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## Introduction

MICHAEL FREDE

We may safely assume that the Greeks always had supposed that human beings think about things, that they can figure things out, that they exercise good or bad judgement, that they can be sensible or reasonable, or fail to be so, that some of them are quick-witted or crafty and some rather slow, and that, at times, they can be out of their mind. If we have any doubts about this, we just have to read Homer.

It is another question whether the Greeks conceptualized this in precisely the way we do. It seems obvious on quite abstract theoretical grounds that they did not. The general conceptual framework and the general understanding of the world and of human beings have changed so much since early antiquity that these changes cannot but also have affected quite substantially the particular notions in terms of which we think about, and try to understand, human thought and judgement. What seems obvious on theoretical grounds is borne out concretely, for instance, by the difficulties one runs into in the simple attempt to translate Homer. When Homer has Paris tell Hector (*Il.* 3. 63) that in his chest he has an intellect (*noos*) without fear, it is obvious from this very passage, as it is from many others in Homer in which he talks about the intellect, that Homer cannot be talking precisely of what we mean by 'intellect'. When (*Il.* 23. 698) he describes Euryalus, knocked out by a blow to his jaws, as having lost sense or his senses, as senseless, unconscious, he says that Euryalus is sensing or thinking other thoughts (*allophroneonta*); obviously he assumes that his sense (his *phren* or *phrenes*), under the impact of the blow, has stopped functioning in the way it works when we are sensible, but rather works in a different way, producing other thoughts. To say the very least, Homer does not conceive of intellect or of sense in quite the

same way as we do. Indeed, one has to wonder whether it is not misleading to present him as thinking of the intellect and of sense at all, given how differently he conceives of them.

Hence yet another question arises, namely whether the Greeks from the earliest times onwards had a conceptual framework within which they could understand and explain the phenomena initially referred to, which at least very roughly corresponds to our conceptual framework, for instance in that it distinguishes more or less the same features, abilities, functions, and parts or aspects of persons involved in human thought. More specifically there is the question whether the Greeks, from the earliest times onwards, had a conceptual framework in terms of which they thought about thinking, in which something held a place analogous to the one occupied in ours by reason, and in which, as a function of the notion of reason, or its analogue, there was a notion corresponding to our notion of rationality.

This might seem a puzzling question. For one might suppose that, given that the Greeks did conceive of human beings as thinking, as making inferences, they must have attributed reason to them. For one might think, to talk of reason just is to talk of the ability of human beings to think, to make inferences, to figure things out. Indeed, one might think that to talk of reason was as non-committal as it is nowadays to talk of mind. In saying that one has something in mind one does not commit oneself to the view that there is a mind in which one has something. But it seems obvious enough that our talk of reason, however we construe it nowadays, goes back to a time when 'reason' was taken to refer to an ability or faculty or part of a human being in terms of which one would account for a human being's thinking, drawing inferences, figuring things out, and the like. And the question is whether the Greeks always had a notion analogous to this notion of reason, though they may have conceived of this ability, faculty, or whatever in question, somewhat differently. One may be inclined to think that this question is to be answered in the affirmative.

But it would be a mistake to take this for granted. For there is evidence that some Greeks, even Greeks as late as in Hellenistic times, did not conceptualize things in such a way as to assume that there was such a thing as reason, in terms of which we can explain that human beings think, draw inferences, figure things out, and the like. They conceptualized things in such a way as to assume that

there is such a thing as memory which is quite powerful, more powerful than we nowadays would assume, in any case powerful enough to account for thinking, drawing inferences, figuring things out and similar functions we attribute to reason. Indeed, the so-called Empiricists in Hellenistic times denied the existence of reason (cf. Galen, *Subf. Emp.* 87. 4-9, 28ff.), treating it as a useless speculative theoretical postulate introduced by some philosophers, though one of them, Heraclides of Tarentum (c.100 BC), took a more accommodating position by allowing for talk of reason, as long as this was understood not to commit oneself to there being such a thing as reason (cf. *ibid.* 87. 12-21). The question is whether the Empiricists, in rejecting such a thing as reason, were trying to revise the way Greeks always had thought about things, or whether they were objecting to a way in which the Greeks, under the influence mainly of the philosophers, who only introduced a notion of reason to suit their philosophical purposes, were more and more coming to think about things.

This is a delicate question, in part because it is not entirely clear what would settle it, since it is not entirely clear what is to count as a notion of reason, let alone as an analogue of it. On balance I think that the answer is that the notion of reason originally was a philosophical construct, rather than part of the framework in terms of which Greeks had always thought about things and which philosophers just tried to articulate further. Homer does, of course, as we have seen, talk about the *nous* of his heroes, or about their sense (*phren*). But though *nous* is the word which later philosophers like Aristotle will use to refer to the intellect or even, more generally, to reason, it is clear that in Homer the word refers to a rather specific ability, namely the ability to, for instance, quickly get an overview and an understanding of a situation. Homer does refer to a number of, in a large sense, cognitive abilities, but there is no notion of an integrated system of abilities which roughly plays the role of reason in explaining how we come to have beliefs about things and how these come to guide, or fail to guide, our actions. Such a notion of reason only seems to emerge very slowly under the influence of philosophical considerations, and we only meet it in a full-blown developed form in Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. But it is telling that even then, and continuing through antiquity, there is a certain wavering in terminology between *logos*, to *logikon*, *nous*, *hegemonikon*, *mens*, *ratio*, and other terms; this wavering is hardly

intelligible if reason had been an ordinary notion, for which there would have been an ordinary standard term, if there all along had been an ordinary notion of reason, of which the different philosophical notions were just elaborations, trying to fit this ordinary notion into the framework of the respective philosophical theory.

To put the matter slightly differently. For us the mere assumption that it is constitutive of us that we are endowed with reason, and that our behaviour has to be understood accordingly, seems trivial. It is easily identified with the platitude that we have thoughts and beliefs, some of them arrived at by reasoning, and that what we do, how we act, also very much depends on what we think and what we believe. But this assumption was originally far from trivial, and certainly did not amount to the platitude mentioned, which even Homer, we have to assume, would have gladly subscribed to. For it seems that the notion of reason was introduced in the first place to explain how our behaviour can be understood at least in part in terms of our thoughts and beliefs, and how it can be understood as failing in part because our thoughts and beliefs are failing, because we fail to make proper use of the capacities of reason.

