

Translations in manuscript up to the *Phaedrus* Myth, inclusive, and I read to him nearly the whole of the Introduction, and also other parts, especially those relating to the Theory of Poetry. The help he then gave me by his suggestive and sympathetic discussion of various points closed a long series of acts of friendship on which I shall always look back with a feeling of deep gratitude.

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The "Cambridge Platonists" represent Plato the Mythologist, or Prophet, rather than Plato the Dialectician, or Reasoner, and in this respect are important for the understanding of our modern English "Idealists," who, it is contended, are "Platonists" of the same kind as Cudworth and his associates 475-519

INTRODUCTION

1. THE PLATONIC DRAMA

THE Platonic Dialogue may be broadly described as a Drama in which speech is the action,¹ and Socrates and his companions are the actors. The speech in which the action consists is mainly that of argumentative conversation in which, although Socrates or another may take a leading part, yet everybody has his say. The conversation or argument is always about matters which can be profitably discussed—that is, matters on which men form workaday opinions which discussion may show to be right or wrong, wholly or in part.

But it is only mainly that the Platonic Drama consists in argumentative conversation. It contains another element, the Myth, which, though not ostensibly present in some Dialogues, is so striking in others, some of them the greatest, that we are compelled to regard it, equally with the argumentative conversation, as essential to Plato's philosophical style.

The Myth is a fanciful tale, sometimes traditional, sometimes newly invented, with which Socrates or some other interlocutor interrupts or concludes the argumentative conversation in which the movement of the Drama mainly consists.

The object of this work is to examine the examples of the Platonic Myth in order to discover its function in the organism of the Platonic Drama. That Myth is an organic part of the Platonic Drama, not an added ornament, is a point about which the experienced reader of Plato can have no doubt. The Sophists probably ornamented their discourses and made

¹ Cf. *Cratylus*, 387 D, τὸ λέγειν μὴ τίς ἐστι τῶν πραγμάτων.

this work, I will offer some preliminary remarks on *μυθολογία*, or story-telling in general, in the course of which I hope to indicate what I conceive to be the ground of Plato's methodical employment of it in philosophy.

2. GENERAL REMARKS ON *μυθολογία*, OR STORY-TELLING.
MYTH DISTINGUISHED FROM ALLEGORY

It is a profound remark that Imagination rather than Reason makes the primary difference between man and brute.¹

The brute lives mainly among the immediate impressions of sense. The after-images of these impressions are evidently of little account in his life, being feeble and evanescent.²

But man lives a double life—not only, with the brute, in the narrow world of present sensations, but also in a wide world of his own, where his mind is continually visited and re-visited by crowds of vivid, though often grotesque and grotesquely combined, images of past sense-impressions. It is in this wide wonder-world of waking dream, which encompasses the narrow familiar world of his present sense-impressions, that man begins his human career. It is here that the savage and the child begin to acquire what the brute has no such opportunity of beginning to acquire, and never does acquire,—a sense of vast environment and of the long course of time. This waking dream, which constitutes so great a part of man's childish experience, probably owes much of its content to the dreams of sleep. Some of the lower animals, as well as man, seem to have dreams in sleep. But man, we may suppose, differs from

¹ "In the lower stages of civilisation Imagination, more than Reason, distinguishes men from the animals; and to banish art would be to banish thought, to banish language, to banish the expression of all truth."—Jowett, *Dialogues of Plato*, Introduction to the Republic, p. clix.

² "At the proper season these birds (swallows) seem all day long to be impressed with the desire to migrate; their habits change; they become restless, are noisy, and congregated in flocks. Whilst the mother-bird is feeding, or brooding over her nestlings, the maternal instinct is probably stronger than the migratory; but the instinct which is the more persistent gains the victory, and at last, at a moment when her young ones are not in sight, she takes flight and deserts them. When arrived at the end of her long journey, and the migratory instinct has ceased to act, what an agony of remorse the bird would feel if, from being endowed with great mental activity, she could not prevent the image constantly passing through her mind of her young ones perishing in the bleak north from cold and hunger" (Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, part I. chap. iv. p. 173, ed. 1901).

the lower animals in remembering his dreams. And he can tell them, and improve upon them in the telling, whether they be dreams of sleep or waking dreams—indeed, he must tell them. They are so vivid that they will out; he cannot keep them to himself; and, besides, the telling of them gives what may be called secondary expression and relief to certain emotions and feelings, which in the case of the brute find only primary expression in acts within the world of sense-impressions. In the case of man, fear, confidence, anger, love, hate, curiosity, wonder, find not only primary expression in acts within the world of sense-experience, but also secondary and, as it were, dramatic expression in the adventures and doings of the dream-world, all circumstantially told. It is impossible to over-estimate the early debt which man owes to his love of story-telling thus inspired and supplied with material. In telling and listening to stories about the dream-world, man, in short, learns to think. The dream-world of the primitive story-teller and his audience is a large, easy world, in which they can move about freely as they like—in which they are rid of the hard facts of the world of sense-experience, and can practise their powers without hindrance on tractable material, calling up images and combining them at will, as the story goes on, and thus educating, in play, the capacity which, afterwards applied to the explanation of the world of sense-experience, appears as the faculty of constructive thought. The first essays of this faculty are the so-called Aetiological Myths, which attempt to construct a connection between the world of sense-experience and the dream-world—which take the dream-world as the context which explains the world of sense-experience. Judged by the standard of positive science the matter of the context supplied from the dream-world by the mythopoeic fancy is in itself, of course, worthless; but the mind is enlarged by the mere contemplation of it; the habit of looking for a context in which to read the sense-given is acquired, and matter satisfactory to science is easily received when it afterwards presents itself. The conceptual context of science thus gradually comes to occupy the place once filled by the fantastical context of the dream-world. But this is not the only respect in which the mythopoeic fancy serves the development of man. If it prepares the way for the exercise

