The Progress of Philosophy

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An Historical Introduction to Philosophy

Readings with Commentary

By

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INTRODUCTION

This book is aimed at readers who have never taken a course in philosophy. You're entitled to know what you're getting into.

You probably have some preconceptions about philosophy, such as

It's deep.

It's not very useful.

Philosophers don't agree on very much.

The first two statements are accurate. Philosophy does require abstract thinking of a type seldom encountered in daily life. And philosophical knowledge isn't required for most of life's tasks; if you look at the want ads under "P," you're unlikely to find anybody in need of a philosopher. Indeed, the only job for most professional philosophers is … teaching philosophy!

So we've already encountered our first philosophical problem: Why study philosophy? It's hard intellectual work, and it doesn't promise an obvious payoff.

But what exactly is this "philosophy" thing? It's too early for a full explanation. For the moment I'll just say that many people want to understand the world in some fuller way. That's true of astronomers seeking to understand the structure of the universe in the large, and nuclear physicists seeking to understand it in the small. Philosophers, however, are more interested in man's place in all these goings on. In this they are more akin to

theologians, except that philosophy isn't faith-based. (Several of the philosophers we'll encounter will be concerned with religious truth, but they approach it by standards of reason, not faith.)

Philosophers try to pull together various bits of our beliefs into a coherent picture of the world and man's place in it. But unlike historians or biologists, who dig for facts or conduct experiments, philosophers rely solely on argument. That's not the clearest explanation ever penned, but it will have to do for now. I'll try to say something more intelligible about philosophy and philosophical argument once we've seen a few philosophers at work.

The third preconception—that philosophers don't agree on very much—requires closer examination. Philosophical debates often seem intractable. When two philosophers square off, it's often difficult to see what kind of additional factual information could resolve the dispute. Nonetheless, I believe that if you take a longer view, there has been profound progress in philosophy. Exploring the nature of that progress is part of what this book is about.

But if there has been progress in philosophy, why study obsolete thinkers? Two reasons: The lesser one is that the names and views of the great philosophers come up all the time, and it's nice to know what they actually said. The larger reason is that part of what I'll attempt to explain is what "progress in philosophy" means, and that's something you can only understand by seeing examples.

This book is an historical introduction to some great philosophers. An historical introduction to philosophy is not, however, an introduction to the history of

philosophy. This book deals in chronological order with some historical figures and movements, but there is no attempt to be comprehensive, and some major figures are left out. Rather, I've attempted to tell a story about how we got to our present level of philosophical understanding. The "we" in that sentence is not all-inclusive; it refers in the main to an educated stratum of people in the English-speaking world. Sorry, but this story is limited to our dead, white, European and American philosophical ancestors.

This book consists of meaty chunks from a few prominent Western philosophers, spiced with what I hope are helpful comments. The great philosophers tried to present a unified way of understanding the world, rather than solving a limited set of intellectual puzzles. Appreciating their contributions thus requires reading larger chunks of their work than is commonly found in introductory textbooks. The commentary tries to orient you to the philosopher's intellectual milieu—what was going on in other areas, particularly the sciences, and how that influenced the philosopher's views.

The commentaries are my own: I do not pretend to present any sort of philosophical consensus. I'll try to warn you, however, of any comments that are particularly heterodox. I should add that I am not a historian of philosophy; I'm interested in these particular philosophers because of what they can tell us about philosophy in the here-and-now. Similarly, we study the history of science not to learn science, but to learn *about* science. But there is a key difference between an historical introduction to philosophy and an historical introduction to science. Science is a fast-evolving field

and philosophy a slow one; what you learn from an historical introduction to philosophy is likely to be relevant to current philosophical debates. The same cannot be said of an historical introduction to science.

There is a final virtue to introducing philosophy historically. In the twentieth century philosophy became an academic discipline somewhat removed from the intellectual concerns of non-specialists. This was not the case for earlier philosophers, who tended to engage with the social and scientific issues of their times, many of which remain live today. Introducing philosophy historically thus promises to make it more interesting for non-specialists. (It also provides a tacit critique of current modes of philosophizing, but I won't pursue that point here.)

Enough of these introductory remarks. It's time to begin where almost any historical introduction to philosophy would begin: with Plato.

A Higher World of Forms: Plato (*circa* 425-348 BC)

Plato, who lived in Athens in the fourth and fifth centuries BC, is not the first philosopher in the Western tradition, but he is the first for whom we have any complete works. Earlier philosophers had written voluminously, but their works survive only as scattered quotations in the works of later philosophers. But with Plato we have over two dozen complete works, some quite substantial, conventionally divided into early, middle, and late periods.

