



SOCRATIC HUMANISM

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With a Foreword by

Robert S. Brumbaugh

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In this sense of the word, *chrema* already implies a "measure," i.e. something in relation to which it is what it is, so that the fragment becomes nearly tautological, or at least trivial, for it takes no great insight or ingenuity to pronounce the relativity of things relative by definition, or to point out that man is the measure of things whose essence depends on man's relationship to them. Taken, however, as a statement of principle at the very beginning of Protagoras' book, there is nothing trivial about the sentence. Narrowing down the contemporary meaning of *chrema*—any thing or object whatsoever—to its original connotations, Protagoras announces a practical program: the things we are concerned with are *chremata*, i.e. things we are decisively related to. There is no point in speaking grandly about what things may or may not be in themselves. What we have to take into account and concentrate on is what they are for us, in the world we live in, in a world in which our relationship to things, our living in the world, is decisive.

If the sentence is understood in this manner, the controversy is largely verbal as to whether the judgments Protagoras holds to be relative are existential or mere judgments of quality and value. Since we are no longer dealing with abstract-theoretical questions concerning things in themselves but with what things are for us, not with absolute but with relative existence, judgments of quality (hot-cold, bitter-sweet) and value (good, bad, fair, just, food, poison) are judgments of existence. The what, how, and that of a *chrema* are determined in, defined by, and dependent on the area of use from which it cannot be abstracted. Without this determinant relation, *chremata* do not exist. There is no need to assign a more precise limit to what "man" denotes in the fragment, for the measure of any *chrema* whatever is neither man as an individual nor man collectively but simply whatever organism (the individual, mankind, the state, plants,

etc.) is in the relation to it which determines its essence and existence (qua *chrema*).¹⁰

The fact that the fragment says "man is the measure of all things" and not that the measure of a thing is that in relation to which it is what it is, i.e. the region into which, as *chrema*, it belongs, in no way conflicts with this conclusion. Protagoras obviously holds¹¹ that the thing a pig, a firefly, a dog-faced baboon, or some still stranger creature may be concerned with is relative to each of these creatures. The point, however, is (and this is what the fragment is designed to emphasize) that we are neither pigs nor dog-faced baboons nor some still stranger creature but human beings, and thus, as far as *we* are concerned, man, whether the individual, the state, or mankind, is the measure of things. If it seems merely tautological at first to say that things of our concern concern us, it is far from trivial to recall this at a time when men appear oblivious of the fact. To remind man at such a time that he is not an abstract-theoretical chimera in communication with objective-immutable absolute essences, but a living human being, to point out that this world of *chremata* is the one in which he lives, the one which ultimately concerns him, and thus to recall him from the world of Parmenides and post-Parmenidean natural philosophy, in which he literally lost himself, into a world of practical action—this is far from trivial. It is the thinker's first and most important task. It is what Protagoras did. Pointing to the world in which our relationships, attitudes, and opinions are decisive, our concerns of utmost concern, he recalled man to himself.

Were this not the case, Protagoras' insistence on relativity would be a great deal less significant. After all, lyric poetry had

10. Concerning this interpretation of *chrema* see W. Nestle, *Vom Mythos zum Logos* (Stuttgart, 1940), p. 246 f.

11. Cf. *Protagoras* 334 ABC.

already found value judgments relative, Xenophanes had already derided the relativity of anthropomorphic religious imagery, and Heraclitus had emphasized the relativity of "private" judgment long before the Sophists. It is Protagoras' historical position—the fact that he radicalized and unified these views in the midst of and in opposition to natural philosophy's search for absolute, unchanging universal first principles and substances—that gives his relativism the status of a much-needed reform. While natural philosophy wanted to get away from what was merely human, relative, and conditioned—and thought itself capable of doing so—Protagoras declared that this attempt was neither fruitful nor desirable. The world we are able to know is the world of our relative, conditioned, human experience, and, instead of framing abstract hypotheses and first principles about the theoretical nature of the universe, we had better return to everyday life and try to solve the problems that confront us here and now.

If it seems anachronistic to give Protagoras' thought an empirical-pragmatic turn, it will be reassuring to turn to *On Ancient Medicine*, which reflects the same attitude. "All who, attempting to speak or write on medicine, have assumed themselves a postulate as a basis for their discussion . . . all these are obviously in error . . ." the writer begins his treatise. Medicine, he continues, "has no need of an empty hypothesis as do hidden and insoluble matters, about which if a man wants to say something he needs postulates; for example, things in the sky and below the earth. Even if a man were to come to know about the state of these, still it would be clear neither to the speaker nor to the listeners whether he speaks the truth or not. For there is no test the application of which would give certainty" (I). Throughout the work, the argument against the abstract-theoretical approach continues and, having pointed out the uselessness and inapplicability of speculative theories to medicine, the writer

winds up: "Certain physicians and philosophers assert that no one can know medicine who is ignorant of what man is . . . But the question they raise belongs to philosophy; it is the province of those who, like Empedocles, have written about nature, what man is from the beginning, how he first came into being and what was his original constitution. But my view is (that what a physician has to know about nature is) what man is in relation to food and drinks and other habits" (20) and not what nature as a whole is in the abstract.¹²

It is often maintained¹³ that Protagoras did not aim at an epistemological critique, had no theory of knowledge, and never bothered to set down the precise limits of human understanding. All this is quite true; his concerns lay elsewhere. But it is equally true that, while forming no theory of knowledge for its own sake, nevertheless, by way of reaching out for his practical goals, he turned his back on the investigations of natural philosophy, and that he did so was an implicit and effective criticism of the type of knowledge to which Ionian and Eleatic philosophy aspired. Nor is this all. Although the man-measure principle was the slogan for a practical program, a practical statement of principle rejecting all abstract hypothesizing, it led to other statements and practices which approached dangerously enough, though never for its own sake, what we might call a critique of knowledge.

The first of these statements is the fragment "on the gods"

12. What *On Ancient Medicine* expressly formulates is also inherent in basic Hippocratic writings like *Airs, Waters, Places, Epidemias* 1-3 and *Regimen of Acute Diseases* which, although containing no philosophical reflections on method, are imbued with the spirit of refraining from sweeping generalizations and first principles but carefully investigating particular situations and the diseases and states of health connected with them.

13. Cf. e.g. H. Maier, *Sokrates: Sein Werk und seine geschichtliche Stellung* (Tübingen, 1913) pp. 218 f.; H. Gomperz, *Sophistik und Rhetorik* (Leipzig, 1912).

which, according to Diogenes Laertius, stood at the beginning of another book of Protagoras': "Concerning the gods I cannot know either that they are or that they are not; for there are many obstacles to knowledge: the obscurity of the subject and the shortness of man's life" (Diogenes Laertius 9.41). According to Diogenes, it was for this book that Protagoras was tried, convicted, and exiled and his books burnt in Athens, but the untrustworthiness of this report¹⁴ and the respect in which Protagoras was held prevent us from interpreting the fragment as impious and atheistic. The fragment says nothing whatever about the existence of gods as such. On the contrary, it is opposed to such statements, for, as to the existence or non-existence of gods, one cannot know anything. The accent is on our lack of knowledge, not on the gods' existence. With this sentence, Protagoras turns his back on another mode of thought as being impractical and expendable: mythological speculation (as well as the acceptance or rejection of religious belief) ultimately has no support in knowledge. This does not mean that religious practices and observances are therefore meaningless. It is almost certain that Protagoras went on practicing all state-sanctioned religious activities, as did Socrates at a later date, thus giving no offense and avoiding charges of *asebeia* which were, legally, directed only against those who rejected those activities. His reasons for doing so were, however, practical or social-political rather than religious in our sense of the word.

14. According to Timon of Phleius (cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* 9.55) and Diogenes Laertius (9.52), Protagoras was exiled from Athens for impiety, and his books were burnt in the agora. This story is in all likelihood apocryphal. In the first place, Diogenes seems to confuse it with the Euathlos-process which had nothing to do with either impiety or exile (cf. Diogenes Laertius 9.56). In the second, Plato, who would be most likely to mention it if it ever happened, never says a word about it. What he does say about Protagoras' reputation (*Meno* 91 E) just about rules out the possibility of trial and conviction.

The fragment is simply another expression of Protagoras' reluctance to deal with what we cannot know and what has, therefore, no relevance for practical life. Controversy over the existence and nature of the gods is as useless as abstract hypotheses about nature as a whole. There is, as a matter of fact, precious little difference, ultimately, between religious postulates and natural-philosophical postulates. Both conjure up first principles as explanations for the origin and constitution of the world to conceal their ignorance about these matters. What gives rise to such speculations, as both Protagoras and some Hippocratic writers point out,¹⁵ is the hiddenness and obscurity of their subjects, but it is precisely because of this obscurity that they should be avoided. Engaging in them merely deflects our attention from matters of human concern and prevents us from solving those problems that are within human reach.

It may be appropriate now to discuss the epistemological implications of Protagoras' insistence on relativity. In connection with his discussion of the man-measure fragment, Sextus Empiricus remarks (and in doing so follows numerous statements to the same effect in Plato and Aristotle): "He says that all impressions and opinions are true and that truth is relative" (*Adversus Mathematicos* 7.60). Prima facie, this in itself supports Porphyry's view (*DK*, B 2)¹⁶ that Protagoras' book was directed "against those who introduced One Being," i.e. against Eleatic philosophy. After all, what could be more opposite to Parmenides' one truth than an infinite number of truths in Protagoras? It seems, indeed, as if Protagoras had given Parmenides' statement "Thought and Being are the same" a comic twist,

15. Cf. *On Ancient Medicine* 1.21 and *On the Sacred Disease* 1.5, 2.6, 3.13–14.

16. *DK*: abbreviation for H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* ninth ed. edited by W. Kranz (Berlin, 1960). B 2, 3, etc.: fragments 2, 3, etc. of author mentioned.

turning it into the opposite of what Parmenides intended: since what is and what is thought are the same, all thoughts must correspond to some reality and thus all thoughts, no matter how contradictory, must be equally true. Drawing this last consequence from Parmenides' philosophy,¹⁷ Protagoras would seem to have a great deal in common with his younger contemporary, Gorgias, whose *On Nature*¹⁸ or *On Non-Being* also appears to be a devastating reductio ad absurdum of Parmenides' *Truth*.

In order to see whether Protagoras really intended to declare all opinions true, we shall turn to the work in which, according to Diogenes Laertius, Protagoras tried to show the truth of contradictory judgments. "Protagoras was the first to say that there are two sides, opposed to each other, to every question. He also argued in the manner . . ." (Diogenes Laertius 9.51). Although this book, the *Antilogiai* (*Antilogoi*, *Antilogikoi Logoi*), possibly a section of *Aletheia, Kataballontes* has been lost without leaving the trace of a single sentence, we do have the Doric work, written soon after 404 B.C. by an anonymous Sophist, entitled *Dissoi Logoi*, which shows so much explicitly Protagorean influence that there is scarcely a doubt that parts of it were modeled after, if not even taken from, Protagoras' *Antilogiai*.¹⁹

17. As Heinemann believes he did; cf. F. Heinemann, *Nomos und Physis*, Schweizerische Beiträge zur Alterthumswissenschaft, 1 (Basel, 1945), 117.

18. The Protagorean book Porphyry refers to is also given the title *On Nature* by Porphyry.

19. The reasons for the almost general agreement that *Dissoi Logoi* is influenced by Protagoras are many. First, the use, in sections 1-4, of an ingenious antilogical scheme, with occasional blunders serious enough to make us doubt that they could have been committed by a skillful antilogist, thus leading to the inference that the writer took his scheme from someone else. Protagoras, the inventor of antilogies, according to Diogenes Laertius, naturally comes to mind, especially as the first sentence of *Dissoi Logoi* recalls the *douoi logoi* Diogenes attributes to Protagoras. (On the Protagorean origin of the antilogical scheme of 1-4, cf. H. Gomperz, *Sophistik und*

The *Dissoi Logoi* maintain and argue that there are two sides to every question, in the following manner (paraphrase of the substance of *Dissoi Logoi* 1-2):

1. I. Twofold arguments are made by philosophers in Hellas concerning the good and the bad. On the one hand it is said that the good is other than the bad, on the other that it is the same, the same thing being at times good and at times bad, for the same people. 2. And I myself agree with the latter. For I see in man's life that food and drink and love-making are bad for the weak and the sickly, good for the healthy and those that are in need of these things. 3. Incontinence with respect to these things is bad for the incontinent and good for the merchants and hirelings. Sickness is bad for the sick, good for the physician. Death bad for the dying, good for the undertakers and tomb makers. 6-10. Victory (in contests of all kinds) is good for the victors, bad for the defeated.

11. But there is another argument according to which good and bad are not the same, but are as different as their names.

12. For, otherwise, if a man answered the question, "Have you

Rhetorik; W. Nestle, *Vom Mythos zum Logos*; W. Kranz, "Vorsokratisches IV: Die sogenannten Δισσοι λόγοι," *Hermes* 72 [1932], 223-32; A. Levi, "On 'Twofold Statements,'" *American Journal of Philology*, 61 [1940], 292-306). Secondly, as we shall try to show, the antilogical scheme of *Dissoi Logoi* is rooted in Protagorean relativism. Furthermore, there is a striking material correspondence between *Dissoi Logoi* 1-4, Protagoras' fragments DK, B 1, 5, Plato's *Protagoras* 334 ABC, and certain passages in *On Ancient Medicine*, as well as between *Dissoi Logoi* 6, DK, B 3, 10, 11, the myth and the *logos* in Plato's *Protagoras*, the *Anonymus Iamblichii*, and the apology of Protagoras in the *Theaetetus* which makes the assumption plausible that of these two groups of passages each had a common Protagorean source (cf. also note 23). The correspondence between parts of Plato's *Republic* Bk. 1 and *Dissoi Logoi* 1-4, and Diogenes Laertius' statement (DK, B 5) according to which Aristoxenus and Favorinus found the whole of Plato's *Republic* contained in Protagoras' *Antilogikoi logoi*, also strengthens this assumption. All this material dependence of *Dissoi Logoi* on Protagoras makes the formal dependence for the antilogical scheme with which we are dealing at the moment all the more likely.

it in the same way at the same time" (*ibid.*), and, with this qualification, their statement will be true.

As far as Protagoras is concerned, Aristotle is belaboring the obvious. After all, no man insisted as much on relativity as Protagoras. No one, before him, was so opposed to speaking about a thing "in itself," absolutely, without qualification, and no reader of the *Antilogiai* or the *Dissoi Logoi* could fail to see that they are based on a thoroughgoing relativism.

There we have the first link between Protagoras' philosophy and rhetoric: his formal invention (antilogy) springs from and is inseparable from his material insight (relativity). Before we can point out other connecting links between the Sophist's thought and style in an attempt to show that the diverse aspects of his work form one organic whole, we shall have to see further in what this whole consists. We have repeatedly asserted that Protagoras' relativism, which was the basis of his antilogies, was not a self-regarding theory of knowledge elaborated for its own sake, impelled by an epistemological interest, and that the man-measure fragment which "introduced relativity" was to be viewed in the larger context of this Sophist's practical activities. It is time now to show what were Protagoras' practical aim and practical philosophy.

Educational Theory and Practice

"I acknowledge myself to be a Sophist and to teach men" (317 B), Protagoras declares in the Platonic dialogue named for him. "If you will associate with me, the very first day you will go home a better man, yet better the day after, and improving every day afterwards" (318 A), for "I believe myself . . . to excel all others in helping men to become good and fair" (328 B), teaching "good counsel in public and private affairs, how to order one's house best, and how to act and speak most ably in affairs of state" (318 E ff.). In other words, "I profess to teach

political art, and to undertake to make men good citizens," (319 A) for "I am a Sophist . . . and a teacher of culture and virtue (*didaskalos paideuseos kai aretes*)" (349 A). That the claim of the Platonic Protagoras to be a teacher of virtue is authentic we cannot doubt. The question is, what was Protagoras' conception of the nature of virtue, of its function and teachability, and of the role of education in human affairs? We can find these questions answered in his two longer speeches, the myth and *logos* in the *Protagoras* and the apology in the *Theaetetus*.

In the *Protagoras*, the Sophist tells a story about the evolution of man, society, and human culture. The fact that he does so seems to go against what we described as Protagoras' opposition to the formulation of speculative theories and hypotheses. There are, however, two overriding considerations. First, Protagoras presents the myth not as historical truth, not as a version of mankind's past to be taken seriously, but as one which, lacking historical truth, nevertheless throws a light on our present situation. In other words, the myth is used altogether heuristically, as Protagoras himself indicates.²⁰ Second, the myth is not concerned with the origin and constitution of man in terms of first principles, primary elements, and substances, matters derided in *On Ancient Medicine* as giving no direction to a current treatment of man, but it considers man as a practical and social-political being whose "origin" is discussed precisely with a view to coping with his present situation and solving his present problems.²¹

20. By giving us a choice between myth and *logos*, 320 C.

21. Protagoras is neither the first nor the last to use an "origin and evolution" story in this manner. Hesiod, whose heir he rightly considers himself to be, used alternative myths in the same way. Plato's use is illustrated by Aristophanes' myth in the *Symposium*.

From what writing of Protagoras Plato has taken the substance of the

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Several aspects of the myth are of particular interest to us, the first notable one being the pre-eminent position and importance given to political art and excellence. While possession of the other arts is sufficient to distinguish man from the animals and make him akin to the gods, it is political excellence, the gift of Zeus himself, that represents the highest stage of human development. And, at the same time, this art is so fundamental that, while in the other arts only a few need share to benefit all, all must have their share of civic wisdom if they are to survive.

The second notable point is that, though Protagoras casts his subject in the form of a fable, the treatment is purely pragmatic in tone, teleological-rational and utilitarian: properties are allotted to men and beasts with a view to their preservation; the invention of the arts and the founding of cities are motivated by man's need; it is man's survival (or that of the animal species) that is the measure of the value of things.

A third point: though man is endowed, in the manner of fable, with a potentiality in the arts by other than human agents, the invention and development of the particular arts themselves (religion, speech, domestic and social arts) is man's own work. Having received his portion (no matter how divinely) man stands on his own feet. The mythological account, far from destroying man's centrality, gives it further emphasis.

While the story resembles Hesiod's accounts in the *Erga* in many particulars, there is at least one important difference. In the *Erga*, the Pandora myth and the myth of the Four Ages have a downward trend and indicate the degeneration and ruin of

story can only be conjectured. Nestle ("Gab es eine ionische Sophistik?" *Philologus* 70 [1911], 242–66) plausibly derives it and similar myths in Herodotus 3.108, Moschion, and Isocrates, from *Peri tes en arche katas-taseos*, a work whose title appears in Diogenes Laertius' list. The close resemblance of the Herodotus passage makes the Platonic origin of the myth unlikely.

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man, the misery that has come to be his lot. In Protagoras' myth, there is not the slightest trace of pessimism. Man's evolution is a progress upward and, having come so far, there is every reason for this self-assured contriver to look forward hopefully to better things.

With the myth's emphasis on practical excellence in living rather than on abstract-theoretical pursuits, and on man as a measure of value and inventor of arts, Protagoras has not deviated from placing man in the center of things, as expressed in the man-measure principle and in the fragment on the gods. But his consistency has created a new problem. If we are concerned with man, and if excellence in practical life is of paramount importance, how can this excellence be acquired? Who can impart it? Protagoras, claiming to be a teacher of precisely this virtue, must be able to answer these questions. He does so in the exposition that follows the myth: It is clear that, though all men partake of a sense for reverence and righteousness "in some way or other," excellence in political art is not shared by all. *Aidos* and *dike*, given to all, are mere endowments, talents to be developed, potentialities for justice and reverence that must be cultivated. Political excellence "is neither something natural nor something that develops by itself, but is something taught and is acquired after careful preparation by those who acquire it" (323 C). In this it differs from other goods, abilities, and characteristics which men come to have "by nature or fortune" (323 D) and for whose lack "no one reproaches or lectures or punishes" (*ibid.*). As political virtue can be acquired and requires not only endowment but "application, practice, and teaching" (*ibid.*), its lack warrants punishment and reproof. This punishment is not unreasoning vengeance taken for some past deed that cannot be undone. It is directed toward the future, it is administered "for the sake of improvement and so that no one should do wrong in the future, neither the wrongdoer pun-

ished nor others who see his punishment" (324 B). He who punishes in this manner "knows that virtue is teachable, for he punishes to deter" (*ibid.*).

Human excellence (for Protagoras now combines all the virtues that aid man in social life into one excellence-in-living)²² can be learned. If so, who are its teachers and how exactly is it acquired?

Everyone, Protagoras insists, is a teacher of virtue, for "learning must begin in youth" (*DK*, B 3): the infant's nurse, tutor, and parents by admonition, reward, and punishment; the boy's schoolmasters by exposing him to poetic descriptions and praises of good men in the past and by teaching him gentleness, grace, and harmony through music; and his athletic trainers by imparting self-possession and a sense of mastery. When he leaves school, the boy's education is taken over by the city, which teaches him the laws, trains him to govern and to be governed by these, and corrects him, when he fails to do so, by punishment (325 C-326 E). Human excellence being the very foundation on which cities are built, how can this be otherwise? As "others' justice and virtue is to our own advantage," (327 B) how can anyone fail to be a teacher of virtue?

If, in spite of this, there are different degrees of excellence among men, these differences are owing to two factors, poor endowment and inept teaching. As to endowment: although by nature all share in a sense for justice and reverence, some men are more, some less, fully endowed. But even the poorest endowment can be developed into a greater excellence than the

22. Cf. *Protagoras* 323 E, 324 E-325 A, 329 C-D. There is no reason to doubt that this is Protagoras' view. If Plato had been the first to unify all virtues in one, why should he have ascribed this to Protagoras here? Socrates attacks Protagoras in the following not because he united all virtues but because he failed to specify in what manner and on what basis virtue is one, and what this virtue's nature is.

best endowment would achieve unattended (327 B, C, D). As to teaching: there are some who do it better than others, and "such a one I take myself to be, excelling all other men in the gift of helping others to become good and true" (328 B). xx

That this discourse is authentically Protagorean in substance and not Plato's own invention is beyond doubt.²³ But its authenticity creates a problem: if, as all evidence indicates, Protagoras the relativist also claimed to be an educator of men, in what manner are these two aspects of his thought related? At first sight, they seem to be contradictory rather than complementary, as Plato was quick to point out in *Theaetetus*. Interpreting the man-measure sentence to mean that whatever a man perceives, feels, or thinks to be good and true is in fact good and true for him, so that ultimately "each of us is the measure of his own wisdom" (*Theaetetus* 161 E), Socrates remarks ironically that on this theory no man is wiser than anyone else and thus no man can teach another anything whatever. If each man is always

23. This is confirmed by its agreement with several Protagorean fragments, the *Anonymus Iamblichii*, and the *Dissoi Logoi*. 1. In the fragments we find: "Teaching needs natural endowment and practice" (*DK*, B 3, cf. also *Protagoras* 323 C-D), and it "must begin in early youth" (*DK*, B 3, cf. also *Protagoras* 325 C f.) for "culture does not grow in the soul unless one goes deep" (*DK*, B 11); and "art without practice, practice without art, are nothing" (*DK*, B 10). 2. In the work of an anonymous Sophist written around the beginning of the Peloponnesian War and paraphrased by Iamblichus we find: To perfect oneself in wisdom, courage . . . or virtue in whole or in part (1), one needs natural endowment, effort, and practice. If you want fame, you must begin in early youth and work at it long (2). By nature, men cannot live alone; thus they form communities, order their lives, develop arts, etc. (drawing on the Protagoras-myth) (6). Order is useful, disorder leads to social evils (7) (my paraphrase). 3. As for the *Dissoi Logoi*, the first four sections of which we found to be based on Protagorean relativism and exhibiting an antilogical scheme, the correspondence between section 6 of *Dissoi Logoi* and Protagoras' *logos* in the Platonic dialogue is even more striking. If virtue can be taught, why are there no teachers for it (6.3)? Why do not parents impart their excellence to their sons (6.4, and *Protagoras* 324 D)? Why do some who associate

matter of fact can be freely taken out of context and used in a frame of reference, or applied to a situation, other than the one in which it happened to be true. It is not that no man judges falsely but that every true judgment can be false if we forget its relativity and treat it as if it were unconditional. This is precisely what Protagorean antilogy, as we know it from the *Dissoi Logoi*, exhibited so well.

In spite of all insistence on the relativity of both the things we deal with and our perceptions, opinions, and thoughts about them, Protagoras distinguishes between being and seeming, truth and falsity, reality and judgment. Hence, relativism and the possibility of error (and the educability of man) are not contradictory views. To explore the question further, let us examine Protagoras' conception of value and justice.

Good is what is useful, advantageous, appropriate, due, fitting.²⁴ What determines the value of anything is not our opinion, but the nature of the thing in question in relation to the nature of what is the measure of its goodness, e.g. it is the natural constitution of man, state, etc., on which the goodness of anything for man, state, etc., depends.

The "good" is not the same as the "just" (lawful, legal, or right), because the latter depends not on nature but on convention, as is evident from the apology in the *Theaetetus*: "Whatever seems right and fair to a state is such as long as held to be such." Laws being man-made, artificial, and conventional, may be bad, i.e. harmful to the state, though they are always "right," i.e. legal, as long as enacted. Thus, though the question of value (good and bad) can be raised validly with respect to the laws, it is otherwise with the question of truth. Since all laws are "just" (legal) by definition as long as they are laws, the "justice" of laws, i.e. whether they are "truly just," cannot be questioned.

24. *Sympheron*, *ophelimon*, *epitedeion*, etc., cf. *Protagoras* 334 ABC, also *Dissoi Logoi* and *On Ancient Medicine*.

The proposition, "laws are just," is analytical and cannot be false.

Laws being conventional and the "good" merely relative (but not conventional), any law may be harmful to the state, and it is the function of the wise man to correct such harmful legislation. This is where wisdom or, as it is called in the *Protagoras*, political art becomes important, for its task is to diminish the gap between what is good by nature and what by custom, convention, and belief (society's laws, rules, and standards of behavior).⁺

It is often maintained that Protagoras made no distinction between nature and convention, but this allegation is not only completely contrary to our evidence,²⁵ but, if allowed, would

25. Even though Protagoras does not use *physis-nomos* or *physei-nomo* as a slogan (in the manner of Antiphon, Hippias, and the Platonic Callides), the distinction is implicit and explicit in his writings: In the Protagoras-myth (*Protagoras* 323 C), the distinction is made between *aidos* and *dike* with which every man is born, on the one hand, and political excellence (*politike arete*) which is neither natural (*physei*) nor spontaneous (*apo tou automatou*) but something taught and acquired, on the other. *Dike is physei*, while political virtue needs not only natural endowment (*physis*) but application, practice, and teaching. Political excellence differs in this from other accomplishments which may be *physei* or *tyche* (cf. also DK, B 3, *Dissoi Logoi* 2, *Protagoras* 327 B). His natural endowment of political sense (*aidos* and *dike*) enables man to live in society if the endowment is developed into a political art that exercises itself in the framing of laws. The laws themselves and the whole of the legal system (*ta dikaiia*) are artificial, man-made, and conventional (*nomo*), and, though always legal and just (since they are the "justice" of the state), they are not necessarily good. Thus, Protagoras connects the laws (*nomoi*) with the *nomizein* (to own, adopt, or introduce as custom) of men (in his apology in the *Theaetetus*) rather than the original *nemein* (to allot, distribute, apportion as lot, share, fate) of the gods, in which all that is *physei* in man is assigned (Protagoras-myth). The arts and language are similarly "invented" by men on the basis of their natural, i.e. innate, divine portion and kinship to the gods (consisting of the possession of the fire and *sophia technes*, a potentiality for the arts in general). While an endowment for arts (mechanical, domestic, social-political) is natural, the actual development of the arts is not (natural or automatic), and their articulated result (language, social and religious customs, and laws) is totally artificial and conventional.

make absolute nonsense of both relativism and education, the twin pillars of Protagoras' thought. Were it not for this distinction, Socrates' charge that Protagoras' wisdom is empty conceit would be to the point, for the Sophist could not distinguish, as he does in the apology (*Theaetetus*), between what is good for society on the one hand and its adopted customs and way of life on the other. If what is good were as conventional as the state's laws and standards, it would be impossible for any man to try to adjust the latter to the former, as the wise man is said to do. If the good were relative to the opinions and beliefs rather than the actual nature of man and the state, political excellence and practical wisdom could not exist.