of the scientific understanding, it also indicates limits within which that exercise must be confined. This it does by supplying an emotional context, if the phrase may be used, along with the fantastical context. The visions of the mythopoeic fancy are received by the Self of ordinary consciousness with a strange surmise of the existence, in another world, of another Self which, while it reveals itself in these visions, has a deep secret which it will not disclose. It is good that a man should thus be made to feel in his heart how small a part of him his head is—that the Scientific Understanding should be reminded that it is not the Reason—the Part, that it is not the Whole Man. Herein chiefly lies the present value of Myth (or of its equivalent, Poetry, Music, or whatever else) for civilised man.

The stories which the primitive inhabitants of the dream-world love to tell one another are always about the wonderful adventures and doings of people and animals. *Ἀνθρωπολογία καὶ Ζωολογία*¹ may be taken as a full description of these stories. The adventures and doings happened "Once upon a time"—"Long ago"—"Somewhere, not here"—that is preface enough for the most improbable story,—it receives belief or make-believe simply because it is *very interesting*—because the animals speak and behave like people, and everything else happens topsy-turvy in a wonderful manner, and there is no lack of bloodshed and indecency. If the story is not "very interesting," *i.e.* not marvellous, gruesome, indecent, it does not carry belief or make-believe, and is not interesting at all. The attitude of make-believe, which I have mentioned, is worth the careful attention of the psychologist. This is not the place to analyse it.² I will only say that it seems to me likely that it is very often the attitude of the primitive story-teller and his audience. The story may be very interesting to its teller and audience without being believed. This is as true, I take it, of a grotesque Zulu tale as of a modern novel written with due regard to probability or a *jeu d'esprit* like *Alice in Wonderland*. But if the story is very interesting, there will always be make-believe

¹ I hope that I may be pardoned for introducing two words which are not in *Liddell and Scott*, but seem to be justified, in the sense in which I use them, by Aristotle's *Ἀνθρωπολόγος* (*E. N.* iv. 3. 31) = "fond of personal talk."

² Coleridge, referring to *Lyrical Ballads*, speaks of "that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith."

at least, and often serious, deliberate make-believe. It is in the spirit of this serious make-believe that not only the little girl talks about her dolls, but we ourselves read our Dante, or make pilgrimages to places associated with the events of great fiction. The adventures of Robinson Crusoe and the journey of Dr. Johnson are followed with little difference in our sense of actuality. The topography of the *Inferno* and that of the Roman Forum are approached in much the same spirit by the interested student in each case. These instances from civilised experience may serve to show how vague the line must be dividing belief from make-believe in the mind of primitive man with his turbulent feelings and vivid imagination controlled by no uniform standard of ascertained fact.¹ His tendency is to believe whatever he tells and is told. That he sometimes stops short of belief at make-believe is, after all, a small matter. At any rate, we may be sure that Nature in this case, as in all other cases, does nothing that is superfluous—*οὐδὲν ποιεῖ περιεργον οὐδὲ μάτην ἢ φύσει*. If make-believe serve Nature's "purpose" as well as belief, which is more difficult, she will take care that her protégé stops at make-believe. Certain stories, we assume, have to be wonderful or horrid up to a certain pitch, in order to give full expression and relief to feeling and imagination at a certain stage of development; and the belief without which these necessary stories could not maintain themselves at all, we further assume, will be that which comes easiest, *i.e.* make-believe.

It is plain that in proportion as stories are more extravagantly wonderful or horrid, the more likely is make-believe to be the attitude of tellers and hearers; and that, where this is the attitude, stories are likely to go on becoming more and more extravagantly wonderful or horrid.

This is one tendency which, however, is met by another. When a wonderful story is often told and becomes very familiar, it comes to be believed more seriously; and, in proportion as it is believed more seriously, it tends to disembarass itself more and more of the wilder improbabilities which pleased when the attitude towards it was still that of make-believe. An in-

¹ Professor Tylor (*Primitive Culture*, i. 284) describes "a usual state of the imagination among ancient and savage peoples" as "intermediate between the conditions of a healthy prosaic modern citizen and a raving fanatic or a patient in a fever-ward."

of cases, engendered by the practice,—thus reversing the supposed order of production.¹

Let me complete my illustration of the Aetiological Myth by giving the pretty Japanese story which accounts for the physiological effect produced by tea:—

