

**PLATONIS
PHILEBUS**

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Platonis Philebus by Charles Badham

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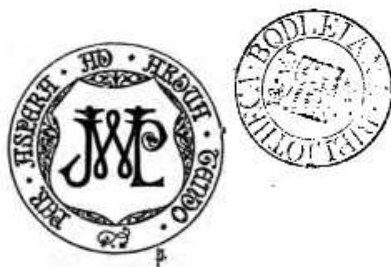
WITH

INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

CHARLES BADHAM D.D.

HEAD MASTER OF BIRMINGHAM AND EDGBASTON PROPRIETARY SCHOOL



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INTRODUCTION.

THE aim of this noble Dialogue is to ascertain the relation of pleasure and of intelligence to the absolute Good. The form of the inquiry is a controversy between Socrates and two young Athenians named Philebus and Protarchus. The latter takes up the cause which his friend had espoused, but found it too much trouble to maintain, and affirms that pleasure, using the word in its largest sense, is entitled to the name of *good*; to which Socrates advances an opposite claim upon behalf of science, intelligence, and all kindred species; observing, that if it should prove that some third thing had a better title than either, then whichever of the two original claimants should be found most akin to the successful species would be entitled to the second prize. Protarchus is then reminded of the great variety and discrepancy in the kinds of pleasure, and is invited to show what common nature there is in all these, in virtue of which they are entitled to receive, in addition to their name of pleasure, the name of good. In reply, he denies that there is any variety or discrepancy between them, *in so far as they are pleasures*. Socrates shows the fallacy of this, and points out that this reliance upon the identity implied by a common name, as if it excluded all diversity, would put an end to all reasoning. This leads to the mention of the great problem about identity and diversity, the delight of young arguers and the terror of quiet, respectable people, the argument of ἐν καὶ πολλά.* The contradiction between the individual as one in nature, and yet many in his many changes of circumstance, and that between the whole

* The bearing of this discussion on the main subject is twofold. The importance of the *μέγας* in dialectics is a suitable introduction to the part which it is to play in physics; and the necessity of the careful division of pleasure under its several heads is shewn beforehand.

as one and the parts as many, are touched upon; but Socrates affirms that men now look upon these as childish and sophistical, but that there are other forms of the contradiction which are far more important. For if we consider any genus or idea as one in itself, and then again observe that the representatives of it are many and unlimited, it is difficult to conceive how this one, at the same time that it remains one in itself, is yet one in all the individuals and in each of them. This contradiction is the inherent and unchangeable property of all objects of reasoning; but though as such we cannot remove it, there is a remedy provided against its practical difficulty. For while all things are constituted out of the one and the many, they have associated in their constitution the limit and the indefinite. We must therefore, in all investigation, take first some one single kind or nature, which we are sure to find if we look for it; from this we must proceed to the next definite number supplied by the object itself in its own natural divisions, and so, continually advancing through all subordinate divisions, to go on till we arrive at the point where the limit or given numbers cease, and the unlimited begins. This process from the one to the indefinite by means of number, or the contrary process from the indefinite to the one, is the dialectical method, the origin of all discovery, and the opposite of that sophistical manner which passes immediately from either extreme to the other. Socrates beautifully exemplifies this position by language, music, metre, and the art of writing; and proposes that the two claimants of the good should be subjected to the same method. But finding that Protarchus is scared by the difficulty of the undertaking, he professes to remember a shorter solution of the question before them, by which it can be shown that neither pleasure nor intelligence can hope for the first prize. It lies in the very conception of the good that it should be perfect and self-sufficient. But if we take either pleasure or intelligence in perfect violation from each other, they are insufficient and imperfect; for no one would accept pleasure alone as all in all, if he had no memory nor consciousness, nor any faculty by which he could be cognisant of the pleasure enjoyed. Nor would any one accept a life of mere intelligence without the least admixture of feeling. To either of these states of being, all men would certainly prefer a combination of the two; therefore each has failed in its preten-

sions to be the absolute good. But which comes the nearest to the mark? That which has most right to be considered the cause of the combination, or to have most affinity with that cause. Thus we are led to inquire into the nature of combination itself, and the laws which belong to it. Now it has already been said, that the limit and the indefinite* are the elements out of which all things are combined; these, therefore, will be the two first kinds which we must consider; the union of these two will be the third, and the cause which effects that union, the fourth.

Every quality of matter considered in its abstraction, extends indefinitely in the direction of two opposites, as in the instances of moister and drier, † hotter and colder, &c. The attempt to limit it at once dissolves the abstraction, because it fixed to a point that which is only conceivable as continually capable of more and less. All things which thus admit of more and less are comprehended in one idea, and receive the name of the indefinite, τὸ ἄπειρον. The opposites of these are the things which admit of equality and proportion, and these are classed under the name of the limit, τὸ πέρασ‡ or περασιδέε. The examples of this kind can only be seen at the same time with the third kind, that is to say, in combinations of τὸ ἄπειρον and τὸ πέρασ. In music, bodily health and strength and beauty, the temperature of the seasons, and above all, in the instance of pleasure, which would be absorbed in its own indefinite cravings, but for the imposition of law and order to limit and preserve it, in all such instances where qualities are blended with definite proportion, we see at once the second element of the combination, and the result of that combination in a certain γένεσις. In the fourth place there must be a cause of such combinations; for that which is made cannot be the same as that which makes, but must always be subsequent to

* This doctrine Plato is said to have borrowed from the Pythagorean Philolaus, who, through extreme poverty, consented to sell him the book in which he had embodied the doctrines of his sect.—See Diog. Laert. in Philolaus.