With this distinction between nature and convention, Protagoras does not return to or advocate a return to an "investigation of nature" such as Ionian philosophy was engaged in, for what interests him is still human nature, which must be known if man's beliefs, customs, and way of life in general are to be improved, if man's life as the totality of his practical relations to everything (men and things) is to be good rather than bad. It is not the theoretical structure of the whole of (physical) nature but the nature of man relative to whatever he comes in contact with that is to be investigated. Such an investigation of human nature does not mean that Protagoras' opposition to universally applicable material definitions (e.g. of human nature) and a parallel legislation of absolute-immutable (ethical) norms is abandoned. For, even if it is the nature of man, the state, and society that determines what is good for each of these, still, since the constitutions of different men, states, and societies are "exceedingly different from each other" (Protagoras-apology), universal, absolute ethical legislation is excluded. This is precisely what makes the moral-political art valuable and necessary. If all men and states were alike in all places and at all times, we would have less need for men who know the requirements and

constitution of particular men and states and thus can find out what law is best suited to the nature of the men or state in question. The same laws, customs, and way of life would apply to all, and, although it would still need a wise man to devise these, once they were found political art would be expendable, and Protagoras would not have to be sent to Thurii to frame a constitution.

Medical art, as it is pointed out in *On Ancient Medicine*, owes its invention and development to exactly the same situation. Medicine was originally "invented" because the food, drink, and regimen of other animals did not agree with man, and men had to "search for food in harmony with their nature" (*On Ancient Medicine* 3) and to prepare and transform the food-stuffs found, "fashioning them to the nature and powers of men." Furthermore, medicine is still necessary because "the same things, when administered to the sick, which agreed with them in good health, neither did, nor do, agree with them (now)," and what agrees with one man, in one situation, may not agree with him, or other men, in other situations.

There is a striking similarity between the view of medicine expressed in *On Ancient Medicine* and Protagoras' conception of practical wisdom and political art. Apart from the relativism and opposition to empty hypotheses common to both, the two resemble each other on most important points. Sophists and physicians are the first "professionals" aware of their own special art. Both stress the facts that their arts are human inventions rather than original endowments, that their arts are necessary because of the difference between one man and another and between men and animals, and that there is a resulting relativity of what is good for each. Both hold that "our present way of life" (laws, customs, regimen) is not by nature but "has been discovered and elaborated during a long period of time" (*On Ancient Medicine* 3, cf. also Protagoras-myth). Both are strong

in emphasizing the utility and teleological justification of their artifacts. In the Protagoras-myth, the state is founded to "save" men from extinction, political art and excellence are cultivated to prevent the dissolution of the state, laws are necessary to ensure its harmonious functioning, and punishment to correct man and prevent discord. In *On Ancient Medicine*, similarly, all the discoveries of medicine have been made "for the health, saving, and nourishment of man" (*On Ancient Medicine* 3). As good laws prevent disorder and dissolution of the state, so wholesome food and regimen prevent "disorder and separation of the bodily powers" (*On Ancient Medicine* 14) and bring "strength, growth, and nourishment." As political art devises customs, rules, and ways of living for the social organism, so medicine devises regimen, diet, and a physical way of life for the body. As the wise man of Protagoras regulates man's interaction with his social environment, so the physician with man's physical surroundings. The one cares for the health of men and states, the other for that of the body. In opposition to natural philosophy, one turns to investigate the social-political-cultural nature of man, the other his physical nature and culture. The aim of both is to find what is useful, appropriate, fitting, or due to the nature of what each has in his care so as to promote healthy, harmonious, and undisturbed life.

This similarity of aim, method, and (almost) subject not only leads to constant association of the two,²⁶ but at times makes it exceedingly difficult to draw a sharp dividing line between them. Not only can the question be validly raised whether *On Ancient Medicine* was written by a Sophist with an interest in and knowledge of medicine or by a physician acquainted with and influenced by Sophistry, and not only do we find medical writings using evidently Sophistic terminology, but some obvi-

26. E.g. Plato in the Protagoras-myth, Protagoras-apology, *Phaedrus*, *Gorgias*; Gorgias in *Helen's Encomium*, etc.

ously Sophistic treatises (e.g. *Art, Law*) have even been included, we do not know when, in the Hippocratic Corpus.

It is hardly surprising, in view of all this, that Protagoras conceives of his art in terms parallel to those of the medical practitioner. He regards the man lacking in good sense and reverence as a "cancer to the city," punishment as a curative, corrective, and preventive, and compares the wise man to the physician and husbandman inasmuch as all these "practitioners" have to better the condition of the patient (whatever organism it be), provide for its health, and make it adopt a better way of life.

In relation to this conception of practical wisdom, or political art, it is clear that the man of practical wisdom does not become a teacher only by imparting his art to others, but that the art itself consists of nothing other than education: political art is the art of the culture or education of man. As the husbandman cultivates his field and helps his plants grow, so the Sophist is engaged in nurturing and developing man's natural endowment, in helping man, state, and society to achieve excellence in being what they are. Political art is the art of the education or improvement of man, the cultivation of "human excellence."

Even the Sophists' preoccupation with political and legal matters, as we understand these, is in line with and is indeed the result of their "educational" aim. Laws are the teachers of man (*Protagoras* 326 D), legal punishment is a kind of education (326 E), and the whole legal-political system aims at providing a climate and a way of intercourse between men that promotes the growth and development of individuals and enables them to attain to human excellence, excellence in living. As this aim cannot be achieved independently of society, the cultivation of man will be necessarily political, also in our sense of the word.

Protagoras' conception of the nature and function of legal-political activity is not only of the noblest, but is also realistic

and useful. Hesiod and Solon merely insisted on the laws (divine and natural) being obeyed if (divine or natural) retribution is to be avoided. Protagoras still insists on this, for, though his laws are conventional, the need for them and retribution for transgression are natural, and law has no less sanction in Protagoras than it did before him. By recognizing the conventionality of laws, however, the Sophist also provides ways and criteria for changing them and, at the same time, reminds the legislator of his educational responsibility. While Hesiod and Solon speak to the citizen merely as subject, Protagoras also addresses him as a legislator who, knowing the mutability of particular laws, should always be on the watch for the need to change and adjust them to altered circumstances.

It will be appropriate, in connection with Protagoras' political art and educational program, to say a few words about his concern for rhetoric, especially as the role and importance of this art for Sophistry are often exaggerated.²⁷

Rhetoric for Protagoras meant the cultivation of the spoken and written word, the art of speaking correctly, of expressing and conveying thought in the right manner (long or short, by myth or *logos*, etc.), and of analyzing the rules and constitution of language. As the spoken and written word were the sole tools of education (consisting largely of the exchange of thought in discourse), the connection between rhetoric—the art of language and discourse—and education, even in the strict contemporary sense of the word, is immediately obvious. But the two were related for Protagoras in a much more fundamental manner.

Men, being different by nature yet dependent on each other and incapable of living outside society, need conventions, rules, and customs to harmonize their activities. Since the good is

27. E.g. by H. Gomperz in *Sophistik und Rhetorik*.

relative to each individual, men must communicate and exchange views, opinions, and convictions to reconcile their private, diverse, and often conflicting interests and reach an understanding. It is necessary that each side present its case as well as possible, making even the weakest case as strong as possible so that it will be apparent to others. In all this, rhetoric, the art of expression and presentation, is necessary.

Men need laws to harmonize their activities. In the absence of mere force, which had already been relegated, in Hesiod, to the subhuman realm, men's differences have to be settled, and laws have to be arrived at by arbitration, persuasion, and convention. For peaceful arbitration, rhetoric, the art of persuasion and discourse, is necessary.

The Protagorean state is not only ruled by law rather than force, it is, further, a democracy in which the laws are established by the advice and consent of all. To secure this agreement and to be able to give advice, one must be able to argue convincingly. It is not enough to know what is good; one must know how to present it; the would-be leader must not only be the right man with the right policy, but he must also be able to persuade the assembly of the fact since he needs its consent. For all this, rhetoric is necessary. A king or a tyrant does not need the power of persuasion, and Sparta may take pride in the opposite of eloquence, but it is not without reason that Pericles held excellence in the art of persuasion to be one of the three important accomplishments necessary to a democratic leader. Democracy being rule by consent and laws being the result of convention and agreement, rhetoric, the art of securing consent, of "convening" and reaching an agreement by discourse, is one of the bulwarks of the state.

In Hesiod already there was a close connection between his insistence on the rule of justice rather than force and his preoccupation with legal proceedings as the sole means for the rule

of law. This kind of connection is even more far-reaching in Protagoras, between the harmony of the state and the rhetoric needed to establish and maintain it, between arbitration and persuasion, between the state as an educational institution and rhetoric as an educational tool. Having made no sharp distinction between persuasion by the mere power of the word and actual enlightenment,²⁸ Protagoras could and did justifiably regard persuasion—in so far as it transforms and improves man—as a kind of education, and education—regardless of its level or type—as a kind of rhetoric. As education's task is to transform and improve man, and as the Sophist transforms and improves not by physical means but by means of the word (*Theaetetus* 167 A), rhetoric and education are inseparable.

The cultivation of speech was much more than "mere" rhetoric for Protagoras, even apart from its political and educational significance. Prior to Socratic questioning, Platonic dialectic, and Aristotelian logic, and prior to the distinction between *logos* qua mere expression and *logos* qua thought, the Sophist's concern with the word embraced all these refinements and in many instances laid the foundations for them. Rhetoric dealt with the faculty that, even prior to a "sense for justice and reverence," distinguished man from the animals and made him truly human (*Protagoras* 322 A), and Protagoras' preoccupation with and pride in rhetoric make him a humanist rather than a mere rhetorician.

To sum up, we can say this much about Protagoras: the diverse aspects of his thought and activities formed one organic whole. The relativistic man-measure sentence expressed the demand that philosophy should once again be practical and hu-

28. The separation was first made by Plato who distinguished between mere rhetoric and real education, mere expression of thought and the content expressed. We may blame Protagoras for not making this distinction but cannot at the same time blame him for engaging in "mere" rhetoric.

man, should return to man and investigate the world that is his ultimate concern. Political art, education, and rhetoric, the art of persuasion, answered this demand. Relativism and political art, political art and education, and, finally, education and rhetoric were so closely connected in his thought as to be at times indistinguishable from each other. Whichever he happened to be cultivating at different times, he never deviated from his practical aim: the cultivation of human excellence.

As a man of critical intelligence, Protagoras brought to question human intelligence as such and, curtailing it by barring abstract speculation, he demonstrated its greatest power, that of self-reflection. As a man of practical wisdom, he recalled man from barren pursuits to himself, and placed him in the center of his world, making him the central subject and object of his own investigations. As a humanist and educator of man, the successor of Hesiod, Solon, and Aeschylus, Protagoras the Sophist had no need of misgivings about his calling nor of deference in proclaiming it in the face of Hellas.

Gorgias of Leontini probably was born around 490 B.C. As a young man he may have had some training in Eleatic thought and Ionian natural philosophy, but this period certainly came to an end by the time he wrote his most famous essay, *On Non-Being* or *On Nature*. For if there is some justification for regarding Protagorean relativism and antilogy as being directed against²⁹ or as being a reductio ad absurdum of³⁰ Eleatic philosophy, there is ample justification for so regarding Gorgias' *On Non-Being*.

This work asserts and tries to prove three theses: 1. Nothing

29. Cf. DK, B 2, Porphyry.

30. Cf. Heinemann, *Nomos und Physis*, p. 117.

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exists. 2. If anything should exist it still could not be thought or known. 3. If anything should exist and could be thought or known, it could not be communicated. The arguments for these theses are no less ingenious than Eleatic proofs, and they are for the most part quite Eleatic in flavor. As it is rather unlikely that Gorgias seriously intended to deny the existence of everything whatsoever, the most plausible interpretation of *On Non-Being* is that the work is a parody of Eleatic discourse.³¹ "If someone takes Parmenides' *Truth* seriously," Gorgias seems to say, "he should do the same with my *On Non-Being*. Yet as *On Non-Being* leads to absurd conclusions, and, starting with more or less Parmenidean premises, turns Parmenides' doctrine into its opposite, this should demonstrate the unreliability of such arguments and of the whole method of thought."

It might be anachronistic to attribute a kind of Kantian antinomy to Gorgias, yet the arguments of *On Non-Being* seem to serve the same purpose as the Kantian antinomies: to show the fruitlessness and contradictory nature of this kind of speculation. To this extent, at least, *On Non-Being* has an epistemological significance. Even if undertaken without any seriousness ("one must destroy one's adversaries' seriousness with laughter and their laughter with seriousness"),³² *On Non-Being* is not

31. So Nestle in "Die Schrift des Gorgias 'über die Natur oder über das Nichtseiende,'" *Hermes* 57 (1922), 551–62, "Bemerkungen zu den Vorsokratikern und Sophisten," *Philologus* 67 (1908), 531–81, and "Spuren der Sophistik bei Isokrates," *Philologus* 70 (1911), 1–51; H. Maier, *Sokrates*, p. 223; also Windelband, Dupreel, et al. H. Gomperz regards *On Non-Being* as a *paignion*, a rhetorical *epideixis* without the least philosophical import. Yet, as Nestle points out, even if *On Non-Being* is a *paignion* to the extent that Gorgias does not mean to deny existence, knowability, etc., it may have a serious purpose (such as discrediting the Eleatic approach), and may contain opinions actually held by its author.

32. Gorgias *DK*, B 12 (translation: K. Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* [Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1948]), quoted appositely by Nestle in connection with *On Non-Being*.

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just a devastating parody. It is also, if only by the way, valid epistemological critique. Gorgias was neither a nihilist nor a thoroughgoing skeptic. That he was skeptical of the Eleatic method is, however, quite obvious.

Of special interest to our investigation are the final arguments in *On Non-Being* concerning the incommunicability of knowledge.³³ How is it possible, asks Gorgias, that, listening to words, the hearer should think the same thing as the speaker? The same thing cannot at the same time be in different people (or places) and, even if it could, it would appear different to them since they are different people. Although the text is uncertain, this last argument is sufficiently relativistic to raise the question as to the extent of Gorgias' relativism.

The first indication of it is to be found in Plato's *Meno* (71 D, E; 74 A), where Gorgias is repeatedly attacked for not giving a general, all-embracing definition of virtue but rather enumerating a host of virtues, proper to men, women, slaves, etc., singly and separately. That this giving of a "swarm of virtues" rather than one universal definition was, in fact, Gorgian practice is evident from the very first sentence of *Helen's Encomium*: "The ornament of the city is courage, of the body beauty, of the soul wisdom, of action virtue, of speech truth."³⁴ The reason for this reluctance to give a general definition is not hard to find: Gorgias simply agrees with Protagoras, who also abstained from absolute-universal definitions of goodness and excellence, in recognizing the relativity of all material definitions. In Protagoras, this reluctance leads not to the denial of

33. In view of this last part's lack of Eleatic arguments, and of its having certain points in common with Gorgias' *Helen* (concerning the lack of clear communicable knowledge of things themselves), it is more likely to express Gorgias' own views than the rest of *On Non-Being*.

34. *Helen* 1.1 f.; cf. also the recounting of the virtues of the fallen in the *Funeral Oration*; also Aristotle's testimony: *DK*, B 18.

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the unity of virtue but to a formal rather than a material definition (the equation of the good with the useful, fit, appropriate, etc.). In a similar manner, Gorgias praises the dead in his *Funeral Oration* for preferring "what is fitting and appropriate" to the harsh letter of the law, and for "holding that the most divine and most universal law is to speak or not speak, do or not do, *what is necessary when it is necessary*" (*DK*, B 5, 15–17). Besides "what is necessary," "what is fitting," Gorgias also introduces the concept of *kairos*, the right moment, appropriate occasion, seasonable time, etc., into ethical and rhetorical discussion. What does an insistence on what is appropriate, right, fitting, necessary mean if not that goodness and virtue, or, what is good in fact and in deed, are relative to the context and situation, and therefore cannot be defined materially? A formal definition (of the useful, needed, seasonable type) is capable of universal application precisely because, far from denying the relativity of goodness and virtue, it merely expresses it in principle, and insists on interpreting goodness and excellence relative to the context, thing, situation, and time, in, to, and at which these terms are applicable. Though not exactly an empiricist himself, Gorgias nevertheless recognized the material uniqueness or relativity of the good (uniqueness in each case, situation, etc.) and so made it easy for the empirically minded Hippocratic writers to adopt his concepts (*kairos*, *kairon*, *akairia*, along with the already familiar *ophelimon*, *chreston*, *epitedeion*) as quasi-slogans in their practical investigations.

Having shown Gorgias' agreement with Protagoras (and Hippocratic medicine) in his opposition to Eleatic philosophy, and in his insight into relativity and insistence on the formal, rather than material-absolute, treatment of the good, it is time to ask whether or not Gorgias' practical activity as rhetorician was motivated by considerations similar to those of Protagoras.

It is a fact universally attested to that Gorgias was primarily,

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if not exclusively, a rhetorician. But what was his conception of the nature and function of rhetoric?

We have heard Protagoras compare Sophistry to medicine inasmuch as the wise man achieves by means of the word what the doctor brings about by means of drugs, and the identical comparison is found in Gorgias' *Helen's Encomium*: "The same is true of the power of speech over the constitution of the soul as of the effects of drugs on the nature of the body." (*Helen's Encomium* 14). As drugs affect the body, so words lead the soul by persuasion and "mold it at will" (*Helen's Encomium* 13). As drugs can help or harm and "put an end either to the disease or to life," so words "can drug and bewitch the soul by a harmful kind of persuasion" (*Helen's Encomium* 14).³⁵

"The word is a great power which achieves the most divine works by the smallest and least visible of means."³⁶ So Gorgias begins his eulogy of *logos*. The ostensible occasion is the defense of Helen. The work is designed to show that the causes of her disaffection were beyond her control, and to vindicate her honor. Gorgias himself calls this piece a *paignion*, a playful exhib-

35. Gorgias' association of rhetoric and medicine is further attested to by Plato's association of the two in Gorgian contexts, with or without explicit reference to Gorgias. In the *Gorgias*, Plato attacks the comparison as unjustified and relegates rhetoric to the level of cookery rather than medicine. It is most likely that this attack is provoked precisely by Gorgias' associating the two. In the *Phaedrus*, where the nature of rhetoric at its best is discussed with great sympathy and understanding, the association recurs (270 B). That the *Phaedrus* most probably echoes Gorgias' views in many instances is indicated, beside this parallel, by the correspondence of *Phaedrus* 272 A (*legein-sigan*) with *Funeral Oration* 17, reference to Gorgias (267 A), the use of *kairos* and *psychagogia*, and the resemblance of the descriptions of rhetoric in *Phaedrus* and in Isocrates, both likely to be Gorgian (cf. W. Suess, *Ethos. Studien zur älteren griechischen Rhetorik*, Leipzig, 1910).

36. *Helen* 8; also *Gorgias* 452 E, 456; *Philebus* 58 A on the power of *logos*.

bition or game, and it is certainly not a serious work as far as its ostensible purpose is concerned. There is no reason to suppose that Gorgias cared much whether Helen was vindicated or not, and Helen is obviously merely a pretext for his argument. There is another aspect, however, under which this defense or eulogy is by no means a playful exercise: most of *Helen's Encomium* deals with the nature and power of *logos*, a subject whose importance and seriousness for the rhetorician are obvious.

Among the four irresistible forces that are mentioned by Gorgias, *logos* alone is discussed at length. The others, *fate*, *gods*, *necessity*, *physical violence*, and *love*, are given short shrift and seem to be dragged in only to enhance, by association, the power of the word. Fate, gods, and necessity come first, as if to show that there is something divine and fateful about the word. Brute force or violence follows as if to emphasize that words, too, have force and irresistible power. And love is last, perhaps because no discussion of Helen would be complete without a reference to it, but more probably because the helplessness of men before Eros has been all too well established by the lyric poets.

This introduction itself indicates the ambiguous nature of the word. From Hesiod to Protagoras, we can observe the development of *logos* into the opposite of physical violence, as the humane alternative to brute force, an exclusively human gift which, in the course of time and with the evolution of society, succeeded in carrying out the victory over violence.³⁷ Now Gorgias partly reverses this state of affairs and reveals the word itself not as a harmless weapon for peace, opposed to violence, but as having its own kind of violence, no less power-

37. On the ambivalence of *logos*, cf. M. Untersteiner, *The Sophists* (New York, 1945), p. 107 f.

ful than brute force.³⁸ *Logos* becomes merely a superior form of violence. Furthermore, what gods, physical force, and love have in common is a certain lack of rationality and intelligibility. They share a kind of obscurity and impenetrability, and their association with *logos* now casts the first shadow indicating that the word itself may not be altogether free of this darkness but may dwell in a somber realm of its own. As human foresight is helpless against the gods because they work in an entirely different sphere, as man's intellect operates in a region and manner entirely different from that of brute force, as love appeals not to reason but to the passionate soul, so *logos*, too, might have nothing to do with knowledge, intellect, reason, but move in an altogether different realm. Gorgias subtly sets the stage and establishes the climate for what he has to say.

Logos is a great power. What are its works? "It can put a stop to fear, remove grief, create joy, and increase pity" (*Helen's Encomium* 8). "Its hearers shudder with terror, shed tears of pity and yearn with sad longing" (*Helen's Encomium* 9).³⁹ *Logos* affects the passions, not the intellect. By what means can speech bring about these effects? There are two: persuasion and deception.

No moral opprobrium attaches itself to either of these terms. Gorgias uses them, as it were, beyond good and evil.⁴⁰ As in Homer the gods' deception results not so much from any evil intent on their part but almost naturally from the meeting of their superior insight with man's comparative ignorance so that the deception is merely an effect and a sign of the difference in insight between men and gods, just so, in Gorgias, *logos* de-

38. Apart from occasional lapses, as in the *Philebus* (58 A), where persuasion is still opposed to *bia*.

39. Translation: K. Freeman, *Ancilla*.

40. In connection with this paragraph, cf. Untersteiner, *The Sophists*, pp. 109-10.

ceives, almost automatically, by virtue of its belonging to a sphere different from that of the everyday, human intellect. When human blindness (*ate*) and *logos* meet, deception (*apate*) results.⁴¹

Gorgias makes it quite clear that this is so: "For if all (men) . . . could remember the past, know the present, and foreknow the future, (the power of) *logos* (to deceive) [text corrupt] would not be the same. But as they neither remember the past nor observe the present nor prophesy the future, (deception) is easy, for on most subjects men offer opinion as advice to the soul. Opinion, being elusive and uncertain, involves those who make use of it in delusive and uncertain fortunes" (*Helen's Encomium* 11). Since men do not know, *logos* deceives. Its power is great because of the weakness of the human intellect.

Suspicion of the epistemological import of *On Non-Being* rapidly loses ground in the *Helen* in view of the latter's appraisal of knowledge. If *On Non-Being* was directed mainly against a certain type of inquiry (Eleatic speculation), Gorgias' scepticism about man's capacity to know is much more inclusive in *Helen*. It is because of man's feeble intelligence, because most men make use of opinion rather than knowledge "that persuasion . . . can mold the soul at will," as is evident "from the discourses of the meteorologists (natural philosophers) who, removing and implanting opinions, cause what is untrustworthy and unclear to appear trustworthy and clear to the eye of the mind";⁴² secondly, from the constraining arguments of legal contests in which speech sways and moves the crowds by the

41. *Peitho* and *apate*, *peitho* and *ate*, are already associated in Aeschylus as the means the gods use for man's destruction (*Agamemnon* 385), as means for good rather than evil (*dikaia apate*, fr. 301-2), means, moreover, which Aeschylus already associates with force and violence (*biaitai peitho . . .*) which leave men helpless (*akos de pan mataion . . .*).

42. *Pista kai dela* in Immisch's reconstruction of the text; cf. Immisch, *Gorgiae Helena* (Berlin, 1927).

art(fulness) of its composition and not by the truth of its statements; thirdly, from philosophical debates in which quickness of thought is shown easily altering beliefs" (*Helen's Encomium* 13). Because of our incapacity to know what man's investigations of nature, philosophical search, and legal debates deal with, all these methods of questioning move within the deceptive realm of "delusive and uncertain opinion" and convince by skill and art rather than truth.

We have seen this demonstrated in the first part of *On Non-Being* where virtuosity establishes something at least seemingly absurd. Even the *paignion Helen* seems to bear this trait inasmuch as, through skill and art, it shows that it is adultery as such rather than Helen's deed that is innocent and blameless. These displays of virtuosity are not designed to belittle the power of the word. On the contrary, by showing that even something unbelievable is demonstrable when one has the skill, the art of persuasion is exalted. These "playful exercises" prove not that rhetoric is untrustworthy and misleading but that, since all human inquiry moves within the realm of opinion where deception is easy, all persuasion (philosophical, "scientific," legal, or other) is a result of the force of eloquence rather than of rational insight. That is all the more reason for cultivating the word. In view of man's ignorance concerning nature, man, and society, we are all—philosophers, Sophists, orators—in the same boat, we all have to use persuasion, which makes it by far the most important art, the "best of them all" (*Philebus* 58 A). It is the art on which all others involving speech, belief, and thought are based. Some disciplines, e.g. Eleatic and Ionian philosophy, may look down upon rhetoric and pretend to have truth rather than persuasion and deception on their side, but all such claims must be rejected. If men knew, there would be a great difference between deception and truth. As it is, we can only distinguish between successful and unconvincing, persu-

sive and fruitless arguments. The power of *logos* is great, but it is a power only to sway, move, and influence, not to enlighten and give knowledge. "If words could bring the truth of deeds clearly and certainly before their hearers, judgment would be easy; since this is not the case," we should recognize the fact (*Palamedes* 35).

We can easily understand Gorgias' relinquishing truth in favor of probability.⁴³ If man's ignorance is such that truth is out of reach, since no opinion can be checked against an ultimate reality, and if it is true that, should one happen on the truth, it could be neither understood nor clearly and certainly communicated (*Helen*, *Palamedes*, *On Non-Being*), then probability is not only a factor in persuasion, but also our only rational criterion for accepting or rejecting belief. As, in the absence of absolute standards of conduct, Gorgias demanded whatever act is fitting, appropriate, reasonable in the given situation, so now, in the absence of absolute knowledge in the realm of opinions, he insists on whatever *all our thought*, as far as it can go, finds to be fitting, appropriate to, and coherent with the situation or case. It is a kind of primitive coherence theory that Gorgias advocates. The improbable is what conflicts with the other known aspects of the case and thus does not pass the test of coherence, while probability consists in coherence with or correspondence, not to the things themselves, which we never know, but to all or most other opinions available on the subject. Given Gorgias' critique of knowledge, probability is the most rational substitute for truth available to us. It is rational because likelihood (as shown in Plato's example, *Phaedrus* 273 B, C) is determined by reflective comparison of different conceptions of the case and not by emotional response, and because it provides the only practical criterion for testing beliefs.

"Probable" opinion, for all its likelihood, still moves within

43. *Phaedrus* 267 A-B; 272 E, etc.

the region of conviction, persuasion, but not knowledge, for the other opinions it coheres with are themselves merely more or less delusive, plausible, probable, but never quite clear and certain. Persuasion, no matter how convincing, still fails to enlighten. There is, however, a form of *logos* that in Gorgias' opinion does provide a kind of clarity and enlightenment though not in a rational manner but more in the way of a transfigured vision. This form is poetry, the most persuasive of all *logoi*.

Through poetry, as we have seen, men are moved to "shudder with terror, shed tears of pity, and yearn with sad longing." How does poetry bring about such changes in us? "The inspired incantations of words bring on pleasure and avert grief, for the power of incantations uniting with the soul's opinion soothes and persuades and transports by means of enchantment" (*Helen's Encomium* 10). Poetry is *enteinos*, inspired, possessed, divine, and its bewitching incantations transport man into another realm.