It is Daruna whom legend credits with the origin of tea. Before he went off into his present trance he made another effort at permanent contemplation, and had failed through falling asleep at the end of the ninth year. When he awoke he was so vexed at his eyelids for their drooping that he cut them off. No sooner had they fallen to the ground than, lo! they took root, sprouted, and sent forth leaves. As the old monk looked in wonder, a disciple of Buddha appeared and told him to brew the leaves of the new shrub and then drink thereof. Daruna plucked the leaves, which now all the world knows as tea, did as the vision commanded him to do, and has not slept a minute since.²

3. From the Simply Anthropological Story and from the Aetiological Story it is convenient to distinguish a third kind of story, the Eschatological Story. Here the teller and his audience are not concerned with the adventures and doings of people once upon a time, long ago, but with adventures and doings which they themselves must take part in after death, like all who have gone before them. It is not to mere love of "personal talk" or to mere "scientific curiosity" that the Eschatological Story appeals, but to man's wonder, and fear, and hope with regard to death. This seems to make a great difference, and to justify us in putting the Eschatological Myths in a class by themselves. Where men fear and hope, they tend to believe strongly; and if ritual practice is associated with their fear and hope, more strongly. Hence we find that Eschatological Myths as a class have more actuality, more consistency and sobriety, and more dignity, than other

¹ The reader who wishes to pursue the subject of the Cultus Myth may consult Miss Harrison's *Mythology and Monuments of Ancient Athens*, pp. xxvi. ff., where he will find a very interesting treatment of the story of the birth of Erichthonios "as an instance of aetiological myth-making of a special kind, of a legend that has arisen out of a ritual practice, the original meaning of which had become obscured"; also Robertson Smith's *Religion of the Semites*, pp. 20 ff., where the rule is laid down that "in the study of ancient religions we must begin, not with Myth but with ritual and traditional usage"; cf. p. 16—"The antique religions had for the most part no creed; they consisted entirely of institutions and practices."

² *The Heart of Japan*, by C. I. Brownell (1902), p. 197.

myths, in proportion as the belief given is, for these reasons, stronger. If make-believe is enough for other myths, Eschatological Myths demand genuine belief, and easily get it from primitive man. It is in no spirit of make-believe that he performs the rites for the departed, which he knows will be performed one day for himself, when he shall have gone to the other world of which the stories tell.

It is not always easy to assign a story to its class. The cause of something that attracts notice may be found in something done by somebody in the course of adventures which have already been recounted as being in themselves interesting. A story which started as "Simply Anthropological," being told from pure love of *ἀνθρωπολογία*, may be annexed by the scientific imagination and become Aetiological. And, again, a story which started as Aetiological may easily forget its original scientific inspiration and become a piece of simple *ἀνθρωπολογία*. Lastly, the interest of Eschatology—of talk about man's latter end—is so peculiar and engrossing that it tends to compel into its service Simply Anthropological and Aetiological Stories already in existence. The *Phaedrus* Myth may be mentioned as showing this tendency at work.

We have seen that in form every story of the dream-world, to whichever of the three classes it belongs, is anthropological and zoological; that it is about the adventures and doings of people and animals—men and men-like beasts and gods; and that it is intrinsically interesting as a story, and receives belief, or, at any rate, make-believe. We must now add that it has no moral—*i.e.* the teller and his hearers do not think of anything but the story itself. This is the criterion of Myth as distinguished from Allegory or Parable: Myth has no moral or other meaning in the minds of those who make it, and of those for whom it is made. It is a later age which reads other meaning into it, when the improbability and indecency of stories told by savage men provoke the rationalising work of those who are unwilling to give up the stories entirely, but cannot receive them as they stand. The stories which seem to need this work most, and on which it is most effectually done, are apt to perish under the treatment which they receive. Becoming transparent allegories or fulfilled prophecies, they cease to be interesting, and are soon

transfigured, that of the twelve apostles he took with him the three; wherein morally we may understand, that in matters of the greatest secrecy we ought to have few companions.

"The fourth sense is called *anagogic*, that is, above sense; and this is when a writing is expounded spiritually which, even in its literal sense, by the matters signified, sets forth the high things of glory everlasting: as may be seen in that Song of the Prophet which says that in the coming out of the people of Israel from Egypt, Judah was made holy and free. Which, although it is plainly true according to the letter, is not less true as understood spiritually: that is, the Soul, in coming out from sin, is made holy and free."

The rest of the chapter (*Conv.* ii. 1) dwells on the point, which Dante evidently considers of great importance, that the literal sense must always be understood before we go on to seek out the other senses. The reversal of this order is, indeed, *impossible*, for the other senses are contained in the literal sense, which is their envelope; and besides, the literal sense is "better known to us," as the Philosopher says in the First Book of the *Physics*; and not to begin with it would be *irrational*—contrary to the natural order.

3. PLATO'S MYTHS DISTINGUISHED FROM ALLEGORIES. TO WHAT EXPERIENCE, OR "PART OF THE SOUL," DOES THE PLATONIC MYTH APPEAL?

Plato, we know from the *Republic*¹ and *Phaedrus*,² deprecated the allegorical interpretation of Myths, and his own Myths, we assume, are not to be taken as allegories; but rather as representing, in the action of the Platonic Drama, natural products of that dream-world consciousness which encompasses the field of ordinary wide-awake consciousness in educated minds as well as in the minds of children and primitive men.

