

Gregory  
Vlastos

# PLATONIC STUDIES



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Aristotle  
PLATO  
GREGORY VLASTOS

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# PLATONIC STUDIES

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consequences; and it is so great a good that no good securable by injustice could be greater. Here "good" is an ellipsis for "good for oneself,"<sup>1</sup> i.e., contributes to one's own well-being or happiness, εὐδαιμονία.<sup>2</sup> So the thesis is that one has more to gain in happiness from being a just man than from any good one could obtain at the price of becoming unjust. Now performing a single just act, or some odd assortment of just acts, is by no means equivalent to being a just man or, in Plato's phrase, "having justice in the soul."<sup>3</sup> So in "justice pays" *justice* is a property not of actions as

discuss in detail my differences with positions taken on the same topic in the following recent papers:

R. Demos, "A Fallacy in Plato's Republic?" *Philos. Rev.* 73 (1964), 395-98.

R. Weingartner, "Vulgar Justice and Platonic Justice," *Philos. and Phenomenological Research* 25 (1964/65), 248-52.

J. Schiller, "Just Man and Just Acts in Plato's Republic," *Jrnl of Hist. of Philos.* 6 (1968), 1-14.

I am indebted to each of these (cf. notes 35 and 46 below), and also to the following: Mr. Jerry Neu, who read a paper on this topic to my Plato seminar in 1966; Professor Richard Kraut, who did the same (and more thereafter in his thesis); Professor David Wiggins, with whom I had a most helpful discussion while still writing this paper; Mr. Thomas Russman, for the help acknowledged in n. 58 below.

<sup>1</sup> Not for "morally good" (morally praiseworthy), for which Plato would have used καλόν. For Plato "justice is [morally] good in and of itself because it makes the just man happy" would be *false*, while "justice is good in and of itself [for the just man] because it makes the just man happy" would be true, and analytically so: to say that X makes me happy would be for Plato part of what it means to say that X is good for me in and of itself.

<sup>2</sup> Following the general practice I shall use "happiness" for εὐδαιμονία, but with the caveat that the strongly hedonistic connotations of the English term (under the influence of 19th-century utilitarianism) should not be read into εὐδαιμονία. For a Greek moralist the question, "Is εὐδαιμονία pleasure, or is it something else?" is always a significant one (cf. the *Philebus*; and Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.* 1098B22 ff.; and the contrast between the "happier" and "more pleasurable life" in note 6 below).

<sup>3</sup> Or "present" (ἐνόν) in the soul (358B5-6; 441C7). Same implication in "having" (ἔχον) justice (367B4 and E3; 435C1) or "possessing" (κτᾶσθαι) it (455B3; 591B5-6). So too in the use of ἔξις of 435B7, 443E6, and 591B4. For the moral virtues as dispositional properties see also 518D-E, where they are said to be like the virtues of the body in that οὐκ ἐνοῦσαι πρότερον ὕστερον ἐμποιῶσθαι ἔθουσιν καὶ ἀσκήσουσιν. That Plato is not thinking of just acts as such, but of a condition of soul which expresses itself in such acts, is rightly stressed in J. D. Mabbott, "Is Plato's Republic Utilitarian?", *Mind* 46 (1937), 468-74, at 474, and in Schiller, *op. cit.*, 6 ff.

such, but of agents;<sup>4</sup> it stands for the active disposition to behave justly towards one's fellows.<sup>5</sup>

## I

The argument to be examined here is the one in Book IV, supplemented by the studies in moral psychopathology in VIII and IX (to 580D) and by the terminal reflections in IX (588B ff.).<sup>6</sup> Correctly analyzed, this argument will be seen to consist of two sub-arguments whose theses are logically distinct:

*Thesis I:* There is a condition of soul—"psychic harmony," I shall call it—which is in and of itself a greater good to one who has it

<sup>4</sup> That Plato should at times state the thesis in terms of "acting justly (δικαία πράττειν) pays" (so, e.g., in 588B7 and E4), instead of "being a just man pays" is no objection, since "acting justly" can be used to refer to the form of action characteristic of the just man and is so used when articulating the thesis: clearly so in 588B-E; and cf. 445A1-2, where "acting justly" is used in apposition to "being a just man" (πρότερον αὐ λυσιτελεῖ δικάει τε πράττειν καὶ καλὰ ἐπιτηδεύειν καὶ εἶναι δίκαιον).

<sup>5</sup> That *any* just act, or arbitrarily selected set of just acts, will "pay" would be patently false (except perhaps for an egoistic utilitarian who might so define "just act" as to make it true); and that Plato would think it false is distinctly implied in the *Republic*, e.g., in the portrait of the "oligarchic" man (553E ff.): though unjust (he defrauds orphans), this man has a fine reputation for justice in his business (εὐδοκίμει δοκῶν δίκαιος εἶναι, 554C12); so there would be stretches of his life during which he performs only just acts, and if just acts *per se* made one happy he would have stretches of happiness; but as Plato pictures him he is never happy: he is "torn in two by internal conflict," harbors "drone-like" and "criminal" desires only "held down under stress of fear, which makes him tremble for the safety of his whole fortune" (554B-D, Cornford).

