

THE  
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ON A SUPPOSED INSTANCE OF DUALISM IN PLATO.

I.

THIS paper proposes to examine a much disputed place in the *Republic*, where the 'two-world' theory appears to raise its head, if current interpretation is right. The inconsistencies and incoherences involved in the similes of the Sun, the Line, and the Cave are well-known, and I do not intend to touch upon them here, except incidentally. Plato, like other philosophers, is liable to self-contradiction; but when interpreters disagree so radically among themselves, it is legitimate to ask whether they may not have started from a common erroneous presupposition. I believe that this may be found in the attempt to apply the Cave to the Line, an attempt which is closely bound up with the assumption that Plato desired to show the dependence of Becoming upon Being. To those who hold some form of this view the breaks between the upper and the lower line and between the cave and the region outside, appear to reveal a metaphysical dualism, or at least to conceal it imperfectly. But should the Cave be applied to the Line, and do the breaks signify one and the same thing? The allegory of the Cave has a purpose distinct from the Line, and neither is primarily concerned with the relation of the world of Becoming to that of Being.

It is an attractive but misleading plea in favour of a certain looseness or laxity of interpretation to say that analogies must not be pressed, or that Plato's figures and myths should not be taken as doctrine. These similes are not myths; they illustrate doctrine, and are in fact preliminary to the theoretical discussion