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The Communism of Plato and Marx

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THE COMMUNISM OF PLATO AND MARX

by

JOHN H. REINKE, S.J.

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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VITA AUCTORIS

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INTRODUCTION

It is extremely important for the whole of the ensuing discussion, and, indeed, for any discussion of any aspect of Plato's Republic, to have the whole of the dialogue in proper perspective. A misunderstanding of the purpose underlying the Republic will inevitably result in a confused and distorted notion of the philosophy therein contained. Specific applications will be made of general theories advanced by Plato, applications which can be shown to be wholly unjustifiable if the evolution of the theories upon which they are based is understood. Particular conclusions, if divorced from their premises, will be twisted to any specious use you please; and Plato will be proved the father of a numerous intellectual offspring of which he would be the first and most vehement to deny himself the legitimate parent. That this is not mere speculation but a sober comment upon actual fact will be shown in some of the following pages. Now, the mere possibility of it serves as an incentive to subject the Republic to a brief analysis of its real nature in order to preclude the possibility of falling ourselves into any similar error of misinterpretation.

The first and most important thing, then, to be understood about the Republic is its purpose. Is it, as it appears, intended primarily as a treatise on practical politics? Must we

consider it as, above all, a dissertation on political ethics? Could its chief purpose be the development of a practical educational curriculum? The answer, simply enough, is no. It is a treatise on practical politics, of course, to some extent; an interesting educational curriculum could very nicely be worked out upon it as a basis; and it does, rightly enough, contain a fairly comprehensive compendium of the proper moral conduct of a state. But none of these truly represents its real character; each of them serves either as an analogy to throw light upon the question of prime concern, as a corollary derived from the main thesis established, or as a stepping-stone to the complete fruition of that with which the main thesis is concerned. But none of them is in itself the object in which the speakers of the dialogue are, in last analysis, chiefly interested.

The "question" of the Republic is: what are the rules of conduct by which a man ought to regulate his life? ¹ Only incidentally is the state considered. Every detail of the entire dialogue looks ultimately to the individual man - the nature of his soul, the requirements placed upon him by his desire to secure the good of his soul and whole being, and the character of the most perfect soul in itself (in which justice and virtues of all sorts reign supreme). A brief reflection will show that this is true. At the outset the discussion turns upon the

¹ Cf. Plato, Republic: 352 d, 367 e, 369 a, 427 d, 445 a and b, 576 c, and 472 b with 588 b and 612 b.

nature of the virtue of justice, of right and wrong, not in the abstract, but considered as they exist in the soul of the possessor. ² That is the problem as posed; and Socrates, to make his own exposition clearer (he would never have called it exposition) chooses to proceed in the matter with his familiar a pari argument. A single human soul is too small to examine minutely in a matter at once so difficult and so obscure; so he chooses to study the problem on a larger scale, in an entire commonwealth, which, with all its interrelated elements, is but a larger copy of the individual. ³ Whatever is shown to be true of it can be applied, with proper qualifications, to the single and individual soul; and, in fact, as each point successively is determined about the state, the application to the soul is made. Thus we find that the three fundamental divisions of his state correspond to the three faculties of the soul; ⁴ the characteristics of each class, with their individual functions and the method of development peculiar to each, are all but an example of the same thing on a smaller scale in the soul;⁵ the subordination in his state of the two inferior classes to the finest and most noble, answers perfectly to the condition of the well-ordered soul in which the less noble emotions are subject to reason. ⁶ The sacrifices he requires of the indivi-

² Ibid., 330 d, 331 c, 332 b.

³ Ibid., 369 a, 427 d.

⁴ Ibid., 435 e sq., 441 c.

⁵ Ibid., 441 c and d.

⁶ Ibid., 441 e, 442 c and d; cf. also 443 d - 444 a, 586 e and 587 a.

dual rights and privileges of each of the separate classes of his state for the good of the whole organism are intended to show how each faculty of the soul must curb its individual urge for self-expression for the sake of the greater good of the entire soul considered as a closely-knit unit. ⁷ In brief, all the separate characteristics with which he endows his Utopia find a perfect counterpart in the human soul. Furthermore, not content merely with a positive exposition, he proceeds to the further elucidation of his subject by way of contrast. He follows the evolution of one form of government from another, from the best to the worst, pointing out with concrete detail the superiority of one over another, and showing quite clearly wherein that superiority lies. And as each successive development appears, when he has studied the nature of the various other forms of government in turn, he points out immediately the likeness between the form of state and the type of man with whom it corresponds. ⁸ His purpose, manifestly, is again that in the light of the comparisons thus established we may learn to read the hearts of men, to distinguish the good from the bad and the best from the worst; ⁹ intending that the contrast between the completely unjust man and the completely just man should

7 Ibid., 586 e and 587 a; but especially 577 c with 591 c - 592 a.

8 Ibid., 545 c - 577 a.

9 Ibid., 543 d - 544 a, where Plato explicitly states this as his purpose in the investigation of the degenerate states. Also, by way of confirmation, confer what Taylor observes on the point: "It should be obvious that the primary interests of these sketches is throughout ethical, not political."
Taylor, A.E., Plato. The Dial Press, New York, 1936, p. 295.

show more clearly, perhaps, than his positive definition, the nature of the virtuous man he started out to discover.

These separate assertions which we have made could be dealt with in more detail if it were our purpose to do so. We could quote the very words in which Socrates in each instance explicitly indicates the comparison intended. But since they are commonplaces to anyone who has read the Republic, and since they can easily be verified, with the references given, by a casual perusal of the dialogue, we shall continue with this further point: it is altogether wrong and an injustice to Plato to use any of the statements he may make or any of the conclusions at which he may arrive during some intermediate stage of his argument, unless all that has preceded and all that follows is carefully considered along with them. In other words, to use some statement of the Republic out of context, and to accredit it to Plato as his definitive doctrine, is a very dangerous thing to do, unless from the argument itself and the way in which the statement or conclusion is applied, or unless from some outside and independent source, we have reasonable certitude that we are not misrepresenting his opinion. This is particularly true of certain of the conclusions he draws in his discussion of what constitutes an ideal state. It is questionable just how seriously he would have wished to be considered a political theorist. We have his word for it that the state which he is describing, does not exist now, has never existed,

and probably never will exist outside the absolute world of ideas. ¹⁰ And if that is so, we must look for his intentions beyond the drawing up of an actual, practicable constitution. We must remember, as we have said, that he developed his state primarily as a large example of the individual, to show, through a picture of a perfect and ideal state, the nature of the man possessing the best and most perfectly ordered soul.

If this is the case, then, what is to be said of the tradition which exists that Plato once actually tried to bring his state into being in Sicily? Although the venture, as might have been expected, was rather unfortunate and short-lived, the fact that Plato was sufficiently enamored of his ideas to try to bring them into action would seem to indicate that his purpose in writing the Republic was more than we have said it is. Call it wishful thinking, if you will, that prompted him to make the trial; or say that he was just simply intrigued by the possibilities of such a state; the venture nonetheless would seem to prove that his intentions were serious in the dialogue, that he was advocating things in which he believed implicitly and firmly, that far from being a mere fabrication of his imagination for the sake of a simile, the ideal republic was, indeed, something practicable and eminently desirable in the eyes of Plato himself. We admit with reluctance our inability adequately to explain Plato's motives in this affair, supposing the tradition to be true; we should like to be able to ¹⁰ Republic, 592 b; also cf. 472 d.

put our finger upon some explanation in the words of Plato himself. But whether or not we can offer a satisfactory explanation for his Sicilian experiment, we can and do still assert, in the light of the evidence contained in the Republic itself,¹¹ that at least at the time of its composition his imaginary state was to him just what we have described: an elaborate simile of the individual, and that at that time he by no means labored under the conviction that it was something practicable or even actually desirable.

It may help in handling the difficulty and in establishing the contention we have just made as to Plato's mind on the subject at the time he composed the dialogue, to recall in a different way something that was mentioned before. We will admit that distinctions must be made between ideas and ideas. Undoubtedly many of the ideas enunciated in the development of this ideal state must be taken seriously, because they represent for Plato universal truths and values. For example, in discussing the education of his philosopher-kings, Plato places greatest emphasis on the period of his training which will make of the fledgling ruler a consummate philosopher;¹² for the philosopher is the man who has found the means to secure the greatest good and happiness for himself and for others. Plato would not have the rulers of his state only learn to study absolute truth and handle all situations that arise in the light of

¹¹ Cf. the references already given above.

¹² The latter part of Rep., Bk. V, all of Bk. VI and Bk. VII, and indirectly Bks. VIII and IX deal with this matter.

the knowledge they obtain by the contemplation of it. That is something he would have everyone strive to possess - the ability to know truth and justice, for the sake of their happiness here as well as hereafter¹³ (since he believed in an immortality of the soul¹⁴). True, the problem is handled in connection with his ideal republic; but the whole atmosphere of the discussion is one of intense conviction. So, too, his severe castigation of degenerate types of state and men can be taken as his honest mind on the subject;¹⁵ and so, in general, most of the ethical doctrines enunciated and many of those which are exclusively educational.¹⁶ This we know both from the way they are presented and from other works of the author which deal with the same or similar questions. But that is what we mean

13 Ibid., 473 d, and Phaedo, 107 c - 108 c, where, after discussing the immortality of the soul, he concludes that the "tendance of the soul" is the most serious of human interests, since the soul takes with it to the next world nothing but its own intrinsic character for good or evil, and its unending future depends on that.

14 For proofs of the immortality of the soul as a basic Platonic concept, cf. the references given to Note #19, page 47 Chapter II of this thesis.

15 We cite Paul Shorey as our authority for this statement. Cf. pg. xx of his introduction to Vol. I of the Loeb translation of the Republic. "In the first two types (of degenerate states) Plato is evidently thinking of the better (544 c) and the worse aspects (548 a) of Sparta. In his portrayal of the democratic state he lets himself go in satire of fourth-century Athens (557 b, ff.), intoxicated with too heady draughts of liberty (562 d) and dying of the triumph of the liberal party. His picture of the tyrant is ... a powerful restatement of Greek commonplace (565 a - 576) ... "

16 It seems to us neither feasible nor necessary to cite these doctrines in detail. The point is, we believe, obvious.

by viewing his statements in the light of the context and in the light of other and external evidence. Care in this matter will show us as well that other things he says cannot possibly be mistaken as pertaining to any other order of things except to that which is to be found in his imaginary state.¹⁷ It is rather with regard to these that we advocate the caution of which we have spoken, lest they be mistaken for his absolute and universal convictions.

We should like at this point to call attention to a fact, many times and easily overlooked, but one which should very definitely be kept in mind during the course of the arguments of this thesis, that identical or seemingly identical conclusions can frequently follow from totally contradictory premises. As a mere matter of dialectics this fact is clear; for, since the premises are contradictory, supposing one is true, the other is necessarily false, and "ex falso sequitur quodlibet." The same may be said of premises which are opposed as contraries; if one is false, the other may be true or it may be equally false, though for quite different reasons; and a gain the phenomenon may be observed of the two leading to identical conclusions. Therefore, if some statement of Plato's or some legislation laid down by him seems to correspond exactly with some similar legislation or statement made by someone else, we must not over-

hastily identify the two legislating philosophies. The causes

¹⁷ E.g., certain legislation regarding community of goods, marriage, care and education of children, etc.; also the application of certain of his myths and fables.

leading to the legislation, the arguments which evoked the statement, must in both cases be studied and compared; and, in general, careful analysis must precede any such categorizing.

One final point is necessary before taking up the discussion proper. All the talk of the need of care and caution might lead one to suppose that we are about to attack a veritable host of adversaries, all of whom are to be crushed by the simple device of showing how they have misrepresented Plato's thought. In a way, certainly, that is true; but, unsatisfactorily enough, our adversaries are not quite the sort who can be handled in that way. To explain what we mean it is necessary briefly to explain what prompted us to take up at all the subject under consideration. Remotely, two things were responsible: first, the striking likeness we observed between Plato's ideas, as we studied them, and what we knew of the Communistic ideology, which led us to believe that inevitably the likeness had at some time been observed by the communists themselves and turned to their own use; second, the confirmation of this belief by various persons with whom the subject was at one time or another discussed in casual conversations. More proximately, a remark in the Modern Schoolman,¹⁸ to the effect that both Plato and Maurice Baring had at one time or another been cited by the communists as supporters of their own tenets, led us to the belief that some formal consideration of Marx and Plato, by way of a comparison of their respective doctrines, would be valuable

18 Cf. note # 1, page 35, Chapter II of this thesis.

for clarifying what might otherwise remain an obscure and misleading issue. A lack of source material rendered impossible the highly desirable procedure of quoting communistic writers exactly on the subject; but the admittedly vague certainty we had that such a misconception of Plato's thought does exist in the minds and writings of some communists, seemed sufficient warrant for continuing with the discussion regardless. As a result, our adversaries are nameless, even, to an extent, imaginary; and the whole of the ensuing discussion is necessarily merely an academic one. But we believe that even as such it has its value; hence, we have proceeded throughout as though the object of our attack were someone very real and very definite.

With all of this in mind, then, we take up the main discussion. We shall proceed with a chapter containing a topical outline of the whole dialogue, showing the interrelation of its various portions. This outline will serve to give us a clear picture of Plato's whole argument, and will be a convenient source of reference. Then, after studying briefly the "communistic" elements in the Republic and the fundamental theses of the Marxians, we shall show that the process of fastening on certain surface similarities between the communistic state and that of Plato, while disregarding the development of the Republic and the whole purpose underlying it, is an uncritical, inaccurate, and, at times, positively erroneous method of procedure. We shall prove any claims to be unfounded which assert that Plato and Marx were spiritual or intellectual brothers; and we

shall show that the answer to those who would make such a claim and their refutation lie, as we should expect, in those very details of Plato's argument which they necessarily neglect at the same time that they accept the conclusions to which they lead. The discussion will end with a consideration of the legislation of Plato regarding marriage and the community of wives and children, which legislation shall be considered both in itself and then in relation to the similar legislation of Marx, our purpose, again, being the same: to deny outright the identity of the two systems of thought. Throughout, for the purposes of argument, we shall handle the teachings of Plato seriously, adapting our manner to that of those with whom we would dispute. We shall show that, even considered as his serious mind on the subject, they do not agree with the similar teachings of Marx. How much less, then, if we reflect that Plato was not, in our opinion, too serious in presenting his picture, and that he was to a great extent, if we may be permitted the expression, "spinning a web."