The question of the origin of the notion of reason, however difficult it may be even to articulate it precisely, does seem to me to be of great importance. For, if in its origins it is an ordinary notion, we have to identify this notion and to explain the different ancient philosophical notions as developments of this ordinary notion. Seen in this way ancient conceptions of reason will seem to make rather overblown and implausible assumptions about something much more modest and ordinary in order to satisfy the demands of the respective philosophical theory, as when, for instance, Aristotle claims that reason has an intuitive grasp on principles. And modern conceptions of reason will seem to be much more faithful to an ordinary conception of reason which, in some form or other, had been there all along; they will seem to free us from speculative and dubious theoretical elaborations of, and accretions to, an ordinary notion which has served us well enough for so long. If, on the other hand, the notion of reason in its origins is a philosophical construct, we have to see that our own notion of reason, however ordinary it may seem to have become, in its origins rests on certain substantial identifiable assumptions which we may want to question.

However we decide this question, it is clear that we only get a fully developed notion of reason which is conceived of in such a way as to account for our cognitive abilities and their exercise, but also for the role thought plays in action, when we come to Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. (I will in what follows leave aside the Epicurean notion of mind. Though the Epicureans, of course, do have an account of thinking, which in many ways resembles the Empiricists', there is a question to what extent they did have a notion of reason.) All later ancient thought about reason and rationality will in large part evolve in response to what these philosophers had to say about reason. And so I want, to begin with, to focus on the notion of reason which we find in these philosophers. I will then briefly turn to the prehistory of this notion as it slowly emerges in Greek thought, and I will, finally, turn to some aspects of its evolution in later antiquity.

Now, to consider the notions of reason these philosophers had is a very major undertaking. The notions differ very substantially from each other, and each is of considerable complexity and subject to scholarly controversy. Their understanding, it seems to me, also suffers from the fact that we tend to take a rather simple and inarticulate contemporary notion of reason for granted and to project it back on ancient philosophers. We tend to think of reason primarily as a formal ability to reason, as an ability to process data with which reason is provided from the outside, and to which, perhaps, it is neutral, in such a way as to calculate what it is reasonable to assume given certain assumptions, or as to calculate what it is reasonable to opt for given certain preferences. This is a gross over-simplification of how we tend to think of reason, and correspondingly of rationality, but it may suffice as a foil against which we can see more clearly two crucial features which the notions of reason as conceived of by Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, or the Stoics, all share, however different they may be in other respects or even in the way they incorporate these features.

First, it is part of the notion of reason according to these philosophers that reason has its own needs and desires. The assumption is not merely that there are desires which we have, and only have, because we have certain beliefs; nor that there are desires which are in line with what we believe to be good, advantageous, or conducive to some preferred state; nor that there are desires which we have because we think that it is perfectly reasonable to have

them or even that we ought to have them. The assumption is that at least some desires, like the desire to know the truth, or to obtain what is thought of as good, are desires of reason itself, rather than desires reason merely endorses. It may also be part of this aspect of the notion of reason that reason itself not only has desires, but that the objects of its desires to some extent are fixed, so that it becomes part of what it is to be endowed with reason to have certain preferences, at however high a level of generality these might be fixed.

The second feature which characterizes these notions of reason is that they involve the assumption that it is part of having reason, of being rational, to make certain assumptions about the world. Whereas we tend to think of reason as what allows us to form beliefs, ideally to form reasonable beliefs, perhaps even to acquire knowledge, to move from a completely uninformed state to a state of at least partial knowledge, the assumption here is that reason is at least in part constituted by a basic knowledge and understanding of things without which we could not even begin to do anything which is worthy of the name 'thinking' or 'reasoning', without which we cannot even begin to talk of 'reason' or 'rationality'.

It should be obvious that these assumptions make a crucial difference to how we conceive of reason and rationality, and hence I will consider them in greater detail, though their consideration within the limits of this introduction will have to be rather dogmatic and somewhat simplified. In this way, it is hoped, the issues will stand out more clearly.

To turn then first to the assumption of a desiderative or voluntative aspect of reason, it seems that the later emergence of the notion of the will has crucially affected modern conceptions of reason. However questionable the notion of the will may seem to us, it has had the effect that reason has come to be seen as having a merely cognitive function. Even when one abandoned the notion of the will, one did not restore to reason the desiderative aspect which had once been presumed to belong to it, though it had been this presumption which had led to the notion of the will in the first place. But, if we look at Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, they all attribute a desiderative or voluntative function to reason itself.

It is notoriously difficult to say anything historically reliable

about Socrates. But Socrates in Plato's *Protagoras* is presented as suggesting a view which markedly differs from the view presented in later dialogues, for instance the *Republic*. Moreover, it is a view which down to small details bears so much resemblance to the view of the Stoics that, given certain further considerations, one is very much inclined to think that the Stoics, relying, among other things, on the *Protagoras*, took this to have been already Socrates' view which they set out to develop further. The view is that all emotion or desire is just belief of a certain kind, that it is invariably a matter of having some expectation that a good or an evil is coming one's way or of having the thought that a good or an evil has come one's way. Thus to be afraid is to think that an evil may overcome one (358d5-7). Hence Socrates can take the position that nobody acts against his beliefs (358b7, c7, d1), rather than the weaker position that nobody acts against his better knowledge, because there is nothing but beliefs which could motivate us. On this view, trivially, all desires, in being beliefs, are desires of reason.

Plato and Aristotle departed from this view by introducing desires which are irrational in the sense that they do not have their origin in reason, but in an irrational part, or irrational parts, of the soul which has a certain degree of autonomy. Thus what one feels or desires may be independent of what one believes. But, though Plato and Aristotle, unlike Socrates, are willing to grant this, they still hold on to the view that some desires are desires of reason. It is unclear whether this, upon further analysis, turns out to be more than the claim that there are thoughts or beliefs of such a kind that the mere having of the thought or belief on its own is a sufficient motive to act. In any case, that Plato holds the view that there are desires of reason is apparent from his argument for the division of the soul in *Republic* 4 (437bff). It is crucially based on the assumption that there are conflicting desires which we can only understand, Plato argues, if we assume that there are different parts of the soul, each with its own needs and interests, in which the conflicting desires have their origin. Thus Plato there not only explicitly speaks of desires of reason, he also is firmly committed to this view to the extent that the division of the soul is based on it. For it is based on the assumption that there may be a desire which conflicts with a desire of reason and hence must have its origin in a non-rational part of the soul. What Aristotle's position may be is a more complicated and more controversial matter. The traditional