<sup>6</sup> Ignoring the further argument (580-588E) that the just life is not only happier, but more pleasurable as well (note the terms in which the conclusion is formulated: εἰ τοσοῦτον ἡδονῇ νικᾷ ὁ ἀγαθός τε καὶ δίκαιος . . . ἀμηνάων δὴ ὄσων πλείονι νικήσει εὐσημοσύνη τε βίου τε καὶ κάλλει καὶ ἀρετῇ (588A7-10)); the same point is made in *Lg.* 734D: the temperate life is "happier" εὐδαιμονέστερος—because it is "both more pleasurable and ὑπερέχειν . . . κάλλει καὶ ὀρθότητι καὶ ἀρετῇ καὶ εὐδοξίᾳ"; it is argued that the just man's pleasures are preferable and "more real," while four other types of life, increasingly unjust, yield increasingly inferior and unreal pleasures. Additional, and puzzling, questions arise here, which I cannot tackle in this paper. The argument I shall discuss is a self-contained one, and is presented as such in Book IV: it is supposed to demonstrate that "justice pays" (and does so to Glaucon's satisfaction (445A-B) without making even anticipatory reference to 580D-588E).

than would be any he could secure at the cost of the contrary condition of soul.

*Thesis II:* One has psychic harmony iff <sup>7</sup> one has a firm and stable disposition to act justly towards others.<sup>8</sup>

Plato's argument for Thesis I is that this is the condition of the human soul when it enjoys health,<sup>9</sup> beauty,<sup>10</sup> and maintains the ontologically correct hierarchic,<sup>11</sup> internal order. This part of his story I shall not discuss; there is no need to do so, since my interpretation here would differ little from that generally held. I proceed at once to Thesis II, for here my interpretation breaks with accepted opinion and has to be expounded and defended in detail.

## II

I. Late in Book IV we come across the following definition:

. . . in the case of each one of us, whosoever is such that each of the three [psychic elements] in him *does its own* [τὰ αὐτοῦ . . . πράττει], he is a just man. . . . (441D2-E2D12-E2)

<sup>7</sup> The customary abbreviation of "if, and only if."

<sup>8</sup> Plato unfortunately does not distinguish these two theses as clearly and does not present them in the proper order: instead of first telling us what a precious thing psychic harmony is and *then* going on to demonstrate its connection with the disposition to act justly, he does the opposite, reserving the praise of psychic harmony for the conclusion of his argument in Book IV (444C-E).

<sup>9</sup> 444C-D; 591B-C (by implication: justice is the condition in which the soul "returns to its nature at its best"—Paul Shorey's translation (Plato: the *Republic*, 2 volumes, London, 1930 and 1935) of εἰς τὴν βελτίστην ἐξιν καθισταμένη—which is for it what "health and strength" are to the body); 609B-610E (injustice destroys the soul as disease the body; justice makes one "alive" [ζωτικόν], 610E). And cf. *Grg.* 504B-D, 512A-B.

<sup>10</sup> Κάλλος (444E1); εὐσηρμοσύνη (588A9). The same implications in the very notion of psychic *harmony* and its description in terms of musical consonance and concord (443D-E). Cf. *Grg.* 503D ff., where the notion that the just and σώφρων soul is the one that has the beautiful order (κόσμος) of a work of art, where all the parts are fitted together in a harmonious composition, first comes into Plato's work (this being its first recorded expression in Greek thought: cf. Helen North, *Sōphrosynē*, Ithaca, N.Y., 1966, 162-63, and W. Jaeger, *Paideia*, II [English translation, Oxford, 1947], 146).

<sup>11</sup> The "natural" and "fitting" order in which the part which is rational, "divine," and "superior by nature," rules the parts which are irrational, corporeal, and "inferior by nature": 444B1-5, 444D3-11; 590C3-D6 (with which cf. 577D3-5 and 589C5-D3; 591B1-7; cf. *Phaedo* 79E-80A and *Laws* 726-728B). Cf. M. B. Foster, "On Plato's Conception of Justice in the *Republic*", *Philos. Quart.* 1 (1950-51), 206-17; and Vlastos, *SPT*, nn. 25 and 26, below.

lay down, and often stated, if you recall,<sup>22</sup> that every single person ought to engage in that social function [literally: that function which concerns the polis] for which his own nature is best fitted.—We did say this.—And indeed that to do one's own and not to be meddling is justice, this we have often heard from many others and have often said ourselves.—We have said it.—This then, my friend, if taken in a certain way, appears to be justice: to do one's own. (433A-B)

The defining formula is imprecise, and is meant to be: that is the force of the qualifying phrases, "this, or some form of it, is justice"; "this . . . if taken in a certain way, is justice."<sup>23</sup> Plato refers to the very start of the investigation of the nature of justice in Book II (368D ff.), where he had presented the division of labor and production for the market as the generative principle of a polis (369A ff.). He understands this principle to mean that a polis arises when, and only when, men come to direct their individual energies with a view to the needs of others no less than their own,<sup>24</sup> each of them pursuing a line of work which will best mesh with that of others to their joint benefit. Plato then proceeds to generalize this principle, so that it will apply not only to economic activity but to all of the forms of associated living which go on within the polis.<sup>25</sup> And he gives

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But though these are sufficient conditions for the existence of a polis they are apparently not necessary for Plato, else he would not have called the primitive community in 369 ff. which clearly antecedes the existence of a state (no provision for governmental functions) a "polis."