All Plato's works are in the form of dialogues—conversations between two or more people in which various positions are advanced and criticized. Most of the dialogues take their name from one of the main characters, many of whom were real people, the most important of whom (but for whom no dialogue is named, as he is omnipresent) was Plato's teacher, Socrates. Perhaps "intellectual role model" would be a better description than "teacher," since the teaching was completely informal, with no prescribed course of study. Apparently, Socrates would make himself available in some public place in Athens, where a group of young men (sorry, no lady philosophers at this time) would gather for lively debates on abstract subjects, with

Socrates leading the discussion and criticizing the views advanced by other participants. Socrates does not seem to have written anything, and there seems to have been no positive Socratic philosophy, merely an insistence on not accepting any proposed answers without rigorous examination, combined with a beguiling style of argumentation.

Socrates was what we would today call an educational reformer. In his time, there was a group of itinerant fee-for-service teachers known as *sophists*. The sophists primarily taught rhetoric, the art of persuasive speech. Such a skill was in high demand in Athens. The Athenians were a litigious lot, and anyone might initiate a lawsuit or find himself hauled in to court to defend himself. There were no lawyers, so every litigant had to rely on his own eloquence to sway the Athenian jury, which frequently numbered in the hundreds.

Socrates's primary criticism of the sophists was that they taught how to persuade, but not what was true; they preferred oratory to investigation.

In 399 BC, Socrates was himself brought before the Athenian courts on a charge of impiety, convicted, and executed. Socrates's life and death had a profound effect on Plato, who wrote at least four dialogues around the events surrounding the trial and execution: *Euthyphro*, *Crito*, *The Apology*, and *Phaedo*. Socrates is the central figure in Plato's early and middle dialogues, and we believe that the early dialogues give the flavor of what Socratic discussions were like. Most of the early dialogues center around various what-is questions: What is love? (the subject of *The Symposium*), What is virtue? (*Meno*), What is friendship? (*Lysis*), What is

courage? (*Laches*). Views are advanced by participants and criticized by Socrates. Socrates usually gets the proponent to admit to other views that are inconsistent with the view first advanced. The dialogue typically ends with the original question unanswered.

In Plato's middle period, and especially in his most famous dialogue, *The Republic*, the figure of Socrates is used to advance Plato's positive views, including a theory I'll refer to as *idealism*.

The Republic, like the dialogues of the early period, begins with a what-is question: What is justice? Socrates gets everyone to admit that justice will be more easily seen in the large than in the small, and so begins to describe a just polity ruled by a group he calls the "guardians." But for the guardians to be entitled to rule, they must possess knowledge that goes beyond that of the ruled, which brings Socrates to the key question of the central portion of *The Republic*: What is knowledge, and how do we get it?

We'll join the discussion midway. Socrates has been outlining in considerable detail the organization of the just state, when Glaucon breaks in to ask whether such a state is possible. Socrates replies:

The Republic

Book V

***

Let me begin by reminding you that we found our way hither in the search after justice and injustice.

True, he [Glaucon] replied; but what of that?

I was only going to ask whether, if we have discovered them, we are to require that the just man should in nothing fail of absolute justice; or may we be satisfied with an approximation, and the attainment in him of a higher degree of justice than is to be found in other men?

The approximation will be enough.

We are enquiring into the nature of absolute justice and into the character of the perfectly just, and into injustice and the perfectly unjust, that we might have an ideal. We were to look at these in order that we might judge of our own happiness and unhappiness according to the standard which they exhibited and the degree in which we resembled them, but not with any view of showing that they could exist in fact.

True, he said.

Would a painter be any the worse because, after having delineated with consummate art an ideal of a perfectly beautiful man, he was unable to show that any such man could ever have existed?

He would be none the worse.

Well, and were we not creating an ideal of a perfect State?

To be sure.

And is our theory a worse theory because we are unable to prove the possibility of a city being ordered in the manner described?

Surely not, he replied.

That is the truth, I said. But if, at your request, I am to try and show how and under what conditions the possibility is highest, I must ask you, having this in view, to repeat your former admissions.

What admissions?

I want to know whether ideals are ever fully realised in language? Does not the word express more than the fact, and must not the actual, whatever a man may think, always, in the nature of things, fall short of the truth? What do you say?

I agree.