CHAPTER I

THE REPUBLIC - A TOPICAL OUTLINE-SUMMARY

Philosophy and common sense make it abundantly clear that man must live with other men if he is to achieve even a relatively complete happiness and a moderately adequate self-expression. The hermit is the exception, that individual who, by divine inspiration, as we believe, is able to find life "in deserto" (or should we say "in vacuo") compatible with his own personal notions of human beatitude. Even a hermit, if he is honest, must admit that complete happiness can never be realized in this world, that only a certain meed of felicity can be acquired by that branch of creation which we call humanity; and that the degree of felicity possible varies as the lives of the individuals who constitute humanity merit it by their conduct. And we may safely say that (with our single exception already noted) it is a practically universal persuasion that whatever degree of happiness is possible in this life can best be realized when men live together in communities, whatever their size or peculiar constitution may be.

Plato, as we have come to realize, was both a philosopher and a man possessed of a rather uncommon share of common sense. That society is a necessary institution he was fully aware; but he was too much of a philosopher not to attempt to

assign a reason for the necessity. So, going a step farther than the ordinary, un-thinking person who is inclined to accept facts without reasoning upon them, he formulated a principle which explained for him the phenomenon whose existence was to them both so obvious. For Plato, the origin of the state (or of society) was due to the simple fact stated in the principle "that we do not severally suffice for our own needs, but each of us lacks many things;" ¹ and to the conclusion flowing therefrom, that for the reason stated we call into service men to supply our needs. ² That, for Plato, explained why states come to exist; and it suffices, at least in part, to explain for us why states are necessary for us to achieve what happiness we may be able to achieve during life.

But Plato, again the philosopher, was interested not only in the "why" of states but in the "how" as well. He was curious to decide how the principle already cited ought to be applied to assure the best results. It is fortunate for us that he was; for, to explain the application, he enunciated a further principle without a grasp of which it would be impossible to understand many of the theories which are properly associated with his name. Specifically, the present study would be rendered exceedingly complex, not to say impossible, since many of the stranger conclusions to be found in his dialogue, The Republic, and to be employed in the arguments which we intend

1 Republic, 369 b.

2 Ibid.

to bring forth in our discussion, are explained, and that adequately, in the light of that very principle which, without further ado, we shall quote and explain.

A.
THE PRINCIPLE OF INDIVIDUAL SPECIALIZATION

In the words of Socrates, Plato's mouthpiece, what we have called the principle of individual specialization is this: "We must infer that all things are produced more plentifully and easily and of a better quality when one man does one thing which is natural to him and does it at the right time, and leaves other things."³ What follows from this is practically self-evident: that a division of interest and activity on the part of any artisan or tradesman who is engaged in the exercise of his natural abilities renders his work less efficient, causes him to be an inferior workman, makes him less what he should be. Further, if in each class of citizens a considerable number are performing their duties only half-heartedly, so to speak, are dabbling in the activities which are proper to some other class, are making themselves less what they should be and more like others, class distinctions are broken down, and that essential unity of the state which is dependent upon each citizen's performing his own task alone, and that to the utmost of his capacity, is destroyed. Division of interest and diffusion of purpose on the part of individuals finds itself copied in the state as a whole, and the unity of purpose and activity which is

³ Ibid., 370 c.

essential to the prosperity of the whole commonwealth ceases to exist.⁴

This we see to be the special significance of the principle as Plato develops it in his argument. Those are the evils which a proper application of his principle will avert. That this is the case can be seen by briefly surveying the manner in which Plato actually applies this principle in the development of the personnel of his state. Without going into the same detail as Plato uses, we can point out again that, first of all, all the various types of artisans, tradesmen, workmen generally, exist in his state of necessity.⁵ A few factotums will not suffice, because their work would be inferior.⁶ One man - one trade; and every trade whose products are necessary for the people of the state must have its own practitioner. To go a step farther, we find this same principle directly responsible for the existence, not only of the artisans, but of the guardians and rulers as well.⁷ Hence, it accounts for the basic constitution of the state, the essential division of classes: artisans, to supply all the necessities of life;⁸ guardians, to protect the state against trouble from within and from without;⁹ rulers, to supervise the work of all and to integrate all activity in

4 In this connection, cf. Ibid., especially 433 c' - 434 c.

5 Ibid., 369 b, ff. Even the citizens of the luxurious state exist only to fulfill some need of that type of state.

6 Ibid., 374.

7 Ibid., 374 a - e, and 412 c, ff.

8 Cf. supra, note # 5.

9 Republic, 415 e.

the light of the absolute good, the contemplation of which is their peculiar function. ¹⁰

Finally, the same principle is at least indirectly responsible for many of the political ideas which have ever since been regarded as peculiarly Platonic: the gold, silver, bronze myth, which is conceived as a means to convince all that each should do what is natural to himself;¹¹ the peculiar constitution of the warrior class (community of goods, dwellings, etc., the hymeneal festivals, the general education), designed to make them efficient in their specific calling, and strong opponents of fat, rich enemies;¹² the special training of the philosopher kings, who must be fitted for their one and all-important task of contemplating the ideal;¹³ the equality of women with men in peace and war, an equality based on their natural constitution, and, therefore, imperative if the women, too, are to be permitted to perform the task for which they are naturally fitted.¹⁴ And, in general, the principle explains Plato's strong insistence on the unity of his state (which is best because perfectly coordinated and integrated, and hence most just); and it throws very significant light upon all the devices which he employs to secure this unity.¹⁵ For him, unity is dependent upon the preservation of rigid class distinctions, each class per-

10 Cf., for example, *Ibid.*, 540 b, and numerous references, particularly in the latter half of Bk. V, and in Bks. VI and VII.

11 Cf. Sec. E, # I, b - of this chapter.

12 Cf. Sec. C, # III and IV of this chapter; also, Chap. IV, Sec. C, of this thesis.

13 Cf. Sec. D, # II of this chapter.

14 Cf. Chap. IV, Sec. B, of this thesis.

15 For example, Plato's ingenious system of marriage. Cf. Ch. IV.

forming its own functions as an individual member of a single organism; which condition can only be maintained by strict adherence to the principle of specialization.¹⁶

Understanding this important concept, let us consider in turn each separate division of the state. In doing so, in order to facilitate matters, we shall use the outline-summary form. We shall examine each class more or less according to the same pattern: in terms of their origin (or, rather, the purpose behind their origin), their nature and peculiar function, their relation with the other classes, and, finally, the peculiar legislation provided in each case for the proper and complete development of each separate class. Certain topics of special interest to our thesis will also be outlined, although it is obvious that a summary of every separate topic taken up in the Republic cannot be given. Nor was that ever our intention.

B. THE ARTISAN CLASS

- I. Origin: in the need of individuals to provide what is necessary for the function of each class and for the state as a whole.¹⁷
- II. Nature and Function: for the most part, no different from what it would be in the ordinary Greek state of Plato's time. They are industrious men who lead a normal family life and are allowed to have private

16 For this point, Cf. Ibid., especially 423 a, ff.; 462 a, ff.; 464 b - 465 d.

17 Ibid., 369 b, ff.

possessions within the limits considered safe for the state.¹⁸ The only peculiarity of their mode of life is that they share common land (i.e., the city itself) for producing their goods,¹⁹ and contribute their products to a common store from which they, in turn, draw what they need for themselves.²⁰

III. Relation to Upper Classes. They are not to be considered servants or slaves of the rulers and warriors, but their co-workers. In reality they support the upper classes, in return for the protection they receive from them and for the beneficent rule in which they share.²¹ Since they are expected to be content with their relatively inferior lot, in view of the "divine metal" which has ordained them for it, they are the "victims," so to speak, of a minimum of legislation. The only supervision to which they are subjected is: 1) the warriors shall be careful to prevent a preponderance of either wealth or poverty among them, securing by the proper means a suitable balance of both;²² 2) they shall pre-

18 There is no specific legislation dealing with this matter. The absence of it argues, it seems to us, that the mode of life for these workmen was to be taken for granted; and the only way of life which Plato could thus leave to be taken for granted by his hearers, would be one which was familiar to them. Also, cf. Ibid., 417 a, where it is argued that private land and homes and possessions will make householders and farmers of his guardians.

19 Ibid., 369 c.

20 Ibid., 369 e.

21 Ibid., 463 a and b.

22 Ibid., 421 e.

vent any disturbance by avaricious souls who, human nature being what it is, may well be expected to exist even in this state.²³

C. THE WARRIOR AND GUARDIAN CLASS

I. Origin. The guardian class was created to supply the need of some group able and equipped to take care of all the problems, domestic and foreign, which arise when a healthy state takes on, as it inevitably will, the character of a mildly luxurious one.²⁴ In this regard, we think it well to note, as it were in passing, that here, as in many other places, we are aware of the purpose of the Republic: to give a large picture in which to read justice and injustice. The contrast between them will appear more sharply in the state in which, ideal as it is, there is a place for injustice to arise. Any injustice which arises will, of course, be taken care of; but it will appear, and that is the point.

II. Nature and Function. The warriors are men fitted by nature for the offices of war.²⁵ Physically they are quick, brave, strong; spiritually, they are high spirited, gentle to friends, harsh to enemies, lovers of

²³ Ibid., 372 e, ff.; and 415 e.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 374 e.

wisdom.²⁶ They are men with the indwelling conviction that they must do what at any time they believe to be best for the state;²⁷ they are men whose contentment with the restrictions (goods, family, etc.) placed on them is secured: 1) by their conviction of the destiny which is theirs because of the divine metal within them,²⁸ 2) by nurture and proper education, which shows them the necessity of it.²⁹ Their general duty or function is to guard the state against trouble from without and trouble from within, which, in the face of envy and avarice, will inevitably arise. Their specific and special duty is to assist the rulers³⁰ in maintaining the essential unity of the state: 1) by guarding against poverty and wealth, which destroy both the unity and the efficiency of individuals and classes in the state,³¹ 2) by letting the state grow only in so far as it can remain a unity, and be a sufficient city and one;³² and 3) by raising or lowering the citizens, no matter in what class born, to that class in which they can perform the task for which they are by nature best suited.³³

Thus will the city function well in all parts and remain one.

26 Ibid., 375 a - 376 c.

27 Ibid., 413 c.

28 Ibid., 417 a and b.

29 Ibid., 416 c; 423 e; 424 a; etc.

30 Ibid., 414 b.

31 Ibid., 421 e.

32 Ibid., 423 b and c.

33 Ibid., 415 b and c.

III. The Training of the Warriors. Their training shall begin with music, i.e., tales, stories, and actual tonal music. The stories and poems must be purified of all that would weaken their spirit, lead to lawlessness or recklessness (as might be the result if innovation were allowed); all that might cause terror or fear, or any violent emotional reaction whatever; and all that might cause them to receive a distorted notion of things fitting and proper to a noble warrior. Hence the poems must be purified of all that would give the warriors a wrong idea of the gods and heroes. This purification is to be made not only in the subject matter of the stories and poems, but also in the meters, modes, and rhythms; selection shall be made only of the virile and the strong type; the soft and sensuous shall be expurgated.³⁴ Gymnastics shall follow music, and shall include, besides regular gymnastic exercises, cautions and admonitions regarding food, drink, sleep, and general care of health.³⁵ Care in the matter of the training of the warriors, and an observance of proper proportion between music and gymnastics, will secure the

34 For all this in much more detail, and supported with specific examples of the sort of tales to be banned, cf. Rep., 376 e - 392 c (for the tales themselves), and 392 c - 403 c (for diction, modes, meters, and rhythms.) Also, cf. Rep., 424 b, ff., for reiteration and re-development of the same idea.

35 Rep., 403 c - 410 b.

desirable mean between boorishness and softness, viz., the well-rounded, cultured individual.³⁶

IV. Peculiarities of the Warrior Class. They are to have all their goods in common, common dwellings and table, community of wives and children.³⁷ (These details are treated fully and discussed in the following chapter and need only to be mentioned here.)

D. THE RULING CLASS

I. Origin. They are to be selected from the guardian class.

All the warriors receive the same preliminary training, but those who show themselves to be the best of the warriors are signaled out for further education.³⁸

First they must pass rigorous tests which are designed to show that in every circumstance and in every contingency they consult the interests of the state and make her interests theirs,³⁹ in pleasure and pain, in joy and sorrow, and in fear.⁴⁰ To forestall jealousy on the part of the warriors not selected, and to prevent pride, ambition, and other inordinate feelings generally, the myth about the "divine metal" in their constitutions shall be invoked.⁴¹ Thus the best guardians will become rulers, and the inferior guardians will be

36 Ibid., 412 a.

37 Ibid., 416 d - 417 b; 419 c, ff.

38 Ibid., 412 c.

39 Ibid., 412 c - e.

40 Ibid., 413 c - 414 a.

41 Ibid., 415 d.

content to be called the rulers' helpers.⁴²

II. Education of the rulers. The details of their education are, in brief, these: from the age of twenty to the age of thirty they repeat all their former instructions, and specialize in further study of mathematics; ⁴³ from thirty to thirty-five they pursue the study of dialectics;⁴⁴ presuming their aptitude for these studies has been proven (if not, of course, they return to the ordinary warrior class), they must exercise themselves for fifteen years, from the age of thirty-five to the age of fifty, in the practical offices of peace and war.⁴⁵ Only then, when they have achieved a perfect balance of their faculties and perceptions, when they have learned to judge of things in this world of shadows in the light of eternal realities, to shape things in the mold of the absolute - only then shall they be considered fit to rule the state. They will be, then, fifty years old.⁴⁶ The purpose of such an education is to make philosophers of those who are to rule the state. Philosophers are those who look, not at particular goods and truths, but at truth and goodness in the absolute, and act always in accord with what they see there. They keep their eyes fixed upon the absolute

42 Ibid., 415 d.

43 Ibid., 414 b.

44 Ibid., 537 d, 539 e.

45 Ibid., 540 a.

46 Ibid., 540 b.

pattern and model of the perfect state in the world of the ideal, and according to that shape their legislation.⁴⁷ That is their one function in the state, and is of cardinal importance in Plato's mind; "for until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside,"⁴⁸ the state will not be able to live or behold the light of day.

III. Function in Relation to the Other Classes. They are to rule as philosophers, in the sense explained immediately above, over all the other citizens of the state, and are to keep secure the proper subordination of the constituent parts of the state.⁴⁹ They are to direct the separate activities of all the citizens so that the whole state may be preserved and may act in perfect harmony.⁵⁰ Finally, they are to regulate all such particulars as the hymeneal festivals (for details of which, consult Chapter IV of this thesis), the education of the warriors and the selection of those who shall receive the further education of the rulers, the preservation of the classes

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid., 473 d.

49 Cf., for example, Ibid., 442 c and d, where Plato is discussing the parallel function of the reasoning faculty in man.