In appealing to the dream-world consciousness of his readers by a brilliant literary representation of its natural products—those stories which primitive men cannot leave un-

¹ *Rep.* 378 D.

² *Phaedrus*, 229 D-E, and see *infra*, pp. 231 ff.

told, and philosophers love to hear well told¹—Plato appeals to an experience which is more solid than one might infer from the mere content of the *μυθολογία* in which it finds expression. He appeals to that major part of man's nature which is not articulate and logical, but feels, and wills, and acts—to that part which cannot explain what a thing is, or how it happens, but feels that the thing is good or bad, and expresses itself, not scientifically in "existential" or "theoretic judgments," but practically in "value-judgments"—or rather "value-feelings." Man was, with the brute, practical, and had struck the roots of his being deep into the world of reality, ages before he began to be scientific, and to think about the "values" which he felt. And long before he began to think about the "values" which he felt, feeling had taken into its service his imagination with its whole apparatus of phantasms—waking dreams and sleep-dreams—and made them its exponents. In appealing, through the recital of dreams, to that major part of us which feels "values," which wills and acts, Plato indeed goes down to the bedrock of human nature. At that depth man is more at one with Universal Nature—more in her secret, as it were—than he is at the level of his "higher" faculties, where he lives in a conceptual world of his own making which he is always endeavouring to "think." And after all, however high he may rise as "thinker," it is only of "values" that he genuinely thinks; and the ground of all "values"—*the Value of Life itself*—was apprehended before the dawn of thinking, and is still apprehended independently of thinking. It is good, Plato will have us believe, to appeal sometimes from the world of the senses and scientific understanding, which is "too much with us," to this deep-lying part of human nature, as to an oracle. The responses of the oracle are not given in articulate language which the scientific understanding can interpret; they come as dreams, and must be received as dreams, without thought of doctrinal interpretation. Their ultimate meaning is the "feeling" which fills us in beholding them; and when we wake from them, we see our daily concerns and all things temporal with purged eyes.

This effect which Plato produces by the Myth in the Dialogue is, it is hardly necessary to say, produced, in various

¹ ὁ φιλόμυθος φιλόσοφος πῶς ἔστιν.—*Arist. Met.* A 2, 982 b 18.

degrees, by Nature herself, without the aid of literary or other art. The sense of "might, majesty and dominion" which comes over us as we look into the depths of the starry sky,¹ the sense of our own short time passing, passing, with which we see the lilacs bloom again—these, and many like them, are natural experiences which closely resemble the effect produced in the reader's mind by Plato's art. When these natural moods are experienced, we feel "That which was, and is, and ever shall be" overshadowing us; and familiar things—the stars, and the lilac bloom—become suddenly strange and wonderful, for our eyes are opened to see that they declare its presence. It is such moods of feeling in his cultivated reader that Plato induces, satisfies, and regulates, by Myths which set forth God, Soul, and Cosmos, in vision.

The essential charm of these Myths is that of Poetry generally, whether the theme of a poem be expressly eschatological and religious, like that of the *Divina Commedia*, or of some other kind, for example, like that of the *Fairy Queene*, or like that of a love song. The essential charm of all Poetry, for the sake of which in the last resort it exists, lies in its power of inducing, satisfying, and regulating what may be called Transcendental Feeling, especially that form of Transcendental Feeling which manifests itself as solemn sense of Timeless Being—of "That which was, and is, and ever shall be," overshadowing us with its presence. Where this power is absent from a piece—be it an epic, or a lyric, or a play, or a poem of observation and reflection—there is no Poetry; only, at best, readable verse,—an exhibition of wit and worldly wisdom, of interesting "anthropology," of pleasing sound,—all either helpful or necessary, in their several places, for the production of the *milieu* in which poetic effect is felt, but none of them forming part of that effect itself. Sometimes the power of calling up Transcendental Feeling seems to be exercised at no point or points which can be definitely indicated in the course of a poem; this is notably the case where the form of the poem is dramatic, *i.e.* where all turns on our grasping "one complete action." Sometimes "a lonely word"

¹ Coleridge says (*Autima Poetae*, from unpublished note-books of S. T. Coleridge, edited by E. H. Coleridge, 1895; p. 125), "Deep sky is, of all visual impressions, the nearest akin to a feeling. It is more a feeling than a sight, or rather, it is the melting away and entire union of feeling and sight!"

makes the great difference. At any rate, elaborate dream-consciousness apparatus, such as we find employed in the Platonic Myths, in the *Divina Commedia*, and in poems like *Endymion* and *Hyperion*, is not essential to the full exercise of the power of Poetry. Some common scene is simply pictured for the mind's eye; some place haunted by memories and emotions is pictured for the heart; a face declaring some mood is framed in circumstances which match it and its mood; some fantasia of sound or colour fills eye or ear; some sudden stroke of personification amazes us; there is perhaps nothing more than the turn of a phrase or the use of a word or the falling of a cadence—and straightway all is done that the most elaborate and sustained employment of mythological apparatus could do—we are away in the dream-world; and when we presently return, we are haunted by the feeling that we have "seen the mysteries"—by that Transcendental Feeling which Dante finds language to express in the twenty-fifth sonnet of the *Vita Nuova*,¹ and in the last canto of the *Paradiso*:—