Then you must not insist on my proving that the actual State will in every respect coincide with the ideal: if we are only able to discover how a city may be governed nearly as we proposed, you will admit that we have discovered the possibility which you demand; and will be contented. I am sure that I should be contented --will not you?

Yes, I will.

Socrates is trying to describe the perfect, or ideal, state, for such a state will be perfectly just. The point about language is that a word like "justice" refers to the perfect form of justice, just as the word "chair" refers to an ideal chair rather than to a particular chair.

Let me next endeavour to show what is that fault in States which is the cause of their present maladministration, and what is the least change which will enable a State to pass into the truer form; and let the change, if possible, be of one thing only, or if not, of two; at any rate, let the changes be as few and slight as possible.

Certainly, he replied.

I think, I said, that there might be a reform of the State if only one change were made, which is not a slight or easy though still a possible one.

What is it? he said.

Now then, I said, I go to meet that which I liken to the greatest of the waves; yet shall the word be spoken, even though the wave break and drown me in laughter and dishonour; and do you mark my words.

Proceed.

I said: 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, cities will never have rest from their evils, --nor the human race, as I believe, --and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day. Such was the thought, my dear Glaucon, which I would fain have uttered if it had not seemed too extravagant; for to be convinced that in no other State can there be happiness private or public is indeed a hard thing.

Socrates, what do you mean? I would have you consider that the word which you have uttered is one at which numerous persons, and very respectable persons too, in a figure pulling off their coats all in a moment, and seizing any weapon that comes to hand, will run at you might and main, before you know where you are, intending to do heaven knows what; and if you don't prepare an answer, and put yourself in motion, you will be prepared by their fine wits,' and no mistake.

You got me into the scrape, I said.

And I was quite right; however, I will do all I can to get you out of it; but I can only give you good-will and good advice, and, perhaps, I may be able to fit answers to your questions better than another --that is all. And now,

having such an auxiliary, you must do your best to show the unbelievers that you are right.

I ought to try, I said, since you offer me such invaluable assistance. And I think that, if there is to be a chance of our escaping, we must explain to them whom we mean when we say that philosophers are to rule in the State; then we shall be able to defend ourselves: There will be discovered to be some natures who ought to study philosophy and to be leaders in the State; and others who are not born to be philosophers, and are meant to be followers rather than leaders.

***

[Socrates continues] And may we not say of the philosopher that he is a lover, not of a part of wisdom only, but of the whole?

Yes, of the whole.

And he who dislikes learnings, especially in youth, when he has no power of judging what is good and what is not, such an one we maintain not to be a philosopher or a lover of knowledge, just as he who refuses his food is not hungry, and may be said to have a bad appetite and not a good one?

Very true, he said.

Whereas he who has a taste for every sort of knowledge and who is curious to learn and is never satisfied, may be justly termed a philosopher? Am I not right?

Plato's claim that kings must be "philosophers" might seem extreme if you don't know the origin of the word. "Philosopher" comes from the Greek words for "lover of wisdom." For Plato a philosopher is someone who wants

to acquire theoretical knowledge generally. So when Plato says that a philosopher is a lover of the whole of wisdom, not just a part, he is merely stating what is implicit in the word.

Something like the Greek meaning endured well into modern times; as late as the 18th century, a distinction was usually made between "natural" and "moral" philosophy. Natural philosophy, or the philosophy of nature, encompassed what we today call the physical sciences, such as physics, chemistry, and astronomy; moral philosophy included what we today call the social and psychological sciences. Today, philosophy is a bounded study, taught in a specific university department, but in Plato's time and for millennia afterwards, it was close to a science of everything. So when Socrates says that the state should be ruled by philosophers, he is not saying that all power should go to the kinds of people you find in today's philosophy departments, but only that the state should be ruled by people who have wisdom—those who understand the deep structure of the world.

We are probably comfortable with the idea that rulers should understand the important things. We might call that knowledge "statecraft." But Plato isn't saying that rulers should have a particular type of theoretical knowledge, because Plato believes that it is possible to obtain a kind of complete theoretical knowledge. Ancient Greece was a simpler society in a simpler time, and it's likely that Plato believed that a person could gain a complete understanding of the world. Today, in contrast, we are used to seeing knowledge as composed of specialties and subspecialties, and universities as

collections of departments. So for Plato, a philosopher wasn't just a person who loved knowledge, but a person who knew pretty much everything important.