50 Ibid., 428 d - 429 a.

intact by the proper placing of individuals according to the metal within them.⁵¹ In fine, all the rules they may decide to place for observance by the rest of the citizens, are to be designed to make the state conform, as nearly as possible, in all particulars to the ideal state upon which they are to fasten their gaze.⁵²

E. TOPICS OF SPECIAL INTEREST IN THE REPUBLIC

I. The Divine-Metal Myth

- a. Details of the myth. This particular fable we have had occasion to mention several times already, and it shall recur frequently in our subsequent discussion. Briefly it is this: the guardians are to be told that they were really bred in a subterranean cavern, sons of the motherland whom it is their duty to defend. Not only they, but all the citizens of the state are sons of the mother, earth; hence, the guardians "ought to take thought for her and defend her against any attack and regard the other citizens as their brothers and children of the self-same earth." But while they are all brothers, God mingled gold in the composition of those who were to be rulers, silver in their helpers, iron and copper in the farmers and craftsmen. Consequently, the safety of the state depends on assigning every man, in whatever class born, to the function designated for him

⁵¹ Ibid., 415 b and c.

⁵² Ibid., 540 b.

by God through the metal he has mingled in them.⁵³

b. Importance of the myth in the Republic. 1) To facilitate the removal of individuals from a higher class, in which they were born, to a lower one, should it be discovered that they are naturally not equipped to perform the duties of that class; 2) conversely, to simplify the matter of taking children from a lower class to a higher one, if they manifest clear signs of a natural aptitude for performing the functions of the higher classes;⁵⁴ 3) to serve as an ideal means of keeping citizens content with their position in the city, by convincing them that their station, high or low, is not a reflection on their character or ability, nor a sign that they are of themselves any better or any worse than any other; but that their being in their particular class is simply an act of providence, designed to preserve the city in the best possible condition; 4) to serve as a most effective instrument for preserving rigid class distinctions in the city, and thus for maintaining order and harmony, and, most important of all, unity.⁵⁵

53 Ibid., 414 c - 415 d.

54. Ibid., 415 b and c.

55 Specific citations to prove these latter two points cannot be given exactly. They are, though, unmistakably implied in Plato's immediate application of the myth, as well as in his reference to it at various stages of his discussion.

II. The Cave Myth

- a. Details of the myth. This myth is an allegory, an attempt to show the relative value of opinion and knowledge. Men, sitting so as to be unable to move their bodies and heads, are compelled to look at shadows, of objects held over a small wall behind them, cast on the wall of the cave before them by the light of fires still farther back and above. The shadows are of men and all sorts of objects; and echoes cause the shadows to seem to speak, when those who carry the objects say anything. These shadows would be reality to those men; and, if they were suddenly released and brought to the light and shown the objects which cast the shadows, they would not recognize them, and would think them less real than the shadows they had seen all their lives. Light would at first blind them; but by easy stages (shadows, reflections, objects in a dim light, in the night, in the daytime) they would at last be able to look upon the sun and recognize it as the provider of seasons and of all things visible. Then would they pity the lot of those still in darkness. But if they were to go back and be forced to contend with the others in recognizing the shadows, before their eyes became accustomed to the dark, they would fail and be ridiculed. Those still in the cave would say the trip to the light had

ruined their eyes, that it was worthless; and they would kill, if they could, any who would release them.⁵⁶

b. Application of the myth to knowledge and opinion. The ascent of the man from the cave to the sun, is the soul's climb to the region of intellection, where the last and most difficult thing to see is the idea of good. This, once seen, is recognized as the cause of all things right and beautiful, true and reasonable, the source of all wise conduct in private and public. Having looked upon it, the man will not wish to return to the study of human affairs again. If he must, until he is accustomed to the "dark" once more, he will cut a sorry figure in a dispute about the shadow of justice, for example, with those who have never seen what it is in itself. These latter possess opinion only, or conjecture; the other possesses knowledge or understanding. The one is a philosopher, the other a "doxophilist." Their comparative worth as a ruler is obvious. The better natures, if forced to win the vision of the good, to take an adequate view, and, without lingering further, to return to the bondsmen and share their lives, however inferior, will be the saviors of the state. After becoming accustomed to the darkness, they will perceive the shadows infinitely better

⁵⁶ Ibid., 514 a - 517 a.

than the rest, and will know, moreover, the things of which they are shadows. They will be better rulers because they will not be wrangling over mere shadows. They will know the principles of good government, but will scorn political rule, since they will possess a life infinitely preferable to the political. Being just men, they will accept their rule in turn; but love of good, not of riches, will impel them.⁵⁷

c. Significance in the Republic. "Apart from disputable metaphysical implications it means simply that ethics and politics ought to be something more than mere empiricism. Their principles and practice must be consistently related to a clearly conceived final standard and ideal of human welfare and good."⁵⁸ Hence it gives rise in the dialogue to some very serious and very circumspect consideration of the nature of the education which can turn the vision of the future rulers to the contemplation of the absolute good.⁵⁹ More than that, Socrates believes it will serve as an illustration to bring home to the philosopher the sublime and exalted nature of his calling: direct contact with truth; and indirectly it will ensure his becoming sufficiently

⁵⁷ Ibid., 517 b - 521 b.

⁵⁸ Shorey, Paul, in the Introduction to Vol. I of the Loeb translation of the Republic, p. xviii.

⁵⁹ Republic, 521 c, ff.

enamored of his task to be willing to perform it exclusively without dividing his attention among trivialities. He will bend every effort to keep the state in line with the pattern he has beheld; and the principle of specialization, eminently applied in this case, will be the source of untold benefits to the state.

III. The Myth of Er

- a. Details of the myth. This fable is quite lengthy, and it is hardly to the point to relate it in full detail. We shall satisfy ourselves with a narration of the more significant points. Er is a character who journeyed to the next world and returned to tell of what he had seen. Souls coming there were sent through separate passages, depending upon whether they had lead good lives or bad. After a certain period had elapsed, these souls emerged and described for Er the way in which the good were rewarded and the evil punished. The sins of some, they said, were so great that they will never be allowed to emerge from their place of torment. The exact nature of the other "rewards" is not specified. Seven or eight days after they have emerged, however, the souls move forward to a place where the Fates sit about the girdle of the heavens and offer the souls their choice of patterns for the life they wish next to live. Animal and human lives, lives in poverty, wealth,

health and sickness are offered; but no indication of the quality of souls is given, since that is inevitably determined by the lives themselves. In spite of warnings to make careful selection, some of the souls choose immediately and rashly, and their choices in most cases are of something different from their previous existence. Those who have not suffered and known trials make the most ill-advised choices. The selections are then ratified and confirmed by the Fates, the souls are taken to the River Lethe to drink and forget all past experiences; and, during a great thunderstorm in the middle of the night, the souls are wafted up to their new existence.⁶⁰

- b. Importance and significance of the myth. It illustrates, first of all, the necessity of having someone in this life to teach us to distinguish the good life from the bad, the just from the unjust, and how to choose always and everywhere the best that conditions allow, considering various circumstances singly and in combination - how they affect the ease or difficulty of the practice of virtue; someone to teach us to fix our eye on the nature of the soul. This knowledge must be taken along to the other world to prevent our being dazzled by all the trumpery and to aid us in selecting the mean always,

60 Ibid., 614 b - 621 b.

shunning excess in either direction.⁶¹ The one who, at each return to life loves wisdom sanely, will find this life happy, and his passage through the other life and through heaven, smooth.⁶² For our purposes, though, we must note that this fable is especially important in that it gives a clear insight into Plato's attitude towards matters moral and religious. It is certainly proof that Plato considered man of a dual nature, and possessor of an immortal soul. And it seems proof enough, that, even if Plato were to be taken entirely seriously in the Republic, he would never have developed the details of his state for reasons economic, but for moral reasons and ethical. And this point is significant, as we shall see in the course of the thesis.

F. RECAPITULATION Here we wish simply to list certain things, besides the nature and function of each of the classes of the state, which should be especially remembered in the ensuing discussion. We have mentioned them all; but we place them here again for the purpose of emphasizing them. They are these: the principle of specialization; the stress placed by Plato on the unity

61 Ibid., 618 c - 619 a.

62 Ibid., 619 e.

of the state, which is dependent on strict class distinctions and the proper balance of wealth and poverty, excess and deficiency; the part played by religious concepts in the state: the patronage of Apollo,⁶³ the immortality of the soul,⁶⁴ the dignity and merit of the moral life; the Platonic concepts of human dignity: that man's nature is dual, that the state exists for man, not vice versa, that man's destiny and supreme beatitude is in the contemplation of truth. With these in mind, then, we proceed to the discussion proper.

63 This we have not as yet mentioned specifically; but Cf. Rep., 427 b and c especially, as well as scattered references throughout the dialogue.

64 For several citations in substantiation of this doctrine of Plato, Cf. note # 19, p. 47, Chapter II, of this thesis.

CHAPTER II

COMMUNISTIC ELEMENTS IN THE REPUBLIC

A. INTRODUCTION

In the state which we have outlined in Chapter I, the communists of today find certain features which seem to correspond with the type of government which they wish to establish. We can understand their desire to claim Plato as one of themselves, if for no other reason than to lend prestige to their position. But we cannot allow to remain unchallenged the assertion that Plato is nothing more than a spiritual forbear of Karl Marx. Perhaps the communists would not state the case so bluntly; but the inference is there, and is injurious to Plato's reputation. Therefore, at the risk of some repetition we must examine Plato's state once again, this time emphasizing the communistic elements which are a part of it. These we have purposely passed over up to now, since we preferred to deal with them expressly in this chapter. When we have seen what they are and where they exist, we shall analyze them in terms of the philosophy which demands them. This will constitute the matter of the present chapter. In the next chapter we shall consider the similar communistic elements in the state designed by Marx,

1 Cf., for instance, William F. Lynch of Fordham University, "Plato and the Absolute State," in the Modern Schoolman, Vol. XVI, No. 1, Nov. 1938, p. 14. Also Cf. the Introduction to this thesis, pp. 10, ff.

analyzing them similarly in terms of his basic philosophy, comparing them then with those of Plato's state. To Chapter IV we reserve the exclusive treatment of marriage in the states of both Plato and Marx. Properly this should be treated in the present chapter and the next; but the subject is quite large and of great importance, and merits a separate chapter of its own.

B. COMMUNISM AMONG THE WORKERS

Without further ado, then, we shall examine the first of the three classes of Plato's state for traces of what we may call communism. If our concern were chiefly with this group we could dismiss the matter at once. The workers share common lands (i.e., the city) for developing their goods,² and a common store to which they contribute what they produce and from which they draw according to their needs.³ Beyond that they are permitted to live as the ordinary artisan or farmer of Plato's own Athens: owning the tools of their trade, and permitted to acquire by their own industry and to own land and other private property,⁴ so long as their acquisitions are kept within the bounds considered safe by the guardians, one of whose functions is to prevent the existence of excessive wealth and penury.⁵

² Republic, 369 c.

³ Ibid., 369 e.

⁴ Cf. note # 18, p. 19, Chap. I of this thesis.

⁵ Republic, 421 e.

The question, of course, arises: why does Plato require even this of his artisans? Why does he concern himself at all with legislation directed at this class? His reasons were psychological as well as practical. He had, first of all, to ensure the necessities of life for the warriors and rulers who, because of natural qualification and governmental selection, could not be involved in the details of procuring them for themselves.⁶ The workers, too, had to have some source from which to obtain those objects and goods necessary to their subsistence which they themselves, specialists as they were in one line of activity, could not spare the time to produce. Moreover, to preserve his commonwealth in a peaceful and well-ordered condition, he had to maintain amongst the artisans the conviction that they were not the slaves merely or the servants of the upper classes, but their co-workers and fellow citizens, performing duties of a different and a lower sort, it is true, but duties nonetheless essential to the state as a harmonious and efficient whole.⁷ According to his legislation, therefore, the workers become an integral part of the state; their interests are, according to their natural capacity, their own; they share alike in the benefits of a state protected from external threats by the superlative class of warriors and guardians, and from internal aberration by its philosopher kings. These benefits they receive as a quid pro quo, we might say, for merely contributing to the common store the fruits of

6 Republic, 374 b - d.

7 Ibid., 463 a and b.

the labor in which each individually specializes according to his abilities and the needs of the state.

The further question might well be asked: in a state so conceived, why is so little restriction of private interests, in this one class alone, necessary? Again the reason would seem to be psychological. Primarily to prevent, in as far as possible (if altogether possible, one function of the guardians would vanish⁸) the existence among the workers of an active, or even passive, discontent and disgust with the lot which is theirs, through no fault of their own, but by an accident of birth - by divine lot. Secondly, because allowing them to acquire for themselves a certain amount by their own industry in performing their special task, will increase their pride in their work and their esteem of the state which creates opportunity for them; and will make them perform better their job which is a vital necessity for the well-being of the state.⁹ (Regarding this point it is well to remember that no type of artisan exists in the state unless necessity demands his existence.)

To recapitulate briefly: a minor form of communism is imposed upon the working class, 1) of such a sort as to ensure the necessities of life for the upper classes and themselves, while at the same time preserving the status of the workers as

8 Ibid., 372 e, ff.; 415 e.

9 This is not to be found just this way in Plato; but it obviously represents his thought, since it is simply common sense.

fellow citizens of those for whom they provide and not as their slaves; 2) not to such a degree, however, that it leaves no room for purely private and personal gain, as an instrument to discourage active discontent and to foster self-esteem and civic loyalty.

Of what importance, then, is the class of workers in our discussion? Certainly not what it would seem from their name. "Workers" in the Marxian state form, as we shall see in Chapter III, a class essentially opposed to the moneyed class. Obviously there is no similarity to be found here. The community of certain things imposed by Plato on his workers (and, we may add, on the other classes as well) is not dictated by any economic demand as a phase of a class struggle.¹⁰ It is rather, as we have seen, a move of pure expediency, dictated by demands practical (the needs of the upper classes as well as of the artisans) and psychological (the maintenance among the

¹⁰ On this point Cf. Taylor, Plato, the Man and his Work, pp. 276-277. "In point of fact, nothing much is said in the book (Bk. IV of the Republic) about the economic organization of the only class who have any economic function at all, the δημιουργοί, but the implication of what is said is that there are differences of wealth among them, and the 'means of production and distribution' are individually owned and operated...nothing is said of the first introduction of private property among the δημιουργοί, who thus must be presumed to have enjoyed it all along... it is clear that agriculture is the assumed economic foundation of the life of his city, and agriculture is just the pursuit to which a 'socialistic' economic system is least easy of application...The real object of the one restriction of ownership on which the dialogue insists as fundamental, the prohibition of all property to the direct servants of the State, is not economic. The purpose is the same as that of the still more emphatic prohibition of family life, the elimination of the conflict between public duty and personal interest."

workers of that self-respect which is essential to their efficiency as citizens of the state and as human beings or, simply, men.) There can, then, be no claim of identity between the states of Marx and Plato based upon their respective classes of "workers."

