, or standards, or norms, i.e. rules that forbid or demand certain jnodes of conduct, or certain procedures; examples are the laws of the Athenian Constitution, or the rules pertaining to the election of Members of Parliament, or the Ten Commandments. I believe that the distinction between natural and normative laws is fundamental, and I think that the various efforts to bridge the gap have been entirely unsuccessful. But I am not going to assume this without discussion. For instance, I shall later discuss the claim that certain
norms are c natural ' in some sense or other. But in order to
discuss such a claim at all, it is necessary first to distinguish as
clearly as possible between laws in the sense of (a) and laws in
the sense of (i), and not to confuse the issue 1 by a bad terminology.
Thus we shall reserve the term ' natural laws * exclusively for
laws of type (a), and we shall refuse to do as has often been
done and apply this term to any norms which have been claimed
to be c natural '. The confusion is quite unnecessary since it is
easy to speak of c natural rights ' or of c natural norms ' when
laws of type (V) are meant.

I believe that it is necessary for the understanding of Plato's
sociology to consider how the difference between natural and
normative laws developed. I shall first distinguish the starting
point and the last step of the development, and later three
intermediate steps, which all play a part in Plato's theory.
The starting point can be described as a naive monism. It may
be said to be characteristic of the ' closed society '. The last
step, which I describe as critical dualism (or critical conventional-
ism), is characteristic of the ' open society '. The fact that there
are still many who try to avoid making this step may be taken
as an indication that we are still in the midst of the transition
from the closed to the open society. (With all this, compare
chapter 10.)

The starting point which I have called ' naive monism ' is
the stage at which the distinction between natural and normative
laws is not yet made. Unpleasant experiences are the means
by which man learns to adjust himself to his environment. No
distinction is made between sanctions imposed by other men,
if a normative taboo is broken, and unpleasant experiences
suffered in the natural environment. Within this stage, we may
further distinguish between two possibilities. The one can be
described as a naive naturalism. At this stage regularities, whether
natural or conventional, are felt to be beyond the possibility
of any alteration whatever. But I believe that this stage is only
an abstract possibility, which we probably never realized. More
important is a stage which we can describe as a naive conventional-
ism, at which both natural and normative regularities are
experienced as expressions of, and as dependent upon, the
decisions of man-like gods or demons. At this stage even the
natural laws, under certain exceptional circumstances, seem to
be open to modifications, an\^ with the help of magical practices
man may sometimes influence them ; and natural regularities
appear to be upheld by sanctions, as if they were normative.
This point is well illustrated by Heraclitus' saying : ' The sun
will not outstep the measure of his path; but if he does, then the goddesses of Fate? the handmaids of Justice, will know how to find him.' 2

The breakdown of magic tribalism is closely connected with

CHAPTER 5 I NATURE AND CONVENTION 51

the realization that taboos are different in various tribes, that they are imposed and enforced by man, and that they may be broken without unpleasant repercussions if one can only escape the sanctions imposed by one's fellow-men. This realization is quickened when it is observed that laws are altered and made by human lawgivers. I think not only of such lawgivers as Solon, but also of the laws which were made and enforced by the common people of democratic cities. These experiences may lead to a conscious differentiation between the man-enforced normative laws or conventions, and the natural regularities which are beyond his power. When this differentiation is clearly understood, then we can describe the position reached as a critical dualism, or critical conventionalism. In the development of Greek philosophy this dualism of facts and norms announces itself in terms of the opposition between nature and convention. 3

In spite of the fact that this position was reached a long time ago by the Sophist Protagoras, an older contemporary of Socrates, it is still so little understood that it seems necessary to explain it in some detail. First, we must not think that critical dualism implies a theory of the historical origin of norms. It has nothing to do with the historical assertion that norms in the first place were consciously made or introduced by man, instead of having been found by him to be simply there (whenever he was first able to find anything of this kind). It therefore has nothing to do with the assertion that norms originate with man, and not with God, nor does it underrate the importance of normative laws. Least of all has it anything to do with the assertion that norms, since they are conventional, i.e. man-made, are therefore 'merely arbitrary'. Critical dualism merely asserts that norms and normative laws can be made and changed by man, more especially by a decision or convention to observe them or to alter them, and that it is therefore man who is morally responsible for them; not perhaps for the norms which he finds to exist in society when he first begins to reflect upon them, but for the norms which he is prepared to tolerate once he has found out that he can do something to alter them. Norms are man-made in the sense that we must blame nobody but ourselves for them; neither nature, nor God. It is our business to improve them as much as we can. This last remark implies that by describing norms as conventional, I do not mean that they must be arbitrary, or that one set of normative laws will do just as well