O abbondante grazia, ond' io presunsi
Ficcar lo viso per la luce eterna
Tanto, che la veduta vi consuasi!
Nel suo profondo vidi che s' interna,
Legato con amore in un volume,
Ciò che per l' universo si squaderna;
Sustanzia ed accidenti e lor costume,
Quasi conflati insieme per tal modo,
Che ciò ch' io dico è un semplice lume.
La forma universal di questo no-lo
Credo ch' io vidi, perchè più di largo,
Dicendo questo, mi sento ch' io godo.
Un punto solo m' è maggior letargo,
Che venticinque secoli alla impresa,
Che fe' Nettuno ammirar l' ombra d' Argo.²

Let me give some examples from the Poets of their employment of the means which I have just now mentioned.

A common scene is simply pictured for the mind's eye:—

Sole listener, Duddon I to the breeze that played
With thy clear voice, I caught the fitful sound

¹ See *infra*, p. 38, where this sonnet is quoted.
² *Paradiso*, xxxiii. 82-9.

Un punto solo m'è maggior letargo,
Che venticinque secoli alla impresa,
Che fe' Nettuno ammirar l'ombra d'Argo.

It is thus, as these sudden lapses, each followed immediately by waking and amazement, succeed one another, it may be, at long intervals, in a poem, that the power of its Poetry grows upon us. It is essential to our experiencing the power of Poetry that there should be intervals, and intervals of considerable length, between the lapses. The sense of having seen or heard things belonging to a world in which "Time is not" needs for its immediate realisation the presence, in the world of waking consciousness, of things which shall "remind" us of the things of that other world in which "Time is not"—without such things to "remind" us, there would be no "recollection" of our visit to the world in which "Time is not." The poet's image, therefore, which began by throwing us into the dream-state, must persist in the state of waking consciousness to which we are now returned, and there, as we look at it in the light of common day, amaze us by its "resemblance" to an archetype seen in the world in which "Time is not." And its persistence in the world of waking consciousness can be guaranteed only by a more or less wide context addressed to our ordinary faculties—to the senses and understanding—and to our ordinary sentiments. Over this matter-of-fact context, however, the amazement produced in us when we perceive that the image, or other product of the Poet's dream-consciousness, which just now set us, too, a-dreaming, is double—is something both in the world without Time, and in this temporal world—casts a glamour for a while. Then the glamour fades away, and we find ourselves accompanying the Poet through the every-day world; and it may be in accordance with the secret scheme which he is carrying out that we are kept in this every-day world for a long while, in order that we may be taken the more by surprise when suddenly, as we journey, the light from heaven shines round about us. "Whatever specific import," says Coleridge,¹ "we attach to the word poetry, there will be found involved in it, as a necessary consequence, that a poem of any length neither can be, nor ought to be, all poetry."

¹ *Biog. Lit.* ch. xiv.

The chief end of Poetry, then, is to induce Transcendental Feeling—experienced as solemn sense of the immediate presence of "That which was, and is, and ever shall be"—in the Poet's patient, by throwing him suddenly, for a moment, into the state of dream-consciousness, out of a waking consciousness which the Poet supplies with objects of interest; the sudden lapse being effected in the patient by the communication to him of images and other products of the Poet's dream-consciousness, through the medium of language generally, but not always, distinguished from that of ordinary communication by rhythm and melody.

But the same result—the induction of the same form of Transcendental Feeling—is produced, not only by the means which the Poet employs,—dream-imagery communicated by language generally, but not necessarily, rhythmic and melodious,—but also by different artistic means—by the means which the Painter and the Musician respectively employ; indeed—and this seems to me to be a matter of first-rate importance for the Theory of Poetry—it is sometimes produced by mere Nature herself without the aid of any art, and by events as they happen in one's life, and, above all, by scenes and situations and persons remembered out of the days of childhood and youth. "We are always dreaming," Renan (I think) says somewhere, "of faces we knew when we were eighteen." In this connection let me ask the reader to consider Wordsworth's lines beginning—

There was a Boy; ye knew him well, ye cliffs
And islands of Winander—

It seems to me that the mere scene described in these lines—a scene to which it would not be difficult to find parallels in any one's experience—is, entirely apart from the language in which it is described, and simply as a picture in the mind of the person who remembers it, and in the minds of those to whom he describes it, the *milieu* in which true poetic effect is experienced. As I write this, I can hardly recall a line of Wordsworth's description; but the picture which the reading of his description has left in my mind is distinct; and it is in dwelling on the picture that I feel the poetic effect—as it was, I am convinced, in dwelling on the picture, before

he composed a line of the poem, that the poet himself experienced the feeling which he has communicated to me. And the re-reading of such a poem is more likely to impair than to enhance the feeling experienced by one who has once for all pictured the scene.