This realm is not only not that of knowledge, but, from the point of view of the intellect, there is something unwholesome and dark about it. This is, however, a point of view we have left behind, for in Gorgias' eulogy of poetry, the tables have been turned: it is everyday human reason that dwells in darkness, that is deluded and blind, that is only folly, and inspired, possessed, ecstatic exaltation through poetry becomes true wisdom. "Tragedy creates a deception in which the deceiver is more just than the non-deceiver, the deceived wiser than the non-deceived" (*DK* fr. 23). It is a "just deception" that the tragic *logos* creates, a deception that reveals something more fundamental than what is open to everyday human insight, and gives greater vision than the erring, deluded, uncertain human intellect could ever aspire to. It is a deception in the sense that all idealization and sublimation deceives by not representing every-

day life and by pointing instead toward something more essential and fundamental than its commonplace surface. In this sense, however, all such deception really und deceives, for, by revealing everyday life and all its pursuits as ultimately deceiving, concealing, and mere mask, it clears our vision in a marvelously inspiring-sobering manner.

That a vision which exalts man and makes him partake of the divine is by no means to be despised is witnessed to by the most determined enemy of the Sophists, Plato, who also knows that the highest insight is unspeakable, conceptually incomunicable, "for it cannot be put into words . . . but is brought to birth in the soul all of a sudden like a light kindled by a leaping spark" (*Epistle VII* 341 C) and thereby makes use of "just deception" (without calling it such) whenever the occasion demands. Platonic myth has the character and function of Gorgian just deception: it is designed to lead the soul to an intuitive insight of something inexpressible and undemonstrable, to a supreme vision that dialectic cannot provide. Such vision may be akin to madness, but if so "it is a madness fairer than mere human sanity" (*Phaedrus* 244 D) and one through which "the greatest blessings come to us" (244 A). As Gorgian just deception "stops fear, removes grief, and creates joy" (*Helen's Encomium* 8), so this madness is, to the man "who is rightly possessed, a release from present ills," making him "safe and whole for the present and future" (244 E). If the Ultimate is ineffable, as it is both for Gorgias and Plato, then all attempt to express it results in deception, and the question is not one of truth or deception but whether or not the deception is of the right kind, i.e. whether or not it strikes through the veil, the mask, the deceptive layer of opinions and produces unobstructed vision. If it does that, then, for all its "untruth," nothing could be more truthful, literally more full of truth, than the Gorgian *logos*.

The non-rational, non-intellectual nature of this *logos* does

not diminish its universal appeal, nor does it make communication impossible. On the contrary, while in *On Non-Being* both rational knowledge and communication were extremely problematic, the *logos* Gorgias speaks of is neither wholly private nor incomunicable. It is not merely private for it lifts man out of his personal existence and transports him into a common region, a sublime realm in which all men participate, and it has its own kind of universality, for "the soul affected by words feels as its own emotion the good and ill fortunes of others' acts and lives" (*Helen's Encomium* 9). It is true that, instead of a discursive understanding, this *logos* brings only empathy and sympathy, an experience in which one is linked with others, not through concepts but in a more primordial, pre- or transconceptual manner. But with discursive communication already discredited, this can hardly be considered a drawback. It is the results that matter, and this type of communication achieves the communion desired.

What is once more apparent is that we cannot divorce a man's formal investigations, in this case Gorgias' preoccupation with rhetoric, from his material insight. Gorgias' emphasis on rhetoric is so closely connected with his view of human knowledge that it is impossible to separate the two or to insist on Gorgias' being a mere rhetorician without any philosophical insight. His view of rhetoric implies a skeptical attitude toward ultimate and trustworthy knowledge, while his skepticism, in turn, makes his preoccupation with rhetoric necessary because Athens is a democracy where the art of persuasion is the greatest weapon in courts of law and other assemblies (*Gorgias* 454 A, 456, 422 A), and because, quite apart from mere political considerations, rhetoric, being a kind of *psychagogia*,⁴⁴ a lead-

44. The term is of Gorgian origin according to M. Pohlenz, *Aus Platos Werdezeit* (Berlin, 1913), p. 343; W. Suess, *Ethos*, p. 79. Whether Gorgias actually used the word or not may not be too important; what he aimed at was obviously *psychagogia*.

ing and molding of the human soul, has a therapeutic effect on man. It soothes, relieves, gladdens, and exalts him. It is a medicine for his wounds.

Although both Protagoras and Gorgias were teachers of rhetoric, fully aware of the importance of this art, their attitudes toward the word are rather different. While Protagoras, following Hesiod and Solon, saw the educative function of *logos* and cultivated persuasion, as opposed to force, in order to improve and educate man, Gorgias' conception of the power of the word makes him more akin to the lyric poets who, instead of enlightening man, gratify, delight him, and provide an escape from his plight. Man cannot be made better but his life can be improved, and words do just that. As in lyric poetry (and like drugs), words influence, manipulate, relieve, and charm the soul rather than educate it. In this, Gorgias is less ambitious than the educators since, for him, *logos* remains an external force which, unlike education, never really passes over into the possession of the man it is used on or really augments *his* power to master life, but rather, like drugs, provides a more or less effective escape from an otherwise painful situation. In this way, the Gorgian *logos* may be said to give less, but, in another way, his approach to rhetoric and to man is more ambitious than the Protagorean, for it has the ambivalent character of the Dionysian view of life: though it considers everyday life to be deluded, ignorant, unessential, and unsafe, it provides release and salvation through an escape into a better, more essential, and sounder realm. It is in this sense that the Gorgian *logos* "educates," i.e. leads the soul out of its narrow confines toward the divine.

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The preceding discussion of Protagoras' and Gorgias' activity tried to present these men as deserving of the respect of their

contemporaries. It is a fact, however, that this respect was not always forthcoming. To show how, in spite of its honorable aims, Sophistry did give rise to much that was not worthy of its founders, we shall follow briefly the degeneration of this art in the hands of their successors. Instead of discussing them individually, we shall deal with them only as they relate to three aspects of later Sophistic thought: the attack on the legal-political structure of the state, the attack on religion, and the abuse of rhetoric.

The Nature-Convention Controversy

Protagoras regarded laws and customs as conventional rather than natural. Their goodness—though not their legality (justice) or truth—depended on how well they fulfilled the purpose they served of enabling men to live in social harmony.

Antiphon's view of justice is closely related to this: "Justice is . . . not to transgress that which is the law of the city in which one is a citizen" (*DK*, B 44,1). But to be law-abiding in this manner is not enough. "A man can best conduct himself in harmony with justice if, when in the company of witnesses, he upholds the laws, and when, alone without witnesses, he upholds the edicts of nature. For the edicts of the laws are imposed artificially, but those of nature are compulsory. And the edicts of the laws are arrived at by consent, not by natural growth, whereas those of nature are not a matter of consent" (*DK*, B 44, Freeman tr.).

The nature-convention distinction,⁴⁵ implicit in Protagoras,

45. It is often pointed out (e.g. by Zeller, Reinhardt, Heinemann) that the ground for the controversy over natural and conventional law was prepared for the Sophists by sixth- and fifth-century natural philosophy which often distinguished between Being and Seeming, Truth and Illusion, Knowledge and Opinion, and the Common and the Private in the realm of

could hardly be more explicit than this. Whereas Protagoras merely suggests that laws, being based on convention, may not always be the best and might therefore be bettered, Antiphon seems to widen the gap between natural and positive law and makes it appear as if the two were necessarily opposed. "The law's prohibitions are in no way more agreeable to nature and more akin to it than the law's injunctions . . . the advantages laid down by the laws are chains upon nature . . . the majority of just acts according to law are prescribed contrary to nature . . ." (*DK*, B 44).

Sophy?
not
yours

We have come a long way since Hesiod and Solon. In Hesiod, justice and law were sanctioned by divine authority and enforced by divine agencies. In Solon, justice had the status of natural law; transgression inevitably—naturally, as it were—resulted in punishment. Now, in Antiphon, there is not only a distinction between justice and legality, and a level-headed suggestion *à la* Protagoras that laws might be reformed, but the two are so sharply opposed that almost all sanction for positive law is completely destroyed. The dilemma implicit in the *Eumenides*' introduction of two kinds of law is now laid

nature. This is, of course, true. Nevertheless, the Sophists were not even the first to apply this distinction to the human sphere, nor, for that matter, to legal-political and religious customs. Heraclitus, who insisted on all human laws being nourished by the one divine law, had already done this, and, still more, Aeschylus in his dramatization of an agon between chthonic and civic justice. Indeed, one might ask whether even Aeschylus' representation of a contest between the old and the new gods, chthonic and civic justice, was anything but a re-enactment of the Homeric opposition between fate and the gods in a new setting. After all, civic arbitration as opposed to nature (chthonic justice) seems hardly less arbitrary than the wilful commands of amoral gods as contrasted with the immovable ordering of fate. And it was precisely this arbitrariness and lack of foundation in nature (implicit in the *Eumenides*) that later Sophistry fastened upon in its attack on the legal-political structure of the state.

open to sight. Aeschylus' trust in civil legislation and arbitration is, however, no longer shared. Protagoras still emphasized man's natural need for social order and the preferability of inferior laws, even, to living in a state of nature so that laws had, to that extent, natural sanction. But Antiphon's appraisal of laws seems to be entirely negative. Laws can be transgressed with impunity if one only escapes detection (*DK*, B 44, 2, 1), for, unlike natural laws, they are based merely on opinion and have nothing to do with truth (*DK*, B 44).

The polymath Hippias agrees with Antiphon. It is "by nature and not law," he says (*Protagoras* 337 D), that we are all fellow citizens here, "for like is akin to like by nature, while the law, tyrant of men, often forces us against nature." Unlike the "unwritten laws" which are "uniformly observed in every country and were not made by men" (*Xenophon, Memorabilia* 4.14), the laws of the state are "covenants made by the citizens about what ought to be done and what avoided" (*ibid.* 13), and as such they "can hardly be thought to be of much account . . . seeing that the very men who passed them often reject them" (*ibid.* 14).

Pindar's "law, the king" is here explicitly turned into its opposite, flagrant injustice, "law, the tyrant." Nevertheless, Hippias is far from advocating the overthrow of all laws and the establishment of the rule of violence. On the contrary, he objects to legal edicts because they are often but another violation, glorified and refined, of the laws of nature, and advocates quite sensibly that this should not be so, that the unwritten, natural laws are the only secure foundation for conduct. In this, he goes no further than his predecessors, or, for that matter, Heraclitus, who also pointed to the foundation of human laws on the one divine law (*DK*, B 114). Like Antiphon, Hippias merely widens the gap between the two and weakens the sanction of positive law. Nevertheless, this gradual undermining of the

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authority of legal systems⁴⁶ and the growing doubt concerning the justice, truth, and usefulness of legal procedures could have but one result: the complete rejection of legal procedures and conventional law embodied in the views of the Platonic Thrasymachus and Callicles.

Whether Thrasymachus actually held the view attributed to him by Plato, and whether or not there was a Sophist who advocated Callicles' theories, cannot be determined. In view of the fact, however, that these views were the logical result of the tendency we just described and that they were the theoretical expression of the principles embodied in many of the events of the Peloponnesian War, we can consider them here without further discussion of their authenticity.

To see how justice, the opposite of violence in Hesiod and Protagoras, was turned into violence, it might be well to remember that a similar inversion has already taken place in Gorgias, inasmuch as *logos*, the only means for peaceful arbitration, the only alternative to settling differences by brute force, became but another kind of violence. It is not surprising that the groundwork for Callicles' theory also seems to have been laid in the same work: "It is natural," says Gorgias, "that the stronger cannot be obstructed by the weaker but the weaker is ruled and led by the stronger, and that the stronger shows the way and the weaker follows" (*Helen's Encomium* 6). Although Gorgias does not specify whether the stronger leads by "force or art or some other" means (*Helen's Encomium* 6), it is clear that there is not much difference between them if the art of persuasion is itself an irresistible force against which the subject on whom it is practised is helpless. Nor does Gorgias specify exactly who benefits by this rule of the stronger, although the

46. Cf. Antiphon *DK*, B 44: the man who has justice on his side is still no better off than his opponent in court, for rhetoric serves both equally well. Also Critias *DK*, B 22.

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implication is that the weaker has little or nothing to gain, just as Helen did not profit by suffering what she suffered. Both of these points, however, become explicit in Thrasymachus and Callicles.⁴⁷

"I affirm that what is just is nothing other than the advantage of the stronger" (*Republic* 338 C), Thrasymachus says. The stronger rules, the ruler or ruling party legislates. What they legislate is justice, and they legislate in their own interest so that the laws express nothing but the interest of the stronger. Accepting the theory of the conventional rather than the natural origin of legal edicts, Thrasymachus gives a reason here for the opposition between natural and conventional laws. If law is man-made, and if it is the nature of man to strive for his own advantage—and very few Greeks would ever deny this—then the question is not whether the law is violence or its opposite, but rather whose interest it enforces and whose it violates: violation (of some people's interest) it necessarily is. In Hesiod, beasts devoured each other and men, having justice, did not. In Thrasymachus, the only difference is that among animals the stronger tears apart the weaker by tooth and claw, while men do the same by means of legislation.

That violence is the law of nature and that enforcement of one's own interest is true justice are further affirmed by Callicles. "In my opinion nature herself proclaims that it is just for the better to have more than the worse and for the abler (to have more) than the feebler" (*Gorgias* 483 D). Contrary to what Hesiod says, "it is obvious in many ways that this is so both in the animal world and in the cities and races of men; and that right has been judged to be that the stronger rule and have more than the feebler" (*ibid.*), "this being just by nature that the possessions of the inferior and weaker should belong to the superior and stronger" (484 C).

47. For the relation of Gorgias and Callicles, cf. H. Maier, *Sokrates*.

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Callicles is aware of the fact that man-made laws sometimes serve their original (Hesiodic-Solonic) purpose of setting limits to rather than enforcing man's natural greed. However, that is still a form of violence: the violence the weaker masses impose upon the strong individual, thereby violating his nature. Unable to achieve their aims by the natural use of main force, the weaker use the law to protect their interests, and to "terrorize the stronger of men" (483 B). This is no less a tyranny than the rule of the stronger. It is merely tyranny by means of law, "justifying with a high hand the utmost violence" (Pindar), rather than the natural tyranny of naked force.

With this not at all unfair appraisal of the purpose of Hesiodic morality, the wheel has come full circle. Conventional law limits over-reaching and unlimited self-aggrandizement: that is why Hesiod and Solon approved of it as natural for man and that is why Callicles rejects it as a violation of human nature. The peaceful education and culture of man by law, advocated as being natural to him by the educators of Greece from Hesiod to Protagoras, is rejected by Callicles as an unnatural taming of a once free and proud animal, a restriction that destroys him. With this conception of nature and convention there is no longer any question (as in Protagoras, Antiphon, and, perhaps, Hippias) of narrowing or even eliminating the gap between them. Rather than adapt and adjust law to nature, the Calliclean solution is to eliminate legal justice altogether.

Although none of the Sophists have gone so far as Plato's fictional protagonist, Plato is not unfair in drawing these conclusions. It was the Sophists who undermined the authority of law; Plato merely showed where it was all bound to lead. The triumph of law in Hesiod, Solon, and Aeschylus was at the same time the triumph of rationality. If Callicles now gives the victory to unreasoning violence, has not the way been prepared by Gorgias who relegated *logos* itself to the realm of unreason,

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regarded persuasion as better or worse deception, and words as magic charms and incantations? In ironic reference to Gorgias' own words, Callicles now proposes to "break free . . . and trample underfoot our codes and witchcraft, our charms and laws, which are all against nature" (484 A). If laws are deception, let us commit them to the flames.

Religious Criticism

The legal-political structure of the state was not the only thing undermined by Sophistry. Religious customs and practices also came in for their share of criticism which, however mild in its beginnings, succeeded in the end in discrediting religion and thereby destroying one more of the bases of traditional morality.

While some of his predecessors ridiculed religious anthropomorphism and opted for a more rational conception of divinity, Protagoras, denying man all knowledge concerning the existence and characteristics of the gods, tried to put an end to religious speculation. That this denial did not amount to atheism we have already pointed out. Protagoras set limits to religious knowledge but did not restrict religious practice, ridicule rituals, or abrogate customs. From what we know of him, it is safe to assume that, as long as these customs contributed to social harmony, they were, for Protagoras, not only true religion (they were that as long as believed in) but they were also good, i.e. useful and therefore desirable.

Although, in the Protagoras-myth, the Sophist ascribed the origin of religious worship to our kinship with the gods, he is unlikely to have taken this explanation any more seriously than the Zeus-Hermes story about the origin of justice. It is not until Prodicus that we find the first serious Sophistic theory of the origin of religion.

According to Prodicus (*DK*, B 5), men first "held nourishing

and useful things divine" and "called gods the sun, the moon and rivers and fountains and all that was useful for our life;" later on⁴⁸ they began to ascribe whatever was profitable to personalized gods. They held "the inventors of nourishing and sheltering things or other arts, like Demeter and Dionysus" to be gods, and "called bread Demeter, wine Dionysus, water Poseidon, fire Hephaestus," and in a similar manner deified "each serviceable thing." It is no longer our kinship to the gods but our insecurity and the resultant gratitude for what helps us survive that is taken to be the basis of religion.

As in the case of Protagoras, so here, it is extremely unlikely that Prodicus' rationalization of religion was directed against existing customs and rituals. Giving a psychological foundation to religion, basing it on fear and gratitude, is not tantamount to saying that religion has no legitimate basis. On the contrary, Prodicus probably held this theory to be an ample justification of religious practices. What he failed to see was that rationalization, no matter how well meant, necessarily constitutes another step toward undermining belief.

Hippocratic medicine also contributed to the fateful process of rationalization. By depriving diseases, believed to have been god-inflicted, of their divine origin (*On the Sacred Disease* 1, 2) and declaring them all alike natural (though no less divine for that, cf. *Airs, Waters, Places* 4, 12), medicine succeeded in depriving belief of yet another support. It is in a manner reminiscent of Prodicus that the writer of *On the Sacred Disease* describes how "men in need of livelihood contrive and devise many fictions of all sorts about this disease (epilepsy), among other things, putting the blame for each form of affliction upon a particular god. If the patient imitate a goat, if he roar, etc.

48. On this second part of Philodemus' *De pietate* being Prodicus' rather than Persaeus', cf. Nestle, "Bemerkungen" *Philologus* 67.

... they say the Mother of Gods is the cause. If he utter a piercing and loud cry they liken him to a horse and blame Poseidon ... " (*On the Sacred Disease* 4, 40–60). For him, all this, and the rites and purifications attempting to cure the diseased, are unnecessary, useless, and unholy. It is neither rational nor pious to "hold that a man's body is . . . defiled by a god, the one being utterly corrupt, the other perfectly holy" (*On the Sacred Disease* 4, 48–50), or to forbid the defiled to enter divine sanctuaries if his disease is really sacred (*Ibid.* 40–60). Such superstitions are to be abandoned.

Through the purification and rationalization of religion, Hippocratic medicine unwittingly emptied religion of much of its substance and left it poorer in function and content. Gorgias' skepticism about religious prophecy (*Helen's Encomium* 11) and Thrasymachus' doubt concerning the gods' supervision of human affairs (*DK*, B 8) also contributed to this process of gradual impoverishment. It was not, however, until Critias that the whole of religion was openly declared an outright falsehood invented to put the fear of god into men so that they would obey the laws.

Critias' satyr-play *Sisyphus* has much in common with other Sophistic writings. As an explanation of religion it bears some resemblance to Prodicus' psychological rationalization. As a description of the original state of mankind and of the gradual development of social life, and as a utilitarian justification of religion, it is reminiscent of Protagoras. Regarding the preservation of justice and law as the function of the invented gods, Critias seems to echo Thrasymachus (*DK*, B 8). And, calling the whole of religion a pleasant and useful lie, justified by the results, he comes close to a prosaic use of Gorgias' "just deception." This conception of religion as a cultural invention of man is also quite Sophistic, for it was the Sophists who ascribed

almost everything under the sun to the inventive power of man bent on survival.

"There was a time," so the fragment goes, "when the life of men was unordered, bestial, and the slave of force, when there was no reward for the virtuous and no punishment for the wicked. Then I think men devised retributory laws, in order that justice might be tyrant and transgression its slave, and whoever did wrong was punished. Then, being forbidden by the laws to commit violent crimes openly, they did them in secret, until a wise and clever man invented fear (of the gods) for mortals, so that there might be some means of frightening the wicked even if they do or say or think (something) in secret. He introduced the divine, saying that there is a god flourishing with immortal life, hearing and seeing with his mind, and thinking of everything and caring about these things, and having a divine nature, who will hear everything said among mortals and will be able to see all that is done. And even if you plan anything evil in secret, you will not escape the gods in this, for they have surpassing intelligence. In saying this, he introduced the pleasantest of teachings, covering up the truth with a falsehood. . . . Thus I think for the first time did someone persuade mortals to believe in the race of deities" (DK, B 25, tr. after K. Freeman).

While others pay at least lip service to religion and ascribe the unwritten law (that which is by nature rather than custom) to gods (e.g. Hippias in Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 4.19), Critias places the whole of religion, gods and all, squarely in the domain of human invention and convention rather than nature, thereby completing what Protagoras and Prodicus began. Though he still pretends to approve of this useful institution, it is clear that his exposé can have only one result: the total discrediting of religion and the destruction of the last vestiges of its usefulness.

The Abuse of Rhetoric

Rhetoric, the intellectual tool for the improvement and education of men, discovered and sharpened by Protagoras, Gorgias, and Prodicus, also deteriorated in the hands of the later Sophists. Protagoras' antilogical arguments became empty eristic, Gorgias' "just deception" deception pure and simple, and Prodicus' synonymous came to be used for the purposes of confusion rather than clarification. Though we do not know against which actual Sophists, if any, Plato's satire of the rhetorical contest in the *Euthydemus* was directed, it is certain that the tendency he attacked was not his invention. The art of persuasion established by the Sophists was obviously a two-edged weapon all too likely to be abused. Even if the Sophists were justified (e.g. Gorgias) in claiming that it was no more the business of rhetoric to teach what cause it should be used for than it was the business of medicine to teach which man was to be saved and which destroyed, and that both arts were equally liable to misuse, nevertheless their emphasis on rhetoric as the highest of arts (*Meno* 95 c, *Gorgias*, *Philebus*) and on probability rather than truth could easily be taken to mean that considerations of virtue and truth were not, after all, very important. That such abuses, even if not prevalent, certainly appeared as early as the fifth century we can see from the testimony of Antiphon, Hippias, and Aristophanes.

Both Antiphon and Hippias were aware of the fact that rhetoric, being an art, was indifferent to moral considerations: "If a case is brought up for punishment there is no advantage peculiar to the sufferer rather than the doer," Antiphon says. "The sufferer must convince those who are to inflict the punishment that he has suffered, and he needs the ability to win his case. And it is open to the doer to deny by the same means . . . and he can defend himself no less than the accuser can accuse,

and persuasion is open to both parties, being a matter of technique" (*DK*, B 44). The arguments of orators, Hippias saw, can easily "upset and maim" the law (*DK*, B 22), and instead of presenting the good points of even the weaker side of the case and bringing out whatever truth even the inferior position contains (*to hetton kreitton poiein*), they may help the worse triumph over the better and the false over the true. The practices satirized by Aristophanes are not unknown in our own day. Legal oratory as mere persuasion can be used or abused indiscriminately. Nonetheless, the Sophists could be blamed for failing to distinguish between true dialectic and demagogic, rational argument and emotional persuasion, and thus for failing to provide a safeguard against such abuses. Had they done so, their followers, some of whom lacked the integrity of a Protagoras or a Prodicus, could not have turned rhetoric so easily into an art that deserved all the criticism of Aristophanes and Plato.

The high development of the art of rhetoric had one last undesirable consequence. A skillful orator spoke so beautifully, persuasively, and, on the surface, plausibly on every occasion that the audience, moved by the power of his words, could not but regard him as an authority on the subject of his discourse. The speaker himself, persuaded by his own eloquence and the enthusiastic response, was likely to entertain similar pretensions. So it came to be that, while Protagoras and Gorgias tried to restrict human knowledge and to exclude certain subjects from meaningful and useful discourse, their successors not only wrote indiscriminately on most subjects under the sun but in the end claimed to be able to talk about and (what seemed to them the same thing) to know about any subject whatsoever. Though in some cases such claims were to a great extent justified (for Hippias was in all likelihood well versed in mathematics and some of the natural sciences, and Antiphon, like

Hippias, made significant contributions to mathematics, e.g. the squaring of the circle), this cannot excuse the exaggerated claims of universal expertise that Plato and Aristophanes ridicule. The Sophists' fault was not so much that they pretended to be all-knowing, but that the possession of such an exquisite weapon as the art of discourse, the absence of a distinction between formal skill in argument and material knowledge of the subject in question, and their insistence on likelihood rather than truth made such exaggerated claims all too likely and conclusive refutation well-nigh impossible. Even if Sophists had never pretended to encyclopedic knowledge, the situation they created fostered these abuses and permitted them to go unpunished.

We have tried, in the preceding, to point to some of the less praiseworthy aspects of later Sophistry in order to show, at least in part, why this art and its adepts met such violent opposition almost simultaneously with the rise of Sophistry itself. There was undoubtedly much in Sophistry that not only gave rise to contemporary attacks but would also be regarded as lacking in merit by many a reader in our day—this is quite clear. But it would be misleading to give the impression that the situation can be presented in an altogether clear-cut, black-and-white relief, as if any aspect of Sophistry were entirely objectionable either in itself or to its contemporary audience. Both the aims and directions within the movement and the intellectual-political atmosphere of fifth-century Athens were much too complex for such a simplified view.

In the first place, the Sophists' sometimes ruthless attacks on traditional legal-political and religious theories and practices were as necessary as they were fruitful. In undermining time-honored institutions, they exposed the weak foundations these were built on, initiated the reflection necessary for correcting

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their shortcomings, and pointed the way to reform. No matter how offensive their questions—concerning the nature and purpose of legal-political institutions, the foundation and use of religious practices and beliefs—may have sounded to some, to raise these questions was no mean accomplishment.

In the second place, we must be careful not to exaggerate the contemporary opposition to Sophistry. Athens was much too diversified intellectually, much too divided in its attitude to anything whatsoever, to be unanimous on this subject. It is not at all surprising to find that even the most extreme theories of Sophists usually express, or are adopted by, some facet of Athenian public opinion, and that their most daring conceptions are as a rule embodied in or mirrored by some event or series of events in Athenian history.

If one thinks of the Thrasymachean-Calliclean view of justice as representing the interest of the stronger, it is not only its explicit word-by-word adoption by Athenian spokesmen in Thucydides (I, 75–76 at Sparta; also Melian dialogue) that comes to mind, but the fact that, in spite of all pious and diplomatic speeches to the contrary, no other principle so underlies, justifies, or explains the Peloponnesian War as a whole (as presented in Thucydides). "Justice is the interest of the stronger" is not mere theory but a fundamental political reality in fifth-century Greece.

As for the Sophists' attack on religion, it would be a gross exaggeration to say that such an attitude was offensive to most Athenians. In fifth-century Athens the state-sanctioned, state-administered religious practices were pretty much on a par with the legal-political customs of the state, and in the majority of cases we cannot find any traces of an excessively deep-seated popular attachment to them. Pericles' speeches in Thucydides stress the greatness of Athens and of man rather than the majesty of the gods. Thucydides' history as a whole (not to speak of

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the particular passages which record religious apathy and even outright antireligious sentiments) lacks all religious emphasis. Euripides' somewhat Sophistic and often antireligious plays enjoy great popularity. In such circumstances, it is obvious that the Sophists' criticism of religion must have found a great many sympathetic listeners.