† The comparatives of all such words are used by Plato because the positive might be misunderstood as implying a μέτρον, or definite quantity, or proportion; but afterwards, he uses the positive, ἐν ὀλίγῃ καὶ βαρῇ καὶ ταχέϊ καὶ βραδέϊ ἀπειροῖσι οὖσι.

‡ πέρασ is properly the ἰδέα, or that according to which they are one, and περασιδέε, the γένος: τὰ περασιδέη again would be the γένη, which we must not confound with γένος, as Ast and others have done, but which is the multitude in the γένος, its numerous specimens.

it.* Therefore we may consider the first three kinds to be the elements of natural things, and the natural things themselves; but the fourth kind is that which operates with and upon them. The question then arises, to which of these four the mixed life of pleasure and intelligence bears most resemblance. It is decided that it resembles most the third kind or the combination. Pleasure again seems most akin to the indefinite. The kind which answers to intelligence is not so evident, and Socrates warns his friend against any rashness in the decision, as touching upon impiety. The gay Philebus laughs at his scruples, but Protarchus has more reverence, and is so awestruck by Socrates's manner, that he is afraid to make any conjecture. Then Socrates declares that his own solemnity was all in sport, and that it is no wonder if philosophers are so ready to pay themselves a compliment, in declaring Intelligence to be the King of the Universe;† but that it is worth while to see what right it has to the designation. Protarchus is then asked to choose between two opinions; one that the universe is subject to chance and blind caprice, and the other, that it is governed by mind and intelligence. He unhesitatingly chooses the latter. But, argues Socrates, in this universe there are the same elements which we also find in the constitution of our own earth, only that here they are found in a poor and scanty state, in the universe they are beautiful and abundant. Now the terrestrial elements must have been derived from the universal ones, the earthly body from the body of the world: but our body has a soul which it must have also derived from the same source; for if the four kinds above enumerated, when brought into action by the power of the fourth, earn for themselves even in this earth the name of Wisdom by acts of creation and restoration, much rather in the universal body and its mighty members in which they exist pure and undebased, will they have wrought all that is precious and beautiful. It follows from this, that the cause which is the chief of the four

* This passage, as well as that in the commencement of the *Tymæus*, are conclusive against the pretence that Plato was a Pantheist; and that whatever militates against pantheistic notions in the *Lysis* (see Book 10), must be ascribed to Philip of Opus.

† This is the second instance in this dialogue where Plato has contrived incidentally to point out that a distinction is to be drawn between the human intelligence and the divine. In the sequel he shows what that distinction is.

kinds will be supreme in heaven and in earth, being the essence of the mind and of the soul of Zeus himself.* The result of this inquiry is to establish that intelligence rules over all things, and that our intelligence is akin to the fourth or highest kind into which all things were divided. The next step is to consider pleasure and intelligence not abstractedly, but as they are. First it is observed concerning pleasure, that it arises when the constituent elements of the creature return towards harmony; but when that harmony is more or less dissolved, pain is the consequence. This is illustrated by hunger, thirst, heat, and cold, in all which there is a tendency to some loss or dissolution, which is pain, and in the relief of which there is a return to natural completeness, which return is pleasure. The second kind of pleasure and pain is in expectation; this kind belongs to the soul, without the body participating in it. These two classes are considered sufficient for the purpose intended, and another observation is added, of which Protarchus is told that he will see the importance further on. It is, that there must be an intermediate state of the body, when it is tending neither towards completeness nor dissolution of any part; when there is this state there can be neither pleasure nor pain. Such a state is quite compatible with a life of mere intelligence; it is also such a life as we may conceive the gods to possess.† This, therefore, is another point in favour of νοῦς in its competition for the second prize.

But in the second kind of pleasure, that which is from expectation and belongs to the soul, the nature of pleasure and its relation to νοῦς is destined to become more apparent. Expectation of pleasure must depend upon memory (that is, not recollection, but the state which is the necessary condition of recollection), and this memory presupposes sensation. If the body alone is affected, and the movement does not reach to the mind, there is no sensation and no memory. In addition to

* That is, of the highest mundane divinity. The argument is, that αἰτία ἐν τῷ δαίμονι is the highest kind; but αἰτία is νοῦς, and νοῦς is inseparable from ψυχή; consequently, αἰτία is the ground of the highest νοῦς and ψυχή i.e., that of Zeus.

† Page 33, St. The sense I have given here is not very clearly expressed in the original as it now stands; it would come out much more forcibly by a very slight change. Οὐκ οὐκ αἴτιος ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸ εὐδαιμόνιον καὶ τὸ πᾶσι οὐδὲν ἀνάγκη εἰ πάντων τῶν βίων ἐστὶ θεός.