The more I read and re-read the works of the great poets, and the more I study the writings of those who have some Theory of Poetry to set forth, the more am I convinced that the question *What is Poetry?* can be properly answered only if we make *What it does* take precedence of *How it does it*. The result produced by Poetry—identical, I hold, with that produced by the other fine arts, and even sometimes by the more contemplation of Nature and Human Life—is the one thing of prime importance to be kept always in view, but is too often lost sight of in the examination of the means by which Poetry produces it, as distinguished from those by which, say, Painting produces it. Much that is now being written on the Theory of Poetry leaves one with the impression that the writers regard the end of Poetry as something *sui generis*—in fact, something not to be distinguished from the employment of technique peculiar to Poetry among the fine arts.¹ I shall return to this point afterwards.

In making the essential charm of Poetry—that for the sake of which, in the last resort, it exists—lie in its power of inducing, in certain carefully chosen circumstances, and so of regulating, Transcendental Feeling experienced as solemn sense of "That which was, and is, and ever shall be" overshadowing us with its presence, I must not be taken to mean that there is no Poetry where this sense is not induced as a distinct ecstatic experience. Great Poetry, just in those places where it is at its very greatest, indeed shows its peculiar power not otherwise than by inducing such distinct ecstatic experience; but generally, poetic effect—not the very greatest, but yet indisputably poetic effect—is produced by something less—by the presence of this form of Transcendental Feeling in a merely nascent state,—just a little more, and it would be there distinctly; as it is, there is a

¹ Mr. Courthope (*Life in Poetry*, p. 78) says: "Poetry lies in the invention of the right metrical form—be it epic, dramatic, lyric, or satiric—for the expression of some idea universally interesting to the imagination." And cf. p. 63.

"magic," as we say, in the picture called up, or the natural sentiment aroused, which fills us with wondering surmise—of what, we know not. This "magic" may be illustrated perhaps most instructively from lyric poetry, and there, from the lightest variety of the kind, from the simple love song. The pictures and sentiments suggested in the love song, regarded in themselves, belong to an experience which seems to be, more than any other, realised fully in the present, without intrusion of past or future to overcast its blue day with shadow. But look at these natural pictures and sentiments not directly, but as reflected in the magic mirror of Poetry! They are still radiant in the light of their Present—for let us think now only of the happy love song, not of the love song which is an elegy—they are still in their happy Present; but they are not of it—they have become something "rich and strange." No words can describe the change which they have suffered; it is only to be felt—as in such lines as these:—

Das Mädchen.

Ich hab' ihn gesehen!
Wie ist mir geschelien!
O himmlischer Blick!
Er kommt mir entgegen:
Ich weiche verlegen,
Ich schwanke zurück.
Ich irre, ich träume!
Ihr Felsen, ihr Bäume,
Verbergt meine Freude,
Verbergt mein Glück!

Der Jüngling.

Hier muss ich sie finden!
Ich sah sie verschwinden,
Ihr folgte mein Blick.
Sie kam mir entgegen;
Dann trat sie verlegen
Und schamroth zurück.
Ist 's Hoffnung, sind 's Träume?
Ihr Felsen, ihr Bäume,
Entdeckt mir die Liebste,
Entdeckt mir mein Glück!

The magic of such lines as these is due, I cannot doubt, to the immediate presence of some great mass of feeling which

are relevant; for Reason cannot stir without assuming the very thing which these arguments seek to prove or to disprove. "Live thy life" is the Categorical Imperative addressed by Nature to each one of her creatures according to its kind.

At the bottom of the scale of Life the Imperative is obeyed silently, in timeless sleep, as by the trees of the tropical forest:—

The fair and stately things,
 Inpassive as departed kings,
 All still in the wood's stillness stood,
 And dumb. The rooted multitude
 Nodded and brooded, bloomed and dreamed,
 Unmeaning, undivined. It seemed
 No other art, no hope, they knew,
 Than clutch the earth and seek the blue.

* * * * *
 My eyes were touched with sight.
 I saw the wood for what it was:
 The lost and the victorious cause,
 The deadly battle pitched in line,
 Saw weapons cross and shine:
 Silent defeat, silent assault,
 A battle and a burial vault.

* * * * *
 Green conquerors from overhead
 Bestrode the bodies of their dead:
 The Cæsars of the sylvan field,
 Unused to fail, foredoomed to yield:
 For in the groins of branches, lo!
 The cancers of the orchid grow.¹

When to the "Vegetative" the "Sensitive" Soul is first added, the Imperative is obeyed by creatures which, experiencing only isolated feelings, and retaining no traces of them in memory, still live a timeless life, without sense of past or future, and consequently without sense of selfhood.

Then, with Memory, there comes, in the higher animals, some dim sense of a Self dating back and prospecting forward. Time begins to be. But the sense of its passage brings no melancholy; for its end in death is not yet anticipated by reflective thought.

