

foundest discoveries which his social philosophy contains. It brought to light an aspect of society which is admittedly of the greatest importance for any social theory and it stated once for all a point of view which the social theory of the city-state never abandoned. Briefly stated it amounts to this: society is to be conceived as a system of services in which every member both gives and receives. What the state takes cognizance of is this mutual exchange and what it tries to arrange is the most adequate satisfaction of needs and the most harmonious interchange of services. Men figure in such a system as the performers of a needed task and their social importance depends upon the value of the work they do. What the individual possesses, therefore, is first and foremost a status in which he is privileged to act, and the freedom which the state secures him is not so much for the exercise of his free will as for the practice of his calling.)

Such a theory differs from one which pictures social relations in terms of contract or agreement and which therefore conceives the state as primarily concerned with maintaining liberty of choice. A theory of the latter sort occurs, as was pointed out in the last chapter, both in the fragment of Antiphon the Sophist and in the remarks on justice by Glaucon early in the second book of the *Republic*.⁹ But Plato rejected it because agreement, resting solely upon the will, can never show that justice is intrinsically a virtue. Social arrangements can be shown to rest on nature rather than convention only if it can be shown that what a man does has meaning beyond the mere fact that he wants to do it. How convincing the argument was found is shown by the fact that Aristotle, who was not greatly influenced by most of Plato's argument for his ideal state, was quite at one with him in this. The analysis of the community in the opening pages of the *Politics* was merely a new version of Plato's argument that a society depends upon mutual needs.

But exchange of services implies another principle of almost equal importance, the division of labor and the specializing of tasks. For if needs are satisfied by exchange, each must have more than he needs of the commodity which he offers, just as he must have less than he needs of that which he receives. It is clearly necessary, therefore, that there should be some specializa-

tion. The farmer produces more food than he needs while the shoemaker produces more shoes than he can wear. Hence it is advantageous to both that each should produce for the other, since both will be better fed and better clothed by working together than by each dividing his work to make all the various things he needs. This rests, according to Plato, upon two fundamental facts of human psychology, first, that different men have different aptitudes and so do some kinds of work better than others and, second, that skill is gained only where men apply themselves steadily to the work for which they are naturally fitted.

We must infer that all things are produced more plentifully and easily and of a better quality when one man does one thing which is natural to him and does it at the right time, and leaves other things.¹⁰

Upon this brief but exceedingly penetrating analysis of society and of human nature Plato's further construction of the state depends.

It turns out, therefore, that the philosopher-ruler is not peculiar but that his claim to power is justified by the same principle which is at work throughout all society. Banish specialization entirely and all social interchange is banished with it. Imagine men with no difference of natural aptitude and the basis for specialization is gone. Take away all training by which natural aptitude is perfected into developed skill and specialization becomes meaningless. These, then, are the forces in human nature upon which society and with it the state have to rely. The question, then, is not whether they shall be used but only whether they shall be used well. Shall men be divided according to their real aptitudes? Shall these aptitudes be wisely and adequately trained to bring them to their most perfect form? Shall the needs which men seek to satisfy co-operatively be their highest and most genuine needs, or merely the wants of their lower and more luxurious natures? These questions can be answered only in the light of what Plato calls inclusively a knowledge of the good. To know the good is to know how to answer them. And this is the special function of the philosopher. His knowledge is at once his right and his duty to rule

¹⁰ *Republic*, 370c.