> Glaucon said: If curiosity makes a philosopher, you will find many a strange being will have a title to the name. All the lovers of sights have a delight in learning, and must therefore be included. Musical amateurs, too, are a folk strangely out of place among philosophers, for they are the last persons in the world who would come to anything like a philosophical discussion, if they could help, while they run about at the Dionysiac festivals as if they had let out their ears to hear every chorus; whether the performance is in town or country --that makes no difference --they are there. Now are we to maintain that all these and any who have similar tastes, as well as the professors of quite minor arts, are philosophers?
>
> Certainly not, I replied; they are only an imitation.
>
> He said: Who then are the true philosophers?
>
> Those, I said, who are lovers of the vision of truth.
>
> That is also good, he said; but I should like to know what you mean?
>
> To another, I replied, I might have a difficulty in explaining; but I am sure that you will admit a proposition which I am about to make.
>
> What is the proposition?
>
> That since beauty is the opposite of ugliness, they are two?
>
> Certainly.
>
> And inasmuch as they are two, each of them is one?
>
> True again.

> And of just and unjust, good and evil, and of every other class, the same remark holds: taken singly, each of them one; but from the various combinations of them with actions and things and with one another, they are seen in all sorts of lights and appear many? Very true.

Plato is saying that beauty is a single thing, everywhere, but in ordinary life there are many kinds of beauty. Once more, he's making a distinction between an ideal type (perfect beauty) and its many particular manifestations (a beautiful flower, painting, person).

> And this is the distinction which I draw between the sight-loving, art-loving, practical class and those of whom I am speaking, and who are alone worthy of the name of philosophers.
>
> How do you distinguish them? he said.
>
> The lovers of sounds and sights, I replied, are, as I conceive, fond of fine tones and colours and forms and all the artificial products that are made out of them, but their mind is incapable of seeing or loving absolute beauty.
>
> True, he replied.
>
> Few are they who are able to attain to the sight of this.
>
> Very true.
>
> And he who, having a sense of beautiful things has no sense of absolute beauty, or who, if another lead him to a knowledge of that beauty is unable to follow --of such an one I ask, Is he awake or in a dream only? Reflect: is not the dreamer, sleeping or waking, one who likens dissimilar things, who puts the copy in the place of the real object?
>
> I should certainly say that such an one was dreaming.

> But take the case of the other, who recognises the existence of absolute beauty and is able to distinguish the idea from the objects which participate in the idea, neither putting the objects in the place of the idea nor the idea in the place of the objects --is he a dreamer, or is he awake?
>
> He is wide awake.

Socrates has just stated the key premise of idealism, which holds that the many objects of a type are of that type because they "participate" in a single perfect form, absolute, or ideal, of that type. Thus each beautiful thing is beautiful to the extent that it participates in the form, or absolute, or ideal, of beauty.

Note that our translator (Benjamin Jowett, 1817-93) used the word "idea" rather than "ideal" or "form" in the next-to-last paragraph preceding this comment. Plato's theory has often been referred to as the "theory of ideas," but don't be misled by the word. When Jowett translates the Greek *eidos* as "idea," you should realize that Plato is not talking about things-in-your-head. Whatever Plato's *eidos* is, it exists independently of our mental states, in a separate world that does not depend on our minds. Modern translators tend to use the word "form" rather than "idea" to denote this non-mental object, and I'll do the same. But I'll refer to the theory (which Plato hasn't fully developed at this point in *The Republic*) as "idealism," mainly because "formalism" means something different in contemporary usage, and "formism" sounds impossibly awkward. (Warning: Some quite different philosophical views share the name "idealism," one of which will come up several chapters from now.)

This might be a good place to note the general problems raised by translation. Two of our philosophers, Plato and Descartes, did not have the good sense to write in English. Accordingly, we are dependent on translators to accurately report just what these philosophers said. There may be better translations than Jowett's, but Jowett's, besides having considerable literary merit, is in the public domain. For someone embarking on a serious study of Plato, that might not be enough, but for our purposes the Jowett translation will do just fine. Just keep in mind that a Platonic "idea" is not something in the head.

> And may we not say that the mind of the one who knows has knowledge, and that the mind of the other, who opines only, has opinion
>
> Certainly.

Plato has just made a key distinction between knowledge and opinion. By opinion, Plato seems to be referring to something like our ordinary knowledge of facts—for example, that water is wet, and that it can support a ship. Opinions are the kinds of beliefs we acquire in everyday life. But knowledge for Plato is more like what we might call theoretical understanding—for example, that water is H_2O, or that a body will float if it weighs less than the water it displaces (Archimedes principle). (At least one translator uses "science" rather than "knowledge" in this part of *The Republic*.)