<sup>22</sup> The back reference is to such passages as 370A-C; 374A-D; 395B-C; 397E.

<sup>23</sup> It cannot be emphasized too strongly that if "doing one's own" meant only the "one man, one trade" principle, Plato would never have thought of using it as a definiens of "justice"; hence the qualification "this, or some form of it" at the start of the citation, warning the reader that the principle of functional specialization in the division of labor has to be further qualified before it can be taken in all seriousness as the essence of justice. When endorsed without this qualification (*Laws* 846D-847A) the principle is *not* taken as a defining formula of justice.

<sup>24</sup> The basis of the polis is human interdependence (369B5-C4); if each man were self-sufficient, each able to meet his individual needs by "himself doing his own for himself" (αὐτὸν δι' αὐτὸν τὰ αὐτοῦ πράττειν), there would be no polis.

<sup>25</sup> The first generalization is at 374B ff.: the principle is invoked to justify a professional soldiery at this point; a subclass of these "guardians" is then selected (412C ff.) for the still higher task of government. In a broader sense the principle is expected to hold even of the activities of children and slaves (433D).

## Slavery in Plato's Thought\*

(1941; *SPT*)

### I. SLAVERY IN PLATO'S POLITICAL THEORY

A formal discussion of slavery is nowhere to be found in Plato. We must reconstruct his views from a few casual statements. The most important of these is a simile in the *Laws* (720), where Plato contrasts the free physician in attendance upon freemen with the slave healer of slaves. The free medical man "investigates the origin and the nature of the disease,<sup>1</sup> he enters into community with the patient and with his friends." He is essentially a teacher, but a teacher who also learns from the sick. He gives no autocratic orders, but educates the patient into health. Slaves, on the other hand, are incapable of such reasonable intercourse. The slave doctor's visit is hurried. He "neither gives a servant any rational account [λόγος] of his complaint, nor asks him for any; he gives an order based on empirical belief [δόξα] with the air of exact knowledge, in the insolent manner of a tyrant, then jumps off to the next ailing servant."<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere (*Laws* 773E), discussing the proper treatment of slaves, Plato sums up the matter in these words: "One must punish slaves justly, not spoiling them by admonition

\* Read in substance at a meeting of the American Philosophical Association, December 1939. Reprinted from *Philos Rev.*, 1941, 289 ff. The original pagination is interpolated in square brackets.

<sup>1</sup> 720D: ἐξετάζων ἀπ' ἀρχῆς καὶ κατὰ φύσιν.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. also *Grg.* 501A, where scientific medicine is defined in similar terms, contrasting the knowledge of the natural cause (τὴν φύσιν, τὴν αἰτίαν) and the ability to give a rational account (*logos*) with τριβὴ καὶ ἐμπειρία.



as though they were freemen."<sup>3</sup> And in another context: "Well then, should they discern this, but be unable to give any rational demonstration of it?—Impossible. The state of mind you describe is that of a slave" (*Laws* 966B).

It is clear from such passages that Plato thinks of the slave's condition as a deficiency of reason. He has *doxa*, but no *logos*. He can have true belief, but cannot know why his belief is true.<sup>4</sup> He can learn by experience [ἐμπειρία] and external prescription [ἐπίταξις]. But he can neither give nor follow a rational account. He is *therefore* susceptible to persuasion.<sup>5</sup> This is not [289] evidence of reason, but the reverse. *Nous* is "unmoved by persuasion" (*Tm* 51E4). The weakness of *doxa*, even of true *doxa*, is that it can be changed.<sup>6</sup> Only knowledge is stable [μόνιμος], for he who knows has direct contact with the immutable Forms.<sup>7</sup> This is what the slave lacks. His experience cannot yield true knowledge.<sup>8</sup> In all matters of truth he is, therefore, unconditionally subject to his intellectual superiors.

<sup>3</sup> Even Aristotle thinks that this is going too far: *Pol.* 1260B6–8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ti.*: 51D-E: δόξα ἀληθής ἰσὺς ἀλογον. Only νοῦς . . . ἐγγίγνεται . . . αἰεὶ μετὰ ἀληθοῦς λόγου.

<sup>5</sup> Διδαχή vs. πειθώ, *Tm*, 51 E2. *Peitho* is usually translated "persuasion", and I shall follow this usage here. But "influence" or "suggestion" would be a better rendering. *Peitho* means simply changing another's mind. It puts no strings on the way this is done. "Persuasion," as ordinarily used in English, ties one down to some kind of intellectual, or, at least, rhetorical, process. You cannot persuade without some kind of argument, though it may be fallacious argument. But Plato can write διδασκάλους πεπεισμένους μισθοῖς (*Laws* 804D) without straining the word. Cf. δῶρα θεοῦ πείθει (quoted in *R.* 390E). In Greek usage *peitho* often stands for "bribe."