With regard to the Sophists' unwarranted self-confidence and the resulting claims to a plethora of knowledge, one cannot help noting that this, too, was very much in the spirit of the time. Conscious of their power, the Sophists made exaggerated claims, it is true. But, conscious of her new position and importance, Athens did the same. To some Sophists it seemed as if the power of human intelligence, their own or man's in general, had no limits. This is precisely the way many Athenians looked upon the power of their city. Her increase in ability in all the arts—intellectual, technical, domestic, political, naval, military—intoxicated Athens just as their success did the Sophists, and in the first flush of victory, both became uncritical of their own capabilities. After the achievements of the elder Sophists, and of Pericles on the political scene, their lesser successors threw all caution to the winds—with disastrous results.

The later Sophists' adventurous spirit, overconfidence, their unrelenting thirst for the novel and lack of regard for the old, their restless probing, searching, and questioning, performed with more courage than resource, all these were not characteristics that distinguished them greatly from their contemporaries. If we believe the Thucydidean evidence, it is clear that a bold, adventurous, critical, self-certain attitude and a pride in the powers and achievements of the mind were part and parcel of the Athenian character. Far from thinking of Athens as unanimously opposed to this aspect of Sophistry, it would be closer to the truth to characterize the city itself as a by and large Sophistic polis. If the Sophists returned to man and ex-

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pected all the solutions to his problems to come from man himself; if they hoped to find the foundation of law, religion and customs in man's nature and, in doing so, glorified man beyond all previous attempts—so did the Athenians. It was this return to man that made Athens the master and schoolmaster of Hellas.

The foregoing appraisal of later Sophistry should not tarnish or obscure the merits of the men who first developed the art. It was Protagoras, Gorgias, and Prodicus who initiated the movement and were responsible for both its positive and negative achievements. To give them their due, however, it is not enough to dwell on their own activities and on those of the successors we already mentioned. We have to refer forward to Socrates who deepened their insights and turned the techniques of early Sophistry to good account. This is amply demonstrated in the early Platonic dialogues, where Protagorean antilogy and paradox reappear in Socrates' ironic-maieutic questioning, where Gorgian "just deception" becomes Platonic myth and where Prodicean syncretic is developed into a search for clearly defined concepts.⁴⁹ Apart from all material correspondence to Protagorean thought on the education of man and on the nature of man and the state (we shall deal with all this later), even the Sophists' emphasis on formal rather than material treatment, on method rather than content, is echoed, though only to an extent and to more profound purpose, in Socrates' greatest contribution to philosophy, his method of questioning and leading the soul toward the truth. In a way, the controversy between Sophistry and Socrates was itself formal: it was not whether the soul could or should be led, not whether education, the cultivation and improvement of man, was possible—for on all this they agreed—but, rather, by

49. Cf. H. Gomperz, *Sophistik und Rhetorik*, p. 288.

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what method, in what manner, and through what form of *psychagogia* this could be accomplished. As the Sophists' formal techniques and investigations were inseparable from their material aim and insight, so Socrates' method expressed and embodied his whole philosophy.

The greatest accomplishment of the Sophists consisted in their return to man, and in this, too, Socrates follows them. Although the solutions they proposed to man's problems were inadequate, the fact that they made these problems once again the central concern of philosophy prepared the ground for the work of Socrates, the greatest Sophist and wisest man of them all.

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Athens
Socrates
before?

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able, they were reluctant to make general definitions. This left their educational aims undefined, their efforts fragmented, and their work centerless and shallow. Socrates, while sharing their insight into relativity, recognized that general concepts were a prerequisite for all rational discourse, the basis of true education, and he insisted on searching for universally applicable formal definitions. This enabled him to probe deep where the Sophists only touched the surface and to arrive at a unitary solution of problems that the Sophists tackled from all sides. While the Sophists in many instances "preferred probability to truth," which they relinquished as unobtainable, and in consequence concentrated on persuasion rather than enlightenment, on obtaining the uncritical consent of the many rather than the intelligent agreement of the few, Socrates did the opposite. He not only insisted on truth but showed a way of getting at it through one's own critical reflection and thus devised a true form of education. The Sophists gave lectures. Socrates merely questioned. The Sophists gave verbal exhibitions on education, virtue, and human excellence. Socrates exhibited them by embodying them in his life. In view of all this, it is not surprising that, while Sophistic teaching resulted in external education, a cure from without, Socrates brought about internal improvement in men, a true "therapy of the soul."

Late Sophistry's exaggerated confidence in its own abilities and uncritical trust in the powers of man were also to be curtailed, and it was Socrates who, with profound self-criticism, investigated the nature and limits of man's power and knowledge and laid a solid foundation for any and all proper self-confidence. In this, he resembled Sophocles, who in *Oedipus Rex* also showed man to be an often inadequate, fragile being, full of needs—a failure, in a sense, rather than a success—but, while taking the true measure of man, affirmed him with all his shortcomings and presented thereby a new ideal of human-

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ity.⁵⁰ However, this implicit ideal had to be made explicit, and the view that was based on poetic insight and inspiration had to be based on rational insight and reflection. Humanism had to be transplanted from the soil of poetry to the soil of philosophy. This became Socrates' task.

In order to see how Socrates developed, perfected, and, at the same time, overcame Sophistry, we shall attempt to follow his inquiry by following the questions he thought most important: What is human good? What is human excellence? How can it be acquired? How can it be taught? There is some difficulty in dealing with these questions in succession, for the answers to them are obviously interrelated, each presupposing and implying the other, so that their separation and order of treatment are to a large extent arbitrary. After all, they are merely different ways of asking the same fundamental question, "What is man?" and Socrates was well aware of this. When reproached that he always said the same thing, he answered "not only the same but the same about the same," and went on circling around the same center, approaching the same thing from seemingly different directions. He had but one concern, man, and the unity and simplicity of his thought did not permit fragmentation. This will become evident as we follow him on his circular path and as the focus of all his concerns takes on a clearer and clearer outline.

HUMAN GOOD

What is good? The Sophists used to ask: What is good for dogs or cats or pigs, for men, women, or children, in sickness

50. For an elaboration of my remarks on Sophocles here and later in this chapter see "Oedipus: Tragedy of Self-Knowledge," *Arion*, 1 (Autumn 1962), 20-31.

or in health, in Athens or at Sparta? In answer they enumerated a "swarm of goods," giving a different reply to each of these questions. Socrates asked: What is good in general, what is it that is shared by everything that can be called good, that all instances of goodness have in common? This was altogether un-Sophistic, for the question itself presupposed that, in spite of all diversity and multiplicity of goods, it was possible to give a unitary definition embracing all instances and overarching all diversity.

At first, Socrates' answer does not seem very different from those of the Sophists. He did not abandon their insight into the relativity of values, but, knowing that no one thing could be good for all people at all times, he, too, refrained from trying to give universal material definitions and adopted the Sophistic identification of what is good with what is useful and beneficial, for whomever and whenever useful and beneficial. "The good is whatever is beneficial relative to whom it is beneficial" (*Xenophon, Memorabilia* 4.6, 8), whatever is useful, helpful, appropriate, for whomever it is such.

What distinguishes the Socratic adoption of this definition from the Sophists' occasional use of it is that, while the Sophists already used a formal definition in this instance (with respect to goodness), they failed to see clearly what made this definition universal and why general definitions were possible to give and necessary to have in every field of human discourse. Socrates was the first to show this.

He saw that it was not merely the relativity of values that barred material definitions but that the very materiality of a good made it a particular instance incapable of universality. Even if it were possible to find some goods that were beneficial to all men at all times, that would not suffice, for we would still be talking about competing goods, rather than the good as such, i.e. that quality, characteristic mark, or formal structure

that all good things, no matter how relative, particular, and materially different, must share if they are to be good at all.

He saw, furthermore, that there had to be such a common characteristic, for otherwise we could never call different things by a common name, and, in consequence, we would become totally incapable of speaking. The Sophists' reluctance to give general definitions, carried to its logical conclusion, necessarily leads to this result.

Let us assume that one refuses to define what is good on the ground that no two instances of goodness—e.g. in sickness and in health—are the same. Then one must also refuse to speak of what is good in sickness or in health in general, for no two diseases require exactly the same treatment, nor do different people in health invariably benefit from the same things. At this point it becomes absurd to speak even of sickness and health as such, for no two cases of illness or states of health are entirely alike. Ultimately one must stop speaking altogether, for the very possibility of speech lies in the use of common names for things that are not identical. If we deny that some things, at least, have something in common, even though they may be different in many respects, that a word can have much the same meaning even in different contexts, and that, therefore, general definitions can be given, words become completely meaningless, and speech and thought—the silent conversation of the soul with itself—become impossible. Thus the Sophists either must admit the possibility of general definitions or they must be forever silent.

Since neither the Sophists nor anyone else has ever been willing to adopt the second alternative, it is clear that everyone acts on the presupposition—conscious or unconscious—that different instances of the same thing (goods, diseases, men, etc.) have a common structure, characteristic mark, or trait. What makes this common characteristic—and thus the meaning of a

word—definable is that whoever uses the same word in different contexts and understands others when they do so, as we all do, already has some awareness of the connotation of the word as well as of the formal identity of the different things designated by a common name. Otherwise he would not be inclined to apply the same name to them all.

If so, all that is needed is to bring this vague awareness of the formal sameness of materially different things to the surface of consciousness and to turn our unclarified notions of everyday use into transparent, well-defined concepts. This is what Socrates attempted to do by going a step beyond the Sophists and their disciples, who merely enumerated particular instances when asked for a definition. He purified and clarified concepts by collecting these scattered instances and comparing them with each other until their common characteristic (called *eidos* or *idea* in the early dialogues) was clearly seen, and thus a general definition of the word in question was obtained by his interlocutors. This allowed him to communicate with the conceptual clarity and overarching vision to which neither Prodicus' syncretic nor Sophistic rhetoric in general was able to attain.

We shall see later on to what extent this clarification of thought and this awakening of our awareness to what already lay within the soul became the central aim of the Socratic method of teaching. At this point we are more concerned with the results of this method in reference to Socrates' definition of the good.

The good is the useful, beneficial, and appropriate. But what is that which is beneficial and what are the criteria for judging whether anything is useful or appropriate? Without criteria, the definition remains not only formal but altogether empty, and Socrates' opponents can justly deride him for hiding behind mere words when he answers their questions with such apparently evasive synonyms. Thrasymachus attacks Socrates in

the *Republic* (336 D): "Don't tell me that [it] is what is necessary or beneficial or profitable or gainful or advantageous, but express clearly and precisely what you mean." Unless Socrates can elaborate on the definition, the objection seems well taken.

So he elaborates. The good is what is useful, but what is the useful? The useful is what one needs, what one is deficient in, what belongs to one, what would complete, satisfy, and fulfill us in those areas and respects that are as yet unfulfilled, deficient, needy. What is not needed by someone is not good for him; what is not needed by anyone is not good for anyone at all. Without needs, wants, and desires in man, there would be no good for man; without the existence of deficient beings nothing whatsoever could be called good in the world. The good is but the other pole to deficiency and lack; human good roots in human need and must be defined with reference to it.

The good is what is desired, needed, lacked, yet not necessarily what people think they need and therefore desire. Men may be mistaken as to their needs and strive for something they do not really lack, something that is neutral or even harmful to them. In such a case, they are mistaken as to their real desires. The good is not what men think they need but what they really need by nature—whether or not they are aware of it—what they are really deficient in, what by nature belongs to them and would fulfill them if possessed. For Socrates, it is human nature rather than opinion, convention, and belief that determines what is good, and so, in the *physis-nomos* controversy concerning the good, he clearly takes the side of nature against convention.

Why do men desire the good? There is but one possible answer to this: the good is what fulfills one's nature, and the fulfillment of one's nature, the realization of one's proper potential is the natural aim of human life. The Socratic name for this self-fulfillment is *eu-daimonia*, the activity or state in which all is well with one's *daimon* (lot, portion, nature), in which

one's *daimon* is well arranged, one's constitution is as it ought to be, in which one has become what, by nature, one had to be, needed to be.⁵¹ Our word for *eudaimonia* is happiness.

The good (useful, beneficial, advantageous, appropriate) is that which makes man happy by fulfilling his nature. One can go no further than this and ask why men want to be happy rather than miserable; to Socrates, and, indeed, to all Greeks, this is self-evident: "All men by nature desire to be happy and no one wants to be miserable" (*Symposium*, *Meno*, etc.). Happiness is the final goal of all desire and the ultimate end of human existence.

This eudaimonistic definition of the good is often deplored by Christian interpreters—at least by those who do not deny it altogether, and ascribe various un-Greek notions to Socrates—which is interesting because the Christian definition of the good is also, in a sense, eudaimonistic. Christianity defines man's nature by starting not with man himself but with his being a creature (creation) of God, whose nature is to be defined with respect to the purpose of God for his creature, and it defines the good as whatever is in accordance with the will of God. Consequently a good man, acting in accordance with the will of God, also acts in accordance with his real and essential rather than his worldly and transitory nature and, fulfilling God's purpose, fulfills himself, becomes what he essentially needed to be. This is eudaimonism pure and simple. The difference between the two views of the good is not that one is eudaimonistic and the other is not, but that Socrates and Christianity differ in their definition of the *daimon*—nature, lot, portion—of man. Christianity defines it on the basis of another world, with respect to a transcendent God, while

51. Cf. P. Friedlaender, *Plato I* (New York, 1958), 37; H. Maier, *Socrates*, p. 317; B. Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), pp. 157–8, on *eudaimonia*.

Socrates' definition remains immanent, worldly, humanistic. Furthermore, Socrates' eudaimonism is hedonistic while Christianity's, at its best and most paradoxical, is not.

Fulfilling a need, satisfying a desire, attaining what by nature belongs to him, man experiences pleasure. The useful, the profitable, and the good are thus necessarily pleasant insofar as they are useful, profitable, and good, and pleasure becomes a recognizable mark or criterion of self-f fulfilling activity. The only reason why the good cannot be simply equated with the pleasant and the bad with the painful is that what is immediately pleasurable may result in future pain outweighing the pleasure, and what is momentarily painful may still bring a more lasting pleasure. But, then, it is clear that when we call a certain pleasure bad we do so because it results in a lasting deprivation of pleasure or lasting pain, that is, we measure its goodness by no other criterion than pleasure. Thus, the good, the useful, etc., is what brings pleasure in the long run, and the bad, evil, harmful, etc., what produces lasting pain (*Protagoras* 353 C–354 E), and "all actions directed at a painless and pleasant life are beautiful . . . and good and useful" (358 B).

It is important to hold on to this identification of the good with what leads to long-term satisfaction, well-being, or happiness because this gives us an empirical criterion of the good and because this alone explains the fundamental Socratic conviction concerning the inseparability of well-doing and well-being (*eupraxis* in both senses of the word). If to do the good means to do what fulfills us, what brings most pleasure in the long run, i.e. what makes man happy, then well-being or happiness is necessarily associated with good action, and good conduct obtains its strongest sanction and support, here and now, in the happiness that is its necessary result.

"All men by nature desire happiness." In Socratic terms, this also means that all men by nature desire the good. Since the

good is what is good (useful, beneficial) for the individual, what makes him happy, it is impossible that any man should really desire what is evil because that would be tantamount to wanting to be miserable, and that is not in human nature. Men often strive for something bad, harmful, and evil, but they do so only out of ignorance: not because it is evil but because they think it good. What is evil, i.e. harmful to him, no man willingly desires.

This leads to one of the cornerstones of Socratic ethics: since all men by nature desire and love what is good, no man willingly does anything evil. To know the good is to do it, and the cause of all evil is not a sinful will but a lack of knowledge. Wrong-doing is the result not of bad faith, weak will, or sinful disposition but of ignorance.⁵²

This Socratic dictum may sound strange to our ears, attuned as they are to two thousand years of Christian teaching, but nothing is simpler or more straightforward if we keep in mind the difference between the Socratic and the Christian presuppositions. With Christianity's separation of what leads to happiness here and now and what is good, and the concomitant elimination of natural inclination, desire, appetite, and earthly will as agents of truly moral action, nothing would seem less self-evident than that a man who knows something to be "morally" good—but just as likely painful, unpleasant, and harmful in his mortal life—should naturally want to do it. If he does it, he does so because in some mysterious fashion he chose to follow his duty rather than his natural inclinations, because he chose the "good" rather than what was beneficial and advantageous here and now.

Socrates identified rather than separated the two—the good

52. Cf. e.g. Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 3.9.4–5, 4.6.5–6; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1145 b23, 1147 b15; Plato, *Protagoras* 354 A, D–E; 352 B–C; 357 D; *Apology* 25 A; *Gorgias* 460 B–C.

and what is useful; the good and what all men by nature need, want, desire; the good and what is "good for" man, each man, each individual; the good and the natural motivation and final end of all our actions—and so, for him, any such break between knowing and doing the good is unthinkable and absurd. It is irreconcilable with the natural constitution of man. If a man chooses and does evil rather than good, he does so not because he is "overcome by pleasure," by desire, by the needs of this earthly existence, for the good is precisely the pleasurable, the naturally desirable and useful, but because he is overcome by ignorance. Blinded by the proximity of one good, he fails to see its ruinous long-term results. Confused by the deception of perspective, he makes the wrong choice. It is not, however, his will that is weakened here⁵³ but his insight into what is (really) good, his capacity to weigh, measure, evaluate future good, i.e. his knowledge of good and evil. An enlightened version of Homeric *ate* (blindness) remains the cause of *hubris* even in Socrates.

We can now begin to appreciate Socrates' advance on the Sophists in the field of Sophistry itself, that is, in the education, cultivation, and improvement of man. The Sophists wanted to better men, to teach them human excellence, but, when it came to defining what human excellence or virtue really was, they were either totally incapable of giving a unitary definition, enumerating, instead, a swarm of specific virtues *à la Gorgias*, or, if they believed with Protagoras in the unity of virtue, their definitions proved to be inadequate, shallow, limited, and particular. To identify virtue with external success in whatever

53. As Snell points out in *Discovery*, pp. 182–3, our notion of the will is completely foreign to the Greeks. They did not even have a word for it.

a man undertakes is not enough because the question is precisely what should or should not a man of virtue undertake. To say that virtue is political excellence is not enough because definitions like "acting and speaking ably in affairs of state" (*Protagoras* 318 E), being a "good citizen" (319 A), and "giving good counsel in public and private affairs" (318 E) either fail to specify in what the goodness of a citizen, the goodness of public and private counsel, or the goodness of able speaking and acting consist, or, if they do specify, "political excellence" becomes a virtue rather than virtue as such, and the definition is of a part rather than the whole of human excellence.

This is where Socrates' search for general concepts, universal definitions, leads him once again to a simple and unique solution of the problem. "If we want to improve and educate our young, surely the first thing is to consider what virtue is" (*Laches* paraphrased), he asserts, and immediately proceeds with his inquiry. Virtue, *arete*, is still a morally neutral word here, designating excellence, the excellence of any thing in any field whatsoever. Whatever is able to do its proper work, fulfill its proper function, attain its proper end or good, we call a thing of virtue or excellence (*Republic* I 352 E). Excellence is always defined teleologically, with reference to the purpose, aim, or end of the thing in question. If we want to define human excellence we must look to the final end, aim, or good of human existence and search for that quality by virtue of which a man is capable of attaining this end. The good of man is *eudaimonia*, happiness, well-being—the outcome of his fulfilling his needs, nature, and function. Whatever contributes to this end is good, whatever imperils it is evil. But what is it that, alone, invariably promotes this end and that enables man to work toward it and attain it? The answer is already contained in the foregoing. If a man necessarily does good (i.e. works toward his natural end) when he knows the good, then human excellence, that by virtue of

which a man is able to attain his end, is knowledge. "Virtue is knowledge" is a sentence Socrates never tires of repeating,⁵⁴ and rightly so, for this one sentence contains the substance of his moral teaching.

If virtue is knowledge, what kind of knowledge is virtue? That all knowledge is not virtue is evident, for human excellence leads to self-fulfillment and happiness while the knowledge of any particular art, field, or subject does not necessarily do so. A man may be an expert shoemaker, doctor, or scientist and yet fail to be happy. He may know all about his particular subject or profession and yet live a miserable life. The knowledge that is virtue must be good, must make us good, must make our lives good, and no specific branch of science will necessarily do so. Particular kinds of knowledge may procure us many of the goods of life, but these goods themselves may only harm us unless we know how to use them wisely, to our ultimate good, toward our self-fulfillment. Nor is virtue abstract-theoretical knowledge, the great achievement of natural philosophy, for such knowledge may have no relevance to the life of the individual. A man may know all about physical nature and yet be at a loss as to what to do with his life, how to infuse it with meaning, and how to make it worth living at all.

We shall have to return to what is already implicit in the preceding. The only knowledge that makes man good, i.e. makes him fulfill his nature and attain to *eudaimonia*, is the knowledge of good and evil. This is what Socrates calls *sophia*, *phronesis*, the only truly practical knowledge—wisdom. Wisdom is not one branch of knowledge among many in which a man may engage if it so suits him or leave to others with impunity if he is uninterested. Since all men by nature desire

54. Cf. Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* 1144 b18, 29; 1116 b4; *Magna Moralia* 1182 b15; 1183 b28; 1198 a10; Plato: all early dialogues up to the *Gorgias*.

happiness, and since the knowledge of good and evil is the only road that necessarily leads to happiness, this knowledge is a natural requirement for all men. Not unlike Protagoras' "sense of righteousness" which all men had to have if the city was to survive, wisdom is essential to every human being and for his own good.

Since the good is the useful, the advantageous, the appropriate, i.e. what belongs to us, what we by nature lack, need, and must have in order to fulfill ourselves, another way of defining human excellence is to equate it, Socratically, with self-knowledge. For self-knowledge, the knowledge of our nature, of what we need, lack, and must have if we are to be happy, is but another name for virtue. Unless a man knows what is good for him, what would make him a whole man rather than the needy, deficient creature that he by nature is, he cannot be good, virtuous, excellent, but unless he knows what he is, what his needs and talents are, and wherein he is deficient, i.e. unless he knows himself, he does not know what is really good or evil, useful or harmful, to him. Since human good is defined with reference to human nature, human excellence, wisdom, or the knowledge of good and evil can be defined as self-knowledge.

Virtue is wisdom, knowledge of good and evil, and knowledge of self. If this definition is good, all other virtues are but special instances or applications of wisdom in some particular region of human affairs. To show that this is indeed the case, we shall raise with Socrates the questions concerning the individual virtues.

Courage

What is courage, according to Socrates? Courage is a virtue, something good, something that makes us (do) good and there-

fore happy. Courage cannot be mere bravery, senseless boldness, unthinking endurance, a rash facing up to any danger, for such recklessness may bring disastrous results, lead to loss rather than gain, or make us miserable rather than happy. Not all risks are worth taking, not all dangers need to be faced, and courage cannot be mere daring. Nor is cowardice merely fear, for fear is not always base and evil; there is such a thing as wise fear, the fear for something worth-while, fear that makes us act usefully and profitably, i.e. virtuously, fear that promotes our ultimate well-being and is therefore good, a virtue rather than a vice.

What, then, is courage? The Socratic definition is simple. Since not all bravery is good and not all fear evil, since only wise daring is a virtue and only foolish fear a vice, courage is nothing but the knowledge of what to fear and what not to fear, the knowledge of what is worth daring and what is good to avoid. The courageous soldier is courageous not because he faces danger without fear for his life but because he faces what he fears (death or maiming) only on account of fearing something else (the life he and those he cares for would have if the war were lost) even more. A man who exposes himself to danger for no reason at all is foolhardy rather than courageous, stupid and unreliable rather than wise and good. Only he is courageous who risks his life because he dare not risk something more than just life: the good life, the life that is alone worth living. True courage comes not from fearlessness but from wise fear, the fear of what is truly fearful, the fear of the loss of a greater good. True courage involves a calculation, measuring, and weighing of what is more or less fearful, what is more or less dangerous in the long run. Courage is simply wisdom, the knowledge of good and evil. The wise man is necessarily courageous, for, knowing what is truly good, he necessarily faces the loss of the lesser rather than the greater

good. Only fools are cowards. They allow the loss of greater goods for the sake of preserving lesser ones. They do so out of ignorance. Cowardice is not lack of bravery but lack of wisdom.

The decision and action that require courage are not qualitatively different from any other practical decision and action; the difference is quantitative. In every human situation requiring choice, we are faced with better and worse alternatives, and in every deliberation the better and the worse hang in the balance. We do not, however, ordinarily speak of courage when the stakes are small or the odds safe. It is only in acute situations when the risks are obviously great and the odds uncertain, when something most men prize highly is at stake, that we hail a man for courageous deeds. But to the wise man, courageous action knows no such distinctions. A great deed of public valor requires no more daring than everyday living. What it requires is greater insight, truer measuring, and harder deliberation, i.e. more wisdom. It is wisdom, the wisdom that all important decisions call for, to which men give the name "courage."

Temperance

The case is no different with *sophrosune*, the next particular virtue to be defined. Although we usually translate *sophrosune* as temperance, moderation, sobriety, prudence, or self-control, a literal translation would be something like health of mind, sound thinking, sobriety of thought—terms whose connection with wisdom is immediately evident. What health is to the body, *sophrosune* is to the soul and indeed to the whole of man. It is the kind of thinking that saves, heals, fulfills man and makes him a hale, whole human being rather than a starved, truncated, incomplete fragment of one.

Socrates' insistence on *sophrosune*, and even his definition

of this virtue as wisdom, is not particularly novel in Greek thought. After all, Hesiod, and Solon and the other Sages, never tired of advising moderation, and popular gnomic wisdom has long included exhortations like *meden agan, gnothi sauton*—nothing overmuch, know your place and keep within its limits, do not transgress. What is original, however, in the Socratic insistence and interpretation is that *sophrosune*, instead of remaining an ad hoc exhortation supported by religious sanctions, or a single virtue among others, is now given a secure foundation and sanction in human nature and is shown to subsist in the same ground as all other virtues.

Sophrosune, translated as temperance, moderation, or prudence, implies restraint, a control over the passions, and a restriction of unbridled desire. It is opposed to lust and license and may at first seem an unlikely virtue for a hedonist to adopt. Nevertheless, the Socratic insistence on self-control is not in the least inconsistent with an enlightened hedonism. Hedonism aims at a life full of joy, a life in which all the needs and desires of man obtain maximum satisfaction, a life in which all the natural talents and capacities of man are given free flow, are unfolded and fulfilled. Hedonism is opposed to anything that means restriction rather than freedom, pain rather than pleasure for the individual *in the long run*. This is precisely why hedonism counsels temperance rather than license.

The passions themselves are blind. They merely urge without exactly knowing to what. They want to be satisfied but do not know what would fulfill them without harmful effects in the long run. They need control and guidance in their own interest and for their own satisfaction, i.e. in order to obtain the most pleasure. Prudence works not against them but in their service.

Furthermore, desire is characterized by *pleonexia*, by always

wanting more, knowing no limit or measure. But if there is a proper limit to a need beyond which indulgence brings pain rather than pleasure, then the need must be limited and tempered by prudence for its own sake. Unlimited passion brings only pain, for what has no limit is impossible to satisfy. Consequently, licentious living is a slave's life, lacking all satisfaction. We must master the passions for their own good lest they tyrannize us to the detriment of the whole man.

Finally, a man has innumerable needs, desires, and appetites, each clamoring for its own satisfaction without regard to that of others. Left to their own devices, they interfere with each other, blocking each other's satisfaction until the whole organism becomes unhealthy, chaotic, and discordant. In such a state of discord, either no passion is able to obtain satisfaction or, if one becomes strong enough to override the others, it buys momentary satisfaction for itself at the ruinous price of greater future pain for the whole. That is why self-control—the moderation of warring desires, the mediation between conflicting claims, and allocation of the satisfaction due to each without infringement on the others' portions—is necessary. Only self-control can introduce harmony into uncontrolled discord, create order out of chaos, and fashion the entire organism into one harmonious, healthy, living whole. Temperance alone fulfills the whole man and makes his life pleasant and good. That is why it is an eudaimonistic, hedonistic virtue.