C. COMMUNISM AMONG THE GUARDIANS AND RULERS

We proceed, then, to the next class: that of the warriors or guardians. We may note briefly that, since the rulers are selected from the class of the guardians and have the same restrictions as those imposed upon the guardian class generally,¹¹ they will be included in the following remarks which are, in fact, the main point of discussion for this chapter.

But, to return, the real communism (using the term broadly) is to be found in the class of the warriors. It is here, perhaps, that the principle of specialized endeavor has its most significant application. Their purpose is to guard the state as watchdogs guard sheep, not to prey upon the citizens as wolves.¹² Hence, "not only their education, but their habitations and all that belongs to them, should be such as will neither impair their virtue as guardian, nor tempt them to prey upon the other citizens...In the first place, none of them should have any property of his own beyond what is absolutely

¹¹ Cf. Sec. D, I, Chapter I of this thesis.

¹² Republic, 416 a.

necessary; neither should they have a private house or store closed against anyone who has a mind to enter; their provisions should be only such as are required by trained warriors, who are men of temperance and courage; they should agree to receive from the citizens a fixed rate of pay, enough to meet the expenses of the year and no more; and they will go to mess and live together like soldiers in a camp. Gold and silver we will tell them that they have from God; the diviner metal is within them, and they have therefore no need of dross which is current among men, and ought not to pollute the divine by any such earthly admixture; for that commoner metal has been the source of many unholy deeds, but their own is undefiled. And they alone of all the citizens may not touch or handle silver or gold, or be under the same roof with them, or wear them, or drink from them...But should they ever acquire homes or lands or moneys of their own, they will become housekeepers and husbandmen instead of guardians, enemies and tyrants instead of allies of the other citizens; hating and being hated, plotting and being plotted against, they will pass their whole life in much greater terror of internal than of external enemies, and the hour of ruin, both to themselves and to the rest of the state, will be at hand." 13

Thus far Plato. Certain obvious comments suggest themselves immediately. Such "communism" is no more insidious in its details than that which could be found in any monastic or

religious rule book, due minor alterations, of course, having been made. We must even commend Plato's amazingly consistent logic. His reasons for such details of legislation are, in general, the same as those of many another Utopian philosopher (e.g., Thomas More, Samuel Butler, etc.): to focus the interest of all classes of citizens on the prosperity and happiness of the entire state, in terms of which individual happiness and prosperity are to be looked for (about which, more anon). In particular we cannot fail to notice how again Plato has applied the principle of specialization which we were at such pains to explain in the preceding chapter.

But there are, as well, certain implications which are rather more doubtful. They are made explicit by Socrates' hearers who object that the guardians can hardly be happy with such an arrangement. They will be little more than mercenaries quartered in the city and always mounting guard, and will be really less well off than the ordinary citizens.¹⁴ Socrates' answer suggests that even happiness is to be held in common. He says that the individual's happiness must come second to the happiness of the state; that the aim is not the disproportionate happiness of a particular class, but the greatest happiness of the whole.¹⁵ For were certain individuals to be allowed indiscriminate pursuit of personal satisfaction, clearly the established order could not long remain sound. Therefore, a guardian

14 Ibid., 419 - 420 a.

15 Ibid., 420 b - 421 c; also, 466 a and 519 e.

who, regardless of the consequences, could so far forget his duty as to seek a happiness or pleasure not befitting his station, would be not a real but merely a seeming guardian; distinctions of class would eventually be destroyed; and the guardian would be seen to be not the saviour but the destroyer of the state.¹⁶

But that hardly settles the matter. Happiness, after all, is an individual concern. A state can only rightly be called happy when its citizens are so, for happiness in itself belongs properly to man, and can only analogously be predicated of a state. Socrates is faced with a very real difficulty in the matter, one whose solution is pertinent to our argument. First of all, it is of no small importance to the well-being of his entire state that the soldier class be not only loyal and devoted, but firmly established as well and contented in their own particular manner of life. And it is equally important, according to his principles, that their manner of life be that which he has described, in which possessions and the like are in common. Is his solution, then, really adequate? Here it is again: the principle of happiness must reside in the state as a whole, and each class is to do its own work in the best way it can, so that the whole state may grow up in noble order, and the several classes then receive the proportion of happiness which nature assigns to them. Upon analysis we find that Socrates has really handled the difficulty admirably. Why does

¹⁶ Ibid.

he wish above all that the whole state should grow up in a noble order, that each class should have its own especial function in relation to the whole and be prepared to sacrifice certain pleasures (which for others might be legitimate) in order to preserve that order and harmony? Because only thus will the individual be able to profit. Only in the state whose elements are all properly subordinated, in which the true order of the Ideal is kept, will the individual be able to live the full life which is his right. The whole function of the state is to make the individual man better, to enable him to form his life more and more after the fashion of the Ideal and immutable Good which exists outside. For this he must live in a state in which that Ideal order is maintained and where no one is hampered by the disorders arising from human passions from imitating it. And if the curtailing of the rights of certain ones is essential to the preservation of that order, by all means it must be done. It is not a lopping off of an individual's happiness for the sake of the soulless entity which is the state. The community good, it is true, determines what a man may or may not do; but the purpose looks to the individual. The ultimate result will be the final and full happiness of all and each. Thus, specifically, the guardians will really find a truer happiness in duty fulfilled than in seeking their own advantage in the lower sense of the word. The whole difficulty may practically be solved by impressing them with the true dig-

nity which is theirs by reason of the divine metal within them. They will thus scorn as debasing to their very nature the pleasures of the ordinary man, and be fully content with the provisions which necessity requires that we make for their state. Socrates indeed solves the difficulty; though, we must admit, he does not render the whole plan any the less impracticable. But with its practicability we are not at present concerned; the point for us is that in Plato's mind the state exists for the sake of the individual, not vice versa. And that is a cardinal ethical principle which must be noted, together with all the conclusions which flow therefrom.

Yet another objection might be raised, one whose answer leads us gracefully into the all-important discussion of Plato's philosophy, that aspect of it, that is, which created the communistic demands which we have outlined. The objection is this: since we have equivalently identified the systems of Plato, More, Butler, monks and regulars (cf. supra, p. 41 and 42) by asserting that they all have the same reasons for demanding these details of communistic life, why should we object to identifying the Marxian system of communism with all these and with Plato's too? We answer simply by denying that we identify the others. We admit a very great similarity, but that is all. Plato, the others, and Marx all profess to desire the greatest happiness for their communities; and to secure that happiness they all recommend very similar legislation. That much we grant. But Plato and Marx, at least (and this is

the point of our whole discussion) are poles apart in their ideas of happiness, precisely because their ideas of the nature of man and the state, and their conception of what constitutes the ideal happiness of man and state are quite opposed, one to the other. Hence they even differ in the particular application of the details of legislation which we have admitted are similar. (For example, in Plato, they preserve a state of rigid class distinctions; for Marx, they destroy all distinctions of class.) All of which leaves us for final solution to consider separately the philosophy of each of these men, relative to the point under discussion. Only thus can the case be studied adequately.

D. PLATO'S COMMUNISTIC DEMANDS IN THE LIGHT OF HIS PHILOSOPHY OF MAN AND HAPPINESS

What is Plato's philosophy of man? Man possesses a dual nature - material and spiritual.¹⁷ Even without an explicit statement of this idea (and there are many such in the course of the dialogue) it would be perfectly clear from an examination of the educational curriculum which Plato has designed for his guardians and rulers. It is a curriculum planned to strengthen both the material and the spiritual elements in man according to his natural capacity (for, rightly enough, he re-

¹⁷ There are so many expressions of this doctrine throughout the whole Platonic corpus, that specific citation is impossible. Alfred Day, for example, has some 174 references to the soul in his analytical index of Plato's dialogues, and these are merely references to general topics discussed in the soul's connection. For a few citations, however, cf. note # 19, infra.

cognized the disparity which exists between the intellectual and physical equipment of different individuals; cf., for example, the gold, silver, bronze myth.) For the body he supplies a period of gymnastic training, to make it a proper instrument for the soul, in order that the soul may be able to live its full, balanced life. Music (to develop the emotional and intellectual faculties) and dialectics (for the special guardians, to develop their intellectual perception to its peak of possible perfection for the contemplation of truth) are the courses of training he considers adequate to develop the soul.¹⁸

Since, then, man possesses an immortal soul,¹⁹ he has certain positive moral duties to himself, to society, and to the gods; to himself, to prevent, as far as possible, those evil inclinations (sins, we would call them) from taking pos-

¹⁸ Republic, 392 c - 410 b; 537 b - d; 539 e - 540 b.

¹⁹ Proofs, or arguments, for the immortality of the soul can be found in the following places in Plato:

Republic: 610 c - 611 a; 621 c; in the account of the experience of Er (Cf. Sec. E, III, Chap. I of this thesis.)

Phaedrus: 245 c - 246 a. (From self-motion.)

Laws: 893 b - 896 d. (An elaboration of the argument of the Phaedrus.)

Timaeus: 41 a - e.

Apology: 40 c - 41 c.

Phaedo: 70 c - 77 d. (From the generation of opposite from opposite; and from the doctrine of reminiscence.)

78 b - 84 b. (From the ability of the soul to grasp the eternal and immutable, the immaterial and imperishable.)

102 a - 107 b. (From the existence of the forms Soul brings life; life can be essentially predicated of soul; it can never, therefore, admit the opposite form, death.)

Epistle VII: 334 e, 335 a.

Axiochus: 366 a, 379 b and c. (This dialogue, while generally considered spurious, cannot be said to misrepresent Plato's thought on this point, at least.)

session of his soul which will result in the diminution or even destruction of his happiness here on earth,²⁰ and will receive condign punishment in the afterworld (where there are positive sanctions, but not so stern as our ethics demand);²¹ to society, insofar that, as society depends for its well-being upon the character of its members, they should contribute positive direction to one another in so far as that may be done. Thus one who has a better vision of the ideal world should do what he can to foster the development of his own city along the lines of the ideal.²² Finally, he has certain moral duties and obligations towards the gods; in other words, religious obligations. It must be kept in mind that religion was of supreme importance to the citizens of Plato's state, so much so that its organization in his state was to be left to Apollo himself, to whom were to be dedicated all the city's most vital and important activities.²³

Briefly, then, Plato's man possesses a body and an immortal soul, to develop both of which must be his concern; and since the soul is the more important part of the man, he must be careful to foster in it all virtues and all devotion to and reverence for the gods. As a corollary to this thesis it follows that the state in which this man lives has a corresponding duty to see that, in as far as in it lies, such a man, in

20 Republic, 417 a and b.

21 Cf. Sec. E, III, a., Chap. I of this thesis.

22 Republic, 540 a and b.

23 This notion is a Greek commonplace. But, cf. Ibid., 427 b and c.

matters moral, religious, educational, etc., may be able to reach his full development.

Plato's thesis, then, develops further. Man, being by nature so constituted, will be happiest when there is proper order established between the various faculties (spiritual and physical) which he possesses; because only thus will each be able to exercise its function to best advantage, and only thus will man have harmony within himself and not be a composite of opposite tendencies. This harmony will be ensured only when in man's soul the faculties of lesser worth are subject to that of greatest worth, viz., reason; each performing its own especial task to the best of its ability, but curbing its baser tendencies in response to the dictates of reason. Finally, this harmony will reach its greatest heights when man's reason occupies itself in the contemplation of the Ideal, in the light of which it will govern the actions of the whole man in matters pertaining both to his body and his soul.²⁴

In a parallel manner, the state, comprising the three separate classes of men of the nature above described, will be happiest when all these work in perfect harmony. This harmony will be taken care of only when each class performs its own particular function to the best of its ability, and acts in obedience to the superior class of rulers.²⁵ It reaches its fullest and happiest development when that class, the rulers,

²⁴ Cf., e.g., Ibid., 442 c and d, 592 b, 621 c and d.

²⁵ Ibid., 423 a - d.

fixing its eyes on the ideal world, directs the state to the closest imitation possible of that ideal, in proportion to its approach to which the happiness of the state must be reckoned.²⁶

In view of all this, it cannot be denied that the communistic details which we mentioned earlier in this chapter as having been assigned by Plato to his guardian and ruler class, are necessary. It is a matter of pure logic. For without them, the individual members of the respective classes would have to provide money, lodging, etc., for themselves, with the result that they would perform their regular tasks poorly and would become less guardians, rulers, etc., and more like ordinary men, shackled with a multiplicity of private interests. The hierarchy of classes demanded by nature (divine metal) and by reason (specialization) would be destroyed; the state would be no longer one but many, and hence no state at all. With them, though, the classes and members will not be hampered, through having to seek for themselves the necessities of life, in the "perfect" performance of their functions. With all classes of citizens performing their duties properly, a condition of harmony will exist in the state; and if the state is functioning in perfect harmony, it will be able to provide for the individual citizens, of nature already described, a perfect opportunity for the full development of all aspects of their personal and individual natures, the only limits being those of natural aptitude. And thus the state and the individual, each and equally, will en-

²⁶ Cf. note # 22, supra.

joy the greatest possible degree of happiness; and justice (in particular), as well as all other human and civic virtues, will flourish to the fullest extent.

CHAPTER III
MARX AND PLATO

A. INTRODUCTION

Our problem, now, is to decide whether Marx can be said to have derived his communistic ideas (those of the type so far considered) from Plato. Our procedure will be, as in the preceding chapter in the case of Plato, to outline the recommendations of Marx regarding community of property, and to discuss the "philosophy" which led him to make such recommendations. This will, of course, involve a study of his ideas on the nature of man and society in general, and an analysis of his ideas on what constitutes the best form of society, and what are the relationships between the individual and the state. Our thesis will then, substantially at least, have been proved when we have made clear certain conclusions implicitly contained in our parallel consideration, pointing out explicitly how, in spite of the similarity of detail in their legislation, the reasons for the details are quite mutually opposed; that any attempt to identify the two systems of thought is a fallacy, the fallacy of identifying two philosophies on the basis of their conclusions without examining (or, worse, by disregarding) the premises from which they develop.