interpretation, not surprisingly, has it that for Aristotle the motive force for our action has its source in a non-rational desire. But in general, and more specifically in the *Ethics*, it seems to me Aristotle is better understood on the assumption that he attributes motive force to reason itself and distinguishes between desires of reason and desires of the irrational part of the soul. Thus, when in the *Nicomachean Ethics* I. 13 he tries to establish the basis for his distinctions between intellectual and moral virtue by distinguishing an irrational part of the soul from a rational part, he seems to rely for the latter distinction on an argument reminiscent of Plato's *Republic*. He refers, for instance, to the inclinations of the weak-willed which go in opposite directions (1102<sup>b</sup>21). This is supposed to suggest that reason inclines us one way and that hence there must be something else which inclines us in the opposite direction. But that reason inclines us in a certain way is most naturally understood as meaning that this would be how we would act, unless something else intervened. Aristotle repeatedly, in a way again reminiscent of the *Republic*, distinguishes three kinds of desire (*orexis*) which might move us to do something, *boulesis*, *thymos*, and *epithymia* (cf. *de An.* 414<sup>b</sup>2, 433<sup>a</sup>23 ff.; *Rhet.* 1369<sup>a</sup>1-7; *EE* 1223<sup>a</sup>27; cf. *MM* 1187<sup>b</sup>36-7). *Boulesis*, as opposed to *thymos* and *epithymia*, standardly is characterized as the desire characteristic of reason (for instance, *Rhet.* 1369<sup>a</sup>1-3). It is a desire for the good which one does not have unless one takes something to be good (ibid. 3-4). The suggestion is not that one has a rational desire, a *boulesis*, if one has a non-rational desire for something, a *thymos* or an *epithymia*, and it also happens to be the case that one believes that what one non-rationally desires is good. For a non-rational desire is not inherently a desire for what is good, though it may be a desire for something which in fact is good. If then the desire of reason inherently is a desire for what is good, a *boulesis* cannot be a non-rational desire for something accompanied by the recognition, or at least the belief, that what is desired is good.

Things are uncontroversial when we turn to the Stoics. At least down to Posidonius (though I doubt whether even Posidonius constitutes an exception, as much as Galen in *De dogmatica Hippocraticis et Platonis* may want to make us believe this), the Stoics think that we are exclusively moved by reason, because the soul in a narrow sense is nothing but reason. More specifically they

think that we are impelled to act by giving assent to a certain kind of impression (*phantasia hormetike*, *Stob. Ecl.* 2. 86. 18), thus accepting a belief. All emotions or passions are such impulses and thus beliefs, fear, anger, pain, pleasure, desire. What distinguishes impulsive impressions from ordinary impressions, and impulses from ordinary beliefs, is that they are accompanied by a more radical change in the organism, e.g. in alerting the person or in reading the person to act. What distinguishes emotions or passions from natural impulses is that they involve ascribing the predicates 'good' or 'bad' to something which does not deserve it, because at best it is something to be preferred or to be dispreferred, like health or illness, life or death, pleasure or pain, good or ill repute, none of which, on the Stoic view, are good or bad. So all desire is a desire of reason in that it is a judgement, though one embedded in a highly complex state. Thus Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics assume that there are desires of reason; indeed Socrates and the Stoics seem to assume that all desires are desires of reason.

To turn to the second striking feature of these notions of reason, it seems to be assumed that it is constitutive of reason to have disposed already of certain beliefs, if not knowledge, about the world. Again it is difficult to form a view as to what Socrates might have thought. But the way he is presented in particular in Plato's earlier dialogues makes one think that he set out to show that people lacked knowledge concerning the questions which matter for the way we live our lives, by bringing them to contradict themselves on such a question they ideally would know the answer to. Moreover, one gets the impression that Socrates would 'refute' them, would make them contradict themselves, even if they initially had given the correct answer. Finally, one easily gets the impression that Socrates thinks that this kind of questioning might ultimately lead to knowledge, might ultimately put one into a position where no amount of questioning or arguing could force one rationally to contradict or even to abandon one's thesis. It is notoriously a puzzle how Socrates may think this. On the whole one is inclined to think that Socrates presupposes that, as far as the important questions are concerned, we, directly or indirectly, already do have the right answers, except that we are so confused that we also have the wrong answers, either directly or indirectly, in so far as we have beliefs which entail the wrong answer. This is what puts

Socrates into a position to refute anybody whatever he says. It is not the case that Socrates' interlocutors would need to uncover new facts to make themselves immune to Socratic refutation. They know all they have to know to defend themselves. What does them in is that in each case they, in their confusion, also hold incompatible beliefs. So it is not the case that, to make themselves immune to Socratic refutation, they have to acquire new beliefs. They rather have to abandon all the false beliefs which are incompatible with their true beliefs. And the question is how they manage to do this, rather than ending up having discarded all their true beliefs incompatible with their false beliefs. The answer to this obviously is that it is impossible to have just false beliefs. But an answer may also be that, for one reason or another, not all true beliefs are eliminable. One reason would be that merely speaking a language presupposes certain true beliefs. We remember that Socrates in the *Meno* (82b4) assures himself that the young slave does speak Greek. But whatever Socrates' answer to the question is, he seems to presuppose that, at least in the domain he is concerned with, we all, directly or at least indirectly, already do have the right answers to the questions he poses and that the problem rather is due to the fact that in our confusion we also hold incompatible false beliefs and thus do not manage to hold on rationally to the true beliefs.

[Plato, for instance in the *Phaedo* or in the *Timaeus*, suggests a view which would explain the state Socrates seems to presuppose, namely a state in which in some sense we confusedly already know the right answers to the important questions. On this view, when reason or the soul, which pre-exists, enters the body upon birth, it does so already disposing of the knowledge of the Forms, though it gets confused by its union with the body, a confusion it only recovers from to some degree mainly through sustained philosophical effort, recollecting the truths it had known before entering the body. But it is only when it is released from the body, freed from the disturbances involved in its union with the body, and free to pursue its own concerns, rather than having to concern itself with the needs of the body, or other concerns it only has made its own, that it again has unhindered access to the truth. It is often thought by commentators that reason or the soul is supposed to have acquired this knowledge with which it enters into the body in its disembodied state when it had unhindered access to the truth. This is hardly plausible, unless we assume that the soul not only had pre-

existed eternally, but also eternally had been subjected to incarnation, and even then it seems questionable. If we just assume that the soul eternally exists prior to its embodiment, it is difficult to see why Plato should, or even how he could, assume that the soul only acquires this knowledge at a certain point prior to its entering the body. It would rather seem that reason has known these truths all along. And from there it is but a short step to the assumption that this knowledge is what constitutes reason in the first place. But in any case Plato suggests, and Aristotle takes him to assume (*APo.* B19. 99<sup>b</sup>25 ff.), that the reason we are born with already possesses a fundamental knowledge of things, in terms of which, however confusedly, we are able to think about the world and understand things.

Both Aristotle and the Stoics reject this view of an innate knowledge. But, some appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, they do not reject it because they think that we are born with reason, but that this reason at birth is a *tabula rasa*. They reject it because they think that we are not born with knowledge. And since they assume that it is constitutive of reason to have a fundamental knowledge of things, they argue that reason only emerges in the course of our development precisely to the degree that we acquire this grasp on, and knowledge of, things which makes thinking and reasoning, properly speaking, possible in the first place. Aristotle quite explicitly says (*APo.* B19. 100<sup>a</sup>2) that reason only comes into being as we come to acquire the appropriate concepts of things and thereby the knowledge of things and their principles which the mastery of these concepts embodies. And the Stoics, as is well known, claim that children are irrational animals which only turn into rational beings, as their irrational soul in its entirety is converted into reason, when they acquire the stock of common notions, naturally shared by all human beings, whose possession for the Stoics constitutes reason (Galen, *De dogm. Hipp. et Plat.* 5. 3. 1 = *SVF* ii. 841).