Man's anticipation of death would oppress his life with

¹ *Songs of Travel*, R. L. Stevenson: "The Woodman."

insupportable melancholy, were it not that current employments, especially those which are spoken of as duties, are so engrossing—that is, I would explain, were it not that his conscious life feels down with its roots into that "Part of the Soul" which, without sense of past or future or self, silently holds on to Life, in the implicit faith that it is worth living—that there is a Cosmos in which it is good to be. As it is, there is still room enough for melancholy in his hours of ease and leisure. If comfort comes to him in such hours, it is not from his thinking out some solution of his melancholy, but from his putting by thought, and sinking, alone, or led by some *μυσταγωγός τοῦ βίου*, for a while into the sleep of that fundamental "Part of the Soul." When he wakes into daily life again, it is with the elementary faith of this Part of his Soul newly confirmed in his heart; and he is ready, in the strength of it, to defy all that seems to give it the lie in the world of the senses and scientific understanding. Sometimes the very melancholy, which overclouds him at the thought of death, is transfigured, in the glow of this faith, into an exultant resignation—"I shall pass, but He abideth for ever." Sometimes, and more often, the faith does not merely transfigure, but dispels, the melancholy, and fills his heart with sweet hope, which fancy renders into dreams of personal immortality.

To sum up in effect what I have said about Transcendental Feeling: it is feeling which indeed appears in our ordinary object-distinguishing, time-marking consciousness, but does not originate in it. It is to be traced to the influence on consciousness of the presence in us of that "Part of the Soul" which holds on, in timeless sleep, to Life as worth living. Hence Transcendental Feeling is at once the solemn sense of Timeless Being—of "That which was, and is, and ever shall be" overshadowing us—and the conviction that Life is good. In the first-mentioned phase Transcendental Feeling appears as an abnormal experience of our conscious life, as a well-marked ecstatic state;¹ in its other phase—as conviction that Life is good—Transcendental Feeling may be said to be a normal experience of our conscious life: it is not

¹ See *Paradise*, xxxiii. 82-96, quoted *supra*, p. 23, and *Vita Nuova*, Sonnet xxv., quoted *supra*, p. 38.

an experience occasionally cropping up alongside of other experiences, but a feeling which accompanies all the experiences of our conscious life—that "sweet hope," *γλυκεία ἐλπίς*,¹ in the strength of which we take the trouble to seek after the particular achievements which make up the waking life of conduct and science. Such feeling, though normal, is rightly called Transcendental,² because it is not one of the effects, but the condition, of our entering upon and persevering in that course of endeavour which makes experience.

5. THE PLATONIC MYTH ROUSES AND REGULATES TRANSCENDENTAL FEELING BY (1) IMAGINATIVE REPRESENTATION OF IDEAS OF REASON, AND (2) IMAGINATIVE DEDUCTION OF CATEGORIES OF THE UNDERSTANDING AND MORAL VIRTUES.

I have offered these remarks about Transcendental Feeling in order to preface a general statement which I now venture to make about the Platonic Myths—that they are Dreams expressive of Transcendental Feeling, told in such a manner and such a context that the telling of them regulates, for the service of conduct and science, the feeling expressed.

How then are conduct and science served by such regulation of Transcendental Feeling?

In the wide-awake life of conduct and science, Understanding, left to itself, claims to be the measure of truth; Sense, to be the criterion of good and bad. Transcendental Feeling, welling up from another "Part of the Soul," whispers to Understanding and Sense that they are leaving out something. What? Nothing less than the secret plan of the Universe. And what is that secret plan? The other "Part of the Soul" indeed comprehends it in silence as it is,³ but can explain it to the Understanding only in the symbolical language of the interpreter, Imagination—in Vision.⁴ In the Platonic Myth we assist at a Vision in which the

¹ *γλυκεία* of καρδίας ἀτάλασσα ὑποτρέφει σπασαρέ ἐλπίς, ἡ μάλιστα θνατῶν πολυτρόφων γνώμων κυβερνή. —Pindar, quoted *Ilp.* 331 A.

² As distinguished from "Empirical Feeling"; see *infra*, p. 389.

³ Plotinus, *Enn.* iii. 8. 4, and see *infra*, p. 45.

⁴ *Tim.* 71 D, E. The liver, the organ of Imagination, is a *μαρτυρίον*.

wide-awake life of our ordinary experiences and doings is seen as an act in a vast drama of the creation and consummation of all things. The habitudes and faculties of our moral and intellectual constitution, which determine *a priori* our experiences and doings in this wide-awake life, are themselves clearly seen to be determined by causes which, in turn, are clearly seen to be determined by the Plan of the Universe which the Vision reveals. And more than this,—the Universe, planned as the Vision shows, is the work—albeit accomplished under difficulties—of a wise and good God; for see how mindful He is of the welfare of man's soul throughout all its wanderings from creation to final purification, as the Vision unfolds them! We ought, then, to be of good hope, and to use strenuously, in this present life, habitudes and faculties which are so manifestly in accordance with a universal plan so manifestly beneficent.

It is as producing this mood in us that the Platonic Myth, Aetiological and Eschatological, regulates Transcendental Feeling for the service of conduct and science. In Aetiological Myth the Categories of the Understanding and the Moral Virtues are deduced from a Plan of the Universe, of which they are represented as parts seen, together with the whole, in a former life, and "remembered" piecemeal in this; in Aetiological and Eschatological (but chiefly in Eschatological) Myth the "Ideas of Reason," Soul, Cosmos, as completed system of the Good, and God, are set forth for the justification of that "sweet hope which guides the wayward thought of mortal man"—the hope without which we should not take the trouble to enter upon, and persevere in, that struggle after ever fuller comprehension of conditions,¹ ever wider "correspondence with environment," which the habits and faculties of our moral and intellectual structure—the Categories of the Understanding and the Moral Virtues—enable us to carry on in detail.