B. THE COMMUNISTIC STATE OF MARX

It is not an easy matter to reduce the communistic "philosophy" to any formula. Were we to take our data exclusively from the encyclical "Divini Redemptoris" of Pope Pius XI we might be accused of being biased. Examination of the writings of several communists, who purport to expound the authoritative doctrine of their leader, Marx, inspires a kind of sympathy with Josef Stalin, who exclaims in something like disgust:

"Add to this (the survival of 'capitalism in the minds of men' - his men) the not very high theoretical level of the majority of the members of our Party, the weak ideological work of the Party organs and the fact that our Party workers are overburdened with purely practical work, which deprives them of the opportunity of augmenting their theoretical knowledge, and you will understand whence comes the confusion on a number of problems of Leninism that exists in the minds of the individual members of the Party, which not infrequently penetrates our press, and which helps to revive the survivals of the ideology of the defeated anti-Leninist groups." ¹

Hence, we feel that we will be giving a fair study to the Marxian philosophy if we select our data from the writings of Karl Marx (of course), Friedrich Engels, V. I. Lenin, and Josef Stalin, all of whom, and we must give them this much credit, hold practically alike on the theory of communism and the best

¹ Stalin, "REPORT OF THE WORK OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION," in International Conciliation, published by Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, No. 305, December, 1934, p. 431.

method of reducing it to practice. Then if we quote the Pope in substantiation of our own analysis of these same works and in refutation of the same, we may, perhaps, escape the stigma of partiality.

First, then, (to keep our parallel discussion intact) what are the actual details of communism to be found in the ideal communistic state as described by these men? They are these:

1) Abolition of private property. This article of the communistic creed receives a rather surprising interpretation by its protagonists. Of the only two existing classes of society, as they see it, the proletarian and the bourgeoisie, or labor and capital, the proletarian has already been exploited by the members of the bourgeois class to the extent that he no longer possesses any private property except his own physical strength and capability to add to the accumulation of capital by what he can produce. The surplus value of his work - the difference between what he can produce and what he receives from the ruling classes in return for the barest necessities of his existence and maintenance - does not accrue to him but to the bourgeois capitalists whose power is thus increased and who are thereby able to exploit the proletarian still further. Hence the abolition of private property applies exclusively to bourgeois property. The result of this will be the destruction of bourgeois monopoly of the means of production (the actual machinery

of production as well as the laborers who are really their wage slaves) and hence a destruction of the class distinction of which it is the cause. Capital is converted into common property, into the property of all members of society. This does not mean that personal property, that little which "the wage laborer appropriates by means of his labor" and which "merely suffices to prolong and reproduce a bare existence" is to be abolished. "It is only the social character of that property which is changed. It loses its class character," since it is no longer a condition of an oppressed majority. The small minority who were its oppressors no longer exist; the class distinction of which it was a factor has disappeared.²

2 Marx and Engels, "COMMUNIST MANIFESTO," in Capital, The Communist Manifesto, and Other Writings, published by The Modern Library, New York, 1932, pp. 335 and 336. The entire quotation follows:

In this sense (abolition of bourgeois property) the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.

We Communists have been reproached with the desire of abolishing the right of personally acquiring property as the fruit of man's own labor, which property is alleged to be the groundwork of all personal freedom, activity and independence.

Hard w on, self-acquired, self-earned property! Do you mean the property of the petty artisan and of the small peasant, a form of property that preceded the bourgeois form? There is no need to abolish that; the development of industry has to a great extent already destroyed it, and is still destroying it daily.

Or do you mean modern bourgeois private property?

But does wage labor create any property for the laborer? Not a bit. It creates capital, i.e., that kind of property which exploits wage labor, and which cannot increase except upon condition of getting a new supply of wage labor for fresh exploitation. Property, in its present form, is

Can we overlook a rather sinister implication in this? In substitution for a practical slavery of one class to another, we see an equally impossible subjugation of both classes - at least of the personnel which once made up both classes - to a rather impersonal "society." What does that mean? Theoretically it means a dictatorship of the proletariat or labor, an intermediate stage between the old condition of class antagonism and the "universal brotherhood of man." All workers, all laborers own and control capital, the means of production and the product or its equivalent; which, of course, sounds ideal. Practically, though, it means the subjection of individuals to

based on the antagonism of capital and wage labor. Let us examine both sides of this antagonism.

To be a capitalist is to have not only a purely personal, but a social status in production. Capital is a collective product, and only by the united action of many members, nay, in the last resort, only by the united action of all members of society, can it be set in motion.

Capital is therefore not a personal, it is a social power.

When, therefore, capital is converted into common property, into the property of all members of society, personal property is not thereby transformed into social property. It is only the social character of the property that is changed. It loses its class character.

Let us now take wage labor.

The average price of wage labor is the minimum wage, i.e., that quantum of the means of subsistence which is absolutely requisite to keep the laborer in bare existence as a laborer. What, therefore, the wage laborer appropriates by means of his labor, merely suffices to prolong and reproduce a bare existence. We by no means intend to abolish this personal appropriation of the products of labor, an appropriation that is made for the maintenance and reproduction of human life, and that leaves no surplus wherewith to command the labor of others. All that we want to do away with is the miserable character of this appropriation, under which the laborer lives merely to increase capital and is allowed to live only in so far as the interests of the ruling class require it.

a soulless entity, the state, and, of course, control of all by the small administrative body which must, in the nature of things, exist whether the "theory" likes it or not. We wonder whether Marx and Engels are being naive when they exclaim in indignation: "And the abolition of this state of things (class antagonisms of the sort being discussed) is called by the bourgeois abolition of individuality and freedom!"³ What else is it, we may ask? But more of that presently.

This might be the place to bring in a rather significant quotation of Josef Stalin. In a rather illuminating report, "Report of the Work of the Central Committee of the Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," he has the following remarks to make. They are, I believe, self-explanatory.

"Unlike the artel ('under present conditions the only proper form of the collective farm movement'), where only the means of production are socialized, in the communes, until recently, not only were the means of production socialized, but so also was the everyday life of every member of the commune, that is to say, the members of the commune, unlike the members of the artel, did not personally own domestic poultry, small livestock, a cow, some grain, or a kitchen garden. This means that in the commune the personal, everyday interests of the members are not so much taken into account and combined with the public interests as eclipsed by the latter in the pursuit of petty bourgeois equalitarianism. It goes without saying that this is the weakest side of the

³ Ibid., p. 337.

commune...This, properly speaking, explains why the commune is not widespread, and why there are so few of them...

This does not mean, of course, that the commune is not needed at all, that it does not represent the highest form of the collective farm movement. No, the commune is needed, and, of course, it is the highest form of the collective farm movement...The future commune will arise on the basis of a more developed technique and of a more developed artel, on the basis of an abundance of products. When will that be? Not soon, of course. But it will be. It would be a crime to accelerate the process of transition from the artel to the commune artificially. That would confuse the whole issue, and would facilitate the task of our enemies. The process of transition from the artel to the future commune must be gradual and to the extent that all the collective farmers are convinced that such a transition is necessary." 4

This was written in 1934, and is a sample of the principles, outlined above from the "Communist Manifesto" composed by Marx and Engels in 1847, as applied to the farm question. "The highest form of the collective farm movement," is one in which individual importance has disappeared, in which the collectivity is the object of paramount consideration. The "sinister implication" in the theory of the Marx-Engel team has taken on a new form: that of fact as opposed to suggestion. But let us return to the other details of the communistic state.

2) State absorption of capital. The means of production, or the means of private gain (which are the same thing to Marx, if

4 Stalin, Op. cit., pp. 432 - 433.

they are in the hands of the bourgeoisie) - capital, in a word - are to be put into the hands of the entire collectivity. This point has already been discussed in the consideration of the application of the abolition of private property, and need not detain us here. Suffice it to observe that it is a second step, after that of abolishing bourgeois property, towards the absorption of all interests, private and public, by the state.

3) The abolition of everything based on private gain. Everything, then, which is based on a system in which one class dominates the other on an economic field - the bourgeois-proletariat system - is to be abolished along with that system. We can see very clearly in his enumeration of this spawn of the bourgeois-proletariat system the fundamental materialism and relativism of Marx's whole philosophy. Here they are: the abolition of the family; the "rescue" of education from the ruling class and the placing of it in the hands of the collectivity; community of women; abolition of countries and nationality; the abolition of all ideas, views, conceptions, and consciousness which are considered to spring from the bourgeois system; and, finally, the substitution, in place of all of these, of community control of the family and education, and community domination of all thought and feeling. It might be well to put all this into the words of Marx and Engels themselves.

"Abolition of the family! Even the

most radical flare up at this infamous proposal of the Communists. On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form this family exists only among the bourgeoisie. But this state of things finds its complement in the practical absence of the family among the proletarians, and in public prostitution. The bourgeois family will vanish as a matter of course when its complement vanishes, and both will vanish with the vanishing of capital." 5

We wonder at what narrow section of humanity they may have been looking when they penned these words. We marvel at their singular preoccupation with their one basic hatred and their determination to destroy its object. We almost admire their cleverness in avoiding the point in question, for we find no denial of the charge nor yet any explicit admission of it in the terms in which it is leveled at them. And we most certainly pity them for their misconception of that most natural and fundamental and most beautiful of societies. But, then, nothing was for them founded on human nature itself, or, we might say, on human nature as such; everything in existence is the result of human nature existing and acting in some particular phase of class conflict. For them there were no universal values.

"Do you charge us with wanting to stop the exploitation of children by their parents? To this crime we plead guilty.

"But, you will say, we destroy the most hallowed of relations when we re-

5 Marx and Engels, Op. cit., pp. 338-339.

place home education by social.

"And your education! Is not that also social, and determined by the social conditions under which you educate; by the intervention, direct or indirect, of society by means of schools, etc.? The Communists have not invented the intervention of society in education; they do but seek to alter the character of that intervention, and to rescue education from the influence of the ruling class.

"The bourgeois clap-trap about the family and education, about the hallowed correlation of parent and child, become all the more disgusting, the more, by the action of Modern Industry, all family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labor." 6

We can see the validity of their objections to certain abuses which most certainly did exist in England and on the continent at the time when they wrote this, when the Industrial Revolution was waxing strong, and legislation of a sane sort had not as yet caught up with the abuses which the revolution brought in its train. But the "cure" is hardly as good as the ill at which it is directed. We wonder for what they would "rescue" the children? For schools controlled and operated by a society with such smug contempt for what is a most natural and, in their own words, a most "hallowed" relationship!

"But you communists would introduce community of women, screams the whole bourgeoisie chorus.

"The bourgeois sees in his wife

6 Ibid., p. 339.

a mere instrument of production. He hears that the instruments of production are to be exploited in common, and, naturally, can come to no other conclusion, than that the lot of being common to all will likewise fall to the women.

"He has not even a suspicion that the real point aimed at is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production.

"For the rest, nothing is more ridiculous than the virtuous indignation of our bourgeois at the community of women which, they pretend, is to be openly and officially established by the Communists. The Communists have no need to introduce community of women; it has existed almost from time immemorial.

"Our bourgeois, not content with having the wives and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal, not to speak of common prostitutes, take the greatest pleasure in seducing each others' wives.

"Bourgeois marriage is in reality a system of wives in common, and thus, at the most, what the Communists might possibly be reproached with, is that they desire to introduce, in substitution for a hypocritically concealed, an openly legalized community of women. For the rest, it is self-evident that the abolition of the present system of production must bring with it the abolition of the community of women springing from that system, i.e., of prostitution both public and private." 7

The simple and sane expedient of directing their shafts at the abolition of the abuses which, to a degree, really exist in an institution, gives way, in the "philosophy" of these one-idea men, to the abolition of the institution itself.

7 Ibid., pp. 339-340.

"The Communists are further reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationalities.

"The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they don't possess. Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is, so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word.

"National differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world-market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto.

"The supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish still faster. United action, of the leading civilized countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat."⁸

Which is all simply evidence of the scope of the revolt these men plan. The abuses which follow as a necessary consequence of the conflict between the two classes of labor and capital are world-wide because the conflict is world-wide. So also must be the remedy.

"Does it require deep intuition to comprehend that man's ideas, views and conceptions, in one word, man's consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life?

"What else does the history of ideas prove than that intellectual production changes in character in proportion

⁸ Ibid., p. 340

as material production is changed? The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class." 9

This is, of course, a superb confusion of what is accidental with what is substantial and permanent. The charge is so obvious that even Marx and Engels foresaw it and provided for it. They place the anticipated objection thus:

"'Undoubtedly,' it will be said, 'religious, moral, philosophical, and judicial ideas have been modified in the course of historical development. But religion, morality, philosophy, political science, and law, constantly survived this change.

"'There are, besides, eternal truths, such as Freedom, Justice, etc., that are common to all states of society. But Communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion and all morality, instead of constituting them on a new basis; it therefore acts in contradiction to all past historical experience.'" 10

And they answer their own objection in this way:

"What does this accusation reduce itself to? The history of all past society has consisted in the development of class antagonisms, antagonisms that assumed different forms at different epochs.

"But whatever form they may have taken, one fact is common to all past ages, viz., the exploitation of one part of society by the other. No wonder, then, that the social consciousness of past ages, despite all the multiplicity and variety it displays, moves within certain common forms, or general ideas, which cannot completely vanish except with the total disappear-

9 Ibid., p. 341.

10 Ibid., p. 341.

ance of class antagonisms.

"The Communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations; no wonder that its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas." ¹¹

Which, of course, is no answer at all. The charge is not that Communism is wrong for not taking Freedom, Justice, etc., and establishing them in a new relationship with circumstances current. Such juggling of eternal verities is not a fact "of all past historical experience." Religion, morality, law, justice, etc., are eternal and undeniable facts, based on laws inherent in the nature of man himself; ideas, conceptions, views, which are capable of embracing abstractions and can have as objects the immaterial and eternal as well as the material and the temporal, function identically in one age as in another; they are not dependent for their existence or operation on the material accidents of a particular culture or civilization, or on any particular epoch of history. Hence, to employ what is by now the old shibboleth, "class-conflict gives character to the age," is ridiculous, besides being a total miss of the mark. Were it not for the fact that the argument quoted above and the so-called answer to the posed objection give us, as we have already mentioned, as explicit a statement of the real materialism of their exponents as we could hope to find anywhere, we would perhaps consider ourselves justified in passing them

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 341-342.

over entirely. But it is significant for our argument to have their own words at hand to justify the attacks we intend later to hurl at them.

We wonder how Marx's thought ever developed to these conclusions. A brief review of what we have chosen to call his philosophy may give us some inkling.