These, then, are two striking features of the notions of reason under consideration. In order to at least begin to understand these features something more must be said about the underlying conception of reason. Very roughly speaking, the conception would appear to be this: that it is the function of reason to determine the course of action we take, indeed the course of our life, by making us do what it wants us to do. To the extent that we can see that saying that reason wants us to do this or that is not just a manner of

speaking, but can be taken literally, we can see why one may talk of desires of reason. Moreover, it is clear that for reason to fulfil this function of guiding and determining our life well, it does have to have a certain knowledge or expertise.

As soon as we begin to look at the details, we notice, though, that this very general conception takes rather different forms with the different philosophers we are considering. Let us begin with Socrates. As is well known, Socrates is motivated by the consideration that we should put our mind to questions which really matter, namely questions relevant to the issue how we, as citizens and as individuals, should lead our lives; and that, if we put our mind to these matters with the same determination with which people have been trying to improve mining, shipbuilding, commerce, or theories about the world, we might make some real progress, whereas in the one area that really matters we remain strangely confused and unenlightened. We need to become clear and enlightened about how one lives a life.

Socrates also appears to have a conception of human beings in which it is not only important, but decisive, which beliefs one holds. He has a substantial conception of the soul, greatly emphasizing the need to be concerned with the well-being of one's soul rather than external matters. And he seems to think of the soul as a mind or a reason whose state and well-being is determined by its beliefs. He apparently takes the view that, however absurd, misguided, despicable, irrational actions may seem to be, they are invariably the result of a person's beliefs. People would not do what they do, however strange it may seem, unless for some specifiable reason they believed that it was a good thing to do. Hence he assumes that life, what people do, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, is entirely guided by reason. Indeed, it seems to be the sole function of reason to do precisely this, to determine what we do and how we live. It is striking that in Plato's *Protagoras* (352b4) Socrates is made to characterize reason as 'leading' or 'guiding', using the very term (*hegemonikon*) with which later the Stoics will standardly refer to reason, and this precisely in a context in which Socrates is made to deny that there is anything which could overcome reason, that anybody ever acts against his beliefs. Now, in order to fulfil this function well it is obvious that reason ideally has to have the relevant knowledge. And hence it is this knowledge we should be concerned to acquire.

Plato and Aristotle in significant ways will depart from this view, whereas the Stoics will return to a more complex version of it. To begin with, whereas Socrates had thought that there was no need to gain theoretical knowledge about the world or reality and that perhaps it was even impossible to do so, since it was not the function of reason to gain such knowledge, both Plato and Aristotle disagreed. They thought that it was crucial not only for a good life, but also for an understanding of how to live well, to have an adequate general understanding of the world. Moreover, though they granted that it was a function of reason to determine the way we live, they, each in their own way, did not think that this was the sole function of reason. Plato rather seems to have thought that guiding us through our embodied life is a function which reason takes on, but that it, left to itself, is concerned to theoretically understand things quite generally. Aristotle's position is yet more complex in that he thinks that pursuing the concerns of reason itself is a crucial, if not the decisive, part of living well. Furthermore, though both Plato and Aristotle think that it is a function of reason to determine the way we live, they assume that reason may fail to do so. Given the supposed autonomy of desire or an irrational part of the soul, limited though it may be, there is no guarantee that reason determines what we do. The claim becomes that reason ought to determine what we do, and that it will do so when it functions well.

The Stoics depart from Socrates, and agree with Plato and Aristotle, in assuming that in order to live well, and to know how to live well, we do need a general understanding of the world and our place in it, but they return to the view that the sole function of knowledge, and hence also of this knowledge about the world, is to guide us in our life, and that the sole function of reason is to determine our life; they deny that there is an irrational part of the soul which could prevent reason from in fact determining our life, and they think that the quality of our life is entirely dependent on the quality of our reason. Hence the aim becomes to perfect reason so as to be able to lead a perfectly rational life, solely determined by an understanding of the good.

Against this background we can return to the question why reason should be thought to be at least in part constituted by knowledge. The question is most easily answered in the case of Stoicism. The Stoics have a view of the world as providentially

ordered in which human beings are constructed in such a way as to act for reasons rather than on impulse, and ideally for the right reasons. To put them into a position to survive by and large and ideally to act in the right way for the right reasons, nature constructs them in such a way as to gain a fundamental knowledge of the world which allows them to orientate themselves in the world, and which serves as a secure basis relying on which they can come to acquire the knowledge which will allow them to act in the right way for the right reasons. Nature achieves this by constructing human beings in such a way that they naturally and normally acquire notions, the so-called common notions, notions of perceptible features, but also of kinds of things, even of gods, notions which allow them to distinguish things adequately, which thus embody some knowledge about things, and notions in terms of which we can begin to think about things. That is to say, human beings could not even begin to think about things unless they had these notions and thus a fundamental knowledge about things. Thus to have reason involves having this knowledge.

Aristotle does not believe in a providentially ordered world, but he does think that organisms have to be understood teleologically, as naturally tending to achieve full development and perfection in their kind, unless they are handicapped or their development is thwarted. Since we naturally do have reason and since reason functions best, and serves its function best, if we do have the requisite knowledge, he assumes that we must be constructed in such a way as to be able to acquire the knowledge reason needs to function well. And he, too, thinks that he can explain this by assuming that there is a process which leads, on the basis of perception and memory, not only to our having concepts, but to our having concepts which are adequate to the way things essentially are, and which thus provide us with basic knowledge about things, but also with the ability to think and reason about things, properly speaking, instead of, for instance, just having impressions or even generalized impressions of things.

As to Plato, it would seem that he thinks that a state of knowledge is the natural state of reason, that what needs to be explained is not how it manages to acquire this knowledge, but rather how and why it lost this natural state, how and why the knowledge it somehow has is latent, inoperative.