From the preceding it is obvious that self-control in the Socratic sense is not the same as total abstinence or complete renunciation and extirpation of all desire. For an eudaimonist whose good is defined immanently and who rules the passions in order best to satisfy them, asceticism is as repulsive as licentiousness. They are merely different forms of excess as opposed to moderation. Both lead to misery, the latter through chaos, the former through utter renunciation of joy. Neither is worth

living. *Sophrosune*, mastery of oneself, is a free man's virtue while asceticism and license are slavish traits. Whether one lives under the unreasoning tyranny of the passions or as a terrified recluse concealed from their irresistible rule, one demonstrates in either case that one is not able to master them or oneself. The ideal of self-mastery is to possess (the passions) rather than be possessed (by them). As one Socratic disciple somewhat characteristically put it: "It is not going in (to a house of ill fame) that is dangerous but not being able to leave . . . (Diogenes Laertius, 2.69) . . . I possess rather than am possessed. For not abstinence from pleasures but mastery over them without being worsted is best"⁵⁵ (ibid. 75). This mastery is aimed at delivery rather than suppression, freedom for satisfaction rather than freedom from desire.

Free life, masterful life, self-control, control of each part of the organism for the good of the whole, harmonious satisfaction of all needs without undue infringement on any, the allocation to each of neither more nor less than its due—if this is what the temperate life means, then the one thing required for the excellence we call temperance, moderation, or self-mastery, is nothing other than the virtue we have already encountered: wisdom, the knowledge of good and evil, knowledge of self. How could one give each need its due unless one knew what is due, proper, appropriate, useful, i.e. good for each. How could one harmonize the whole unless one knew what was good for the whole, i.e. unless one had the knowledge of good and evil? How could one control and master oneself so as to attain self-fulfillment unless one knew what one was, what one's ultimate needs, desires, and talents were which needed to be unfolded and satisfied, i.e. unless one had self-knowledge?

⁵⁵ Aristippus' view of self-mastery is quoted here because, unlike Antisthenes', it is in line with the Socratic notion as expressed in the early Platonic dialogues.

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Wisdom alone can arrange everything according to its proper order, harmonize each with all, and combine the whole into one free, well-tempered, healthy organism. *Sophrosune*, sound thinking, health of mind, is nothing but wisdom. It is not theoretical contemplation or mere intellectual activity for the sake of the intellect alone, but practical insight into ultimate good and evil for the sake of the good life, the whole man. A wise man, needless to say, is necessarily temperate. Only fools are licentious and not out of weakness of will but out of ignorance.

Justice

The Sophists, or at least those of them who claimed to be teachers of political excellence, had much to say on the subject of justice. Their distinctions between natural and conventional law, as well as their theories concerning the nature and purpose of the state, contributed a great deal toward the final solution of the problem. In spite of this contribution, they themselves did not arrive at a satisfactory definition, and even Protagoras, in whose thought on the subject the Socratic solution was already implicit, contented himself with explicitly identifying justice and legality, justice and the existing laws of each particular state. This made him unable to give justice itself a workable, universal, and formal definition or to distinguish between just and unjust laws, although he did speak of good and bad ones, which is really the same thing. Socrates brought Protagoras' work to fruition and demonstrated the unity of justice and all other virtues by equating this excellence, too, with wisdom.

In his theory of the state, Socrates is in substantial agreement with Protagoras. States exist for the good of their citizens. The existence of states is justified by the material and intellectual benefits they confer on their citizens. If men were self-sufficient

and could lead as secure and satisfying lives living separately as they can in organized communities, there would be no reason for their living together. Since, however, this is not the case, since the state provides greater security and, through the organization and distribution of functions, makes life richer, better, and more livable, it confers great benefit on each citizen (*Republic* II, *Crito*) and makes communal living preferable to isolated existence. States are good because, and to the extent that, they serve the interest of each individual, compensate for his weakness and help him to fulfill himself.

Without some regulation and organization of their activities, men would constantly infringe on each other's interests and hinder each other's satisfactions. In the resulting chaos, the state could not fulfill its function of benefiting the citizen and could not even exist as a unified whole. Therefore, laws, customs, and rules of conduct are necessary. Regulating spheres of interest, mediating between conflicting demands, and allocating certain functions and duties, the laws are designed to prevent discord and bring about a harmonious functioning of the whole. The state being good for each man and the laws being good for the state, the laws are good for each individual. They are not mere restriction and curtailment of freedom but rather they alone provide freedom, i.e. an atmosphere in which each man can fulfill himself to the best of his abilities. To destroy the laws means to destroy the state and thus to deprive oneself of all the benefits the state and the laws confer (*Crito* 50 A ff.).

Of course, all this is true only of good states and good laws, those states and laws that fulfill the above functions. As states and laws may fall short of this aim and in the end may be more harmful than beneficial, justice cannot be equated in the Sophistic manner with simply obeying the existing laws of the state. Justice is a virtue, i.e. something that is always good, useful and beneficial, while mere lawfulness may not be. It is

therefore necessary to ask what all men, laws, and states which are rightly called just have in common.

There are several different formulations of the Socratic definition of justice, and they all express the same thing. The first definition is: to give each man his portion, his due—what is needful, appropriate, proper to him, what belongs to him, is by nature his own, what is good, beneficial, for him, etc. It is extremely similar to the definition of temperance as giving each need, desire, passion, each part of man, its due. This similarity is not surprising, for what temperance is in the life of the individual is, for Socrates, justice in the state. The individual and the state are similarly constructed. As the individual has a variety of conflicting needs, passions, and desires, so the state contains a multitude of individuals whose interests, needs and desires conflict. As temperance creates order out of the discord of man by giving each part of him its due without infringing on the satisfaction of the others, so justice produces harmony in the state by the allocation of proper portion and function to each man. Both temperance and justice are designed to enable a living organism, the individual or the state, to live a healthy, properly functioning, orderly life. Since neither man nor state can survive without internal harmony, temperance and justice are virtues, guaranteeing the goodness, excellence, and well-being of the organism whose health they are designed to ensure.

The next definition of justice differs only in emphasis. Justice means "to do one's own," "what one is by nature best fitted for." It is the "having and doing of one's own and what belongs to oneself" (*Republic* 433 A, E). Although formally this version describes justice without explicit reference to the other members of the community, in intent and purpose it amounts to much the same thing as the preceding definition. A state in which each man does what he is best fitted for by nature and

fulfills his own function without encroaching on that of others is a harmonious, well-functioning state where each individual is most likely to get what belongs to him by nature. Such a state is a just state, laws which ensure that each man should have and do his own are just laws, and the man who does and has his own is a just man.

It is essential to observe that this definition could also serve as a definition of temperance. In the individual, too, there is harmony and order only if each part of man fulfills its proper function. Temperance and justice are distinguished only by reference to different organisms (individual and state) and not in aim, purpose, and function. Indeed, even this distinction is not one Socrates scrupulously observes. He sometimes speaks of justice in the individual (*Republic* 443 D) as well as temperance in the state (*Republic* 431 D).

The Socratic reduction of virtues does not end here, for not only are justice and temperance formally indistinguishable, but the definition of justice as doing one's own, i.e. what is one's proper work, can be used equally well as a definition of excellence as such. Excellence is defined teleologically with respect to the proper, natural end or good of the individual or thing in question, or, conversely, with respect to its function or work which is at the same time what it is best suited for and what is most suitable to it. As excellence is defined relatively to ends and functions and as whatever does not perform its own function is not likely to come into its own, justice as "doing what one is by nature best suited for" is at the same time the whole of excellence as such, i.e. that by virtue of which anything attains its end and fulfills its nature.

At this point, it becomes somewhat difficult to retain even the term justice in reference to this excellence which is the same not only in human life but also in whatever has a proper aim, end, or function (whatever has none cannot in any sense

be called excellent), even in spheres where we do not normally apply the term justice. This is precisely the virtue of these Socratic definitions, that they clearly exhibit the formal identity of excellence wherever it can be spoken of and explicitly relegate all diversity to material differences. With this achievement, Socrates leaves behind not only Sophistry but also most of modern Western thought with its formal distinctions between moral goodness and practical expediency. For Socrates sees that it makes no difference in principle whether we are talking about the goodness of men, horses, trees, or knives. The excellence or virtue of each consists in his or its performing well the function or work that is his or its own.⁵⁶ Although it is obvious that the same thing is not necessarily good for men, dogs, and knives, and that the particular excellence of each will be different from others', this is because they each have different natures and functions in view of which the excellence of each is defined, and not because we employ a different definition of excellence in each instance. This is true even in the case of our distinction between moral virtue and non-moral abilities and talents in man. It is the field of reference that is different and not the definition of excellence, and we lay more emphasis on moral virtue only because it refers to that field or activity which we regard as truly human, because it is excellence in what we regard the proper, natural, essential function and work of man.

The same is true with regard to all human virtues. We may separate temperance and justice and speak of them as different manifestations of human excellence, but here, too, the difference is only material. It is the field of reference—e.g. individual or communal life—that is different and not the definition and determination of virtue as such. In principle, human excellence

56. Cf. R. L. Nettleship, *Lectures on the Republic of Plato* (London, 1958), p. 42.

is always the same, and it was Socrates with his peculiar, annoying, yet so necessary insistence on general definitions who first attained to this insight.

Returning once again to justice as a "particular" virtue, we need not spend much time on the third version of the Socratic definition which is equivalent to and implicit in the previous two. It describes justice not from the point of view of the activity of the just man (doing one's own, giving each his due), but rather with reference to the quality or state that this activity aims at and produces. Defined in such manner, justice is nothing but an orderliness (*eukosmia*), good arrangement (*eutaxia*), and harmony in the soul of the individual or in the state, a kind of concord of the organism as a whole. As this kind of well-being of the whole, characteristic of men and states in which each part "does its own" and "renders all others their due," justice again is nothing else than (temperance or) the whole of virtue.⁵⁷

In view of this fundamental unity of virtue, it would be surprising if, unlike courage and temperance, justice did not also turn out to be based on what we previously saw to be human excellence as such: wisdom, knowledge of good and evil, knowledge of self. And, of course, for Socrates it does. The one thing that makes a man not only courageous and temperate but also just is wisdom. How could a man do what by nature belongs to him and is needed for his fulfillment unless he had wisdom, the knowledge of self? How could he render any part of himself or of the state its due unless he had wisdom, knowledge of good and evil? And how could he attain to harmony himself or contribute to the harmony of the state without wisdom, without a knowledge of the good of the whole and of the good—the purpose and function—of

57. Concerning the preceding, cf. *Gorgias* 504–508; *Republic* 444 D–E.

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each part of the whole? Finally, why would he want to do these things if he did not know that justice itself was good for him, which he could not know without wisdom, the knowledge of good and evil? Being wise, how could he fail to be just?

This is a most important consideration. Justice in Socrates has no other sanction than the usual utilitarian, eudaimonistic, hedonistic one. The wise man is just because he knows what is good for him and justice is good. It is useful and beneficial, it "pays," makes the just man happy.

To give justice this utilitarian sanction is nothing new to the Greeks. From Hesiod on, the just man's house was supposed to bask in warm sunshine and the unjust man's to be brought low. Justice was constantly affirmed as the way to well-being, and injustice to ruin. Hesiod, however, had to introduce a whole array of deities and spirits to guarantee the rule of justice. Even Critias the Sophist, who satirized the arrangement, could not think of a better way of enforcing a just retribution. This is where Socrates takes up the work of Solon and Protagoras and demonstrates the natural inevitability of retribution for transgression and the natural utility and desirability of justice for man.

Solon and Protagoras had regarded injustice as a disease in the city which ate away its substance and in the end destroyed it altogether, bringing harm to all men who relied on the city for security and comfort. Socrates' view is the same. The unjust state, torn by internal discord and incapable of concerted action, will not only fail to fulfill its purpose and provide the benefits which are the sole justification of its existence, but, if it is not reformed, it will be destroyed by its own injustice (*Gorgias* 508, *Republic* 352). Since communal living promotes the self-fulfillment of each individual, the disease and fall of the city is harmful to each. It is in the interest of each man to be just. The man who harms the city merely injures himself.

HUMAN EXCELLENCE

Justice means to give each man his "own," his due, and for Socrates this principle of altruism has no other foundation than that of utility. To be unjust, to fail to render each his due and thus to harm another, means to injure oneself, for a man has to live a communal life for his own benefit, and the better his neighbors and fellow men are the better he himself will live. But harming others means to make them worse, corrupt them, lessen their excellence—otherwise there is no real harm done—and so whoever harms others makes his own (communal) life worse. Harming a dog makes him a worse dog, likely to be useless or harmful for us. Injuring a horse lessens the horse's excellence and thus harms those that have to rely on him. Just so, harming a man will make him less good a man (in whatever human excellence consists), more corrupt, vicious, and unjust, and harmful to us. Who would want to live among unjust rather than just, vicious rather than virtuous, evil rather than good men? Who would voluntarily corrupt his own life? For that is what harming others means (*Apology* 26). Injustice brings about its own retribution while justice—rendering each man what is due, thus improving him and making him better to live with—brings its own inevitable reward (*Gorgias* 520 D). Therefore, the wise man, knowing what is good for him, will necessarily be just, and no man will do evil except out of ignorance.

Doing evil even in return for evil can never be good or just, for evil done to a man makes him evil, and it is contradictory to the concept of justice qua virtue, goodness, excellence, that it should produce its opposite. To do men evil makes them bad, disorderly, disharmonious, and it is contradictory to the concept of justice qua harmony that it should bring about discord. Requiring evil with evil is never beneficial, for, augmenting discord, it makes the city unlivable, and, corrupting others, makes them more likely to harm us in return.

Wrongdoing, Socrates repeats, harms the doer, and it harms him even more immediately than by destroying the city which is good for him or by corrupting others who harm him. Injustice injures the doer himself by making him worse, baser, and less capable, and, thus, in the long run, miserable and wretched. If justice means performing one's own, fulfilling one's work and function, the unjust man, meddling in others' affairs and wasting his time on what is not truly his own concern and activity, will fail to fulfill himself and will thus remain unwhole, incomplete, and unhappy. If justice is human excellence and injustice vice, and if it is by virtue of its excellence that anything can attain to its natural end, then justice alone enables a man to live a good life in both senses of the word (doing good and living well) (*Republic* 352 E).

Justice, furthermore, ensures the harmony, internal order, and smooth functioning—the health, in short—of an organism, while injustice is disorder, discord—disease. The unjust man not only produces discord in society but, if he is truly unjust and recognizes no principle, measure, or order at all, he will be characterized by internal disorder and confusion, disharmony in his whole being, and, thus diseased and rotten at the core, his life will not be worth living (*Republic* 445 A, B). To do wrong, therefore, means not only to harm others but to make oneself worse, to weaken and sicken the organism that one is, to corrupt one's own soul, the very principle of life, and consequently to lead a life that is corrupt, unhealthy, and miserable (*Crito* 47 D, *Gorgias* 482 C, etc.).

For Socrates nothing could be more certain than the truth of his well-known paradox: that it is better to suffer than to do wrong, and, if he be unjust, it is better for a man to be caught and punished than not to be caught. If injustice is a disease of the soul and just punishment not an injury but a cure (and unless it is that, it is not just), then to be punished means to

be healed, which is preferable to escaping the punishment, which is like escaping the only cure for a fatal disease. Instead of health being restored, the cancer grows and the soul becomes sicker and weaker until it dies of its own corruption (*Gorgias* 472–479).

If it is the doing of injustice that alone corrupts the doer's soul, it is certainly better to suffer than to do wrong. The good man suffering injustice is harmed only externally, while, doing injustice, he would harm himself internally and thus suffer infinitely greater harm. External possessions and even life are less important than the good life, the just life, for it is better not to live at all than to live with a diseased soul, miserably. It is not life but the good life that is worth living because to a good man no evil can come. The only real evil is not death but injustice, and others cannot make a man unjust; only he himself can do this. A better man can never really be affected by the worse. They can kill him, but they cannot make him either wise or foolish, good or bad, and this alone matters. In what counts most, each man is his own master.⁵⁸

That is why the good man in Socrates is necessarily characterized by *autarkeia*, true self-sufficiency, freedom and independence from others: for the first time, what really matters depends on the individual alone. As long as the Greeks defined virtue as power, honor, or wealth, the virtuous man was never self-sufficient, for it was others that had to recognize and submit to his power, grant him honor and admiration, and provide and covet his wealth. For his very virtue he was dependent not only on himself but on the willing-unwilling co-operation of others, so that, no matter how powerful, he was, in reality, always in their power. Now that virtue no longer means merely excellence in relation to others but primarily ex-

58. Concerning this, cf. *Apology* 28 B, 30 E, 41 D; *Crito* 44 D; *Gorgias* 478 C–479 B, 482 C.

cellence in what one is, well-being not externally but internally, in relation to oneself, the good man now becomes truly free, self-reliant, and independent. It is not so much that power is no longer desired, but rather that Socrates shows what true power means: not external, not unqualified, not gained by any means whatsoever, but the power to attain self-fulfillment. Power and riches unjustly gained are useless because the unjust man, ignorant of his real needs, will be powerless to satisfy them and will be poor and miserable for all his "power" and wealth. Indeed, instead of making an unjust man happy, his power over others will only add to his misery by precluding all possibility of his ever being punished, corrected, and cured, i.e. set on the road toward well-being (*Gorgias* 466-467). Furthermore, unqualified power, in contrast to the power to fulfill one's nature, can never be a wise man's aim, for, being unqualified, unlimited, and without measure, it is by its very nature unattainable. Having no limit, being characterized by *pleonexia*, it always remains beyond the reach of man (*Republic* 348-350; *Gorgias* 490), leaving him unfulfilled and unhappy. Power is good only if accompanied by justice and wisdom, while wisdom does not need power to make it good. Wisdom is power, the only true power there is: that of fulfilling oneself. Wisdom (i.e. courage, temperance, justice, and self-mastery, the whole of human excellence) alone is sufficient for a man and nothing else is without wisdom. "Excellence does not come from riches, but of excellence riches and all the goods for men, individuals, and states alike" (*Apology* 30 B).

With this conception of justice Socrates provides a final solution to the problem of natural versus conventional law.

Particular laws, rules of conduct, the established order, and institutions regulating human behavior are no less artificial in Socrates than they were in Sophistry. They are entirely man-

made, the result of human art and convention. This, however, does not justify their wholesale rejection. For while it is the nature of man and society rather than human opinion and arbitrary convention that determines what is best for the individual and for society, this best order or pattern is not actually implemented by nature or the gods in the life of either individual or society. *Pleonexia* rather than measure, chaos rather than harmony, characterize brute existence. Order has to be found, established, and upheld by art and artifice. Far from nature being irreconcilably opposed to art, it is precisely the nature of man that demands the artifice. Without human ordering, neither the individual nor society could survive.

The necessity for human ordering does not, of course, make any particular law necessary or just. Men being ignorant of their own needs, talents, or good, the particular laws they set up may fall short of their real needs and, in special cases, may be entirely opposed to their natural interests. This opposition calls, however, for more rather than less artifice, for more rather than less reflection, examination, and re-examination of both nature (the given man, state, situation) and law. Only in this manner will the laws be adequate to the underlying nature that they are designed to fulfill and harmonize. Wisdom alone can diminish the gap between nature and convention.

The best aspect of this Socratic solution of the *physis-nomos* controversy is that it resolves it not only on the level of the state but also in the life of the individual. Since the individual, like the state, needs rules to order and harmonize life and since he, too, needs reason and art to fulfill his nature, harmony within the self is as needy of "artificial," conscious imposition of order as is the state. Rational self-control (justice, temperance) alone makes man and state alike excellent and good.

The importance of this unified solution is that it resolves, as much as possible, a tension that is a great deal older than

the nature-convention controversy of the fifth century. As we have already pointed out, the Aeschylean opposition between old and new gods—one side representing chthonic, natural, blood-law and the other civic, intelligent arbitration—was in a sense but the revival of the Homeric opposition between *moira*—impersonal, unconscious, and, as it were, natural—and gods—personal, conscious, arbitrary—an opposition which Hesiod's identification of *dike* with the will of Zeus tried to abolish. Now, in Socrates' thought, the unconscious violence, blindness, and absence of intelligence that characterized Homeric-Aeschylean fate as well as Hesiodic beasts, reappear as the lowest part of the soul (brute desire, raw instinct, unguided impulse), while conscious guidance and intelligent arbitration become the function of the highest part of the soul, reason, on a level much more elevated than either Aeschylus' or Homer's Athene was capable of reaching.

This internalization of both blind nature and intelligent control in man enabled Socrates to succeed where even Aeschylus failed in the reconciliation of "fate and Zeus." Aeschylus tried to eliminate the tension by simply eliminating one party to the controversy, by turning the Erinues, by a sleight of hand, into guardians of civic justice. Tension is still present in Socratic man, for appetite and reason are no more alike than Homeric *moira* and the gods, or the Aeschylean Erinues and Apollo-Athene. But by showing that brute nature (in man or society) needs rational guidance for its own satisfaction just as much as reason needs to satisfy the appetites and order the whole of man for its own good, Socrates pointed the way to order and balance in spite of tension and diremption within man. What neither the shallow, fragmented, episodic man of Homer, nor the Aeschylean masklike-negligible individual was capable of, the Socratic self, a complex yet unitary organic whole, could accomplish. Having become the bearer of the most important

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forces operative in human life—fate and the gods, chthonic and civic justice, brute nature and guiding intellect—it could now master them by mastering itself. Man no longer needed the gods above or below; he needed rather courage, temperance, justice, wisdom, i.e. human excellence as such. This will be further borne out in the following section.

Piety

Having defined justice, explained its benefits, and shown it to be nothing but wisdom, we can proceed to the last virtue to be discussed here: holiness, or piety. Its Socratic treatment is of interest to us if for no other reason than that Socrates was indicted, convicted, and put to death for his supposed lack of it. In view of this, it is significant that Socrates' discussion of piety is a great deal more tentative and incomplete than that of any other virtue and that, unlike other excellences, with which he deals repeatedly, the discussion of piety is confined almost completely to one early and inconclusive dialogue.

The two tentative definitions of piety or holiness in the *Euthyphro* are: the "holy is that which is dear to the gods," and "piety is that part of justice which concerns not our relations to men but our *therapeia*, caring for and cultivation of the gods." Both definitions are rejected as incomplete. The first is dismissed because Euthyphro cannot answer the question whether what is holy is dear to the gods because it is holy or holy because it is dear to the gods, and because, if he had, the definition would remain incomplete. If what is holy is holy because it is loved by the gods (and this is something Socrates would hardly agree with), we still would not know what is holy unless we also knew what exactly the gods were and what was dear to them, while, if the gods love what is holy

because it is holy, we have not a definition but a single attribute of holiness.

The second definition of piety or reverence as service and cultivation of the gods is equally useless unless we know exactly in what this care for the gods consists, i.e. unless we know what the gods are and care for, what to them is pleasing, beneficial, and good. This is precisely what is omitted and lacking in Socratic discussions. Unlike Homer, Hesiod, and Aeschylus, Socrates does not contribute to the creation and embellishment of Greek religion. Unlike Xenophanes and Heraclitus, he simply refuses to engage in an inquiry into the essential nature of the gods. In the best Protagorean manner, he follows the accepted religious practices, leaving etiological explanations, rationalizations of myths and all speculation concerning the gods to others with more leisure and cleverness. As for him, he prefers to "do his own," reflect on his own nature and concentrate his inquiry on man rather than on divine matters. "I am not yet able . . . to know myself and so it seems ridiculous to me, who does not even know this, to inquire into irrelevant matters. And so I dismiss all these and, following the customary belief about them, reflect not on these but on myself . . ." (*Phaedrus* 229 E—230 A).⁵⁹ Theological speculation as to the exact nature of the gods is not only difficult and obscure but also useless and irrelevant to Socrates because, in the manner of contemporary enlightenment, he refuses to believe that the gods can do or be anything but good (*Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Republic* III), and, if the gods are by definition good, without knowing their precise attributes we can be certain that good action and conduct will be holy, pious, and pleasing to the gods. If so, piety is not a special virtue, but virtue itself becomes the

59. The *Phaedrus*, although not an early dialogue, contains many Socratic elements. On this point, at any rate, it is in line with the early Platonic dialogues and Xenophon (e.g. *Memorabilia* 1.1.10–12).

essence of piety, and the good man, simply by virtue of his excellence, is *eo ipso* pious.⁶⁰

From Hesiod to Protagoras, reverence and justice (*aidos* and *dike*) have been closely associated, and they are still associated in Socrates. But while in Hesiod this connection was external, it is more than internal now. Instead of being associated by a certain likeness, the two have become identical. Furthermore, while Hesiod's justice needed religious-mythological guarantees for its enforcement, Socrates' does not. It has all the natural, rational utilitarian sanction that man can ask for, and that is one of the reasons why Socrates does not have to engage in religious-theological speculation or in an elaboration of the proper care for the gods (*eusebeia: therapeia theon*). Having identified justice (or, better, virtue) as a whole with reverence he can now turn to what is "his own" and inquire into human excellence in this life which is, in any case, the only life we know anything about (*Apology*). If there are gods they must be good, and if they are good a man need only concern himself with becoming as good as he possibly can. He will be pious thereby, and "no evil can come to him either in this life or hereafter" (*Apology*). The Socratic elimination of religious theorizing from all discussion of human excellence is less surprising if we keep in mind that even the virtue we are at present dealing with, *eusebeia* qua proper reverence, does not necessarily specify any relationship to the gods. *Eusebeia* means proper reverence, awe, fear, and respect toward whatever is truly venerable, awesome, fearful, and respectable, be it human or divine. If, as Socrates believes, the gods happen to be good and are therefore to be respected, then proper reverence is their due, and *eusebeia* includes our relationship to them, too. This relationship and service is the right relationship, however, only

60. Concerning this interpretation of piety, cf. H. Bonitz, *Platonische Studien* 3rd ed. (Berlin, 1886).

if we fear what is most fearful and awful on this earth, the loss of human excellence, and have most awe and respect for nothing but goodness and virtue. This one can do without any special cultivation of the gods qua gods but never without a knowledge of good and evil. Thus, piety (like courage, which was also a knowledge of what to fear, and, indeed, like all other "single" virtues) becomes nothing but wisdom. The wise man, knowing what is good and evil, will necessarily care for and render awe, reverence, and respect to what is truly venerable, i.e. good, and he will necessarily engage in becoming as good as he can, thereby becoming, as far as is humanly possible, divine.

We shall see later that this view of *eusebeia* was not exactly orthodox in fifth-century Greece and may thus have contributed, though not to any great extent, to Socrates' condemnation for impiety. At this point, it is more important to sum up the results of the preceding discussions concerning human excellence and then to proceed with our investigation of Socratic ethics.

The good, for man, is the useful, profitable, and pleasant, what he by nature needs, lacks, and desires, what belongs to him and, if possessed, would fulfill him and make him whole. Self-fulfillment, well-being, *eudaimonia* being the natural goal and end of all men, whatever quality or ability contributes to the attainment of this goal we call human excellence or virtue. Without knowledge of his good, his end, and function, man cannot hope to fulfill himself, but, knowing it, he will necessarily do so. Therefore, human excellence is nothing but wisdom, the knowledge of good and evil, knowledge of self.