<sup>6</sup> *Meno* 98A. Plato's educational system aspires to dye the right beliefs into the soul like fast colors into wool. But even fast colors fade. The ultimate guarantee of the stability of the state is not in the early precautions to make the guardians' good convictions proof against persuasion, oblivion, beguilement of pleasure and pressure of fear (*R.* 413BC); it is the guardians' eventual acquaintance with the unalterable Good.

<sup>7</sup> E.g., *R.* 532A. "Direct" means here "through reason without the mediation of the senses."

<sup>8</sup> It may be asked: What of the slave-boy in the *Meno*? Socrates confidently asserts (85E) that what the boy has done in this instance he could do "in the whole of geometry and in all other lessons." But what has he done in this instance? Socrates makes each successive point so plain that only a half-wit could miss it. Plato never suggested that slaves are stupid. He only says that they lack *logos* or *nous* and cannot apprehend the Forms. One may lack *logos* yet be a paragon of empiric acuteness (e.g., *R.* 516C; and 519A τῶν λεγομένων ποιηρῶν μὲν σοφῶν δέ, ὡς δριμύ μὲν βλέπει τὸ ψυχάριον . . .). At the end of the encounter the slave-boy has not discovered the Forms Square, Diagonal, etc.

Now it is an axiom of Plato's political theory that the only one fit to rule is he who possesses *logos*.<sup>9</sup> The good ruler must rule for the good of the state. He can only do this if he knows the form of the Good and then uses the necessary "persuasion and coercion" to order the state accordingly.<sup>10</sup> Thus government is good for the governed,<sup>11</sup> but does not require their consent.<sup>12</sup> [290] A democratically minded theorist like Protagoras<sup>13</sup> holds that all men have a sense of "reverence and justice"; that they all share in the "political art."<sup>14</sup> Plato denies this flatly: "Does it seem at all

Socrates gives the pieces of the puzzle and keeps prodding and correcting until the boy has fitted them properly together. The boy then has the answer to this particular problem, but no grasp of the underlying general truth. He knows the true solution, but not why it is true.

Nevertheless I should not conclude that Plato thinks that this slave-boy could not discover the Forms. This point is left undetermined. But, if the slave-boy could master the Forms, then he ought not to be a slave. In a "true" (i.e., Platonic) state he would be a philosopher, and *therefore* at the top, not the bottom, of the social pyramid.

<sup>9</sup> E.g., *Laws* 968A: The highest magistrate "must be able to give a rational account [*logos*] of all that admits of a rational account." Otherwise he cannot be a "fit ruler of the whole state, but only a servant to other rulers."

<sup>10</sup> *R.* 519E: συναρμόττων τοὺς πολίτας πειθοῖ τε καὶ ἀνάγκῃ.

<sup>11</sup> E.g., Socrates' argument against Thrasymachus in the *Republic*, I, maintaining that government is for the benefit of the governed.

<sup>12</sup> *Plt.* 293A, 296B–297B. This point is all the more remarkable because it contrasts sharply with the conception of government which underlies the *Crito*. There Socrates thinks and acts as a responsible member of a free republic. It is because he has himself consented to the laws that they are binding upon him: παρὰ τὰς ξυνθήκας τε καὶ ὁμολογίας (52D); ξυνθήκας τὰς πρὸς ἡμᾶς παραβάς (54C). However, it would not be impossible to find a casuistic reconciliation of political obligation that rests upon consent with political authority that is above consent. Plato's point, I suppose, would be that the good ruler's commands must be obeyed, consent or no consent; though if his subjects knew the Good as he knows it (a hypothesis which would abolish the distinction between subject and ruler in the *Republic* and the *Politicus*), they would gladly give their consent.

<sup>13</sup> It is significant that Pericles entrusted him with the framing of the constitution of Thourioi.

<sup>14</sup> *Prt.* 322C, D. It is suggestive to compare Protagoras' myth with the myth of the *Politicus* and the comparable passage in *Laws* 713B ff. In the former the setting is man's struggle for self-preservation: Prometheus' gift of fire and Hermes' gift of "reverence and justice" put into man's hands the two weapons that enable him to survive. Plato's aristocratic counterblast changes the setting so as to abstract entirely from the principle of human self-reliance and self-help. It harks back to the age of Cronos where there is no struggle with nature (πάντα

possible that a multitude in a state could ever acquire this [*sc.* political science?—By no means" (*Pl.* 292E, Fowler's tr.). Hence anything like contract theory of justice strikes Plato as a pernicious error.<sup>15</sup> How can men who do not know the nature of justice establish a just state by common agreement? The only way to get justice is to recognize the fact that "some men are by nature fitted to embrace philosophy and lead in the state, while others are unfit to embrace it and must follow the leader" (*R.* 474C; cf. *Laws* 690B).