Given such a conception of reason, it is clear that the corresponding conception of rationality will be highly complex, indeed that there will be significantly different conceptions of rationality corresponding to the different notions of reason under such a conception of reason. Rationality will, of course, involve adherence to the formal canons of reason. But this involves more than the mere formal ability to see what follows from what and what is incompatible with what. If one holds a belief which is incompatible with another belief, the explanation may be, not that one lacks a sufficiently developed sense for incompatibility, but that the belief one holds on to in spite of its incompatibility with some other belief is so firmly lodged in the way one is used to thinking and feeling about things that it is not easily displaced by having it pointed out to one that it is incompatible with a belief we are, and should be, unwilling to discard. It seems to be particularly important to keep this in mind in the case of extremely intellectualistic positions like that of Socrates or that of the Stoics, for whom even desires are beliefs of a kind. They certainly do not assume that ridding oneself, or others, of mistaken beliefs is just a matter of cogent argument. In particular the Stoics, and especially later Stoics, pay a great deal of attention to the treatment of irrational beliefs or propensities to believe. Part of the reason why it is important to keep this in mind is that it helps to understand why later the view becomes prominent that it may be our inordinate desires which stand in the way of our being able to see the truth. If such desires are mistaken beliefs, or even just if they involve mistaken beliefs in one way or another (for instance by rationalization), these beliefs stand in the way of our seeing the relevant truths, or at least of maintaining a firm grasp on them.

It is also, as we have said, a matter of rationality to have certain true beliefs and to be attached to the good, if not also to particular goods, for instance to knowledge of the truth, in particular the knowledge which is needed to live well. Now, if it is at least a function, if not the function, of reason to determine what we are going to do in the light of this knowledge, a whole series of problems arises over how the general knowledge reason disposes of helps it to determine what to do in the particular case. This problem is particularly acute, since ancient philosophers do not assume, or even reject the assumption, that there is an antecedently



given set of general truths, or rules, from which one could infer in a particular case what needs to be done in this case. This, again, is a large topic, and I will restrict myself here to two observations.

To do what is appropriate in a given situation requires a judgement. From the fact that there is no set of antecedent general assumptions which covers all possible cases in a way which does justice to all of them and which would allow us to deduce what is appropriate in the particular case at hand, it does not follow that the judgement must to some degree be arbitrary. It is a rational judgement, for instance, in that one can satisfactorily explain and justify it in any amount of detail. But the form of explanation here is not that of theoretical explanation. What Aristotle does is to distinguish two kinds of general knowledge which one needs in order to be perfectly rational and to live well: theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge. They are relevant for our life in different ways. The theoretical knowledge provides us, among other things, with a theoretical understanding of human beings, of what is distinctive about them, of how they function, even of what their end is and of the fact that they have to involve themselves in attaining this end. But there is also the practical knowledge, which does not serve the need to know and to do what needs to be done if we are to live well, if we are to attain the end. The bodies of knowledge are not isolated against each other. A better understanding of what needs to be done, attempts to do it, and reflection on these attempts and their results may lead to a better theoretical understanding, and vice versa. For this and other reasons theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom can only be had jointly. But the crucial point is that the rationality involved in coming, on the basis of one's practical knowledge, to a correct judgement in a particular case is formally rather different from the rationality involved in coming to understand a particular fact in virtue of one's theoretical knowledge. Hence there is a notion of practical rationality in Aristotle. What this, though, precisely amounts to is far from clear in Aristotle.

Another problem concerning rationality is raised by the Stoics. Claims sometimes made to the contrary notwithstanding, even the Stoic sage is not omniscient. He disposes of a general body of knowledge in virtue of which he has a general understanding of the world. But this knowledge does not put him into a position to know

what he is supposed to do in a concrete situation. It does not even allow him to know all the facts which are relevant to a decision in a particular situation. He, for instance, does not know whether the ship he considers embarking will reach its destination. The Stoic emphasis on intention, as opposed to the outcome or the consequences of an action, in part is due to the assumption that the outcome, as opposed to the intention, is a matter of fate and hence not only not, or at least not completely, under our control, but also, as a rule, unknown to us. Therefore, even the perfect rationality of the sage is a rationality which relies on experience and conjecture, and involves following what is reasonable or probable. It is crucially a perfect rationality under partial ignorance.

Needless to say, the implicit contrast between divine provident omniscience and human ignorance further encouraged questions, pursued at great length in late antiquity, about the compatibility between divine foreknowledge and fate, on the one hand, and human responsibility and freedom, on the other.

We have been considering the notion of reason as it is developed by Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, a notion of reason according to which reason has the function to guide us in our lives, a function which it can exercise because it is a cognitive ability which provides us with the necessary knowledge about the world, but also the ability to recognize what is good and to move us towards it. In particular we have focused on two aspects of this notion: the assumption that it was constitutive of reason to have disposed already of a basic knowledge about the world, and the assumption that reason has its own desires. We have focused on this, because it is what gives this notion a very distinctive character, easily overlooked and not sufficiently taken into account. But in emphasizing these aspects we should not completely lose sight of other features connected with this notion.

Of these, three should at least be mentioned here. The first is that we are not captive to the way things strike us, let alone to first impressions, but in virtue of reason are able, to some extent at least, to discriminate between the true and the false. We are in part able to do this because we can reason and discriminate between valid and invalid argument. Thus we can see something to be true, if we see that it follows from something else we see to be true. But this ability can be perfected by an art and its exercise, namely dialectic or logic. Hence this art is also conceived of as a method to

arrive at the truth. A lot of philosophical effort in antiquity went into the development of this art. In particular Aristotle and his students, but then also the Stoics, developed sophisticated formal theories of argument. But it has to be remembered that they did so within the context of a method aimed at obtaining the truth, more specifically scientific knowledge, the knowledge requisite for a good life. This conception of logic or dialectic was so much tied to the conception of reason we have been considering that those who did not share such a notion of reason also rejected logic or dialectic, as it was then understood, as, for instance, the Epicureans, the Empiricists, the Methodists, and—in a different way, of course—both Academic and Pyrrhonian Sceptics. Second, the knowledge logic or dialectic aimed at was conceived of not primarily as a mere knowledge of facts, or a knowledge which could be extended to arrive at further and new facts, but as a knowledge which provided understanding, ideally complete understanding. After all, part of the reason why a good life was thought to require knowledge was that it was thought to require a certain understanding of the world and one's position in it, in order to be able to respond adequately to the situation one finds oneself in. But this demand in turn had the effect that one tried to conceive of reason in such a way that it would be able to meet this demand of providing understanding. This brings us to a third point. Reason even in its merely cognitive aspect was thought to involve a variety of abilities. One important distinction that was made, though in rather different ways, was the distinction between the intellect (*noûs*) in a narrow sense, in virtue of which we intellectually instruct or grasp fundamental items or fundamental truths, and discursive reason, in virtue of which we grasp truths or derivative truths. And, given a distinction along these lines, it would be assumed that understanding ultimately depended on an intellectual grasp of fundamental items or fundamental truths. These remarks, I hope, suffice at least to indicate some of the major topics a good deal of reflection was devoted to down to the end of antiquity.