To us, the distinction seems obvious. We all believe that below the surface structure of our world—the world as it appears to us—there is an unseen deep structure of

atoms and subatomic particles, of strange forces, of dark matter and energy. In short, we accept the modern scientific picture of the world. But in Plato's time, it may never have occurred to most people that the world followed laws that were hidden from casual inquiry. Thus, the insight granted to a few that there were such hidden laws, and the desire to uncover them, is what philosophy—literally, the love of theoretical understanding—was all about.

Socrates is about to embark on an extended argument to show that opinion is an intermediary between knowledge and ignorance. That's not a difficult conclusion to swallow. In fact, as we'll see, it's a good bit more plausible than some of the premises used to get there. I'll devote some space to this argument because I want to make a point about philosophical arguments as they appear in *The Republic*, and as they'll appear in the works of the other philosophers we'll be reading.

> But suppose that the latter [the one who only has opinions] should quarrel with us and dispute our statement, can we administer any soothing cordial or advice to him, without revealing to him that there is sad disorder in his wits?
>
> We must certainly offer him some good advice, he replied.
>
> Come, then, and let us think of something to say to him. Shall we begin by assuring him that he is welcome to any knowledge which he may have, and that we are rejoiced at his having it? But we should like to ask him a question: Does he who has knowledge know something or nothing? (You must answer for him.)

> I answer that he knows something.
>
> Something that is or is not?
>
> Something that is; for how can that which is not ever be known?
>
> And are we assured, after looking at the matter from many points of view, that absolute being is or may be absolutely known, but that the utterly non-existent is utterly unknown?
>
> Nothing can be more certain.

If you haven't guessed, "absolute being" will turn out to be the world of forms.

> Good. But if there be anything which is of such a nature as to be and not to be, that will have a place intermediate between pure being and the absolute negation of being?
>
> Yes, between them.
>
> And, as knowledge corresponded to being and ignorance of necessity to not-being, for that intermediate between being and not-being there has to be discovered a corresponding intermediate between ignorance and knowledge, if there be such?
>
> Certainly.

Notice what's happened here: Socrates has argued that opinion and knowledge have objects. Accordingly, because opinion and knowledge are so different, their objects must be completely different sorts of stuff; "absolute being" for knowledge, and something less for opinion. For example, you might be of the opinion that drinking water will slake your thirst, but have knowledge

that water is H_2O. But, *contra* Plato, it seems more likely that water—the very same water in each case—was the object of both the opinion and the knowledge.

It has to be said: Lots of the arguments Socrates advances in *The Republic* are flimsy. As we'll see, the actual argument for Plato's idealism is a bit different (and more convincing) than the argument you'll find on the page.

> Do we admit the existence of opinion?
>
> Undoubtedly.
>
> As being the same with knowledge, or another faculty?
>
> Another faculty.
>
> Then opinion and knowledge have to do with different kinds of matter corresponding to this difference of faculties?
>
> Yes.
>
> And knowledge is relative to being and knows being. But before I proceed further I will make a division.
>
> What division?
>
> I will begin by placing faculties in a class by themselves: they are powers in us, and in all other things, by which we do as we do. Sight and hearing, for example, I should call faculties. Have I clearly explained the class which I mean?
>
> Yes, I quite understand.
>
> Then let me tell you my view about them. I do not see them, and therefore the distinctions of fire, colour, and the like, which enable me to discern the differences of some things, do not apply to them. In speaking of a faculty I think only of its sphere and its result; and that which has the same sphere and the same result I call the same faculty, but that which has another sphere and

> another result I call different. Would that be your way of speaking?
>
> Yes.
>
> And will you be so very good as to answer one more question? Would you say that knowledge is a faculty, or in what class would you place it?
>
> Certainly knowledge is a faculty, and the mightiest of all faculties.
>
> And is opinion also a faculty?
>
> Certainly, he said; for opinion is that with which we are able to form an opinion.

Socrates says that faculties are "powers in us," such as sight and hearing. This squares with our normal use of the word. For example, my ancient Webster's Collegiate defines "faculty" in part as "1. Ability to act or do. 2. A physical power or function; as, the faculty of hearing." But then Socrates says, without any evident justification, that knowledge and opinion are faculties. That seems a stretch, but, as we'll see, it's important for Socrates's argument.

> And yet you were acknowledging a little while ago that knowledge is not the same as opinion?
>
> Why, yes, he said: how can any reasonable being ever identify that which is infallible with that which errs?