It follows that the absence of self-determination, so striking in the case of the slave, is normal in Platonic society. The fully enlightened aristocrats are a small minority of the whole population (*e.g.*, *Pl.* 292E). All the rest are in some degree *douloi* in Plato's sense of the word: they lack *logos*; they do not know the Good, and cannot know their own good or the good of the state; [291] their only chance of doing the good is to obey implicitly the commands of their superiors. Thus Plato speaks currently of subjection to the reasonable discipline of rulers, human and divine, laws, parents, and elders as servitude (*douleuein, douleia*).<sup>16</sup> This usage is not without precedent. But Plato goes farther in this direction than any earlier writer. It had been the proud boast of Aeschylus for his fellow-countrymen: "They cannot be called the slaves of any man" (*Pers.* 242). It is hard to find an instance in fifth-century literature where *douleia* is used, as Plato uses it, in the sense of virtuous, amicable, and cheerful submission to constituted authority, without any of the grim associations of duress and dishonor. Yet Plato's genial extension of the word to cover an honorable and even fortunate estate is amply justified by the premises of his own thought: The manual laborer, for example, is "weak by nature in the

αὐτόματα γίνεσθαι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, *Pl.* 271D; ὡς ἀφθονὰ τε καὶ αὐτόματα πάντα εἶχεν, *Laws*, 713C), and where man's social life is directly under the care of divine beings (the "divine shepherd" of the *Politics*, the "daemons" of the *Laws*). Here reverence and justice (*Laws*, 713E) are not the condition, but the product of good government; and good government means not self-government but government of the inferior by the superior, of the mortal by the divine.

<sup>15</sup> *R.* 359A, *Laws* 889D-E: that justice rests on agreement is mentioned as part of a dangerous view, destructive of morality and religion. Yet the idea of law as συνθήκη was so widespread that it invaded even the thought of its opponents: *e.g.*, Plato himself (*Crito* 52D, 54C, cited above) and Aristotle (see Bonitz, Index, 729B 53).

<sup>16</sup> *Laws* 698BC, 700A, 701B, 715D, 762E, 839C, 890A. For some of these references, and for much else in this paper, I am indebted to G. R. Morrow's "Plato and Greek Slavery", *Mind*, April, 1939.

principle of the best." Left to himself, he could not rule himself, but would be ruled by his appetites. What happier solution could there be than servitude to one who is strong in the principle of the best, "so that we may all be alike and friends so far as possible, all governed by the same principle"?<sup>17</sup>

When Plato speaks so innocently of the artisans of the *Republic* as the "slaves" of the philosophers, he certainly does not mean to be taken literally.<sup>18</sup> He neither means to degrade all artisans to the level of bondmen, nor to raise the social status of [292] the slave to that of the free laborer. There is not the slightest indication, either in the *Republic*<sup>19</sup> or anywhere else, that Plato means to obliterate or relax in any way that distinction. The very opposite is the case. Professor Morrow's admirable recent study has shown that Plato's law of slavery is not more but less liberal than current Attic law; and in one important respect less liberal than any known slave legislation of classical antiquity.<sup>20</sup> Then what is the point of speaking so freely of all sorts and conditions of political subordinates as *douloi*? The point is not practical, but theoretical. It underlines the fact that, in principle, there is no difference in Plato's political theory between the relation of a master to his slave and of a sovereign to his subjects; or, as Aristotle put this Platonic doctrine: that "mastership

<sup>17</sup> *R.* 590CD. (Jowett blurs the point by translating "servant" for *doulos*, much as King James' translators often render "servant" for *doulos*; *e.g.*, Matt. 20: 27, Mark 10: 44, Gal. 4: 1, Eph. 6: 5. Lindsay's translation is more exact.) This passage has never received the attention it deserves. B. Bosanquet is the only exception I know. He sees that "this is the essential basis of Aristotle's explanation . . . of slavery," and accepts it in principle: "Plato's general account of the spiritual relation of society to inferior or immature minds, and in some degree to all minds, is unimpeachable" (*Companion to Plato's Republic, ad loc.*). I suppose that in terms of Bosanquet's political theory the philosopher would express the "real will" of the *doulos*. Hegel is more sophisticated on this point. See his stricture on Platonic philosophy: "the principle of subjective freedom does not receive its due" (*Philosophy of Right*, tr. by Dyde, par. 185, note. Cf. M. B. Foster, *The Political Philosophies of Plato and Hegel*, Ch. iii). But it is significant that Hegel does not criticize Plato for his denial of the objective freedom of the working classes. Hegel's own political theory would hardly entitle him to make this criticism.

<sup>18</sup> As mistaken, for example, by W. L. Newman, *The Politics of Aristotle*, I, 109-10, in a valuable reference to this passage, suggesting that this was "perhaps the source from which Aristotle derived his theory of natural slavery."

<sup>19</sup> On slavery in the *Republic* see SER above.

<sup>20</sup> "Plato and Greek Slavery," *Mind*, April, 1939. See pp. 194-98, and especially p. 196. For a more detailed discussion see the same author's *Plato's Law of Slavery* (University of Illinois Press, 1939).