One thing which clearly emerges from our earlier considerations, even if one disagrees with some of the details, is that the history of the conception of the mind and of reason down to the Stoics can be understood, and presumably is best understood, in terms of a rather limited number of clearly identifiable philosophical considerations in response to what at least was assumed to be Socrates'

position. So it would seem that historically the decisive step was taken by Socrates in conceiving of human beings as being run by a mind or reason. And the evidence strongly suggests that Socrates did not take a notion of reason which had been there all along and assume, more or less plausibly, that reason as thus conceived, or as somewhat differently conceived, could fulfil the role he envisaged for it, but that he postulated an entity whose precise nature and function then was a matter of considerable philosophical debate, and that it was this entity which is the ancestor of our reason, rather than some ability or part of us which had been acknowledged all along.

But, however one thinks of the matter and prefers to describe it, one can hardly want to doubt that Socrates' assumption about the constitution of human beings constituted a crucial step in the history of the notion of the mind and that for this step he could rely on antecedents. For it seems clear enough that what Socrates actually did was to take a substantial notion of the soul and then try to understand the soul thus substantially conceived of as a mind or reason. By 'a substantial notion of the soul' I do not mean a notion according to which the soul is the kind of insubstantial shadow of a person presented at times in Homer, or some life-giving substance which quickens the body, but a notion according to which the soul accounts not only for a human being's being alive, but for its doing whatever it does, and which perhaps, though not necessarily, is rather like what we would call the self. This was not a common conception, it seems, even in Socrates' time, but it was widespread and familiar enough under the influence of non-traditional religious beliefs, reflected, for instance, in Pythagoreanism. And it seems to have been such a substantial notion of the soul which Socrates took and interpreted as consisting in a mind or reason.

And, of course, there are also antecedents for his conception of reason and the importance he attaches to it. But to see this in perspective we might as well, at least briefly, return to earlier Greek philosophy, in fact to its beginnings. At the very origin of traditional accounts of the world which turned out to conflict with each other and in some regards to stretch one's credulity unduly, one could come up with an account of one's own, if one put one's mind to it, an account which one could explain and defend and of

whose truth or plausibility one could persuade others, especially if one relied on observations familiar enough and considerations of a kind we also use in everyday life. The fact that one could do this must have come as a surprise, but it would have fitted the idea that traditional ways of going about things do not have to be accepted and that, if one puts one's mind to it, one may be able to think of better ways and to persuade others to adopt the new ways, in politics, in technology, and in other areas of culture. But, obviously, one can assume that people came to think along these lines without also having to assume that there was a change in the very character of thinking, a change from mythical thought to rational thought; and certainly without assuming that people now began to think about what it is to be rationally thinking about something, or even that they now discovered reason. One just has to assume that they came to think that a domain of discourse could be subjected to the kinds of considerations they had been used to all along and which had been applied with conspicuous success in some other areas of life.

Serious reason for reflection concerning the very nature of this thinking, or of thought in general, philosophers only came to have once this enterprise was well under way. This is not the place to consider this complex matter in detail. And perhaps for our purposes it will suffice to consider just one very striking case which would, and it seems did, give abundant reason for reflection. When we come to Parmenides we see that the confidence in the power of thought has become very strong. Strong it had to be, for otherwise Parmenides hardly would have set out to convince us that the world is quite radically different from what we think it is. Whereas we think that there is a colourful, infinitely varied, ever shifting and changing manifold of things, in truth there is just one thing which never came to be, never will pass away, which does not move or change, is entirely homogeneous, and has none of the features we are accustomed to attribute to things. Indeed, Parmenides seems to be awed by the power of thought which would yield such a conclusion. For he at least presents it as a revelation. That in this he follows a literary tradition should not be taken to mean that Parmenides is merely following a literary convention in presenting his thought as a revelation. It is no wonder that he has to work very hard to persuade us given his conclusion. He obviously tries to find an argument which, given that the premiss is indubitably true

(namely that if we take something to find out what can be said about it, the first thing we have to assume is that it is something which is), will force us to grant the conclusion on pain of appearing singularly dense or dishonest or unfair. It is a closely knit argument which for the first time reveals a sense for the logical force of argument which will be even more evident in Zeno, though, of course, neither Parmenides nor Zeno are able to conceptualize the matter in this way. But there is an awareness that the Way of Truth, the method to reach the truth, involves that one submits one's thinking to certain canons which then later dialectic or logic will be thought to codify. Aristotle at times (cf. *Sophist*, frag. 1, Ross) suggests that Zeno was the founder of dialectic.

Parmenides does not think, as we might suspect he does, especially if we also think of Heraclitus, that there is some mysterious ability in us to attain such surprising truth, if we only would avail ourselves of it. It is not in this sense that he discovers reason. He rather thinks that ordinary mortals do not manage to think straight by following the canons one has to respect if one wants to attain the truth. They are ready, for instance, to contradict themselves from one sentence to the next. He tells us in *The Way of Opinion* what the world looks like if one relaxes the canons of thought in a minimal way. Part of this picture (cf. frag. B16) is an intellect (*nous*) which obviously is supposed to explain thought and cognition as of like by like. But not only is this not Parmenides' own view of reality, it is a picture which is extremely primitive and schematic in its conception of cognition; moreover, it fails to address one obvious problem Parmenides' theory raises, and it does not form part of a theoretical view of how human beings work and what roles cognition and thought play in this. The obvious problem it does not address is this: how does it come about that, if reality is the way Parmenides describes it, we nevertheless perceive it the way we do? It was Democritus who took up this problem, and, in taking it up, had to face the question of the relative roles of thought and perception in cognition. He thus, instead of having a vague and indefinite notion of some cognitive power of thought, came nearer to having a notion of reason by trying to determine more precisely the relative role of thought in cognition. Unfortunately Democritus' thought is preserved highly selectively, and there is not much evidence concerning his views on the soul. But given that he thought of philosophy as providing therapy for the afflic-

tions of the soul, it would seem that he, too, had a substantive notion of the soul integrating perception, thought, belief, and desire in some systematic way. And so we, finally, come at least fairly close to a notion of reason, as we find it from Socrates onwards.

Thus it seems that a clear acknowledgement of a distinct cognitive ability which at the same time, at least unless there is a missing function, determines what we do, seems to be missing in pre-Socratic thought, though we find antecedents of it. Indeed, Aristotle repeatedly claimed (*de An.* 404<sup>a</sup>27–<sup>b</sup>6, 427<sup>a</sup>21 ff.; *Metaph.* Γ 1009<sup>b</sup>12 ff.) that earlier thinkers had not clearly recognized reason as a distinct cognitive ability, to be distinguished from sense and perception.

When reason was given its decisive role, there was at least a strong current of optimistic thought that if we just put our mind to it we would be able to acquire the knowledge needed to live well. Some generations of philosophical endeavour were enough to dampen this optimism. The endeavours of Speusippus and Xenocrates and their followers, for instance, could hardly be said to have secured firm knowledge, or a good life, for those who pursued this knowledge. Philosophers radically disagreed with each other, and they did not seem to find a way to resolve their differences.