Virtue is one, and, although men call it by different names according to the situation and field of activity they are concerned with (in acute danger: courage; with respect to one's own person: temperance; with respect to relationships between

men: justice; to the gods: piety), there are no separate virtues. As man is one whole and has to be fulfilled as a whole, human excellence, by virtue of which the whole is fulfilled, is one indivisible whole, too: wisdom, the knowledge of a whole (man) in the whole of its relationships (to himself and to the state as a whole).⁶¹

Now that all virtues have been reduced to one, and this has been shown to be wisdom, we can deal with the problem of the teachability of virtue and the proper method of its cultivation. If virtue is knowledge and knowledge is teachable (to the extent of the student's endowment), virtue is teachable and man can be improved. If our well-being depends not only on our own virtue but, to a lesser extent, also on that of our fellow men, every man is by nature concerned with learning and acquiring virtue himself and teaching and imparting virtue to others. On the teachability of virtue and the importance of the cultivation of human excellence, Socrates fully agrees with the Sophists. If virtue could not in some manner be taught and men were not somehow capable of improvement, there would be little point in investigating what human excellence is and what knowledge makes a man virtuous and happy. Such an inquiry would be purely theoretical, without the least practical value, and neither the Sophists nor Socrates was ever interested in such useless pursuits. Both wanted to improve men and believed in the teachability of virtue, and it is only at this point that they part company. They disagree as to the method of teaching virtue, and this "merely" formal disagreement is so great as to outweigh all similarity and place Socrates in a class by himself. For the Sophists, having defined virtue by and large as external success in acquiring social, political, and economic status, and having adopted a method of edu-

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61. Concerning wisdom as knowledge of a "whole," cf. *Republic* 428 D, 442 C-D.

tion that was also by and large external, gave the student a superficial polish and outward-directed ability to influence, persuade, and overcome others without making him any better internally by influencing, changing, and transforming him, without helping him to perfect, complete, and overcome himself. This is where the Socratic method of education was diametrically opposed to theirs, and this is where Socrates as educator not only surpassed the Sophists but also developed a theory and method of the cultivation of human excellence that is still unsurpassed today.

METHOD

To see how the type of knowledge that is virtue can be taught, we have to ask two prior questions: What is knowledge as such, knowledge in general, that which is common to whatever can be called knowledge? Can knowledge, any knowledge at all, be taught?

The Sophists either failed to distinguish between opinion and knowledge, probability and truth, or, in the manner of Gorgias, they declared certainty, knowledge, and truth to be unattainable and concentrated on probability, opinion, and persuasion rather than on real education. Socrates' clear-cut distinction between opinion and knowledge, appearance and truth, and his belief in the attainability of knowledge and truth changed this situation radically.

What is the difference between opinion and knowledge? An opinion is any statement someone accepts and is willing to act on. It is whatever we believe, are convinced and persuaded of, hold to be probably or certainly so. Since our beliefs are not always right, we have to distinguish between right and wrong, true and false, opinion. This precludes the identity of opinion and knowledge, for something that can be false, as can opinion,

cannot without contradiction be called knowledge. To have "false knowledge" means to hold something to be otherwise than it is and that means to fail to know it, to hold an opinion about it rather than have knowledge of it. It may be logically possible for a man to be ignorant of everything, to have no knowledge at all, but to have false knowledge is self-contradictory.

Although knowledge cannot be false and opinion may be, the truth of a statement does not *eo ipso* make it knowledge, for opinion may also be true. Truth is, therefore, a necessary but not sufficient criterion of knowledge. To define knowledge completely, we must also refer to something subjective, to the manner in which man comes to hold and is holding a statement to be true.

*Soph. or
Plato?*

It may seem paradoxical that neither (subjective) belief in the truth of a statement nor its (objective) truth, nor even the two together, qualifies it as knowledge, but no paradox is intended by Socrates. Obviously, these two criteria apply to right opinion as well as to knowledge. What distinguishes knowledge from opinion is neither its truth nor belief in it but simply the knower's ability to account for the truth of what he holds to be true. For Socrates, to know something means to be able to give reasons for it, to defend it by rational argument and to demonstrate it to others. It means to hold something not as an unconnected, isolated piece of information unsupported by anything else, but to hold it as a conclusion fastened by a long chain of reasoning to an unshakable foundation in first principles whose truth can no longer be questioned. In contrast to opinion (right or wrong), knowledge is something reflected upon, something reasoned, criticized, and argued, something that is not merely accepted on someone else's authority but appropriated by the knower himself through rational reflection, made his own by questioning and accepted on his own authority

as a reflective human being. To turn mere opinion into knowledge, reflection is required, a relentless questioning of every statement until we can account for it by giving the reasons and arguments that make us accept it as true. What makes the knower a knower is not the truth of a statement but that search for and appropriation of the truth which alone can result in the acquisition of knowledge rather than opinion. Opinions can be accepted without any work on our part; mere assent to a statement makes it an opinion we hold. Knowledge cannot be acquired in this manner because it requires rational assent which presupposes rational reflection on the part of the individual, i.e. something he himself must engage in and work at. Anyone can supply a man with opinions, but only he himself can appropriate knowledge.

In view of this difference between knowledge and opinion, the two can be seen to differ in both nature and worth. False opinion we need not discuss, since it is obviously worthless and more likely to harm than to help us. But even true opinion—which, provided a man happens to have it and in whatever field it happens to apply, is just as good as knowledge—cannot, on the whole, be compared with knowledge in utility.

Having uncritically accepted an opinion without reflecting on it, a man does not know whether what he holds to be true is really true or not. If true, it will be true fortuitously and, having no criteria for judging and distinguishing right from wrong opinion, a man will be just as likely to hit upon something false. He will consequently be equally likely to harm as to benefit himself. Knowledge, on the other hand, is always true, is always known to be true and can only benefit.

Right opinion, furthermore, is swayable and transitory. Since a man accepts it without rational reflection, on someone else's authority, persuaded by eloquence rather than argument, he will be just as likely to relinquish it if someone with more

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apparent authority and more eloquent persuasion comes along and urges him to do so. Possessing no judgment himself, he is always at the mercy of others and, instead of being in control of himself, he is not even master of his own mind. Only the knower is, and only knowledge, supported by reasoning, is firm against mere eloquence, persuasion, or any authority other than that of one's own intelligence.

Yet even this is not enough: the greatest shortcoming of opinion is that reliance on it restricts a man's vision and makes him unable to acquire what he most needs, knowledge. Even right opinion, which is useful in the particular instance to which it applies and as long as the situation remains the same, is totally useless in acquiring right opinions concerning other matters and for modifying belief in accordance with a changing situation. Even though true in a restricted field, right opinion by itself leads to no other truths. This is where knowledge is worth much more. The man who knows something has appropriated it by his own search and will know how to search for and acquire further knowledge, will know how to learn what he does not yet know. Knowledge is not only certain, self-authenticated, and not to be swayed by persuasion, but is also self-augmenting: the knower not only knows what he knows, but, being reflective and critical, he also possesses an invaluable tool—rational inquiry—for testing opinion, ascertaining truth, modifying belief, and extending knowledge beyond its existing limits.

Socrates easily answers the famous paradox concerning the impossibility of a search for knowledge—that a man cannot search for what he already knows nor for what he does not know, for, in the first case, no inquiry is necessary, while in the second the inquiry would be undirected and without criteria for recognizing the solution. A man of critical, reflective mind will never think that he knows what he does not know for he

knows how to distinguish between knowledge and opinion. But knowing that he does not know, i.e. that he has mere opinion rather than knowledge in a certain matter, he can now inquire: His opinion—not being perfect ignorance, which really would preclude all search, but rather something between ignorance and knowledge—will give some direction to his inquiry, and his knowledge (the knowledge that his opinion is merely opinion) will supply the criteria for recognizing the truth if it is found. More than that, he will not only recognize the truth, but, since he arrived at it by questioning, he will be able to account for it by giving reasons and will be able to demonstrate it to other men of critical intelligence, helping them in their search for the truth. His knowledge will be useful not only to himself but to the whole of society. Socrates can confidently and justifiably assert that "believing in the necessity of search for what we do not know will make a man better and more of a man and less helpless than the notion that we can neither discover what we do not know nor need to search for it. This is something I will fight for, as far as I am able, with word and deed" (*Meno* 86 B).

Having examined the nature and value of knowledge, we can go on to the problem of the proper method of imparting it. Once again a comparison with Sophistry is helpful. The Sophists either failed to distinguish between knowledge and opinion, or relinquished knowledge as unattainable and concentrated on imparting opinion, molding belief, and changing conviction. Opinions, beliefs, and convictions being uncritically accepted, unreflected, and unappropriated, i.e. not really one's own, they could be imparted externally without any work on the "learner's" part. The Sophists' method of education could accordingly remain purely external: persuasion rather than instruction on the "teacher's" part, passive acceptance rather than active thought on the part of the learner. Not being addressed

to reason, persuasion did not have to rely on rational argument so much as on the aesthetic-emotional force of the word, and the tool of Sophistic "education" became rhetoric. Mere eloquence was perfectly capable of and sufficient for molding and imparting belief.

The shortcomings of this method are obvious. At best it imparted right opinion and at worst false belief, which was bound to harm the student. Whatever it did, the student himself could not judge. He was delivered to a teacher who was all the more unreliable as he himself did not need to have any knowledge of the subject matter. He had only to speak beautifully, persuasively, and convincingly about something, and this he could do without the least knowledge of the truth. Consequently, he was as likely to impart wrong opinion as true belief without necessarily being able to distinguish between the two himself. Education in the Sophistic sense became unreliable and open to abuse. It was a public danger rather than a boon.

In contrast to the Sophists, Socrates wanted to impart knowledge, and this called for an entirely different method. Since knowledge, unlike opinion, could not be accepted uncritically but had to be made one's own by reflection, had to be appropriated by the learner himself, no external method of education could suffice. It was no longer enough to be eloquent and move the student by the beauty of the word to the passive acceptance of an opinion. He had to be made to participate actively by thinking on his own. Since only one's own search could lead to knowledge, whoever now wanted to teach had only one task: to start the student on his own rational, reflective, critical search. This obviously could not be done by giving lectures, epideictic speeches, and orations to a captive and passive audience, nor by answering all questions and presenting the student with ready-made solutions to all problems, as many a Sophist was wont to do. Answers and ready-made solutions encourage

unreflective, uncritical acceptance, provide the student with opinions rather than knowledge, and, instead of helping, they actually hinder his search. Whoever accepts such solutions will believe that he knows and will, consequently, fail to search.

The way to start the student on his search for knowledge is not to give him a set of opinions and a concomitant confidence that he knows, but the opposite of this: to make him aware of his ignorance. In a sense, this is all there is to teaching.

That awareness of ignorance necessarily leads to search can be understood if we presuppose that the learner already wants knowledge and that the only thing that keeps him from the search is that he thinks he is already in possession of it. This is the presupposition Socrates makes and is entirely justified in making with reference to the knowledge he proposes to teach. For, unlike other kinds of knowledge, which a man may or may not need, this knowledge, wisdom, is the necessary and sufficient condition for attaining what all men by nature want: the good life. If all men want to live well and if no man can be good and live well without a knowledge of good and evil, then all men by nature need and want to have wisdom, and if no man can fulfill himself without self-knowledge, then all men by nature need and desire self-knowledge. If all men want this knowledge (whether they are aware of wanting it or not), then they only need to be shown that they do not yet possess it and they will necessarily search for it. Thus, consciousness of ignorance, at least in the case of a knowledge of good and evil, is necessarily the beginning of a search for knowledge.

To the extent that a man can be made aware of his lack of knowledge, he can acquire knowledge. But are all men capable of this? Socrates believed they were. He held that although men were endowed with rationality in widely different degrees and could thus attain to different degrees of knowledge, no man was so completely lacking in intelligence that he could not to

some extent be made aware of his ignorance. Since men were neither beasts nor gods but something between the two, they were neither totally incapable of realizing their ignorance and searching for knowledge, nor so wise and perfect in knowledge as to need none (*Symposium*). Being men, they all needed improvement and were capable of being improved. All needed instruction. All were teachable.

That real education aims at imparting knowledge rather than opinion, that knowledge cannot be handed over ready-made but has to be appropriated by the knower, that appropriation is possible only through one's own search, and that to make him aware of his ignorance is to start a man on the search for knowledge—these are the considerations that govern and determine the Socratic method of teaching. As this total method is variously described by the words maieutic, elenctic, aporetic, negative, and ironic, it seems advisable to show briefly how all these names apply to the same thing.

The maieutic (obstetrical) method of teaching rests on the insight that the teacher cannot instill and beget knowledge in another's soul by the teacher's effort alone, as if knowledge "were the sort of thing that could flow by mere contact from the fuller into the emptier vessel" (*Symposium* 175 D). Only opinion can be handed over in this way. The relationship between teacher and student is more like that between a midwife and a woman in childbirth, inasmuch as the teacher, like the midwife, does not give anything of his own to the student but merely helps to bring to light what is already there, merely helps the student to bring forth what he is pregnant with. As the midwife induces labor in the pregnant woman by means of drugs, so the teacher induces the search in the pregnant soul by means of skilful questioning that makes the student aware of his need for knowledge. Once the labor for knowledge has begun the teacher assists the student in arriving at knowledge

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on his own by questioning him further so that the resulting knowledge is truly the student's own. The teacher is not its giver or its cause, but merely the occasion of its birth. Unlike the midwife's, the teacher's task does not end here. He tests what is brought forth and, casting doubt upon it through criticism and argument, he tries to determine whether it is true knowledge for the student or only a miscarriage of learning: opinion. It is only when the student gives account of what he knows and is able to defend by reasoning what he brought forth that the teacher is satisfied. His—and the student's—labor is done or, rather, ready to begin anew, directed toward further knowledge.

Since the teacher merely induces the search, assists in its labor, removes its impediments, and tests its results, his approach is thoroughly "negative" on the surface. Instead of handing the student positive doctrine which the latter can accept uncritically, thus acquiring opinion, he merely negates, attacks, and criticizes the "truths" that the student believes he already has as well as the truths he now brings forth. The teacher destroys false confidence and makes the student perplexed and aware of being at a loss (*aporia*). This awareness of ignorance is the first step toward learning, and it is why Socratic conversations tend to end not so much with positive conclusions as with *aporiai*, an overall admission of doubt and perplexity. This does not mean that the dialogues contain nothing positive since, in the first place, there is hardly a dialogue that does not arrive at solutions to the problems discussed. These conclusions are negated at the end merely to prevent the student from uncritically accepting them instead of going through reflection that would make them his own. In the second place, what is positive here is not so much something contained in the written word itself as something that takes place in the learner's soul, namely, that he does in fact

search for and acquire knowledge. This is what makes the dialogues truly constructive in spite of all surface negativity and *aporia*.

The Sophists' "positive" approach—answering questions and teaching solutions—produced opinion, and that is why Socrates adopts a negative method consisting of nothing but questioning, doubt, and inquiry. True teaching must be *elenctic*, i.e. a questioning of accepted opinions, an examination of beliefs, a refutation of dogmas, a testing of knowledge and an indictment of ignorance—in short, a demand for an accounting and justification on the student's part. Only such *elenchus* can destroy false complacency and reduce the student to the state of doubt where he can begin to learn.

For a description of what this elenctic-aporetic method is supposed to accomplish, we might adduce Socrates' running commentary to his examination of a slave-boy in the *Meno*. The examination itself may not be a very good example of the method, but the description is to the point: "Observe now," Socrates remarks about halfway through in the inquiry, "the progress he has made. . . . At first he did not know (the subject in question) and even now he does not; but while then he thought he knew and answered confidently as if he knew and was aware of no difficulty, now he feels perplexed, and although still ignorant (at least) he does not think he knows . . . and so he is better off with respect to the matter he did not know. . . . By making him perplexed and giving him a shock we have done him no harm . . . rather we helped him toward finding the truth, for now he will search gladly, seeing that he does not know. . . . But do you think he would have tried to search and to acquire knowledge while he thought he knew what he did not know, before he was reduced to the perplexity of being aware that he did not know and thus yearning for knowledge? . . . Now because of his loss he will find out some-

thing, searching with me, although I merely ask questions and do not teach him anything outright . . ." (*Meno* 84 A-D).

It might be remarked here that it made little difference to Socrates what means he used for achieving his aim. His conversations were studded with Sophistic (in the worst sense of the word) arguments, fallacious proofs, nonsensical analogies, and untenable premises and conclusions, and he was fully aware of them. He used these devious tactics to get the student where he wanted him: in a state of wonder, bewilderment, and perplexity at his ignorance. The goal of his efforts fully justified these means, for what was important in the inquiry was not merely that some statement happened to be true, nor even that Socrates himself assented to something and was able to defend it, but that the student should know it rather than merely believe it to be true, that he should appropriate it and be able to defend it by reasoning. If he could do this, no false arguments could do him the least harm, for his knowledge was "fastened by a chain" to firm foundations. If, on the other hand, he could not give an account and possess the truth merely as an opinion, then it was better for him to be deprived of this "truth" and disabused of the notion that he knew.

The Socratic method, as well as Socrates himself, was characterized by irony. In view of the preceding, we can understand why this had to be so, why, indeed, all genuine teaching must be ironical to a certain extent. Irony means underplay, understatement, dissimulation, a pretense to be less than one is, an assumption of an inferior role, a feigning of defenselessness and inability. The ironist is a play-actor who takes a negative attitude toward himself to create deception although he himself is far from deceived. Socrates' favorite ironic mask was that of ignorance. He professed to know less than he knew, declared his own knowledge to be "negligible and disputable like a dream" (*Symposium* 175 D), most often pretended to

know nothing at all except that he did not know, and assumed the mask of the learner who, being ignorant, needed instruction and wanted to be enlightened. This device was thoroughly in line with his method. Professing ignorance, he had a perfect excuse for not dispensing knowledge outright, for teaching no ready-made truths, and he avoided the danger of imparting mere opinion. Disclaiming all authority, he left his students unable to rely on his wisdom and compelled to stand on their own feet. Assuming the inferior role of the learner, he could avoid giving answers and solutions and could instead persist in questioning others and forcing them, by a pretended incomprehension, to explain themselves and justify their beliefs. Professing to believe that all his inquiries came to nothing, that in the end they were no closer to the truth than in the beginning, he discouraged those around him from accepting opinions rather than acquiring knowledge. All this pretense was thoroughly effective, for, by his own pretended ignorance, Socrates was able to break through others' pretense of knowledge; by assuming the role of the learner, he could explode other men's undue assumption of a teaching role; by putting on an inferior mask, he could tear off the mask of superiority others laid on, and, revealing it as mere mask, reveal to them their ignorance. In the process of the ironic-maieutic investigation, a subtle change of roles took place: both masks became more and more transparent until they vanished altogether, revealing the erstwhile learner as teacher and the former teacher as learner in dire need of knowledge. Once this exchange of masks was accomplished, the ironist's role was finished. Having been revealed as teacher, he no longer had to teach, for the student, revealed as student, was already on the road to knowledge. Aware of his ignorance and searching for truth, he had become his own teacher, and this is what irony aimed at.

and they did!

As Socrates' method of teaching was an elenctic method,

one of questioning, examination, and joint inquiry, all his attempts at improving others naturally took the form not of monologues (lectures, *epideixes*, etc.) but of dialogues. It is not surprising that his successors also adopted the dialogue as the natural form of presenting his teaching and that almost the whole body of Socratic literature consists of nothing but dialogues. Before we can see how appropriate this form was to its Socratic content, we have to observe another correspondence between form and content in the teaching of Socrates himself: the correspondence between his (formal) method and the material aim of his teaching.

In order to impart knowledge, Socrates refrained from trying to hand it over materially. He attempted only to bring the student to the point where he could start the search himself and acquire actual knowledge. This purely formal method of teaching delivered the student from the material confines of his opinions and turned him toward knowledge by turning him toward himself, i.e. making him conscious of his own ignorance. Formally, the maieutic method awakened self-awareness, self-reflection, and a self-critical inquiry into the truth. What is interesting here is that this is precisely what Socratic teaching did materially: it aimed to teach nothing but self-awareness, self-reflection, and a critical inquiry into oneself. The how and the what of this education converged in the student: it was the student's work alone that could give him knowledge, and the knowledge attained was also about himself, his own life, his own good, his own natural end.

This had to be so if the sole aim of Socratic teaching was to be the improvement of men, if it was to teach them virtue, and if human excellence was wisdom, knowledge of good and evil, knowledge of self. Socratic teaching naturally aimed at imparting not only formal self-consciousness—the knowledge of what one knows and what one does not know—but also material

self-knowledge—the knowledge of what one is and thus needs and desires and must have by nature, the knowledge of what is one's own, one's goal, one's good. In this way, it not only corrected the shortcomings of natural philosophy, whose non-teleological approach excluded man as a practical, aim-directed living human being from the scope of inquiry, but it also surpassed the Sophists, who were concerned, at least, with the practical approach to practical man. But while the Sophists' education was external to the student both formally and materially—they "improved" him by *their*, not *his*, activity, imparting *their* opinions about matters that were by and large alien to him—Socratic education was internal both as to its form and its content: the student was improved by his own search for self-appropriated knowledge about his own self.

The aim of Socratic education was the self-unfolding of the student in a triple sense: Whatever was unfolded, discovered, and solved had to be discovered by the student himself. What he unfolded, revealed, and made apparent to himself was ultimately nothing but his own nature. What the whole process aimed at was his unfolding and growth to full stature through self-knowledge.

Since self-knowledge is all there is to human excellence, Socratic teaching made the student not only a knower (though even this would have been a great deal more than what the Sophists had been able to do) but also a man, a whole man, a man of excellence. The student thus taught would know not only that he was incomplete in knowledge and how he could acquire more, but also that he was incomplete as a human being and how he could fulfill himself. He would know that unexamined opinion is not knowledge, that the unexamined self is not truly a self, and that the unexamined life is not really worth living. Knowing this, he would, of course, be on the road not only toward knowledge but also toward self-knowl-

edge and, thus, self-fulfillment, well-being, *eudaimonia*. This self-involvement of the student in the inquiry (that he was both subject and object of the investigation, both questioner and the thing in question) is one of the most striking aspects of Socratic thought. It is also its greatest achievement, for it made not only man but each individual human being as a whole the absolute center of philosophic reflection. And this was the beginning of true philosophy.

DIALOGUE-FORM

Keeping in mind the student's involvement in the Socratic inquiry, we can now fully understand the need for the dialogue-form.

In the first place, a true dialogue, unlike a lecture or an oration, requires two active participants opposed to each other in an *agon* and requires that the participants be engaged in a *dialegein* and *dialegesthai*, a making of thoughtful distinctions, an inquiring into a problem, a thinking something over, reflecting upon it, arguing, and reasoning it out. To be engaged in a true dialogue means to be engaged in the rational search that leads to knowledge, i.e. to be engaged in an educational experience. Since the true dialogue is characterized by the thoughtful opposition, tension, and negativity that is the main feature of maieutic teaching—the opposition that is the struggle for truth—dialogue is the natural form of maieutic communication.

Besides being a form of rational communication, the dialogue has also something in common with true drama: it presents not merely doctrines and theories, not merely thought in action, but also human beings in the midst of life, living *paradeigmata* in an action where thought and personality fuse. In the dramatic dialogue, the participants are involved not merely qua teacher and student in an intellectual exercise, but also qua human

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beings in the whole of their being. Thus their *agon* is not merely for true knowledge but also one for the true (way of) life. They do not merely present and analyze ideas, remaining themselves detached and out of the focus of the inquiry but, on the contrary, they enter the stage and become the actors and the center of action, the viewers and the thing viewed; they participate as both subject and object. This double participation parallels the double involvement of the student in Socratic education. Furthermore, the dialogue, like the drama, involves the participants not as men in general but as individuals. Unlike lectures, which are not addressed to any one particular person, and unlike narration, which refers to people in the third person, the dialogue brings men together face to face. In their personal encounter, the participants recognize each other as distinct individuals, and this recognition involves each in his uniqueness and individuality. They address each other by name, in the second person, and, unlike titles which refer to this or that aspect of a person's life and activity, this form of address refers to the person in the wholeness of his being, and involves him not partially (that part of him which he assumes as the member of a class—soldier, physician, shoemaker, Spartan) but wholly. It is not Euthyphro qua diviner or Nicias qua general that is addressed, but Euthyphro the man and Nicias in his uniqueness that are called upon to justify, defend, and give an account of themselves. Thus the dialogue, leading to reflective accounting for one's own individual, unique person and life, is the most appropriate form of Socratic education. We can abandon any notion that the dialogue was a mere vehicle, an external form, chosen by Socrates' successors for presenting and keeping alive his teaching because his teaching was by its very nature dialogic or dialectic in every sense of the word.

We have dealt with the participation of men qua unique

individuals searching, in the dialogue, for self-knowledge, the knowledge of their own natures and ends, but our discussion would remain incomplete without emphasizing another aspect of the dialogic relationship: its communal nature.

A dialogue requires two participants engaged in a joint inquiry for the truth, and such a joint inquiry can be successful only if there is a possibility for agreement as to the truth, if it is presupposed that the truth to be found is also communal, and that the faculty that is supposed to recognize the truth and assent to it is in some manner alike in all men. These are, of course, presuppositions that Socrates makes. What would be the point of asking for general definitions unless there were definitions common not only to all instances of what is defined but also commonly acceptable to all men? The possibility of formal agreement on any question presupposes a sameness in rationality on the part of all questioners. Even beyond this formal likeness in rationality, men must have in common something that embraces the whole of their nature or there would be little point in asking what the common human good, human virtue, human excellence, are. For not only the particular things that different men desire but the very constitution of their desire would otherwise be different; not only their particular functions but their functioning as men would fail to coincide. Men being so totally different, any agreement, any dialogic relationship, community, and communication whatsoever would be unthinkable.

The dialectic relationship presupposes true community as well as individual participation. The two are complementary for, on the one hand, true individuality and uniqueness consists not merely in being different but also in being fully aware of what one is, which one can be only in opposition to other individuals who are in some respects like, and in some different from, ourselves. On the other hand, community and commun-

cation imply that the participants remain unique individuals lest they merge into a homogeneous, undifferentiated mass, and enter into a mob situation, a fusion and communion on the lowest level, as opposed to human community and dialogic communication. Such an amorphous mass could be influenced but not taught, affected and swayed but not improved, for, having given up their individuality, its "members" have also lost all claim to community and with it all claim to human excellence.

In our discussion of justice we saw that each individual by nature needs the state and must participate in communal life for his own good. We saw that, since each man wants to improve his own life, each has a natural interest in the general good and the improvement of all others in the community. Real improvement being improvement in virtue, it is the concern of each man not only to become as good as he can but also to help others to acquire human excellence, giving every man a natural need for and concern in education.

The analysis of the Socratic method tried to show what the proper method of education was for Socrates and that the dialogic-maieutic relationship in which this method consists is the proper relationship of each individual to all others, for it is only in the communal-individual relationship that man attains to self-knowledge and the good life, and only thereby that the community as a whole can become a proper community for the benefit of each man.

We can now say that the maieutic method is not merely a method of teaching but a way of life, indeed, the only true way. If every man is interested in and strives for the good life, and if the good life can be attained only by self-improvement and the improvement of others, then the good life itself is nothing

but a process of education, a process of growth, a process of self-unfolding, fulfillment, and assisting others toward fulfillment. Since this can be done only maieutically, the life of excellence is a life of maieutic education.

To elaborate on this and to sum up what we have said about human good and the method of its attainment, we shall turn to the Socratic theory of love.

EROS

X X

Eros has a unique place in Socratic teaching from the very beginning inasmuch as it is the only subject not covered by Socrates' profession of ignorance: "While I may be worthless and useless in all other matters, this talent at least I have been given by a god somehow that I can easily recognize a lover and a beloved" (*Lysis* 204 B-C). "And I do not see how I could refuse to speak on the subject (of love), seeing that I claim to have no knowledge at all other than that of (*ta erotika*) matters concerning love" (*Symposium* 177 D-E). This being so, we shall do well to pay special attention to his theory, and to raise with Socrates the questions: What is love? What is its nature and what are its works? How does the Divinity manifest itself? Why does the god deserve the special attention of all lovers of wisdom? Socrates answers these questions in the *Symposium*.⁶²

To begin with, Eros is not a god, even mythically speaking. Gods are perfect, and Eros not only has no perfection itself but whatever is perfect is necessarily devoid of love. The essence of love is rather the opposite of perfection: it is deficiency,

62. On account of its un-Socratic character, the latter portion of Diotima's speech (*Symposium* 209 E-212 A) is not considered here. For explanation, cf. Appendix.

need, lack, consciousness of incompleteness, and desire for fulfillment. Love is wanting in what is loved, and the gods are not wanting in anything.