[δεσποτεία], statesmanship [πολιτική] and kingship [βασιλική] are the same thing."<sup>21</sup>

In other words, Plato uses one and the same principle to interpret (and justify) political authority and the master's right to govern the slave, political obligation and the slave's duty to obey his master. His conception of all government (*archē, archēin*) is of a piece with his conception of the government of slaves. Is this saying too much? One thinks of any number of important qualifications.<sup>22</sup> Yet substantially the statement is true. One need only refer to the *Politicus* for the explicit statement that there is no other difference between the art of slaveowner [δεσπότης 259B7] and king [βασιλικός 259C2] than the size of their respective establishments.

Whatever be the refinements of such a theory, it appears at once as a radical denial of democracy. It could no more account for the facts of democratic government in Athens, than the contract theorists could account for the fact of slavery. The [293] contract theorists generalized the government of the state by the *demos* for the *demos*. They verged on idealism at the point where they would substitute "man" for "citizen of Athens"; at that point they did not know what to do with slavery, and played with the subversive view that slavery was unnatural.<sup>23</sup> Plato, generalizing the government of slave by master, was forced into the opposite conclusion that democracy was unnatural. Plato idealized the institution of slavery, the contract theorists the institution of democracy.

<sup>21</sup> *Pol.* 1253B18; 1252A8. That this is Plato's view is clear from *Plt.* 259BC.

<sup>22</sup> It would be superfluous to detail these here. They are obvious to any reader of the *Republic* and the *Laws*, and I should not wish to belittle them. See especially *R.* 547C. All I am suggesting here is that Plato uses one and the same principle to interpret (and justify) authority in the case of both master and statesman and obedience in the case of both slave and subject.

<sup>23</sup> Contract could only be the thinnest of disguises for force, on which slavery so obviously rested (see *Pol.* 1255A5 ff.). To base slavery on agreement was to suggest the view that this agreement was unnatural and slavery invalid. How many of the contract theorists shared this view? We do not know. In the *Politics* (1253B21) Aristotle does not name his opponents who flatly maintained that slavery is conventional and contrary to nature. See *Grg.* 484AB for Callicles' view that "natural justice" may be violated by slavery. Antiphon, the sophist, undercuts the distinction between noble and low birth, between Greek and barbarian ἐπεὶ φύσει πάντα πάντες ὁμοίως πεφύκαμεν (Diels, B, 44, Fr. B, col. 2). The same principle would undercut slavery. Alcidas, the pupil and successor of Gorgias, is said to have declared: "God left all men free; nature made no one a slave" (*Schol.* on *Rhet.* 1373B18). And a fragment of Philemon, the comic poet (ed. Meineke, Fr. 39), runs: "Though one be a slave, he has the same flesh; / By nature no one was ever born a slave."

Their conflicting idealism mirrored the real contradiction in Athenian society: a free political community that rested on a slave economy.

## II. SLAVERY IN PLATO'S COSMOLOGY

Can we detect any higher overtones of the master-slave relation? Can we trace it in wholes of a different order than political society: in the human microcosm and in the physical macrocosm? One's attention is drawn in this direction by Plato's frequent references to the body as the "slave" of the soul. That this is no mere figure of speech, but is meant to convey a serious philosophical truth, is clear from three considerations. (i) It stands as a formal premise in a metaphysical argument for the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo*.<sup>24</sup> (ii) It is written into the physiology of the *Timaeus*.<sup>25</sup> (iii) It determines leading ideas [294] in Plato's ethics.<sup>26</sup> Each of these matters deserves detailed discussion. But to keep this paper within reasonable limits, I proceed at once to Plato's application of the slave metaphor beyond anthropology to cosmology itself.

Let us begin with the scene in the *Phaedo* where the Platonic Socrates explains that he turned away from Ionian physics, because it did not use the right method. The right method, suggested by Anaxagoras' *nous*, but,

<sup>24</sup> 79E-80A. It is because "nature ordains" that soul should be ruler, the body slave, and because authority and servitude are respectively "natural" for the divine and the mortal, that soul is ὁμοιον τῷ θεῷ and body ὁμοιον τῷ θνητῷ.

<sup>25</sup> In the head, whose spherical form copies the shape of the universe, is placed "the divinest and holiest part" (452A), which is "lord [δεσποτοῦν] of all that is in us" (44D). The rest of the body is made to serve (ᾗ καὶ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα παρέδωσαν ὑπηρεσίαν αὐτῷ): it is a vehicle (ἄχημα) for the head, supplementing the soul's two "divine revolutions" (44D) with the "six wandering motions" (44D8; cf. 43B). The "mortal" part of the soul is housed apart "for fear of polluting the divine part" (69D); the neck was built as "an isthmus and boundary to keep the two apart" (69E).