One reaction to this situation was scepticism. I will not here go into the details of the sceptical movement, but just mention some of its consequences. Scepticism in particular undermined the confidence that reason ever would be able to provide us with certain knowledge of the general truths in the light of which we would be able to live wisely and well. It did this so effectively that even in later antiquity, when scepticism no longer was perceived as an important and live issue, there was some uncertainty about the status of claims to philosophical knowledge. But radical scepticism not only questioned whether philosophical claims were known or even could be known, to be true, it even questioned whether we had any reason to believe them to be true. This suggested that perhaps we can live well without any beliefs concerning the matters discussed by philosophers, though supposedly knowledge in these matters is at least necessary, if not sufficient, for a good life. It even suggested that the wisest and most rational thing to do was to have no beliefs concerning such matters, if one wanted to live well.

Needless to say, one major reaction to this was to claim that a life without such beliefs lacked aim and orientation and could not possibly succeed, and that hence one just had to adopt a position which, upon due consideration, seemed plausible to one, in order to be able to live rationally. This view might be strengthened by the view that the position which one chose was not just a matter of subjective plausibility, but that the diligence with which one went about choosing it lent it some cognitive status, though never enough to turn it into a matter of certain knowledge. But it also easily turned into the view that it ultimately was just a matter of faith which position one adopted on these fundamental questions, that ultimately one just had to make a choice between the different options on offer.

Thus the status of assumptions which in later antiquity were more and more regarded as fundamental and decisive for the way one lived, for instance concerning the existence of God, divine providence, the nature and the fate of the soul, was left rather dubious.

Hence the question arose whether our inability to see the truth clearly on these vital issues was just a matter of an inherent weakness of reason or whether it rather was a matter of the deplorable state our reason happened to be in.

Platonists here had a problem of their own. Ever since they actually had begun to seriously study Plato's dialogues again, they had to deal with the fact that according to Plato's *Republic* (6. 509b) the Idea of the Good, the source of all being and all intelligibility, itself is beyond being and intelligibility. Given that they identified the Good with the One of the first hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*, and both the Good and the One with God, or at least God the Father, they seemed to be committed to the view that God, the first principle, is beyond intellectual cognition in the best of circumstances. Even if we were to be able to restore the intellect to its pristine clarity and power, it would not be able to see more than the plurality of ideas and thus eternal truth, but not the source of this truth. A great deal of philosophical effort was spent to consider various philosophical and non-philosophical ways to bridge the gulf. I will not pursue them here except to mention that one sometimes, for instance in the *Hermetica* (e.g. I. 1. 21), finds the suggestion that this cognitive step requires divine help, or grace.

But, not surprisingly, Platonists also thought that our difficulty in reaching clarity in philosophical matters, and in overcoming the disagreements among philosophers, was due to the deplorable state of reason in its union with the body. What was needed, it was thought, was a detachment from earthly matters, a purification of the soul, and thus a liberation of the intellect from the distortions in its thinking brought about by its improper attachment to worldly things, to allow it to see the truth. What perhaps is surprising is that we find this kind of thinking and a tendency towards asceticism also in Stoics, for instance in Attalus and in Chaeremon in the first century AD.

In both Stoics and Platonists we also find another diagnosis for the corruption of reason. It is thought that society is corrupt, that the Hellenistic age was a disaster, that we should return to the Ancients, who bear testimony of the wisdom of an incorrupt age, which testimony, though, needs to be interpreted. This return to the Ancients, not only Greek, but also barbarian, has many facets and forms. It involves the idea that we in our corrupt state will have access to the truth only by relying on some authority or authorities to guide us in the search for the truth. It is crucial that it also tends to be assumed that once we have found the truth, we see and understand it on our own and for this no longer depend on authority. Thus Plato, in particular of course by Platonists, is regarded as an authority, as a repository of the true philosophy. And philosophical work is regarded, for instance by Plotinus, as a matter of recovering the philosophical insight which Plato had had by interpreting the dialogues. But Platonist philosophers also will not refuse to seek guidance from what they take to be divinely inspired texts like the Orphic poems or the Chaldean Oracles. We find the same attitude in Christian writers like Clement, Origen, and Augustine, in particular the early Augustine, except that for them, of course, it will be Scripture which constitutes the authoritative text. But they, too, believe that, given the guidance of Scripture, we can attain a rational understanding of the truth which is independent of authority. One has to begin by believing to reach understanding, but the understanding once reached no longer involves a reference to authority. If they think that to attain such an understanding we need divine help, they do not differ from a pagan who might begin his lecture with an invocation of God.

If we follow the history of reason from Socrates to late antiquity,

we may think that what started out as a somewhat optimistic attempt at a rational approach to life, private and public, had turned into an invitation to irrationality. But we should not forget that a late ancient reader of Plato's dialogues and letters would find his own view already adumbrated there.

Since antiquity the notion of reason has undergone enormous changes. But some of the most important of them were already set in antiquity. One major factor in the development of these changes is Christianity. It is standard Christian doctrine that human beings are born with a newly created rational soul. Augustine even at the end of his life had not been able to decide between a number of different views about the origin of the soul, including the view that the soul pre-existed, as long as it was clear that it had been created out of nothing. But the view of a pre-existing soul came to be so closely associated with Origenism that it was generally rejected. Now, a newly existing rational soul is not the kind of soul which brings with it the knowledge it had in its previous existence. It also is not a soul which develops into a mind or reason by developing the knowledge which is constitutive of reason. Not is it a soul which develops into a rational soul as it develops the concepts and the knowledge which allow it to grasp and understand things. It is, already to begin with, a soul with reason, but no knowledge. There are, of course, various ways to provide it with knowledge, if this on other grounds, is deemed necessary. But the simple necessary link between having reason and being endowed with a certain knowledge is broken. Moreover, this rational soul is supposed to be endowed with a free will. This is thought to be part of what it is to be rational, thus revealing the continued assumption of an intrinsic link between reason and action. Already Origen, for instance, claimed this to be the teaching of the Church (*de Princ.* 3. 1. 1), though it becomes clear from his own remarks that this in his day was not yet so, if we understand 'teaching' in a technical sense. To say that a rational soul is endowed with a free will is to say that what a person does, though it very much depends on what the person believes and desires, does not necessarily depend entirely on the person's beliefs and desires. It also depends on the person's will. Given a certain situation, it is not impossible that a person with certain beliefs and certain desires should act otherwise than the person actually does, given the very same desires and beliefs. This notion of the will, at least on the face of it, leaves very little room

for the assumption that reason has its own desires, which might conflict with our ordinary desires. It now seems to be the will which, if anything, is in conflict with our desires. Thus, given the notion of a non-pre-existent rational soul endowed with a free will, we would expect the notion of reason to develop in the direction of a conception according to which reason is purely cognitive. Thus one can see how, under the influence of Christianity, a notion of reason would tend not to be characterized by the two distinctive features of earlier Greek notions of reason: reason would not be constituted at least in part by knowledge about the world, and it would not have desires of its own, its desiderative aspect being absorbed into a doctrine of the will.