What is Eros if not a god? Still speaking in terms of myth, Socrates calls Eros a great spirit or *daimon*, i.e. neither man nor god but something between gods and men, "filling the intervening space and uniting the whole within itself." Eros is not a divinity yet is something divine. It is not immortal yet in a sense it is undying. Man, though neither divine nor immortal, partakes of a kind of divinity and immortality through love. We can see how this is to be understood if we observe love in its actual operation.

Love is always love of something. It is necessarily directed toward an object. To love means to love something. But what is the object of love? It is simply what one needs, desires, and wants. As one does not need, want, and desire what one already has, love is always directed toward something one does not yet possess. But not all things that a man does not have are needed and wanted by him. No man wants something that is bad and evil for him if he knows it to be such, and so only the good can be loved. Love is desire for what is good, useful, and helpful for us, it is the love of what we by nature lack, need, and want, i.e. of what by nature belongs to us and would complete us. Human love is nothing but love of the human good. It is man's tendency toward his natural aim and end, it is each individual's inborn need and desire for self-fulfillment (*Lysis* 221-222; *Symposium* 200-201).

Seen in this aspect, love introduces no new topic into our inquiry. Since love is love of the good, whatever we said about the nature of the good must in some way apply to love as well. If so, we can make two further statements about love: as the good is universally desired, love must be common to all men, different though they may be; and, as there is only one good,

there can be only one love, though it may appear in many different guises.

Love is common to all men since all men by nature desire the good, and love is nothing but this desire. In order not to love, a man would have to be either perfect (in wisdom and goodness) or perfectly devoid of sense and insight, for only these two poles of perfection are self-contained, complete in themselves. What is perfectly good and wise does not lack and therefore cannot love (goodness and wisdom). What is perfectly ignorant and insensible ignores its own ignorance and lack and thus feels no want and need. Man, being neither a god nor a senseless thing but something between the two, is imperfect in goodness and ignorance, virtue and vice, and, being conscious of his imperfection, desires improvement. Thus, man is by nature a lover.

There is only one love, although it may have different manifestations. As it is not the particular goods needed and striven for by each particular man that enables us to define the good, but what is common to all instances of it, so it is with love. What is common to all love is the acknowledgment of something as good, and this acknowledgment is at the same time the acknowledgment of the lack of what is posited as good. Love is essentially this negative position, the positing of something as that which is lacked. As the desire for what we lack and for what is suitable to our nature, love is not the desire for something given as an absolute outside us but for something that belongs to our nature and would complete it. It is simply the love of fulfillment impelled by the consciousness of our deficiency and finitude. As human good is defined with reference to human need, so love is defined in reference to human good. The Socratic conceptions of the good and of love are merely different aspects of the same thing, different ways of expressing what Socrates thought to be human nature.

What is man's nature if he is characterized by love? Metaphorically speaking, he is only a symbol, a fragment, something fundamentally incomplete and unwhole which, aware of its incompleteness, is moved toward self-completion, strives for what would make it into that which it by nature must be in order to fulfill itself. There is something basically unbalanced in the nature of man, something constitutionally amiss and awry. Instead of being the self-certain, self-sufficient crown of creation, as some Sophists were fond of thinking, he is a creation with a fatal flaw, with something essential missing, he is by nature unequal to himself yet full of desire to right the equation. He is at any moment less than what he by nature must be in order to be a whole, yet he is full of longing for the whole. He is a "human sore," as it were, that has to be healed,⁶³ a project that has to be brought to completion. In a sense, he is not (what he already is) but is to be; not a fulfillment but a demand; not an accomplishment but an undertaking. This demand for self-fulfillment and self-completion, this pursuit of wholeness is what we call love. Characterized by love, man is forever on the move away from (what he already is) and toward himself (as he must be). He is a movement, a transcendence, a "thing in between" (*metaxu*).

As the concept of love, and of man as lover being something "in between," is an important one for Socrates, expressing as it does all that needs to be said concerning the nature of man, we must deal with it in some detail.

We have already seen that love is something intermediate between that which is earthbound in its unconsciousness of a better thing and that which is eternally at rest in the consciousness of its perfection. Eros is a *daimon*, a spirit between what is

63. Aristophanes' terms in the *Symposium* are employed here, because they are, by and large, nothing but a poetic formulation of the Socratic theory.

perishable and mortal and what is immortal and divine. Now we can add that love is "in between," not in the sense of being a static balance between opposites, but rather in the sense of being a dynamic mediator through which the opposites are brought together, a principle of mediation, by virtue of which whatever partakes of love is partaking of something other than what it is and is seeking to escape what it is, longing for what it is not (yet), rejecting what it is.

The lover is always between having and not having. He is never in actual possession of what he loves because what he already possesses he need not, cannot, strive for. Nor is he utterly deficient and lacking in what he loves, for, if he did not possess it at least potentially, i.e. in the form of needing it, if it did not belong to him by nature though not actually acquired, he would not need and thus love it. So he is always in between, in a negative position, positing something as the good lacked.

Love is not a static state but a movement of mediation because whoever needs, lacks, wants, and, being conscious of this, loves something, will necessarily strive for it: to know the good is to do it, to work for its attainment, and so love is necessarily dynamic. It is always a movement of mediation between what one already has or is and what one by nature must have or become. Love is a becoming: it is the basic principle of all human action, for all action originates in love, i.e. in our consciousness of need. Love is the principle of life, for life is action: a process, a movement, a drive, and all human movement is impelled by love.

But love is not only the impetus, the driving principle of life—it is that which completes, fulfills, and enriches it and makes us whole and happy. Only through action can we fulfill ourselves and only through love can we act. A man who, being ignorant but aware of his ignorance, strives for knowl-

edge will increase his knowledge; a man who needs improvement and, conscious of this, strives for excellence will become better; a man who is in any respect unfulfilled yet, knowing it, strives for fulfillment, will necessarily come closer to fulfillment and lead a richer, fuller, better life. Love, the consciousness of incompleteness and the desire for completion, is not an impotent craving but an activity which, impelled by need, fulfills the need in which it originated. Negative as it is in principle, originating as it does in need, lack, and want, love gives us all that is positive in human existence.

Two ideas need to be emphasized in this connection. The first is that Socrates, although he did not, like the latter Sophists, regard man as the height of perfection but contrasted this imperfect and perishable creature with the complete and self-sufficient gods, did make man none the less autonomous. He did so, not because man needed nothing, but because, through his love-inspired activity, man could obtain all that he really needed—not because he was perfect but because, being conscious of his imperfection, man would better himself. Man, improved by love, is improved by his own work, for, though love is called a *daimon*, i.e. something more than man, Socratic Eros is not something over, above, and beyond man, but rather his spirit, *daimon*, and nature, and its gifts are the result of human achievement.

Socratic man resembles the Sophoclean hero inasmuch as, in spite of his frailty and imperfection, he is characterized by a curious kind of grandeur, independence, and freedom. Although he is not so much in possession and control of his love as he is possessed and driven by Eros, in this daimonic possession he remains self-possessed. What he is possessed and driven by is not something alien and external to himself—gods, spirits, external fate—but his own nature and spirit. As a lover, he is on his own, stands on his own feet, and needs no external support

for his fulfillment. There is greatness in human deficiency and strength in human need.

The second aspect of the subject we must emphasize is that man is not only self-sufficient in the sense that all that happens to him is human rather than divine work, but also in the sense that being human rather than divine and remaining in this world rather than transcending it is sufficient to him. As he needs no other-worldly support for living, he needs no other-worldly life for his fulfillment. Whatever divinity and immortality is open to him he can achieve as a mortal man living and dying in a human way. Love may well be something daimonic that lifts man beyond what he is at any moment and makes him constantly more, but it does not transport him into another realm and does not give him another non-human existence.

Nevertheless, according to Socrates, the works of love are "a divine affair and an immortal element in the mortal nature" (*Symposium* 206 c). If so, what kind of divinity and immortality can this be? Love, as we have seen, is dynamic and creative; it necessarily leads to action, to an actualization, generation, or creation of something that has not previously been. Love being not only love of the body but of whatever man needs in body and soul, generation and creation are not restricted to the engendering and bringing forth of human offspring but are an engendering and bringing to birth of whatever may be in a man that he must bring forth, i.e. whatever he loves, needs as his own, his good. If it is knowledge a man strives for, it is knowledge he creates in his own soul and others'; if it be virtue, beauty, or some other good, it is virtue, beauty, or some other good that he brings about. In any case, love necessarily leads to the creation of something, and, as whatever is created here (human offspring or other works) need not die with the individual but may survive him, love lends the lover the im-

mortality not of not dying but of leaving something behind after one's death and thus not altogether dying. This is the only kind of immortality open to mortal men (*Symposium* 207 D, 208 B).

Creation makes a man immortal not only because he leaves great fame or works behind so that others may remember his name, i.e. not only because his memory survives, but also because what he leaves behind is not something alien to him but a part of him—indeed, his best part and most precious possession. For all men love the good, i.e. that which by nature belongs to them and is their own, and so, creating and leaving behind what is good, preserving and perpetuating what they love, they create, preserve, and perpetuate themselves. The artisan, the statesman, and the artist live in the work they leave behind even should their names be long forgotten, because what they most loved (and that is what was best in them) lives, works, and functions long after they are dead. They not only transformed what they worked at into their own image (of the good), but also transformed themselves into the thing created; they breathed their spirit into it, and this spirit, which is what they were themselves at heart, lives on. They have become immortal because they loved and created, and all creation is but a recreation of oneself, of what one loves, needs, what belongs to one, what is one's own, i.e. what one is.

This is also why love is so revealing and why a man in love shows himself not as he is externally but as he is inwardly, in the very depths of his soul. All men being lovers, they are all "pregnant in body and soul" and have to bring to light, to birth, what is in them, have to realize their talents, fulfill their functions, achieve their goals. In doing so, they are at work at their own actualization and realization. They are creating themselves.

Love is a self-directed, self-creating, self-renewing drive even

when mortals in love relate themselves to each other, for, while they seemingly work only at someone else's improvement, at the fashioning not of themselves but of the world, they are, in reality, transforming and fashioning others in the image of what they themselves love, i.e. in their own image (of the good), and so they are working at their own actualization and realization in and through others (*Phaedrus* 252 C-253 C). "By consorting (with other men) one only bears and brings forth what one has oneself long borne and been pregnant with" (*Symposium* 209 C). A man works at his own salvation, satisfies his own needs, and attains his own good while improving others. No matter what one loves and creates on the surface, in reality one is also working at one's own growth, becoming, and transformation into what one has always potentially been.

This does not mean, of course, that the relationship is any less maieutic as far as the beloved is concerned. For, although the lover tries to transform the beloved into his own (image of the good), he does that not by turning the beloved into something other than he by nature needs to be. The basis of any satisfactory love relationship is that lover and beloved have something (the good) in common, that to an extent they love and need the same, so that by turning the beloved into his own (the lover's good), the lover does not violate him but rather makes him into what he (the beloved) by nature must be in order to be fulfilled (*Phaedrus* 253 B-C). He does it maieutically, not by foisting his own conception of the good on the beloved but by bringing the beloved's long-felt conception to the surface; not by turning the beloved toward him (the lover) but by turning him toward himself so that he may attain to the good on his own, the lover being merely the occasion for the attainment. Were this not the case the relationship would be fruitless, for improvement that is not self-improvement is no real improvement at all. The love-relationship has to remain

maieutic on both sides: both lover and beloved are occasions for the other's self-improvement, for mutual progress, toward the common good.

This progress itself is an immanent transcendence in every sense of the word: it is literally a movement that both originates and remains within the bounds of individual human existence. The movement is immanent because what impels the individual lover is immanent in him, is his own proper good, function, nature, *daimon*, love, the principle of his life, and because what he moves toward is not an alien good but his own self-realization, not in a transcendent, non-human existence but in this life, here and now. At the same time, the movement is one of transcendence and surpassing, for, impelled by love, man is forever moving away from what he is and has at the moment, transcending what he already achieved and actualized and surpassing what he already accomplished. The immanent transcendence of love is one of self-overcoming and self-realization, for the movement is directed away from and yet toward man himself: it is his own nature (needy, lacking, incomplete) that he negates and also his own nature (what he needs, lacks, and wants for completion) that he posits as a goal and tries to accomplish. Not unlike the Sophoclean Oedipus, Socrates' daimonic man, possessed by love, is engaged in a self-impelled, never-ending struggle with himself, against himself, and for his own fulfillment. This "loving" struggle for self-realization is the essence of human life.

This process of man surpassing what he already accomplished is necessarily lifelong, not because this or that need cannot be permanently satisfied but because life itself consists of nothing but self-surpassing, the movement of self-realization, and so the latter's termination also means the end of life. A man is alive only as long as he is unfulfilled and, aware of this incompleteness, tries to fulfill himself. Once he is fulfilled (could

this ever be the case), he is incapable of love and thus of acting, creating, living. His life may run on as a routine, vegetative existence but it cannot properly be called living. Only as long as a man is pregnant, as it were, with himself, bears the seeds of what he yet can be, needs as yet to bring to birth the man he is (potentially), i.e. only as long as a man loves does he act, work, live. An artist, for example, lives as an artist only as long as, aware of the incompleteness of his work, he tries to surpass it, to surpass the artist he already is and create the work that will make him the artist he feels he must be. Once this self-directed agon is over, his life qua artist has ended, and, though he may live to fulfill other needs, he is no longer that artist. So it is with every aspect of human activity: life is growth, an agon for self-realization and not a static state of fulfillment.

It is easy to resume at this point our discussion of the good life as a life of (mutual self-) education, for we have never really left the subject but merely dealt with it along a slightly different line. The result of our investigation is the same as before: human life, the life of love, is by its very nature a process of education. It is a creating and bringing to birth of what lies within, a movement of growth and self-realization. Since whatever we are laboring at and bringing forth in love (that is, in all our activity) is ultimately nothing but ourselves, every man is in the end his own midwife and educator (in the original sense of *educare*: *e-ducere*, bringing forth, to light), his own lover and beloved. Consequently, everything we have said about the maieutic relationship and its ironical, elenctic, negative, revealing-unmasking nature must apply equally to the relationship of love.

Love relationships are ironical because they are full of pretense. Each participant in the relationship pretends to the other

that he loves him as he is, for what he is, when in truth each aims at transforming the other into something other, i.e. something better, than he already is. Furthermore, each participant (qua lover) pretends to the other (qua beloved) that it is he (the lover) who wants to be loved and that he wants to turn the beloved toward himself when in truth it is not as himself that the lover wants to be loved but as he would love to be. It is not toward himself but toward his good or, what is to say the same thing since they share the good, toward his own (the beloved's) good that he wants to turn the beloved. Finally, though each participant pretends to himself that it is the other's good, the other's transformation into something good that he is interested in, in reality it is himself, his own improvement and self-realization that he wants, whether he acknowledges it or not. What saves the relationship is, ironically, that, while in reality (though perhaps unknown to himself) each participant is working at his own self-realization, each also succeeds in what he only pretends to be interested in: the other's improvement. Thus, there is a constant tension, a constant disparity between surface intention and real result, actual intention and its unintentional by-product. Both lover and beloved are constantly deceiving and deceived for the good of both.

The erotic relationship is by nature elenctic. In the first place, it is full of doubt, questioning, examination, and inquiry with respect to the other, for the lover seeks in his beloved for what would complete and fulfill him, and thus forever tests and examines men in order to find his true beloved, and examines the beloved, if found, in order to see whether he is really the object of search—indeed, in order to make him into the object of search (the good). In the second place, love is elenctic because, even as a self-relationship, love is by nature a quest for oneself and one's own fulfillment: a process of questioning

and doubt (is this all I am?), of inquiry (what am I, what must I yet become?), of denial (what I already am is not enough), and of demand (for growth).

Love is a negative-positive relationship, not only because the lover negates the beloved's actuality and tries to transform him into his own image of the good, but also because love as a self-relation is one of constant negating (oneself as already achieved yet still incomplete) and positing (oneself as goal) and because this negative attitude toward oneself (I am not good enough yet) is the only one that brings positive results.

Love is dialectic not only because, as we have seen, it is a dialectic interchange between lover and beloved, but also because, even as a self-relationship, love is a dialectic movement toward self-improvement, a relentless dialogue with oneself (is this all that you, my self, can be?), a self-related *agon*.

Love is an unmasking, not only because love reveals the lover (since he loves but his own self and what belongs to him, his love discloses his nature to others), but also because, even as self-related, the movement of love is one of continuous unmasking: in the process of growth and self-realization, layer after layer, mask after mask (what is already achieved) is torn off and laid aside as a mere mask, a fossilized surface that hinders rather than promotes self-fulfillment, and new masks are tried on, only to be discarded in their turn; and so the process goes on as long as life (love) lasts.

Since, no matter what is intended on the surface, true love-relations lead to the (self-) improvement of both participants, maieutic love is the highest and most fruitful relationship among men. It is, to be sure, an all too human relationship, for the gods never enter into it either as subjects or objects. They cannot participate as subjects because in their perfection they cannot love. They do not participate as objects because the object of man's love is never anything but himself—not the per-

fection of a god but his, man's, improvement. It is precisely its all too human nature that makes Socrates interested in love: because love is always human, because Eros is the *daimon*, spirit, nature of man, it is the proper subject of human inquiry. This, after all, is the only thing that makes anything worth investigation, that, concerned with it and inquiring into it, we are concerned with and inquiring into ourselves. Not only is love the proper (his own) subject for man, but the inquiry itself, as a self-directed search and activity, is nothing but a labor of love as self-directed search and activity. Involved in the inquiry, involved in love, man is involved in nothing but what he is by nature (qua lover) already involved in, i.e. being a man (i.e. essentially a lover), and fulfilling his natural function and work.

In spite of the immanent-human rather than transcendent-other-worldly nature of Eros, there is a great similarity between Socrates' view of man as a lover and at least one Greek religious attitude toward man.

The Dionysian view of man⁶⁴ negated everyday reality in that it regarded man's involvement in and concern with the needs and necessities of everyday life as alienated from his real substance, the god, and thus involved in and concerned with something that was not really his concern. Because of this negation, i.e. because, from the point of view of ecstatic religion, man was "ecstatic"—out of his essential nature, separated and exiled from his native realm—not in what we call ecstasy but in the everyday normalcy of life. Dionysian ecstasy sought to *reverse* / this state of affairs and, by negating the negation, i.e. by delivering man from his "normal ecstasy" and alienation, by cleansing him from the pollution and sickness of merely human

64. Cf. my "Dionysus and Tragedy," *The Review of Metaphysics*, 16 (September 1962), 82–97.

life, it sought to return him to his original, essential nature. This return was accomplished in Dionysian ecstasy where man, free of the masks of mere humanity and delivered from the bonds of everyday existence, became an "enthusiast": a being possessed by and in possession of the essential, one with and full of god.

Socratic thought, for all its marvelous sobriety, has a great many traits in common with such a view of life. To begin with, it, too, is characterized by negativity inasmuch as it not only regards man, at every stage of his life, as something not yet essential, something unwhole and incomplete in want of wholeness, i.e. something ecstatic, out of his nature, not yet what he is, but it also makes this unwholeness, incompleteness, and unessentiality, together with man's awareness of it, the very essence of human life. Since man's awareness of his unessentiality is at the same time the beginning of his pursuit of wholeness, and since it is only by taking a negative attitude toward himself and trying to step out of (ec-statically) what he already is, negating and transcending it, that a man can become whole and one with his nature, the taking of this negative attitude—Socratic "ecstasy"—is what drives and fulfills life. Because of this negative appraisal of everyday life and because of the fact that it identifies life itself with negativity, the Socratic method of saving, improving, and fulfilling man is also totally negative. It merely negates all the student stands for or believes himself to stand for and by this negation unmasks the student to himself and helps him become whole. As Dionysus, the god of the mask, unmasked his worshipers to make them whole, so Socrates, wearing his ironic mask, engages in an ironic unmasking to make men excellent.

Dionysian ecstasy was no respecter of persons. It broke through all barriers of personality, abolished all difference, and allowed no detachment, but involved the enthusiasts to such

an extent that all distinctions between them and the object of their longing, the god, vanished. In their union with the god, all subjects as well as their object, the god, became one. This could not be otherwise, for what they sought, the god, was nothing but their own essential nature and what they found was ultimately nothing but themselves. A similar circularity and involvement characterized Socratic search. Subject and object of the search and the search itself, the inquirer, what was inquired into, and the inquiry itself, were one—human nature—and the involvement was necessarily self-involvement and its outcome nothing but self-realization, a union with what one essentially always was.

As the call of the god was irresistible and possessed man totally, with nothing of him left apart from the experience, so the activity of Socratic man was the result of a total, irresistible, and fatal possession. Driven by his nature, the *daimon* Eros, man was possessed by rather than in control of his love, and he would be driven by it in a philosophic, philotimic, philoplutic frenzy, daimonically, as long as he lived.

That negativity, unmasking, self-involvement, and possession characterize both Dionysian and Socratic pursuits did not escape Plato, and, accordingly, we find a quasi-Dionysian eulogy on Socrates as the embodiment of love in the *Symposium*. "I shall reveal Socrates," Alcibiades begins his eulogy, and for this revelation he chooses rather strange imagery: he likens Socrates to Silenus-figures and to the satyr Marsyas. This is much more than a merely external allusion, for, though Silenus and Marsyas qua satyrs were already associated with Dionysus, it is the nature of Silenus-figures themselves and of Marsyas which makes the association evident.

The Silenus-figures sold in the Athenian market place represented Dionysus' companion with a pipe or flute in hand, satyr-like in external appearance, yet opening in halves to re-

veal golden images of gods within. In other words, these images were only masks, concealing and revealing the god. Marsyas himself was a satyr of almost divine wisdom who could enchant, entrance, and render ecstatic with his flute-playing until, challenging Apollo to a contest, he was defeated and flayed by the god who proved himself to be superior in the art.

Socrates resembled Silenus-images because he, too, was gross, ugly, and ridiculous in appearance and wore stupidity and ignorance as his outer garb, but was "divine and golden and beautiful and awe-inspiring" within (217 A), full of virtue and all sorts of unseen, unimagined excellence. Even his physical nature was an ironic mask to which he added the mask of his ignorance. Like his method, his very nature was full of negation and irony, a quasi-Dionysian diremption, a disparity and tension between what was within and what without, an external underplay and even contradiction of inward greatness. Not only was he himself by nature like Silenus-figures—or the mask-god—but even his talk resembled them, even his words were as if made to be opened: absurd and ridiculous on the outside, rambling on about pack-asses and cobblers and tanners and similar uncouth, inelegant company (all this "the hide of a mocking satyr"), but, if anyone got beyond the outer casing to the meaning beneath, Socrates' speeches were revealed as "the only ones with reason in them . . . divine and rich in images of virtue, intent on all those things a man must look to if he wants to be fair and good" (222 A).

Socrates was also like Marsyas because, while one could listen to others unmoved and unchanged, no one could go away unaffected by Socrates. Like the fluting of the satyr, his words possessed and entranced and transported his companions. As Alcibiades testifies: "When I hear him I am worse than any fanatic [*corybantes*], his words make my heart leap and my

tears pour out, and I see a great many others suffer the same" (215 E). His words bite and gnaw at "my heart or soul or whatever one should call it . . . and taking possession of a young and talented soul they force it to do or say anything whatsoever" as you all know for "all of you have shared in this philosophic madness and Dionysia" (218 A-B). What is the result of this Marsyan-Socratic possession? The same as Dionysian ecstasy: a negation of life as it is, an unmasking and improvement of man. As Alcibiades describes it, "The influence of this Marsyas has often brought me to a state where, living as I did, my life did not seem worth living. . . . For he forces me to agree that, although I am greatly deficient, I neglect what is truly my own while I concern myself with alien things. . . . He alone can make me feel ashamed" of what I am, and while others admire and flatter me and fawn upon me, he alone reveals me to myself as what I am: ignorant, unworthy, and useless as I am, yet capable of improvement (216 ff.).

What is interesting in this description of the Marsyas-Socrates relationship is not only that Socrates qua lover is at the same time teacher and improver of man and that the love-relationship is an ironic-maieutic relation, but that the nature of this unmasking-improving possession is formally identical with that of Dionysian ecstasy. Not only does Socrates as lover and teacher resemble Silenus-images and Marsyas, not only are his words themselves like Silenus-figures or the pipe notes of the satyr, but his Silenic talk turns his companions into Silenus-images as well (in the way that Dionysian possession makes one full of the god), revealing to them the mask-like worthlessness of their lives and reminding them of the potentially divine core within, ready to be brought to the surface. Not only do his maieutic-Marsyan words possess and entrance his companions (like the call of the god) but the words themselves are like

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Marsyas, they have to be flayed to get at the real content; indeed, they turn the hearer himself into Marsyas flayed of his unsubstantial hide and emerging as a new man.

Thus Socrates' erotic *periagoge*, this turning of man inside out, or rather turning him away from unessential pursuits toward himself, has as we have seen a great deal in common with Dionysian ecstasy. But the difference between these two modes of "peripety" is equally great. Though both approaches aim to make men more essential, they disagree as to the fundamental substance of man. For enthusiastic religion, the essence of man is the god. For Socrates, it is man himself. Dionysian ecstasy turns man out of his humanity and makes him, in his union with god, supposedly divine, while Socratic education merely turns him into more of a man, brings about a union with himself (surface and substance) and makes him truly human. Dionysian *enthousiasmos*, negating this world as a whole, transports man into a divine region, while Socratic education, negating only the unessential aspects of this earthly existence and not human life as such, tries to establish man within a more essential here and now. Dionysian ecstasy breaks down all barriers between men as well as those between man and god, and achieves an irrational, impersonal union whose consummation consumes the individual. Socratic thought makes men into individual selves in their own right and brings them together through rational communication by means of which they discover their own individuality as well as what they have in common. Dionysus saves man at the price of his "humanity" while Socrates enables him to exist as a whole, unified, harmonious human being. Dionysian ecstasy is ultimately inhuman, anti-human, or at least non-human, while Socratic thought, impelled by love and recognizing love as the essential nature of man, is a thoroughgoing humanism.

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We have remarked, at the beginning of this section, that it is difficult to separate different aspects of Socrates' thought and deal with them in isolation, because his teaching forms a whole and, dealing with any aspect of it, we are involved in the whole. That this is so was clear in the preceding inquiry, where every seemingly new approach (the good, virtue, method, love) only led us back to the same conclusion. There is but one final aspect of Socratic thought that we have to consider in order to reinforce this conclusion: its embodiment in Socrates' life and death. For Socrates not only presented a theory of human nature while he himself took a detached attitude toward his own thought, he also incorporated his philosophy in his own person and acted it out in his own life. In the end, it is as impossible to separate Socrates' thought and teaching from his life as it is to separate different aspects of his thought from each other. Socrates was teacher and *paradeigma*, the personal embodiment of his philosophy.

In order to do justice to Socrates' behavior at the time of his trial it is not enough to concentrate on his defense against the actual charges. What is interesting about the whole process is that the charges themselves were vague and open to interpretation and that the charges actually brought forward in court may not have been at all the ones that led to his indictment and conviction. Because of this we have to consider not only the charges but also the background of the trial and the sentiments that may have motivated the accusation and conviction.

The official accusation brought before the King-Archon is rather concise, and, though we may not know its exact wording, it must have been pretty much as follows: "Socrates transgresses against the law by not recognizing the gods of the city

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most people were reluctant to do so. In consequence, they were repelled before they could profit, they took offense faster than they could benefit and grow, and, leaving Socrates prematurely, they took away with them the impression of a man who was offensive as a person, to whom nothing was sacred and unquestionable, and to whom no authority was acceptable and beyond doubt. They saw in Socrates merely a troublemaker, subverter, or fool.

He was a man who had no regard for excellence of birth, for inherited or acquired social standing, and the aristocrats and ruling class of the moment took umbrage. The same man held the masses in no higher esteem and did not think a man good merely because he was part of the *demos* but only when he was also excellent and wise, and this did not endear him to the masses, either. Having no regard for party, he offended both parties and outraged politicians who were merely politicians and members of this or that party rather than human beings in their own right. This being the general reaction of the public to the Socratic method, we can see how particular utterances of his could appear to most men as valid bases for prosecution.