The general background of his ideas is to be found in the philosophy of Marx which is known as historical and dialectical materialism, and which is, as V. I. Lenin would have it, "the legitimate inheritor of the best that humanity created in the 19th century in the form of German philosophy, English political economy, French socialism."¹² However we may react to such an extravagant claim, the doctrine may be explained briefly as follows:

Materialism: in the philosophic sense that the first reality is matter. The whole world began as matter, and all its phases, as well as all its constituents (and this we understand in the broadest sense) are phenomena of matter.

Dialectical: as opposed to mechanical. This means that the world has evolved, from the beginning of its existence, according to its own intrinsic laws, not through extrinsic forces

¹² Lenin, V.I., in "The Three Sources and Three Constituent Parts of Marxism," an essay on Marxism contained in the introduction to CAPITAL AND OTHER WRITINGS, Modern Library Edition, p. xxi. Lenin also, on pp. xxii and xxiii, gives from the Communistic viewpoint an explanation of the significance of Marx's Historical and Dialectical Materialism. It is substantially the same as ours, with the exception that he does not see in it the same sinister implications which we find therein. Naturally.

operating upon it (as the materialism of Feuerbach would have it), but through successive internal conflicts, until it has developed new forms. The process will continue to its perfect culmination in a society freed from further conflict, a classless society. (This, although opposed to the idealism of Hegel, is an application to the material world of Hegel's dialectic: that weird theory of thesis, or affirmation of a state of consciousness, antithesis, suggested by the thesis and containing a negation of the same consciousness, and synthesis of the two, embracing both and balancing them one against the other until the idea evolves into the absolute which is perfectly conscious of itself; and all this in the ideal world! Opposition - struggle - rest, in the perfect synthesis.)

Historical: or, better, economic. The factor which determines the evolution in matter and society is the economic condition of the world at any particular stage in the evolution. Thus, all social conditions are the result of contemporaneous economic conditions. The instrument by which this evolution is to be effected is, as, with proper adaptations, in the idealism of Hegel, class struggle, ending in a classless society.

The application of this philosophy to present conditions (present, at least, in his time, and, though somewhat obsolete now, still of sufficient importance to our analysis as to merit consideration) is made clear in the Communist Manifesto, Section I, which discusses the relationship between bourgeois and pro-

letarian.¹³ And Friedrich Engels, happily, summarizes that rather wordy discussion in what he calls "the fundamental proposition which forms its (the Manifesto's) nucleus.

"That proposition is: that in every historical epoch the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained, the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently the whole history of mankind (since the dissolution of primitive tribal society, holding land in common ownership) has been a history of class struggles, contests between exploiting and exploited, ruling and oppressed classes; that the history of these class struggles forms a series of evolution in which, now-a-days, a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class (the proletariat) cannot attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and ruling class (the bourgeoisie) without, at the same time, and once and for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class-distinction and class-struggles."¹⁴

Let us briefly, now, before passing to the final business of this chapter - the comparison of Marx's philosophy with that of Plato - criticise this fundamental philosophy of Marx. With his materialistic thesis as such we find fault, because it involves a denial of the soul, a negation of morality, and a rejection of God. And with these basic psychological, ethical and theological truths rejected, obvious dangerous conclusions follow. The dignity of man is no greater than that of a machine. Why should it be? They are both phenomena of matter. The machine

¹³ Marx and Engels, op. cit., pp. 321-334.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 318-319.

may even be of greater value, if its productivity is greater and more beneficial to the state. Morality is a relative thing, dependent upon the whim of the ruling body, a group of irreligious men. We could pursue the speculation ourselves; but Pius XI has done so before us, so we can paraphrase briefly his castigation of the system. ¹⁵ Every man, ultimately, is a cog in a giant collectivistic system - devoid of liberty, personal dignity, and individual rights; without personal or private property. His marriage is a purely artificial and civic institution, subject for dissolution to the whim of the individual or to the collectivity, to which also the children and their education exclusively belong. Man, in short, becomes the citizen of a civilization, which results from blind evolutionary forces and culminates in a humanity with no other God but the tyrant Collectivity.

As to the class struggle, what a mockery such an idea is! It is a sheer perversion - the substitution of hatred and a necessary and deadly struggle of one class with another, for the universal duty and commandment of love. A fundamental impulse in man is denied and forcibly turned against itself. And yet these men speak of furthering this struggle, almost as though to do so were a Messianic mission - an inestimable and

15 Pope Pius XI, Encyclical "Divini Redemptoris," on Atheistic Communism, Sec. II, A.

unfathomable benefit which they are called upon to bestow on mankind.¹⁶

Finally, on the historical or economic question Marx is in error. The error is due to his theory of value. In the teachings of a sane ethics (or economics), the value of a commodity is not determined merely in terms of the work spent in producing it. There are many other factors to be considered: the rarity of the object; its usefulness, which may be all out of proportion to the labor required to produce it; the ease with which some object may be produced because of the fact that machinery has lightened the task considerably. Besides, there is the human element to be considered: the dignity of the labor which it receives from the character of the laborer, and the intrinsic value of the work which it derives from the purpose for which it is performed, usually to enable a man to provide an honest and a comfortable existence for himself and his family.

In the communist state, though, all are required to work according to their ability and to receive according to

16 Stalin, Op cit., (cf. supra, p. 53) p. 431, remarks: "The Seventeenth Party Conference declared that we are marching towards classless socialist society. It goes without saying that classless society cannot come by itself. It has to be won and built by the efforts of all the toilers, by strengthening the organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat, by extending the class struggle, by abolishing classes, by liquidating the remnants of the capitalist classes in battle with the enemy, both internal and external. The thing is clear, one would think."

the work they have done and their requirements.¹⁷ The work as such is not considered; the worker spends his efforts for the state and receives from the state what he needs, not what his work as such, with all the modifications above outlined, has merited. As for Marx's theory of surplus value - that it is necessarily swallowed up by the capitalists and hence warrants the abolition of that class - it simply does not solve the matter. Because of individual abuse and individual violation of charity and justice, a whole class need not be destroyed as responsible. But destroy it the communists will; and what becomes of surplus value then? It is "absorbed" by the state. Where is the solution?

C. MARX'S COMMUNISTIC DEMANDS IN THE LIGHT OF THIS PHILOSOPHY

This will be brief, and will serve nicely as a summary of all we have discussed. Since man and all else (including man's ideas, and even his will)¹⁸ are phenomena of matter; since, therefore, his conditions - physical and mental, his

17 Ibid., p. 434. Speaking of the meaning of Marxian equality, Stalin says: "By equality Marxism means...c) the equal duty of all to work according to their ability and the equal right of all toilers to receive according to the amount of work they have done (socialist society), d) the equal duty of all to work according to their ability and the equal right of all toilers to receive according to their requirements (communist society)."

18 Marx and Engels, op. cit., p. 338. "Your very ideas are but the outgrowth of the conditions of your bourgeois production and bourgeois property, just as your jurisprudence is but the will of your class made into a law for all, a will whose essential character and direction are determined by the economical conditions of existence of your class."

ideas, views and consciousness in general - are subject to change in accord with the "changes in his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life;" since whatever has the semblance of universal value in them is the result of the historical phenomenon that, in spite of various political and economic changes in society, society has always been based upon class antagonisms which have been the outcome of constant economic oppression by the wealthy of the poor; since these successive systems of society have always resulted in spiritual and physical and economic slavery and oppression, never moreso than at present; since, finally, Marx is tackling the problem of the betterment of society, finally and irrevocably; therefore, the whole economic order must be changed according to the plans outlined, viz., by putting the means of production in the hands of the collectivity; by forming a new classless society, freed from all the shackles and bonds of the present society, whether these have been imposed in good faith or by hypocritical self-seeking; by destroying all that exists as a result of the economic disorder which this new society will combat, together with its consequent oppression; by adopting all the details of legislation we have mentioned above.

D. COMPARISON OF MARX AND PLATO

At long last we come to the comparison of these two ideologies: that of Plato's Republic, and that of Marx's communistic state. And before taking them up point by point, we are

moved to remark how differently the two would impose their legislation on the state: Marx and the communists, by violence and bloodshed, liquidating all parties in opposition; Plato, by "doing violence" to their convictions, telling them the myth about the divine metal in their constitutions. Each by his individual means would "win" the people to the acceptance of his constitutions; and is this not foreshadowing enough of the conclusions to which our comparison will lead?

Here, then, are a few obvious differences: Plato - man possesses a body and a soul; Marx - man is a phenomenon of matter; Plato - man will find his personal happiness in a state patterned on the ideal, all its elements properly harmonized, a state which creates such a condition of living for its members that they can procure in this life the perfect relationship and proper and harmonious subordination of all their faculties, as a preparation for an afterlife spent in contemplating the ideal and immutable Good; Marx - man will find happiness by submerging his individuality in a soulless collectivity, which denies in man all spiritual and intellectual interests and ambitions apart from those produced in him by the material condition of the society in which he lives, and which, of course, knows of no such thing as an afterlife; Plato - the state is an instrument to be used by man to procure his perfect personal happiness; Marx - man exists for the state, is a cog in a giant collectivistic system, is merely himself an instrument designed to contribute what he can to the

perfection of that system as an end in itself; Plato - education is to enable man to think in terms of the absolute truth, to approach a more intimate understanding of the ideal Good; Marx - education is to teach the individual to think in terms of the absolute state, the collectivity, to deny all universal values, and to focus his convictions and mental functions on matters transitory and of but relative value; Plato - above all, in men must be fostered devotion to the gods, and to Apollo must the development of the state religion be entrusted; Marx - religion, morality, etc., have no universal value, are but the remnants of outmoded ideologies,¹⁹ and hence have no place in his state.

As applied to state organization, their very similar communistic regulations reveal the same striking contrast. The communistic details are for Marx clearly an economic demand. Call communism a philosophy, a religion, a system of education, what you will. The fact remains that it is ultimately and basically an economic system. The communistic details recommended by Plato, on the other hand, represent a move of pure expediency, with certain elements provided because, with his deep insight into the demands of fundamental human psychology,

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 341. "When the ancient world was in its last throes the ancient religions were overcome by Christianity. When Christian ideas succumbed (sic) in the 18th century to rationalist ideas, feudal society fought its death-battle with the then revolutionary bourgeoisie. The ideas of religious liberty and freedom of conscience merely gave expression to the sway of free competition within the domain of knowledge."

he believed that they were necessary. Again, communism is introduced by Marx as a weapon to destroy class distinctions, and to create an entirely classless society. By Plato it is introduced as the most efficient tool he could provide to maintain in his state the rigid hierarchy of classes which he deemed essential to its continued existence, and which he was at such pains to create by reasoning and by fable.

Other contradictions could be worked out in detail. There are many implicitly contained in our more or less parallel exposition of the two opposing philosophies. Here we have thought it sufficient to point out specifically the most outstanding contradictions. These should suffice to show that, if so great a divergence is to be noted in basic concepts and in their application, the difference will be tremendous as those concepts develop. Hence, while certain elements of the applied philosophy coincide, the philosophers cannot be said to have reasoned along identical lines. The facts which we have set forth show that basically the philosophies are quite opposed.

CHAPTER IV

WOMEN AND MARRIAGE IN THE STATES OF PLATO AND MARX

A. INTRODUCTION

Our thesis is substantially proved in the two chapters immediately preceding; we could rest our case here. But there is still one aspect of the legislation of both Plato and Marx which has not yet been discussed; and that is the subject of women and marriage. It is a subject of no little importance in itself and would merit extensive treatment on that ground alone. But as a reflection of the respective philosophies of the men under discussion, particularly of Plato's, it is a subject which we cannot very well dismiss without some consideration. While it is true that the points already discussed in Plato's state are hardly of a nature to cause us any great chagrin, when he goes to the further length of assigning wives and children, too, as the common possessions of his guardians, we are given pause. This so-called "sore spot" of the Republic is, it is true, a natural and logical development of the principle of specialization, the principle upon which the whole state is built. But we should like to investigate it still further and compare it point by point, as we have done with the other regulations, with Marx's legislation concerning women and marriage. Of course, our discussion will lead to the al-

ready familiar conclusion that, neither here any more than elsewhere, despite apparent similarities, can Plato and Marx be called identical thinkers.

B. PLATO'S IDEAS OF WOMEN

The idea that women are essentially the same as men is peculiarly Socratic. Plato, as Taylor suggests, merely adopts that idea from his master and argues therefrom almost as from a self-evident premise.¹ According to Plato, then, the following observations are little less than self-evident. We paraphrase:

Just as we said that some men are by nature fitted for ruling - for the study of philosophy and for learning easily - and that one man's body adequately serves his mind, while other men possess these qualities of nature not at all; so of women, with the single exception that they bear while men beget, and are in general weaker than men, some are by nature musical, athletic, warlike, lovers of wisdom, and high-spirited, while others are not. Broadly speaking, then, natural capacities are distributed alike among men and women, women naturally sharing in all pursuits, some women, even, possessing the qualities of a guardian, i.e., the same nature as a man in respect to the guardianship, save that one is weaker and the other stronger.²

Women, therefore, as men, possess the divine metal in their constitutions, and are thus designed by nature, some for the ruling class, some for the warrior class, some for the

¹ A.E.Taylor, in Plato, pp. 42, 132, 133, speaking of "goodness women."

² Plato, Republic, 454 d - 456 a.

class of artisans. They must, then, depending upon which class they are designed for by nature, receive the same training as the men of that same class; and they must receive the same opportunities for self-development. Finally, they must have the same duties and obligations to the state as we have already seen are incumbent upon the men; and for them the same legislation holds, and for the same reasons. For warrior women, therefore, there shall be community of goods, community of dwellings, community of husbands and children.

That this arrangement is most desirable Plato seems convinced. Here again is a paraphrase of his comments:

Women of this kind (who possess the guardian nature) shall be selected as wives of our guardians and shall have the same pursuits, music and gymnastic...Is it best we should so order it? The guardians, with their education, are the best of all the citizens; the guardians' wives, the best of women; and there is nothing better for the state than the generation in it of the best possible women and men...So our arrangement is possible and desirable as the best...³

We agree with Plato that essentially, as human beings, men and women are the same, with equal rights and duties. We agree that there is "one moral standard for all of us, male or female, Greek or barbarian, bond or free. There really is one 'eternal and immutable' morality, not a variety of independent moral standards..."⁴ But we cannot overlook the fact that by

³ Ibid., 456b - 457a.

⁴ A.E.Taylor, op. cit., p. 133.

nature as well as by temperament men are constituted quite differently from women. The function of child bearing is not just an isolated experience which is endured and nothing more. It involves also the subsequent duties of caring for and educating the child borne; and these duties devolve in great part, at least in the child's early years, upon the mother. Her place is in the home, not following the same pursuits as her husband, but tending to her own particular tasks. All this is clear enough from a mere consideration of the nature of the family. But the point seemed necessary, even in spite of (perhaps because of) Plato's further legislation to provide a substitute for the normal family life of his own Greek contemporaries. Let us pursue his argument further.