But the notion of the will, or even of the free will, is not an alien intrusion into ancient thought, and I want, in conclusion, to make some remarks about its origin. To understand it, we have to go back to the Stoic conception of reason. As we saw, the Stoics assume that what we do, our whole life, including the way we think and feel about things, is entirely a matter of which impressions reason gives assent to. If reason is weak it gives assent to impressions which it should not give assent to because they are false or because, though they are true, it is rash to give assent to them, as they are not sufficiently clear to warrant assent. Even when it gives assent to impressions which are true in such an evident manner that it is not rash to assent to them, its assent might be so weak that it cannot be counted on to be able to hold on to its grasp of things. It might not be firm and constant in its beliefs and thus in its desires. This weakness, as we have seen, though a weakness of reason, is not just a matter of intellectual weakness as we understand it, a failure, for instance, to grasp logical relations. Or rather, even when it is that, it is that in part because one is attached to things in an irrational way which makes it difficult or impossible to consider the impressions in which they are represented in a rational way. Hence strength or weakness of reason, though a purely intellectual matter in the sense that it is just a matter of espousing or not espousing certain beliefs as true, also very much depends on one's emotional attachments.

So which impressions one gives assent to depends on one's beliefs in general, but also in particular on those beliefs which are desires. Hence reason has a general disposition to assent to certain kinds of impressions and thus particularly to certain kinds of impul-

sive impressions, that is impressions assent to which constitutes impulse or the desire to do something, indeed the decision to do something. Epictetus calls this general disposition of reason *prohairesis* (which in Latin is rendered by *voluntas* or *arbitrium*). There is no indication in Epictetus that the will is a separate part or faculty of reason. It is just the general disposition of reason to make certain kinds of choices rather than others. Epictetus enjoins us to be concerned with the kind of will we have. Thus one can desire or want that one's will be different. For it may, as we still say, be a good will or a bad will. For the will to be good is for reason to be firmly attached to the good, according to the Stoics the divinely imposed rational order of things, to see reliably what is good and to decide to do it, motivated by the desire for the good. But reason may also be attached to things which are indifferent, as if they were good, and hence choose and act accordingly. Epictetus also, like earlier Stoics, speaks of our freedom. If we allow ourselves to be attached to external things as if they were good, we enslave ourselves to them, we see things and have impulses in a way which is irrational. We give external things power over us and let them compel us to think and act in a way we would not, if we thought and acted rationally. We allow our assents to be compulsive. Hence in this case we are not free. This view Epictetus and other Stoics hold at the same time as they maintain that everything is determined by fate. The circumstances are determined, and so is our reason and its disposition, and the two together necessitate our assent. But since it is our will which crucially determines whether or not we give assent in given circumstances, we are held responsible, being the sort of people who in these circumstances do give assent, when we should not, as other people do not.

Platonists and Peripatetic philosophers, like Alexander of Aphrodisias, deny fate. Platonist philosophers, for instance, deny fate because they think that the intellect is not part of nature and thus not subject to the causal chain of nature, unless it attaches itself to things like the body which are subject to determination. Thus in its pre-existence, prior to its embodiment, it may well not have been subject to determination at all, if it did not feel any attachment to physical things and thus would not be affected by their fate. But, when it is embodied and does feel attached to the body and external things, it may get so totally absorbed by these attachments as to lose its autonomy altogether, so as to let its

desires be completely determined by these attachments. Now the pre-existing intellect in its 'healthy' state has beliefs and desires, and thus a will, which are not causally determined. It has these beliefs and desires, and thus this will, for reasons. The question is whether its having these reasons not only explains, but also determines, its beliefs and desires. The question is whether it is possible to have all the right beliefs and the right desires for the right reasons and yet, in a certain situation, to give assent to an impression which it is not good to assent to. The Stoic answer clearly is 'no'. We get the notion of a free will in our sense, if the answer is affirmative. And some Platonists clearly believe that an affirmative answer may explain the fall of the intellect or the soul and its embodiment. In their wake Augustine believes that it is precisely this which happened to Adam in Paradise. The will is free to give assent to the wrong impression, even when the mind has all the right desires and beliefs. It might do so, if its attachment to the good is not so strong as to rule this out. Thus, what was the attachment of reason to the good now becomes the attachment of the will to the good which may be firmer or weaker. And so what one does is no longer just a matter of one's beliefs and desires.

Needless to say, this view that it is all ultimately a matter of the love of the good or of God, or in any case of the will, should not be seen as in itself promoting irrationality, but it cannot be emphasized strongly enough how much it affects the conception of reason and rationality and how much it undermines the spirit with which earlier Greek philosophers had set up reason as the arbiter of our life and had sung its praise. But by the time we come to the end of Antiquity, it is hardly surprising that people would have come to take a rather dim and modest view of the ability at least of their reason to govern their life, both as individuals and as a community.

## I

## The Philosophical Economy of Plato's Psychology: Rationality and Common Concepts in the *Timaeus*

DOROTHEA FREDE

### COMMON CONCEPTS AND DIALECTIC

It is and will remain a sound maxim that a Platonic dialogue should not be interpreted in terms of what Plato says elsewhere. Needless to say, however, this maxim is violated by the exegete all the time. And it is all the more tempting to sin against it if Plato introduces seemingly crucial concepts at crucial points in a text, but then leaves it to the reader to fathom the depth of what is merely hinted at in his all too brief remarks. Especially the recurrence of these crucial concepts in different dialogues provokes the attempt to construe a pattern of explanation into which the isolated remarks can be fitted like the pieces of a puzzle. Such constructions cannot be more than conjectural; there is no guarantee that Plato meant us to fit his scattered remarks together to form a neat picture, no matter how 'pregnant' his terminology may seem. But the fact that this is often our only resort is my justification for reading a crucial passage in the *Timaeus* in the light of the results of a line of interpretation that I have developed in an article on the common concepts in the *Theaetetus*.<sup>1</sup> Since the limitations of that article did not allow a further pursuit of this line I am glad for the opportunity to resume the discussion here. I hope that what I have to say on the *Timaeus* can largely stand on its own, but some references to the

<sup>1</sup> 'The Soul's Silent Dialogue: A Non-Aporetic Reading of the *Theaetetus*', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, 215 (1989), 20-49. For a more extensive discussion on similar lines, cf. Allan Silverman, 'Plato on Perception and "Commons"', *Classical Quarterly*, 40 (1990), 148-75.