At this point, before I go on further to explain Plato's handling of Transcendental Feeling, I will make bold to explain my own metaphysical position. A very few words will suffice.

I hold that it is in Transcendental Feeling, manifested

¹ Kant makes "Reason" (*i.e.* the whole man in opposition to this or that part, *e.g.* "understanding") the source of "Transcendental Ideas," described as "conceptions of the unconditioned," "conceptions of the totality of the conditions of any thing that is given as conditioned."

normally as Faith in the Value of Life, and ecstatically as sense of Timeless Being, and not in Thought proceeding by way of speculative construction, that Consciousness comes nearest to the object of Metaphysics, Ultimate Reality. It is in Transcendental Feeling, not in Thought, that Consciousness comes nearest to Ultimate Reality, because without that Faith in the Value of Life, which is the normal manifestation of Transcendental Feeling, Thought could not stir. It is in Transcendental Feeling that Consciousness is aware of "The Good"—of the Universe as a place in which it is good to be. Transcendental Feeling is thus the *beginning* of Metaphysics, for Metaphysics cannot make a start without assuming "The Good, or the Universe as a place in which it is good to be"; but it is also the *end* of Metaphysics, for Speculative Thought does not really carry us further than the Feeling, which inspired it from the first, has already brought us: we end, as we began, with the Feeling that it is good to be here. To the question, "Why is it good to be here?" the answers elaborated by Thought are no more really answers than those supplied by the Mythopoeic Fancy interpreting Transcendental Feeling. When the former have value (and they are sometimes not only without value, but mischievous) they are, like those supplied by the Mythopoeic Fancy, valuable as impressive affirmations of the Faith in us, not at all as explanations of its ground. Conceptual solutions of the "problem of the Universe" carry us no further along the pathway to reality than imaginative solutions do. The reason why they are thought to carry us further is that they mimic those conceptual solutions of departmental problems which we are accustomed to accept, and do well to accept, from the positive sciences. Imaginative solutions of the "problem of the Universe" are thought to be as inferior to conceptual solutions as imaginative solutions of departmental problems are to conceptual. The fallacy involved in this analogy is that of supposing that there is a "problem of the Universe"—a difficulty presented which Thought may "solve." The "problem of the Universe" was first propounded, and straightway solved, at the moment when Life began on the earth,—when a living being—as such, from the very first, lacking nothing which is essential to "selfhood" or

"personality"—first appeared as Mode of the Universe. The "problem of the Universe" is not propounded to Consciousness, and Consciousness cannot solve it. Consciousness can *feel* that it has been propounded and solved elsewhere, but cannot genuinely *think* it. It is "propounded" to that on which Consciousness supervenes (and supervenes only because the problem has been already "solved")—it is propounded to what I would call "selfhood," or "personality," and is ever silently being "understood" and "solved" by that principle, in the continued "vegetative life" of individual and race. And the most trustworthy, or least misleading, report of what the "problem" is, and what its "solution" is, reaches Consciousness through Feeling. Feeling stands nearer than Thought does to that basal self or personality which is, indeed, at once the living "problem of the Universe" and its living "solution." The whole matter is summed up for me in the words of Plotinus, with which I will conclude this statement which I have ventured to make of my metaphysical position: "If a man were to inquire of Nature—'Wherefore dost thou bring forth creatures?' and she were willing to give ear and to answer, she would say—'Ask me not, but understand in silence, even as I am silent.'"¹

In suggesting that the Platonic Myth awakens and regulates Transcendental Feeling (1) by imaginative representation of Ideas of Reason, and (2) by imaginative deduction of Categories of the Understanding and Moral Virtues, I do not wish to maintain that the Kantian distinction between Categories of the Understanding and Ideas of Reason was explicit in Plato's mind. There is plenty of evidence in his writings to show that it was not explicit; but it is a distinction of vital importance for philosophical thought, and it need not surprise us to find it sometimes implicitly recognised by a thinker of Plato's calibre. At any rate, it is a distinction which the student of Plato's Myths will do well to have explicit in his own mind. Let us remind ourselves, then, of what Kant means by Categories of the Understanding and Ideas of Reason respectively.

¹ Plot. *Enn.* iii. 8. 4, καὶ εἰ τις δὲ αὐτὴν (τὴν φύσιν) ἐρωτᾷ τίνας ἔσται ποιῆ, εἰ τοῦ ἐρωτῶντος ἐθέλοι ἐπαθεῖν καὶ λέγειν, εἴποι ἄν' "ἔχρημ' μὲν μὴ ἐρωτᾷν, ἀλλὰ συνίεναι καὶ αὐτὸν σιωπῆ, ὡς περ' ἐγὼ σιωπῶ καὶ οὐκ εἰσίσταμαι λέγειν."