C. ARRANGEMENTS FOR MARRIAGES IN THE STATE

Since the guardians, both men and women, must attend to one task only and must not have their attention divided between duty to the state and duty to their family, public duty and personal interest; since they not only possess a natural right to have children but are even under a positive obligation to beget children in order to maintain the average of the population both in quantity and quality; some suitable arrangement for marriage is imperative. Plato recognized the fact that "these men and women, picked as nearly as possible from the same nature, having houses and meals in common and no private possessions, and being thrown together in exercise, life, and

education, will be drawn by an innate necessity of love to sexual union."⁵ He foresaw, too, a danger. "But disorder and promiscuity would be an unhallowed thing; so the rulers must arrange marriages, sacred, as far as possible; and the most sacred would be those that were most beneficial."⁶

The following system of marriage, therefore, was devised.⁷ Hymeneal festivals were to be arranged, under state auspices, and sanctified with prayers and sacrifices to the gods. Strict supervision and rigid qualifications must be provided by the rulers concerning those who are to beget children for the state. They must see to it, first of all, that in as many cases as possible, only those who are in their prime of life be allowed to cohabit; and that, not privately, but only when the state allows. Of those who are in their prime, only those whom the rulers designate shall hold intercourse; the reason being to make it possible for the rulers to consider wars and diseases and thereby keep the number of citizens as nearly as possible the same, that the city be neither too great nor too small. Only the children of the unions approved and sanctioned by the rulers shall be raised and educated for the state. Unholy shall be declared the union and bastard the offspring of those in their prime who beget children without the sanction of the rulers, or of those who are not within the pro-

5 Republic, 458 d.

6 Ibid., 458 e, 459 a.

7 The details which follow concerning these hymeneal festivals are based on Republic, 459-462.

per age limit, whether they are above the limit or below it. Bastards and children of inferior parents shall be destroyed in the embryo; or, if that cannot be done, when born they shall be disposed of, since the state cannot accept the responsibility or the burden of supporting them; for while superior parents will naturally beget a superior offspring (which shall, of course, be reared), the progeny of inferior parents will be naturally inferior, and cannot be reared, at least if the whole flock is to be maintained in a first-rate condition. Deformed children, too, shall be disposed of; and children with bronze in their composition (according to the myth) are to be deposed to the class of the workers (though nothing is said of the manner of determining just whether there is bronze in the child or not.)

The parentage of the children of superior parents is to be concealed. All children born within the seventh to the tenth month after such a hymeneal festival are to be called brothers and sisters; and all those who had intercourse at the time are to be called the parents of all the children. The mothers will be relieved of the petty cares ordinarily accompanying their station, for the children shall be given for rearing and nursing to women provided by the state for that purpose. In this way, "the wives of our guardians are to be common, and their children are to be common, and no parent is to know his own child, nor any child his parent." The children

will thus grow into a superior citizenry, and thus will be ensured the excellence of the guardian class and of the whole state. There will be a total abolition of "mine" and "not mine," elements which destroy the unity of the state. The only danger, that of incest, will be avoided by having all those who took part in the festival call all children, born within the seven to ten month period following, sons and daughters, and by having all these children call one another brothers and sisters. The only obstacle, that of prejudice built on age-old customs, will be overcome by experience and education.

In our state, then, we are all fellow citizens; our rulers are to the people saviours and helpers. To the rulers the people are those who pay their wage and support them, not their slaves. To one another they are co-guardians. Besides, they all look on one another, not as outsiders, but as "belonging," since they consider them brother, sister, father, mother, son, daughter, etc. Nor will the names, merely, of this kinship persist alone; all the offices of love and duty and reverence, care and obedience to parents will be observed, since they look for favor from gods and men. The name and the deeds of kinship will exist. Their speech and convictions will show unison and community of pleasures and pain: "it is mine that fares well or ill," and so on. And the cause of this unity and harmony, besides the general constitution, is the community of wives and children among the guardians. Such a state is like a human body in respect to the pleasure and pain of its parts, and it is the greatest blessing for the state to be of this nature...⁸

D. CRITICISM OF MARRIAGE LAWS OF PLATO

Leaving moral considerations aside for the moment, we cannot fail to recognize that such a system is not only altogether impracticable, but quite undesirable as well. With all the good will in the world, such a system would lead almost inevitably to the neglect of the children. What Aristotle says, commenting on Plato's communism, is entirely to the point and constitutes a very trenchant criticism.

Even admitting that it is most advantageous for a city to be one as much as possible (which he really does not admit without qualifications) it does not seem to follow that this will take place by permitting all at once to say this is mine and this is not mine (though this is what Socrates regards as a proof that the city is entirely one)...Let each citizen ...in the state have a thousand children, but let none of them be considered as the children of that individual, but let the relation of father and child be common to them all, and they will all be neglected ...for it would be uncertain to whom each belonged, and, when it was born, who was to take care of it...It is better for anyone to be a nephew in his private capacity than a son after that manner.⁹

Plato, on his own grounds, would have to recognize the value of this argument. It applies, of course, to the children when they have left the care of the state nurses. If they receive no further care, the exact condition will eventually arise which he considers to be the first step in the destruction of the state. The warriors and rulers will have of necessity to be chosen from an inferior citizenry, simply because

⁹ Aristotle, Politics, 1261 b, 1262 a.

there will be no alternative. And no amount of fine training and presentation of high ideals will be able to overcome this initial handicap and make of this poor material anything better. The downfall of the state will be merely a matter of time.

That is the first objection. Again, the danger which Plato foresaw as resulting from the possibility of promiscuity and even incest, will be very great and will, in all probability, be realized. After all, no matter how carefully he may try to guard against it, such a course as he prescribes is a misuse of man's powers, and can eventually lead to nothing but the destruction in him of true love and finally to the complete debasement of his God-given faculty of generation. And a system which makes everyone either brother, sister, father, or mother to everyone else is so impracticable that incest and crimes of the worst sort are inevitable.

Still another difficulty exists in the unequal opportunity for intercourse given to the various members, depending on their divinely-bestowed natures. The tendencies in all are alike; and the over-gratification of them in some ("the young men who excel in war and other pursuits will receive prizes and honors and more opportunities for intercourse; which will be a pretext for having them beget as many of the children as possible")¹⁰ as well as the restriction of them in others ("ingenious lots shall be devised so the inferior man at each

¹⁰ Republic, 460 b.

conjugation shall blame chance and not the rulers")¹¹ will both lead to harmful results - physical, moral, and psychological. No amount of arguing on the basis of the divine metal myth will suffice to prevent the trouble, human nature being what it is; and all this will eventually bring about the destruction of the harmony which is essential for the continued existence of the state. Therefore, we find fault with Plato's doctrine on the score of undesirability and impracticability.

On psychological grounds, too, Plato is in error in the matter. He is foolish, of course, for expecting to satisfy by a myth a considerable percentage of his population to the gratification of whose natural desires and inclinations he finds it advantageous to place a check. More than that, he seems to fail to realize that loyalty to his family will increase a man's loyalty to the state almost a hundredfold; that a man will defend a state, when that state's destruction means the destruction of what is his most cherished possession in life, with far more zeal and earnestness than he would one which contained some thousand or more of his "children," for whom he could not possibly have more than an impersonal concern. Such a state is not consonant with man's very nature. A man's loyalty to the state will, after all, be in proportion to his interest in its members, depending upon whether they are his own personally, or his own, so to speak, generally.

¹¹ Ibid., 460 a.

Another psychological difficulty is brought out by Taylor.

"...If the reader will take the trouble to work out the consequences of the regulations prescribed for the mating of the guardians, he will find that the impulses of sex and the family affections connected with them are subjected to much severer restraint than any which has ever been proposed for a Christian society. It is plain that the governing classes, to whom the regulations are meant to apply, are expected to find no gratification for the sexual impulses except on the solemn occasions when they are called on to beget offspring for the State. The extension of the duties of the 'guardian' to both sexes of itself carries the consequence that these occasions arise only at long intervals; and the self-denial implied in the acceptance of such a rule of life might prove to be even severer than that imposed on the monk by his vow of chastity, for the very reason that the inhibition has to be broken through at the time when the State so commands. Indeed, the overwhelming probability is that if any society should attempt to enforce on any part of itself regulations of the kind proposed in the Republic, the attempt would fail just because of their intolerable severity. No actual ruling class would be likely to consent to the absolute elimination of the affections of the family circle from its own life, even if it were prepared to reduce the gratification of the physical impulses of sex to the contemplated minimum."¹²

Taylor uses the above argument to show that there is no "community of women," in the usual, unsavory sense, in the Republic. But the implications he notes in the doctrine constitute, as well, a formidable psychological barrier, if not to the estab-

¹²A.E.Taylor, op. cit., pp. 277-278.

lishment of such a system, certainly to its permanence.

Finally, for moral considerations we must object to Plato's doctrine. It is not necessary to dwell at length on the fact that he endorses the common pagan practice of exposing unwanted children and advocates the worst and most brutal kind of birth-control. Aside from these two unnatural and, in the worst sense, pagan practices, the system described by Plato would completely destroy the possibility of family life. Clearly he did not understand the true nature and dignity of the family. According to the teaching of the Church, the family is of divine origin. Since the primary end of marriage is the procreation and education of children, God put it in man's power to cooperate with Him in bringing children into the world to know, love, and eventually to attain to Him. To safeguard this power He decreed that its use be restricted to those who have joined their lives in marriage, which He signed with the dignity of a Sacrament. Two only may make the contract; else the principle benefits of the married state will be lost, namely, conjugal fidelity, mutual love, and indissolubility, all of which bring with them countless other particular benefits as well. Moreover, the education of the children belongs to the parents who, since they began the work of nature by bringing the children into this world, naturally have the duty and hence the right to continue this work. In fact, they may not leave it unfinished and thus expose it to ruin. This, in

bare outline, is the Church's teaching on marriage, its nature and offices.¹³ It is evident from this that the family is a society more sacred than the state and that men are begotten not for the earth and for time, but for heaven and eternity. Plato, of course, could never understand all this; some of the notions, perhaps, but not all. It must be confessed, though, that he seems hardly to have realized any of it. To his mind the children were to be begotten for the state; their parents, then, were to be chosen by the state; their education was to be taken from the parents' hands and made the concern of the state. Hence he was but logical again in deciding that marriage, however sacred, was still to be considered as essentially a civil and a social contract. Some credit he does deserve; he did realize that this life is a preparation for an after-life; he had sufficient vision to require that marriage be placed, in his state, under the supervision and patronage of Apollo to protect it from abuse and disorder. Religion and morality he did understand. But, on the whole, he adhered too closely, in this case, to a principle which from the outset should have been considerably qualified.

E. MARX'S DOCTRINE CONCERNING WOMEN AND MARRIAGE

We may mention at the outset that the doctrine we are about to describe now is no more acceptable than that of Plato.

¹³ The preceding outline of the Church's doctrine on marriage is a paraphrase of the discussion as given in the encyclical of Pope Pius XI, "Casti Connubii."

It will be evident, as we proceed, that it is, like Plato's, based upon the peculiar philosophy of which it is but a logical development. That philosophy we have already studied; so, without further ado, let us proceed to the examination.

Some hint as to what to expect is to be found in the following rather significant quotations:

"The original form...of private property can be observed in the institution of the family where the wife and children are the slaves of the man. This slavery, naturally still very crude and hidden in the family, represents the first form of private ownership...making it possible to take advantage of another person's labor."

"Education, culture, civilization, freedom -- these high-sounding words in all capitalist, bourgeois republics of the world, go hand in hand with unusually debasing and brutal laws which emphasize the inequality of women in marriage rights and divorce, the inequality between the 'legitimate' child and the child born out of wedlock, the privileges of men, the humiliation and degradation of women...The Soviet Republic, the republic of the workers and peasants, has swept away these laws, has smashed all this bourgeois falsehood and bourgeois hypocrisy."

"Not a trace is left in the Soviet Republic of the laws which placed woman in a subordinate position."¹⁴

Woman takes her place, then, alongside of man as his equal in this state. She shares with him alike the loss of personal dignity and spiritual character, and the deprivation of all individual and personal liberty, rights and property, apart

¹⁴ F. Nurina, Introduction to THE SOVIET LAW OF MARRIAGE, International Publishers, New York, 1933, p. 3.

from those assigned by the collectivity. But, with him, she takes her place in public life as his equal.

"The family and marriage code of the Soviet government has emancipated the woman in the family and made her the equal of man. Soviet laws give the opportunity to every working woman to participate equally with man in the construction and government of the only country in the world which is victoriously building Socialism."

"Under the leadership of the Leninist Communist Party, hundreds of thousands, even millions of working women and peasant women are working on a par with men at the bench, on machines, in the collective farms, in the trade unions, in the cooperatives, in the Soviets and government offices. The Soviet laws have really given woman equal rights with man, and have in every way possible safeguarded the health and interests of mother and child."¹⁵

What, then, of marriage and family life? Family life, as we have seen in the first of the quotations listed in this section, is regarded as a primitive form of slavery. No such charge can be leveled at Soviet marriage! "The fundamental principle on which the marriage and family code is drawn up is absolute equality in the marriage and family of the working man and woman which forever safeguards the interests of women and children."¹⁶ It is no marriage, strictly speaking. The only official character it possesses is in the requirement that the individuals concerned register at the civil registry office in the manner prescribed by the marriage code.¹⁷ And "marriages

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁷ Ibid., Part I, # 1, p. 6.

are registered only to make easier and to simplify, in case of necessity, the safeguarding of the interests of either of the parents or the children."¹⁸ It is not necessary, even, to register before being married. A couple may live together, apparently, indefinitely without registering the 'marriage'; and the only difference is that the marriage is not official. They are free, of course, to register it at any time during that period,¹⁹ as long as there are no impediments to the registration, such as blood relationship between the two parties, or the fact that one or both of them is already officially married.²⁰ Dissolution of the marriage 'bond' is quite simple, as one would expect. "During the life-time of both parties to a marriage, the marriage may be dissolved either by the mutual consent of both parties to it or upon the ex parte application of either of them."²¹ Thus marriage, in the Soviet state, is merely a convenience, an artificial and a civil institution, designed for the benefit of the individual, and subject for dissolution to his whim or that of the collectivity.