Plato is saying that you only know something when you can't be wrong about it. This seems consistent with our common usage. For example, I know that 2 + 2 = 4, but I don't know (for sure) that I won't go to sleep in the next four hours, even though I believe it strongly (it's

now 10am, and I don't feel sleepy, but it's always possible that I'll take a nap between now and 2pm).

Plato is on a philosophical quest for certainty, a quest that will also absorb later philosophers we'll study. But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

> An excellent answer, proving, I said, that we are quite conscious of a distinction between them.
>
> Yes.
>
> Then knowledge and opinion having distinct powers have also distinct spheres or subject-matters?
>
> That is certain.

Not only does it not seem "certain," it doesn't even seem true. But again, it's an important part of Platonic idealism: Knowledge is about one kind of thing (the forms), and opinion is about another (Spoiler: the objects we know through our senses).

> Being is the sphere or subject-matter of knowledge, and knowledge is to know the nature of being?
>
> Yes.
>
> And opinion is to have an opinion?
>
> Yes.
>
> And do we know what we opine? or is the subject-matter of opinion the same as the subject-matter of knowledge?
>
> Nay, he replied, that has been already disproven; if difference in faculty implies difference in the sphere or subject matter, and if, as we were saying, opinion and knowledge are distinct faculties, then the sphere of knowledge and of opinion cannot be the same.

Now you can see why it was so important for Socrates to claim that knowledge and opinion are faculties: They have different objects—that is, they are about different sorts of stuff.

> Then if being is the subject-matter of knowledge, something else must be the subject-matter of opinion?
>
> Yes, something else.
>
> Well then, is not-being the subject-matter of opinion? or, rather, how can there be an opinion at all about not-being? Reflect: when a man has an opinion, has he not an opinion about something? Can he have an opinion which is an opinion about nothing?
>
> Impossible.
>
> He who has an opinion has an opinion about some one thing?
>
> Yes.
>
> And not-being is not one thing but, properly speaking, nothing?
>
> True.
>
> Of not-being, ignorance was assumed to be the necessary correlative; of being, knowledge?
>
> True, he said.
>
> Then opinion is not concerned either with being or with not-being?
>
> Not with either.
>
> And can therefore neither be ignorance nor knowledge?
>
> That seems to be true.
>
> But is opinion to be sought without and beyond either of them, in a greater clearness than knowledge, or in a greater darkness than ignorance?

In neither.

Then I suppose that opinion appears to you to be darker than knowledge, but lighter than ignorance?

Both; and in no small degree.

And also to be within and between them?

Yes.

Then you would infer that opinion is intermediate? No question.

But were we not saying before, that if anything appeared to be of a sort which is and is not at the same time, that sort of thing would appear also to lie in the interval between pure being and absolute not-being; and that the corresponding faculty is neither knowledge nor ignorance, but will be found in the interval between them?

True.

And in that interval there has now been discovered something which we call opinion?

There has.

The argument is now rolling along. Opinion is located between knowledge and ignorance, and its object is something less than absolute being (which is the object of knowledge) but greater than nothingness, or not-being (which is the object, if you will, of ignorance).

Then what remains to be discovered is the object which partakes equally of the nature of being and not-being, and cannot rightly be termed either, pure and simple; this unknown term, when discovered, we may truly call the subject of opinion, and assign each to its proper faculty,—the extremes to the faculties of the extremes and the mean to the faculty of the mean.

True.

This being premised, I would ask the gentleman who is of opinion that there is no absolute or unchangeable idea of beauty—in whose opinion the beautiful is the manifold—he, I say, your lover of beautiful sights, who cannot bear to be told that the beautiful is one, and the just is one, or that anything is one—to him I would appeal, saying, Will you be so very kind, sir, as to tell us whether, of all these beautiful things, there is one which will not be found ugly; or of the just, which will not be found unjust; or of the holy, which will not also be unholy?

No, he replied; the beautiful will in some point of view be found ugly; and the same is true of the rest.

And may not the many which are doubles be also halves?—doubles, that is, of one thing, and halves of another?

Quite true.

And things great and small, heavy and light, as they are termed, will not be denoted by these any more than by the opposite names?

True; both these and the opposite names will always attach to all of them.

And can any one of those many things which are called by particular names be said to be this rather than not to be this?

He replied: They are like the punning riddles which are asked at feasts or the children's puzzle about the eunuch aiming at the bat, with what he hit him, as they say in the puzzle, and upon what the bat was sitting. The individual objects of which I am speaking are also a riddle, and have