<sup>26</sup> In the beginning of *Laws* v, the whole rationale of virtue is reduced to these terms: "A man's own nature consists invariably of two kinds of elements: the stronger and better are lordly [δεσπόζοντα] the weaker and worse are slaves [δοῦλα]; wherefore one must ever honour the lordly above the slavish elements in one's nature" (726). That is, honor the soul above the body and its pleasures and passions. In the *Republic* intemperance is described as insubordination of the appetites against the order of reason. It is "a meddlesomeness and interference and rebellion of one part of the soul against the whole to gain a rule to which it has no right; that part indeed whose nature is such that it ought to be slave, while the other should never be slave, but ruler" (following Lindsay's translation of 444B, except after the semicolon, where he takes τοιοῦτου ὄντος φύσει to refer to τῷ δλω instead of μέρους τινός). Similar expression in 442AB.

(2) The "secondary" cause, which is "necessary," irrational, fortuitous, and disorderly.<sup>31</sup>

The modern reader must find something baffling about this blend of necessity with chance in the secondary cause. For us the very idea of necessity implies necessary order.<sup>32</sup> How conceive of necessary disorder without self-contradiction?<sup>33</sup> [296]

I can think of one clue: "The ideas of *douleia* and *ananke*," writes George Thomson, "are almost inseparable in Greek, the word *ananke* being constantly used to denote both the state of slavery as such, and also the torture to which the slaves were subjected."<sup>34</sup> No one, so far as I know, has ever thought of interpreting the *ananke* of the *Timaeus* on the pattern of slavery. Yet Plato speaks of material necessity as a "servant" (ὑπηρετοῦσιν, 46C7; ὑπηρετούσας, 68E4) who, he also tells us, is "incapable of any *logos* or *nous* about anything" (46D4). But this, as we have seen, is the defining concept of the slave: a servant destitute of *logos*. Here, I think, is the explanation we need.

<sup>31</sup> ἀνάγκη (48A), ἡ τῆς ἀνάγκης φύσις (56C), τὸ ἀναγκαῖον (68E), τὰ δι' ἀνάγκης (47E); ὅσαι μονωθεῖσαι φρονήσεως τὸ τυχὸν ἄτακτον ἐξεργάζονται (46E). Cf. with this last *Phil.* 28D6, 7.

<sup>32</sup> In the ensuing discussion I am not speaking of Plato's concept of necessity as a whole. I am excluding from the discussion logical necessity. Like everyone else, Plato identifies this with rational order. He uses constantly ἀνάγκη, ἀναγκαῖον, etc. to mark the cogency and evidence of a deductive conclusion (e.g., *Grg.* 475A-C; *Phaedo* 91E; *Phil.* 40C; *Ti.* 53C). This kind of *ananke* is at the other extreme from the *ananke* of the secondary cause. Logical necessity is explicitly opposed to verisimilitude (*Theait.* 162E), while verisimilitude is the characteristic mood of all discourse about the material world (*Ti.* 29C; and 53D κατὰ τὸν μετ' ἀνάγκης εἰκότα λόγον). This bifurcation of *ananke* into formal order and material disorder is conserved by Aristotle. His view is tersely stated and acutely discussed by D. M. Balme in the *Class. Quarterly*, Oct., 1939: "Ananke does not govern sequences: there is no transeunt causality inherent in the material," p. 130.

<sup>33</sup> In *Plato's Cosmology* (162 ff.) F. M. Cornford throws some light on this problem. He points out that to Plato, as to Aristotle, chance does not mean the opposite of necessity, but the opposite of purpose. Thus a "necessary accident" means to both any unintended, but unavoidable, circumstance involved in the execution of a plan. This does explain the element of compulsion in *ananke*. But it does not explain the element of disorder.

<sup>34</sup> *The ORESTEIA of Aeschylus*, II, 345, (Cambridge, 1938). The association of the two words follows naturally from their obvious meaning. Aristotle defines *ananke* (in the sense of compulsion: τὴν γὰρ ἐξωθεν ἀρχὴν, τὴν παρὰ τὴν ὁρμὴν ἢ ἐμποδίζουσαν ἢ κινουσαν, ἀνάγκην λέγομεν (*Nic. Eth.* 1224BII); while the common view of *douleia*, as Aristotle reports it, is τὸ ζῆν μὴ ὡς βούλεται (*Pol.* 1317B13).

The idea of "disorderly necessity" strikes us as a flat selfcontradiction because we think of necessity in terms of a mechanical instrument, whose motions follow a strict mechanical order; that order is inherent in the instrument, and we can only use the instrument in so far as we respect its order. Plato thinks of necessity in terms of a "living instrument," whose use does not seem to depend on our understanding of its own intrinsic order, but rather on our ability to "persuade" it to follow our own purpose. In this case the order does not seem to be in the instrument but in us. This is the very image that occurs to Aristotle when he pictures the teleological order of the universe: "But it is as in a house, where the freemen are least at liberty to act at random, but all things or most things are already ordered for them, while the slaves and the beasts do little for the common good, for the most part live at random."<sup>35</sup> The slave does not share of his own accord the order of the common life. Left to himself he would "wander" off into disorder.<sup>36</sup> Order, which [297] he could not originate himself, must be imposed upon him, preferably by persuasion or, failing this, by coercion. The Demiurge, being the wisest of masters, need not resort to coercion at all: he "persuades necessity" (48A2) and makes it his "willing" slave (56C5). The notion of "persuading necessity" and the implied idea of "compelling necessity" make sense only if one keeps steadily in mind the slave metaphor. Persuading the law of gravitation does not make sense. Persuading a slave does.