Children enjoy equal rights, whether legitimate or bastard. "The family and marriage code abolished the terms 'out of wedlock,' and 'illegitimate child.'...The parents must equally support the children born of registered as well as un-registered marriages, or children born of casual intercourse."²²

18 Ibid., pp. 3 and 4.

19 Ibid., p. 6, # 3.

20 Ibid., p. 7, # 6.

21 Ibid., p. 9, # 18.

22 Ibid., pp. 3 and 4.

If their parents cannot or do not provide properly for them, they are turned over to state nurses. "In case of the non-fulfillment of their duties on the part of the parents or in case they do not properly exercise their rights with respect to their children, or if they treat their children cruelly, the court issues a decree to the effect that the children be taken away from the parents and turned over to the care of the office of Guardians and Trustees, and the court is authorized to decree at the same time that both parents contribute to the support of their children."²³ State schools, of course, they must attend always, partially in order to relieve parents of the burden, and to give them time to work for the state; mainly to train the children to think from the start in terms of the collectivity. The children are the beneficiaries of much detailed legislation; more than 77 articles out of a total of 143 in the marriage code are concerned either directly or indirectly with the children.²⁴ The laws are designed for the children: a) to secure their status of equality;²⁵ b) to protect their interests in case of the divorce of their parents, in case of neglect by one or both parents, in case they are illegitimate, etc.; c) to develop an ideal citizenry, collect-

²³ Ibid., p. 14, # 46.

²⁴ Ibid.; articles # 25 - 102, and several others passim from # 102 - 143.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 11, # 25. "The mutual rights of children and parents are based on consanguinity. Children whose parents are not married possess the same rights as children born in wedlock."

ivity-minded, for the future of the state.²⁶

Such a conception is a travesty on the true concept of family life and marriage. It is at every turn so obviously erroneous that refutation is scarcely necessary. In the light of the sample citations given above, we wonder what abuses the communists are attempting to prevent when they decree: "It is unlawful to register the following marriages: (a) between persons one or both of whom is or are already married either with or without registration; (b) between persons one or both of whom has or have been adjudged weak-minded or insane, in the manner prescribed by law; (c) between relatives in the direct line of descent; also between brothers and sisters, whether of the full blood or the half blood."²⁷ Such marriages are not prevented by such a decree; at most they can never become official. And when Marx speaks of legalized community of women,²⁸ he must certainly have meant something like this: "Those who register their marriage...must also state how many marriages, registered or unregistered, each of them has previously contracted, and how many children each of them has."²⁹

An interesting commentary on the legislation which we

26 Ibid., p. 13, # 41. "On the parents rests the duty of taking care of their minor children, in particular bringing them up and preparing them for socially useful activity."

27 Ibid., p. 7, # 6.

28 "The Communist Manifesto," in CAPITAL, Modern Library Edition, 1932, p. 340.

29 THE SOVIET LAW OF MARRIAGE, pp. 29 and 30, # 132.

have barely outlined above was the result of a chance conversation. We had lost the reference, but had vivid recollection of having read that in Soviet Russia the marriage and divorce laws still retained the force of law, but had in practice been modified almost beyond recognition. They were, even for the Soviets, impossible. In speaking of this with a citizen of the South American Republic of Ecuador, we were told that in the early '30's, Páez, the dictator of Ecuador, had set up a form of government with laws based on those of Communist Russia, and had adopted in their entirety the Soviet laws on marriage; that, after a trial of some months, "in imitation of what had been done in Russia," these laws had been substantially modified in practice, though they had been allowed to remain as official statutes. We merely mention this here for its own inherent interest; the inference is clear.

F. COMPARISON OF MARX'S DOCTRINE WITH THAT OF PLATO

It remains for us only to compare the doctrine of Marx with that of Plato, though we almost hesitate to subject Plato to the indignity of the comparison. First, as to similarities. Plato, as Marx, considered the cares consequent on marrying and raising children, a sufficient hindrance in the performance of the regular work of the citizens to justify giving precedence to the work. Plato, as Marx, had false ideas concerning the equal status and nature of men and women, and a mistaken notion of the nature of the marriage contract. Plato, as Marx,

subordinated the family to the state, allowed the interference of the state in regulating marriage and thought it right that the state should usurp the right and duty of the parents to educate their own children. But what striking differences there are even within these matters on which they are superficially alike! Plato's state regulates marriage only to ensure the best possible offspring; for him it is not an arrangement of mere convenience, a catering to lust, a practically legalized prostitution. To Plato marriage is still a sacred thing, not subject to mere whim, either for contraction or dissolution. In Plato's state the education of the children is of an infinitely superior and nobler type: to enable the children to know the eternal and absolute truth which they ought to know, and to fashion their lives on it as a model. For Marx there is no eternal and absolute; his education would warp the minds of the children, focus their attention on error, provide for the perpetuation of a false and unnatural system of thought and plan of life. Finally, they both reject the natural and ordinary form of marriage; Marx, because it is a carry-over from the hated bourgeois society, and because devotion to family would divide the allegiance of the worker and lead to inequality and the formation of classes; Plato, because it would destroy the class distinctions he considered essential, by distracting his guardians from their public duty. These, certainly, are the most striking differences, though,

as before, there are many others implicitly contained in our parallel exposition. They could, of course, be worked out in detail if it were necessary, and if our thesis were not abundantly proved without them.

G. CONCLUSION

Here again, then, we see the danger of temerity in identifying Plato and Marx in terms of their philosophy. Neither system, in this case, can admit of any defense, because both are unnatural and contrary to the moral law. But in Plato's case we can find an excuse. He was groping, and had no Christian concepts of the sanctity of the family bond to guide him. The communists, being in a position to understand it and accept it, have rejected it; for which reason their error is the greater.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Some surprise may be expressed that, throughout the preceding discussion, the details given forth as Plato's mind on the successive topics considered were taken exclusively from the Republic. After all, certain modifications of Plato's theories are to be found in the Laws, which is a later work, and one which represents much more mature thought on the subject of the state. Our reason (and our defense) is simply this: it has seemed quite unnecessary for establishing our thesis to cite the later dialogue. Some of the more radical theories, those, for instance, on the subject of women and marriage, have been considerably changed in the Laws; others have undergone practically no change at all. Consequently, if, as the doctrine stands in the Republic, it is opposed on nearly every point to the Marxian philosophy of communism, how much moreso when that same doctrine has, as we have said, been modified and even, in the points more radical, greatly subdued!

But that is really of minor concern. It seems necessary at this point, however, to discuss once more and a little more fully a problem posed in the Introduction to this thesis. That problem, in the form of a question, is this: how seriously

is Plato to be taken in this dialogue? We can never say, of course, how much of his legislation he really considered suitable for actual application; and we are certain that such a consideration would have been, in his mind, but incidental to the main purpose of his discussion. And, as we suggested at the end of the Introduction, we suspect that Plato had his tongue in his cheek regarding many points; although we did think it advisable for our discussion to take him in dead seriousness in order to show that even thus his doctrine is a far cry from Marxism. We still have the same conviction, as regards many points he discusses and much of the legislation he formulates; but we feel that there is yet more to be said on the subject if we are to answer the problem fully.

Plato was about twelve years old when Athens suffered its crushing defeat at Syracuse, during the famous Sicilian Expedition. Athens, as we know, never fully recovered from that blow, although she managed to hold out against complete collapse for some eleven years after. During his most impressionable years, then, Plato watched the city of his birth, the city he loved, in the throes of a death struggle. It is not difficult to imagine how a sensitive youth, such as he was, must have reacted to the sight of this proud city forced to yield to the humiliation of a defeat such as this was, and to its effect upon her spirit. He was a youth of twenty three at the time of the naval defeat of Aegispotami in 405, when the

fleet of Sparta, under Lysander, sailed into the Peiraeus and laid siege to it. Athens was forced to yield; and, in accord with the demands of the victor, had to destroy her fleet (except twelve vessels) and tear down the walls between the Peiraeus and the city. This was the end of the Athenian Empire. Lysander established the rule of the Thirty Tyrants of Sparta in 404: an oppressive rule which made the streets of the city run red with the blood of Aristocrats and drained the city of its wealth and treasures to satisfy the selfish and egoistical cravings of the oppressors. The city was in a state of almost complete demoralization; but it managed, with the help of Thebes, to rout the Spartan army, seize the Thirty, and kill or banish them, after having endured a year of their impossible rule. Democracy was restored in 403; but Athens faced long years of convalescence before it could consider itself in any way restored to a condition of security. It had passed through the ten years of the Pelopponesian War, 431-421, the disaster at Syracuse and its consequences, the cruel tyranny of the Thirty; it had lost all it had won by conquest, and had been drained of practically all its ancient resources and means of subsistence as well.

Nor did its trouble cease with the restoration of the democracy. Political intrigues developed; selfishness and greed grew to a critical stage. Socrates, of whom Plato was by now an ardent disciple and with whom he was seeking for

eternal and absolute truths and values, ran afoul of the government and was forced to drink hemlock. Plato must have burned with indignation as he thought of all this.¹ He, and every Athenian with him, must have been consumed with a desire to find a remedy for the injustice which they had suffered. Oligarchy and democracy alike had shown themselves unsuitable. Somewhere must be a state in which justice could rear her head, in which the citizens could pursue their lives in peace and harmony and freedom from fear. For the grave evils he saw, he sought an adequate cure, a revolutionary cure, perhaps, if necessary. So, possibly, were sown in his mind the first seeds of his plan for the ideal republic, the perfect and only city in which perfect justice could reign, the great and complete cure which could embrace and unify all the partial and inadequate cures.

Perhaps, now, we are spinning a web. If our speculation is correct, why was he not more practical in his solution? He acknowledges the fact, at the end of his treatise proper,² that it is humanly impossible for such a city as he has outlined, in which justice (individual and civic) exists in a per-

1 Cf. Republic, 361 a, where Plato gives a picture of the just man as opposed to the unjust man, and demonstrates how the man who is really just, and not just seemingly so, is the victim of misunderstanding and persecution in the state which he is trying to serve; while the really unjust man, who is only seemingly just, is held in the highest honor and esteem, precisely because of the reputation he has built for himself by means the most unscrupulous.

2 Republic, 591 e, 592a and b. (Also cf. 472 c and d.)

fect state, that there never has been such an one nor ever will be. But we must recall that Plato approaches this whole problem as a philosopher; and that the only object worthy the study of a true philosopher is, on his own principles, the eternal and the absolute.³ That is why, after admitting the impossibility, he goes on to say that, at least, everyone, if he will, can study the model which exists in heaven, and can fashion such a perfect city in his own soul.⁴ There is his solution. As a true philosopher he has found the perfect remedy for the evils of his world; he has found the city where justice rears her head and rules over the peace, the harmony, the tranquility of the lives of the citizens. That city is ideal and can be copied only in the souls of men as yet living in this world; still, in so far as men, especially rulers, copy it in themselves, their lives will be better and the world will profit by their rule and example. That, I say, is his solution, practical enough when all its implications are understood; and Plato can hardly be blamed for the unfortunate fact that its application depends upon that most wonderful, but

3 Ibid., 475 e, 479 e, 484 b, etc. In 473 b, Plato inaugurates a discussion which is of considerable interest to this point. The question is: "what wrongs in our present governments must be corrected before our perfect polity can be established?" And the answer is: "Kings must become philosophers, and philosophers, kings."

4 Cf. references given above, note 2, p. 100.

sometimes most selfishly obstinate, of every man's possessions, his free will.

We see again, then, that the real purpose of the Republic is ethical, not political. The laws of the state are "primarily laws of personal morality; politics is founded on ethics, not ethics on politics."⁵ Though the political element looms large, "Socrates...is careful to explain that the reason for studying the public life of classes and communities is in them (his hearers); we study the 'larger letters' in order to make out the smaller by their aid. All through, the ultimate question is that raised by Glaucon and Adeimantus, what right and wrong are 'in the soul of the possessor.'"⁶ As Plato himself expresses it, "only in such a state could we discover justice and have the answer to our main inquiry."⁷

One last point, not essential but certainly of interest in the winding up of our argument, is the striking similarity between the communist state as outlined by Marx and the democratic state which Plato describes as the second last stage in the "progressive degeneration through which personal and national characters pass as the true ideal of life falls more completely out of view."⁸ It is the second least desirable of all possible states which he is describing; the least desirable being a tyranny, into which a democracy quickly and inevitable

5 A.E.Taylor, Plato, p. 265.

6 Ibid.

7 Republic, 420 b.

8 Taylor, op. cit., p. 294.

develops. We shall paraphrase briefly his description of the origin and nature of such a state, and rest the consideration there.

The pauper element, ever increasing, burdened with debt, hating and conspiring against the acquirers of their estates, foster the seeds of revolution. In any contact with the lazy, fat, soft, spoiled and wanton rich, they see what an inferior lot, both in mind and body, rules them. (They themselves are sinewy and sunburnt from their forced toil.) A sick body needs just a push from the outside, sometimes not even from the outside, to be overcome by its disease. So this sick state needs only a little push, a little help from an outside ally, possibly only from its constituents, to bring about an upset. The paupers will kill some, expel others, and divide the citizenship and offices equally among the rest. Thus arises a democracy.

What sort of life and constitution does a democracy have? Freedom; freedom of speech; freedom of action; all sorts and conditions of men living as they like. It is like a general-market of constitutions: freedom to hold office or not, make war or not, arrange peace or not, at will, even in the face of contrary legislation; tolerance of convicted criminals who go and come as they please; freedom from all the meticulous details regarding training and pursuits of those who would be its best citizens, caring not what pursuits their politicians have followed, so long as they love the people...

Rulers are praised for being like subjects, subjects for being like rulers. Children hold no reverence for their parents, who fear them and try to be like them. Likewise in the relationship of resident aliens and citizens, teachers and pupils, men and women, slaves and masters, and, in general, young and old. Even animals are given the run of the roads. The people chafe at the slightest thought of servitude and obey no

laws, written or unwritten, nor brook any master...

But any excess brings a reaction to the opposite. So from the height of liberty will come the fiercest extreme of servitude for state and individual.⁹

The resemblance, we think, is sufficiently striking to warrant the lengthy quotation. Some might like to carp in detail with minute individual differences; but they cannot deny the general likeness; and it has been our purpose merely to show that.

Finally, then, we restate our thesis. Platonic communism and Marxian communism, in spite of many apparent similarities, are two basically opposed philosophies; and the position of those theorists who would identify them for any reason whatsoever is false. We believe that in the pages which have preceded we have conclusively proved the validity of this statement and have, therefore, established our thesis beyond refutation on any but the most superficial and unessential grounds.

9 Republic, 556 a - 558 c; 562 e - 563 e; 563 e - 564 a.

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