Socrates opposed the distribution of offices by lot because he held that positions of responsibility should not be given indiscriminately to any citizen who was eligible but only to those capable of filling them, and the chance drawing of a name from an urn did not seem to him to guarantee such capability. No one would dream, he argued, of so choosing his physician, and it was even more foolish to select men to administer the state and guard its health in such manner. The argument is, of course, irreproachable, but those who already mistrusted Socrates on general grounds did not pay very close attention to the argument. To them, Socrates' opposition to one law simply meant opposition to established law in general, and they branded him as holding all laws in contempt and subverting the constitution

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(Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2.9). After all, was this not what the "other Sophists" aimed at in declaring conventional law unnatural?

Socrates emphasized wisdom, held lack of insight to be lack of worth and advised his friends to respect and obey those who know (physician, trainer, etc.) rather than those who do not, though the latter be parents, relations, or men in authority. Once again, a perfectly respectable argument, but to men who already disliked Socrates this was merely another instance of his undermining parental authority (Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2.48–52; *Apology* 20), loosening the ties of kinship, and belittling the officials of the state.

Socrates distorted poetic passages for elenctic purposes, criticized poetry and mythology outright, and tried to show that much of it was really objectionable. He seldom concealed his low opinion of poets as educators who spoke not on the basis of knowledge but out of poetic inspiration and thus imparted opinions rather than knowledge. To the masses, who failed to follow his reasoning, all this appeared to be merely another instance of Socrates' attacking and uprooting the very basis of moral and religious education.

It stands to reason that anyone who caught hold of a fragment of Socratic conversation without exposing himself to the whole of which it was only a part was liable to regard Socrates as either dangerous or foolish. Here was a man who would not only contradict what everybody "knew" to be true, but would just as soon contradict what he had himself just said and argue against it with equal tenacity until, in the end, his listeners were utterly confused and seemingly left with nothing at all. How could the uninitiated, the mediocre, the unintelligent, the vast majority of the people, help but regard such teaching as unmitigated Sophistry and Socrates himself as a Sophist of the worst kind? He appeared to them to be indulging in empty

eristic, in "turning the worse *logos* into the better," and "making the unjust seem just," as Aristophanes portrayed him doing in the *Clouds*.

The other part of the Aristophanic image also seemed to be true to Socrates' character. Since Socrates had most probably studied Anaxagoras' works (if not actually with him) and those of other Ionian philosophers, his name could be associated with theirs even though he had abandoned such pursuits as worthless. Was not Socrates a "philosopher," i.e. precisely what those other men were? To the general public, ignorant of both alike, there seemed to be little distinction between them. The Aristophanic Socrates, investigating things above and below the earth, venerating clouds and thunder, living cooped up in a thinkery, or suspended in a basket in the air, may have been an exaggerated comic figure, but it was, on the whole, substantially true to his public image. To the public, Socrates *was* a man engaged in idle talk, vain investigations, and dangerous pursuits without regard to the decencies, amenities, and values of traditional life.

In view of all this, it would not much matter whether this or that particular official or unofficial accusation brought forward at the time, in or out of trial, happened to be true. What all these charges amounted to was that Socrates was in some way a menace to the old and indeed to any order, and this most people already "knew." The only problem was what to do about it, how to go about putting an end to his activities, and how to protect themselves, their sons, and the whole state against such corruptive influence. That is why the surprising thing about the actual trial was not that Socrates was convicted but that (and he himself marveled at this) he was convicted by such a narrow margin, and indeed that he had not been indicted and convicted long before.

Much of what we have said about the unofficial charges

against Socrates is based on Polycrates' pamphlet⁷⁵ and, though we are sure that the pamphleteer did not himself concoct these charges but merely collected and summarized them, giving expression to public opinion,⁷⁶ we are not so much concerned here with Polycrates as with the two other "accusers," Aristophanes and Anytus. While Polycrates' motives for writing his pamphlet against a man long since dead were as questionable as his weapons, Aristophanes' and Anytus' motives and means were both decent and honorable, and this is what puts the actual events around Socrates' death in their proper tragic perspective.

Aristophanes wrote his *Clouds* long before the trial, and, in doing so, he used fair means to attack a man and a movement that he honestly held to be harmful to everything that the Athens he loved stood for. This is not to say that Aristophanes himself necessarily believed his comic Socrates to be a true image of the real one. Like as not, he drew on public opinion without necessarily subscribing to it in detail, exaggerated it according to the necessities of his art, and reinforced it by adding to his characterization a few traits which may not have exactly fit Socrates but did fit Sophists and other philosophers. In this way, he could attack in Socrates' person much more than the man himself—he could attack a whole type and a whole movement that he found objectionable. The procedure was justifiable not only because comic distortion and the presentation of types rather than individuals is fair enough in comedy but also because, from the playwright's own point of view, Socrates did not seem so very different from Sophists and philo-

75. As reconstructed from Libanius' *Apology*. For reconstructions cf. M. Schanz, *Platons Apologie* (Leipzig, 1893); J. Mesk, "Die Anklagerede des Polykrates," *Wiener Studien*, 32 (1911); also, on Polycrates and the Socratic problem, A. H. Chroust, *Socrates, Man and Myth* (London, 1957).

76. Plato's and Xenophon's vigorous direct and indirect defense against these charges would have been hardly necessary otherwise.

themselves would have acted in his place. Their first mistake led to their second, and the whole mistake, i.e. that their image was a misconception from beginning to end, led to Socrates' death.

The whole affair takes on the shape of real tragedy. It is not malice but irremediable ignorance that leads to the hero's fall, and we begin to perceive the outlines of an antilogical situation: two sides irreconcilably opposed in an *agon* in which there is an equal distribution not of rights but of honesty and the sincere conviction of being in the right. To this extent the Socratic drama resembles that of *Antigone*, but what makes it even more tragic is that while, in the *Antigone*, it was the limited and partial nature of each antagonist's insight that led to the conflict and subsequent fall of both, here only one side is ignorant (of the other) and the other fully aware of all the forces, all the motivations and convictions at work, and yet, for all his wisdom, Socrates cannot prevent or reconcile the conflict. Indeed, it is precisely because of his superior character and insight that he is powerless against the ignorance and wrongdoing of the others and has to fall.

If this is true, wisdom and virtue themselves acquire a tragic dimension, for Socrates' fate would indicate that our world is so constructed that a man of excellence is necessarily homeless in it and has to perish at the hands of those who, though inferior, dominate it to the detriment of all.

To see whether this is the case, we have to look at the other side of the coin and ask what Socrates' motives were for acting as he did and whether he really had to take the course he adopted. Given the political and emotional background of the trial, given the fact that public opinion was what it was and that the public, accusers, and judges, would act in accordance with what they were and believed in, would it not have been still possible for Socrates to gain acquittal and save his life?

Had Socrates acted otherwise at his trial, had he humbled himself, renounced his activities, promised reform, and begged forgiveness, he could have escaped not only the death penalty but probably imprisonment and exile, too. He might possibly have been acquitted altogether. By acting as he did, he in effect committed suicide. That he himself knew this is evident from his last address to the judges: "You seem to think, o men, that I have been convicted through lack of words, such as would have persuaded you to acquit me—that is if I had thought that a man should do and say anything at all in order to escape conviction. Yet this is not so. The lack that led to my conviction was not one of words but one of brazenness and shamelessness, and of willingness to say to you what would have been sweetest to your ears. You would have loved to hear me crying and moaning and doing and saying things that are unworthy of me. Only I did not think that just because I was in danger I ought to have acted like a slave, nor do I regret now that I made the defense I made, rather, I prefer to die having done what I did than to live otherwise" (Plato, *Apology* 38 E-39).

What these words make evident is that, although Socrates could have escaped with his life by trying to please and appease his judges, the life he would have gained in this manner would not have been worth gaining; although he brought about his own death by his behavior, any other course of action would have meant to him moral and intellectual suicide. Physical death seemed preferable by far. By remaining true to himself rather than by living up to the public image, Socrates sealed his fate. And yet had he done anything else, he would have lost more: not life but the good life, the life that is alone worth living. Being what he was, Socrates had no choice; he had to remain true to himself.

This note of "remaining true to oneself" is extremely important for us, for in a sense it expresses Socrates' entire motivation

stroyed completely the justice of his case and relinquished the only foothold where he could stand as an honorable man. He could have saved his life only by admitting in words and proving in action that it was not worth saving.

Nor did this situation change when he was imprisoned after the trial. While other men might simply escape, as Socrates was able and urged to do, arguing that, though illegal, it was not unjust when one had been unjustly condemned, this way was not open to Socrates. By escaping he would, again, only prove the justice of the conviction. He had already been accused of holding all laws in contempt and now, by breaking a law he held just—that convicted prisoners should not be allowed to escape—he would demonstrate that he did indeed despise them all. He had already been accused of corrupting the young, and now, by giving a criminal example, he would be corrupting them in fact. This would make his escape—now the escape of a criminal—all the more unjust and inexcusable.

In view of these considerations, it is evident that for Socrates there was no honest way out, no just way for obtaining justice either at his trial or thereafter. Regardless of the injustice of his conviction, he, as a just man, could only die. If so, why not relinquish justice, seeing that it led to one's death? Was justice after all worth dying for? For Socrates it was.

All his life Socrates had taught that justice brought its own reward, that it was not life but the just life that was worth living, that it was not suffering injustice but committing it that was the worst possible evil, and that whoever knew what was just would necessarily act accordingly. Now, by his own (knowingly and willingly unjust) act, he would not only show that he did not himself practice what he taught but he would also contradict all his teaching and deny the truth of his principles, for a moralist could not act immorally without doing just that. Anaxagoras, the Ionian philosopher, might retract all his theo-

~~ries and break all the laws of the state (not that he had done so), and it would make no difference to the truth of what he taught: the sun would still be a stone and seeds would still make up the universe.~~ But Socrates was not a theoretical observer of the nature of the universe; he was an educator whose subject was human excellence. He was not a detached inquirer into things alien to us but a man completely involved (as subject and object) in his inquiry, and his conduct was all-important. It could disprove the results of all his search. What was at trial here was not merely Socrates but all he stood for, and, being not only a teacher but at the same time the embodiment of what he taught, he could not deviate from his principles without disproving them completely.

Lest this give the impression that Socrates died for a mere principle, out of a kind of obstinacy and the fear of having his theories disproved, we must emphasize the other aspect of the situation. Though it is true that Socrates died for his teaching and his principles—in short, all that he stood for—what we must keep in mind is that he not only “stood for” these things in the manner in which an official may stand for his office (judge for Justice) and represent *it* rather than himself, but that, knowing his principles to be good, Socrates embodied them in his life and thus, dying for them, he died for what he was, died for himself. He was not a “martyr dying for a cause” but an individual human being affirming himself and aiming at the richest and fullest life. His death, far from being an act of “idealistic” self-sacrifice, was the opposite, an act of practical, individual necessity dictated by his own nature and natural desire for self-fulfillment.

Like his life, Socrates' death was truly his own. To understand his death, we must put the accent on Socrates' life, as he himself did. What determined his choice was not that one alternative led to death while the other led to life, but that one

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alternative led to a brief but good and satisfactory life while the other led to a wretched existence, however long, a life that was not worth living, a life that was worse than death. He did not choose death but the best life that was open to him.

This is obvious when we visualize the alternative. Socrates might have escaped by compromising justice, but, being an embodiment of justice, this would have meant self-compromise for him. Having yielded not an abstract point of legality but his own character and nature, what would he have done with the life thus gained? Socrates might have preserved others' regard and established external harmony between himself and his fellow men by debasing himself, getting down to their level and acting as they would have, but this would have meant losing his own self-respect and internal harmony. Living on with a discordant, corrupt, and diseased soul would have been far worse than dying. Homeric *aidos* (sense of honor, shame, respect, reverence) is here brought to its highest expression as self-reverence, a sense of integrity, the natural concern for one's *timē* (*timē* not in the sense of "external honor and dignity," but in the sense in which this word has the same connotation as *moira* and *physis*, i.e. portion, lot, function⁷⁷). As Homeric *ate* no longer means externally induced blindness but rather one's own ignorance and conceit in wisdom, so *aidos* is internalized in Socrates. It is not reverence for, awe of, shame in face of the gods or other men but self-respect and concern for one's own "good." Hesiodic-Solonic *dike* is no longer merely external social balance but internal balance and harmony.

Had Socrates promised to be silent, to give up his questioning, and to conform to public opinion, he would have been

77. Cf. E. Leitzke, *Moira und Gottheit im alten griechischen Epos* (Göttingen, 1930), pp. 7-8.

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allowed to live. In doing so, however, he would have given up his own nature, function, and end, and renounced not only this or that external activity but his whole life, the only life he had and therefore had to live. He would have gained a living death, an existence that might be suitable for someone else but not for Socrates, a life that was not his and was therefore no life (for him). Instead of choosing physical death, which, for all he knew, might be nothing terrible, he would have condemned himself to the worst fate he knew: intellectual and spiritual self-destruction.

We can now see that Socrates' self-affirmation was anything but an act of unnecessary self-sacrifice. It was simply the only way in which he could save himself and be what he by nature had to be. His action was not even heroic if by heroism we mean self-denial for a higher purpose, for the point is that Socrates did not deny himself. He did what he did in order to assert and fulfill himself, in order to be the man he knew himself to be. Self-affirmation and self-fulfillment being the natural goal of all men, and the particular way in which Socrates acted being the only way in accord with his nature, Socrates simply followed his nature in doing what he did.

We can now return to the question we left earlier to deal with the motivation of Socrates' behavior at the time of his trial. We had asked whether Socrates' fate was inevitable and, if so, whether human excellence as such had a tragic dimension, inasmuch as it was not the weakness but the strength, not the shortcomings but the greatness of men that led to their fall. In view of Socrates' fate, is it the case that, society being what it is, a man of virtue who remains true to himself is necessarily out of joint with it? Is it true that, men being what they are—well-meaning but foolish, on the whole sincere, yet, in their ignorance, unjust—a man of justice necessarily conflicts with

them and perishes in the conflict? Is it true that there is some fatal flaw in the construction of the world that makes it an inappropriate place for good men to live in, or some fatal flaw in wisdom that makes the wise man homeless, or some incommensurability between the mediocre many and the excellent few which makes the latter, and indeed (after the deed) the former suffer, just because they are all what they are?

The answer is: All this is true. Given the world he lived in, or for that matter any world of men, Socrates, by remaining true to himself, had to die. Given these circumstances, it was his own nature that destroyed him, his own wisdom, justice, courage, and health of mind that made him incapable of living except as he did, the way that led to his death. He perished through his own greatness. Human excellence itself bears the seeds of its own downfall. The good man is eo ipso a tragic figure.

All this is true, but there is nothing sinister about it. On the contrary, the picture, far from being gloomy, is one of hope. Socrates, the great man anywhere and at any time, not only falls but also triumphs. Remaining true to himself, he has to die, but, living as he does, he achieves in his life the greatest victory available to man: that of being what he is, doing that which is his own, living the good and harmonious life, fulfilling his own nature and destiny. In comparison with this victory, the fact of death is without significance.

This reveals another aspect of the situation. The many—the great, mediocre, ignorant, general public—can kill a man, but to a good man no *evil* can come. Remaining true to himself, on his own, by his own effort, he achieves all that a man could ever want: the good life. Though surrounded by others who are inferior to him and on whom he yet depends for his life, the great man is still supremely self-sufficient. All that really matters depends on him alone.

EPILOGUE

In order to put into sharper relief what is meant by Socratic humanism, it might be helpful here to take just one look forward, and try to focus on one important non-humanistic trend that developed in the wake of Socrates' activity.

In the *Symposium* Plato introduced and carefully distinguished from the rest of the dialogue a way of thought built upon Socratic beginnings but tending in the opposite direction. Because of its un-Socratic nature we have until now omitted from our discussion the last part of Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*. It is time for us to turn to these "Greater Mysteries."

Having described the nature and movement of love as the principle of human life, and the kinds of immortality open to mortal man striving for self-fulfillment, Diotima pauses: "Into these love matters, o Socrates, even you might be initiated. But whether you can attain to the greater and final mysteries to which these lead the rightly instructed, I do not know. Nevertheless I will do my best to speak of them, and you try to follow as well as you can" (209 E-210 A). These remarks introductory to the Greater Mysteries announce a twofold departure: a departure from what Socrates himself taught to a way of thinking he might neither understand nor approve, and a departure from the previous descriptions of Eros which are now revealed as merely preliminary. What follows is a radical shift of emphasis. From a eulogy of Eros we go to a eulogy of the Beautiful as the final object of love. From emphasizing the movement of Eros itself, for which all objects, the Beautiful in all its guises, were but occasions and means, we turn to an emphasis on the Beautiful itself, to which all the movement of Eros is but a means and a way, a "heavenly ladder." The transition from Eros to the Beautiful is deceptively smooth and un-

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broken. At first it sounds as if we were merely confronted with the other side of the same coin, the other pole of the relation we have been dealing with all along. It is only when we contemplate this new revelation closely and become aware of all that it implies that we discern how radical a reversal has been accomplished.

"He who wants to go about this business [of love] rightly" (210 A), Diotima begins, must not center his love on particular bodies, but, realizing that it is the same beauty that dwells in all of them, he must progress to loving them all. And this is merely the first step. From beautiful bodies he shall proceed to beautiful souls, and from here to loving the beautiful as exemplified in customs and laws and branches of knowledge. Finally, leaving behind him the "mean and trifling slavery to single instances" (210 D), he should arrive at a single knowledge, a wondrous vision of the Beautiful itself. This is what all the preceding movement aimed at, and this is the final object for the sake of which men undergo all the toils of love.

The Beautiful itself, revealed not gradually by man's own search but suddenly in a moment of more than human enlightenment at the end of the lover's ascent, is such as man has never beheld before. It is "most strange" (*thaumaston*) and, because of its transcendent nature, it can be best described negatively: "First, it is eternal; it neither originates nor perishes, neither grows nor diminishes" (210 D-211 A); it is wholly unlike anything seen in the physical (growing-diminishing, changing, flowing, living) world. "Then it is not partly beautiful and partly ugly, at times beautiful and at times ugly, in some relation beautiful and in others ugly, at some place beautiful and at others ugly—so as to be beautiful to some and ugly to others" (211 A). It lacks all the spatial, temporal, and contextual relativity that the Sophists so strongly insisted upon. Finally, it is nothing concrete, particular, existing here or

wonderful
admirable

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there in the guise of a single body or reasoning or knowledge, but it is "by itself, in itself, uniform and everlasting" (211 B). Absolute and transcendent, it is unaffected by the generation, change, and destruction of all the beautiful things partaking in it (211 B).

After the description of the dialectic of love as a temporal process and an immanent movement,⁷⁸ the utter immobility, timelessness, and lifelessness of its "ultimate object" is striking. To hear the latter part of Diotima's discourse is like listening to Parmenides' account of the One,⁷⁹ and the Parmenidean flavor of the oration grows rather than diminishes as we go along. As in Parmenides one could approach the One only by pure reason, so now in Plato the right approach to the Beautiful becomes *theoria*, intellectual contemplation. "Pure reason by itself [must be] used to seek the pure essence by itself of things" (*Phaedo* 66 A). As in Parmenides all but the One becomes mere Seeming rather than reality, so now in Plato it is only this new vision (of pure forms) that gives truth, and all else is but contact with illusions resulting in illusion (212 A). Whatever is of this world (concrete, temporal, and earthly) is but a semblance. Reality is abstract (divorced from all particulars), theoretical (a matter of intellectual vision), and eternal. From immanent love, we have turned to the realm of transcendent Being.

In accord with this emphasis on the intellect and on the transcendent object of all human striving, life itself obtains a new goal. It is no longer the self-fulfilling movement of love that makes life worth living but rather the static state of perfection at the end of all movement: when a man "at last arrives

78. Cf. above, pp. 128-146.

79. Compare, e.g. *Symposium* 211 A "proton men . . ." with Parmenides 8.1-7; *Symposium* 211 A "auto kath hauto meth hauto monoeides on" with Parmenides 8.29 "tauton t'en tauto te menon kath beauto te keitai" etc.

at the knowledge of the Beautiful, then, above all, is life truly worth living to him as he contemplates the Beautiful itself. This, once beheld," will outweigh all earthly delights (211 C-D). "To look upon Beauty essential, pure, unalloyed, undefiled by human flesh and color and ever so much other mortal trash . . . to behold divine and uniform Beauty itself—would you think it a life of little worth for a man to turn his eyes that way, contemplating [Beauty] in the right manner and being united with it?" (211 E-212 A). It is in this communion alone, "bringing forth and nourishing true excellence, that a man becomes a friend of God and immortal above all others" (212 A).

One interesting aspect of this elevation of an intellectual vision of and union with the Beautiful itself is that it is at the same time a radical devaluation of all other human pursuits. Except for this union, man as a whole becomes mortal trash. Except as a means to the achievement of this vision, life itself becomes worthless and the movement of love loses all intrinsic significance. The immanent immortality once thought to be the only kind mortal man could have is now revealed as illusory in comparison with this transcendent deathlessness. Time itself is polluted; nothing less than eternity will do.

Lest we seem to read too much into Diotima's last speech, we shall look at the *Symposium's* companion dialogue, the *Phaedo*.

In the *Phaedo*, where the theme of the Greater Mysteries is further unfolded, the essence of man is the soul, but the soul is no longer all that is alive in man, the principle of life as such—Eros in the lesser mysteries; rather, it is the intellect, pure reason by itself as it seeks the pure forms of things (66 A, 83 A-B). Reason alone being essential, everything is accordingly devaluated. The body with all its "loves [*eroton*], desires, fears, pervading illusions, and multiple nonsense" (66 C) be-

comes a hindrance, a disease. Life, here and now, with its "pleasures, desires, pains, and fears" becomes a "dreadful prison," and the world in which we live degenerates into a realm of infection, contamination, and corrosion. Over against this worthless, polluted, and impure world stands a pure world of forms, the transcendent repository of all truth and value and being. Over against this world of life and death, movement and change, stands what is "eternal, immortal, and immutable" (79 D), a world "difficult to describe" (114 C) except by presenting it as the negation of all that pertains to this world of ours.

The ethical implications of this dichotomy follow logically: the aim and end of man is to escape from the polluted prison of this world into the pure dimension of transcendent forms. The aim of all movement in life is to get to the point where all movement is arrested in a static contemplation of immutable, eternal essences. The fulfillment of life is no longer the immanent self-fulfillment of man as a whole, but rather an escape from the mortal self and the achievement of a lifeless, inhuman, intellectual immortality. Not perfecting as a movement but perfection as rest is the goal, and, since perfection cannot be achieved in life but only in death (66 E), death becomes the aim of life itself. Death is that "for the sake of which we live through life" (67 B), and thus all his life the good man, the man of true rather than illusory excellence, "pursues nothing but death and dying" (64 A).

A greater contrast to the Socratic philosophy of man than these Greater Mysteries could hardly be imagined. In Socrates, man, driven by the *daimon* Eros, was self-sufficient in that he did not have and did not need a transcendent foundation and justification for his existence. In the Greater Mysteries, the only thing essential in man is his transcendent origin and end. In Socrates, man was autonomous and, though at all times incom-

plete, could better himself in this life by his own effort since he was conscious of his incompleteness. In the Greater Mysteries, man is so incomplete that only by divesting himself of his humanity (and retaining only his divine, i.e. intellectual portion) can he achieve salvation, and that not in this life but in another. In Socrates there was much in each man's life that he had to negate, but the power of this negative self-appraisal impelled man on to positive growth. In the Greater Mysteries, life itself as a whole is appraised negatively, and the appraisal drives man out of, away from, and beyond it. Socratic man had to overcome himself; Platonic man has to overcome life and leave it for a transcendent realm. Plato's emphasis in the Greater Mysteries on the "other pole" to immanent Eros resulted in the lesser mysteries' almost complete reversal. Instead of being directed toward himself, the man converted to and initiated in these new mysteries is directed only toward the divine, transcendent, eternal realm of Being. This is the end of humanism.⁸⁰

It is interesting to observe that this radical negation of life and affirmation of a transcendent, indescribable, other-worldly realm brings Plato's Greater Mysteries very close to Dionysian rites and revelations. For, though it is the Parmenidean identification of being and thought ("*to gar auto noein estin te kai eimai*") that is revived in the Platonic demand for abstract thought about abstract being ("*ho ti an noese [psyche] aute*

80. We hardly need to emphasize at this point that the preceding treatment does not even begin to do justice to Plato. The point is that we are not trying to do him justice. Our contrasting Socrates and Plato—or the early and late Plato—is fragmentary (it concentrates on particular tendencies rather than the whole of Plato's work) and heuristic: We juxtapose two elements or two stages in Plato's thought and radicalize their conflict, regardless of the extent to which this conflict was reconciled by Plato himself, merely in order to crystallize the opposition between two trends of thought: Humanism and transcendent philosophy.

kath hauten autō kath hauto ton onton," Phaedo 83 B), the Dionysian traits of this new attitude to life are unmistakable. In both Dionysian worship and Platonic thought, life as a whole is rejected, and ecstasy—a leaping out of this life by way of orgiastic frenzy or of sudden intellectual vision—is recommended as the way to salvation. Both view man as alienated in this life from his essential nature, and able to regain it only by transcending his merely human existence and achieving a union with what is divine. To be a man, here and now, in the fullness of his being, is deemed insufficient by both. *Enthousiasmos*—orgiastic or intellectual—is necessary. That such enthusiasm transports man into a transcendent region where the god (Dionysus) or the divine forms may dwell, yet no man can live, matters to neither, for life (self-fulfilling movement, growth) has long since become mere pollution to both. In the self-less union with Dionysus or the lifeless contemplation of and union with the forms, there is only rest. Resting ever the same, self-sufficient in static perfection, man no longer partakes of Eros, the human *daimon*. He is no longer man, he has become (one with) god. And humanism has turned into transcendent philosophy or religion.

It is not claimed here that transcendent philosophies or religions, Greek or other, are somehow expendable. On the contrary, they will always be the right approach to life for most men. For Socratic humanism (and this is what the preceding study tried to show) not only locates all value (however great or little this may be) in man. It also places the greatest demand on his shoulders: the demand to be a whole man on his own and by his own effort, a self-controlled, self-affirming, self-overcoming, and fulfilling human being. Not every man is equal to this demand. The demand is daimonic: wonderful and terrible at the same time. The majority of men will always have to take refuge, find their *ethos*, in another world. Lacking the

strength to revere and affirm their own *daimon*—*eros*, their nature, portion, and lot—they will always have to affirm and reverence some other *daimon* or divinity. Lacking Socratic "integrity," wholeness, they will always remain fragments. This, however, is no argument against humanism as an ideal for man. Oedipus at Thebes still remains more admirable than Oedipus at Colonus, and Socrates in the *Apology*, the Socrates of the lesser mysteries, a greater man than Socrates in the *Phaedo* and in the Greater Mysteries of the *Symposium*.



APPENDIX: THE SOCRATIC PROBLEM

THE VIEW OF Socrates' life and thought presented in the preceding section is based on a variety of sources: a number of Platonic dialogues, some of Xenophon's, Aristippus', Aeschines' writings, comments of Aristotle, the Comedians' images, Polycrates' accusation, etc. In the following we shall present the considerations governing our selection of sources and explain what claims of historical authenticity we are ready to make for our Socrates.

As to the selection of sources, the method followed was neither revolutionary nor particularly original. We approached the Socratic problem with Maier's basic question (a modification of Schleiermacher's): "What must Socrates have been to account for the fact that the Socratics, for all their divergence, could each claim to be authentically Socratic or at least to continue Socrates' work, elaborating the implications of his theories?" Then, as a further requirement we added that any reconstruction of Socrates' thought and personality not only had to be consistent with Aristotle's comments, which Maier somewhat needlessly disregards, but also had to make Socrates' opponents' views and accusations at least superficially plausible.

Accordingly, we began the reconstruction by taking as our starting point a number of Platonic dialogues which were internally consistent in form and content and which fulfilled the