To appreciate the importance of this development one must see it in historic perspective. The slave metaphor occurs at the very point where Plato turns consciously away from the cosmology of his predecessors.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Met.* 1075A19. Cf.  $\delta\tau\iota \epsilon\tau\upsilon\chi\epsilon\nu$  and  $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\tau\alpha\kappa\tau\alpha\iota$  of this passage with  $\tau\acute{o} \tau\upsilon\chi\acute{o}\nu \epsilon\tau\alpha\kappa\tau\acute{o}\nu$  of *Ti.* 46E5.

<sup>36</sup> But the slave's behavior is not utter disorder. It is only disorderly from the standpoint of the superior order intended by the master. At the price of inconsistency Plato is true to this feature of the slave-metaphor, maintaining that the primordial chaos had crude "traces" of the elegant order that the Demiurge was to impress upon it at creation:  $\tau\eta\nu \gamma\epsilon\nu\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\epsilon\omega\varsigma \tau\iota\theta\eta\nu\eta\nu \upsilon\gamma\rho\alpha\iota\nu\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\eta\nu$  και  $\pi\upsilon\rho\omicron\upsilon\mu\epsilon\nu\eta\nu$  και  $\tau\acute{\alpha}\varsigma \gamma\eta\varsigma \tau\epsilon$  και  $\acute{\alpha}\epsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma \mu\omicron\rho\phi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma \delta\epsilon\chi\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\eta\nu$ , και  $\delta\omicron\upsilon\alpha \acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\alpha \tau\acute{o}\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota\varsigma \pi\acute{\alpha}\theta\eta \sigma\upsilon\nu\epsilon\pi\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota \pi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\chi\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha\nu$  (*Ti.* 52DE). The last clause is particularly important, for it recognizes an order of causal implication *before* the chaos had been "informed with shapes and numbers" (53B). Yet Plato can only explain causal implication *through* the Forms: e.g., the necessary connection between fire and heat, snow and cold (*Phaedo* 103C ff.). This is part of a larger contradiction in Plato's thought which I have noted in "The Disorderly Motion in the *Timaios*," p. 76-7, *Class. Quarterly*, April, 1939.

<sup>37</sup> See W. H. Heidel, *περὶ φύσεως*, *Proc. Am. Acad. of Arts and Sciences*, Jan. 1910.

From the very beginnings of Ionian thought *rational* and *immanent* necessity had been an integral feature of the concept of nature. Recall, for example, the saying of Anaximander that things come into existence and perish "as it is ordained; for they make satisfaction and reparation to one another for their injustice according to the order of time."<sup>38</sup> To express natural necessity this early Milesian borrows words from the government of man. But that is, of course, no more than what we must still do today when we speak of the "laws" of nature. What is important is rather the absence of any suggestion of a superior agency to issue ordinances and enforce reparations. On the contrary, Anaximander excludes the intervention of a superior order in the course of nature by endowing nature itself with the attributes of divinity: it is infinite, immortal, indestructible.<sup>39</sup> Thinkers as opposed to one another [298] as the Ionian Heraclitus and the Italian Parmenides<sup>40</sup> preserve this feature of Anaximander's thought. Some verbal expressions may suggest the opposite. But a closer examination shows how firmly they adhere to the notion of autonomous nature. When Heraclitus says, for example, "The sun will not overstep his measures [μέτρα] else the Erinyes, the assistants of Justice, will find him out" Justice and the Erinyes stand for no independent entity; they simply express the inevitability of the pattern that fire follows in its unceasing transformations, "kindled in measure [μέτρα], and extinguished in measure."<sup>41</sup> Likewise when Parmenides writes, "strong *ananke* keeps it in the bonds of the limit,"<sup>42</sup> *ananke* is neither superior nor inferior to the inflexible rationality of existence, but simply identical with it.

<sup>38</sup> Diels, B, 1.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, B, 3. (Cf. my "Equality and Justice in Early Greek Philosophy," *Class. Phil.*, 42 [1947], 156-78 at 168 ff. on Anaximander, and 174 ff. on "The Naturalization of Justice.")

<sup>40</sup> This connection of Parmenides with Anaximander was suggested to me by Werner Jaeger's remark: "he also calls it [sc. *ananke*] *dike* or *moira*, obviously under Anaximander's influence," *Paideia*, Eng. tr., p. 174.

<sup>41</sup> Diels, B, 94 and 30. Cf. also B, 80: "strife is justice." The conflict of the elements ("war") itself produces its own order. So again in B, 53: "War is father of all and king of all; some he has made gods and some men, some slaves and some free." A question might arise over B, 41: "the thought (*gnomē*) which steers ( $\epsilon\kappa\upsilon\beta\acute{\epsilon}\rho\eta\nu\sigma\epsilon$ ) all things through all things." Is this governing thought an extraneous, superior factor? Clearly not, if one compares B, 64, "the thunderbolt that steers ( $\sigma\lambda\alpha\delta\iota\zeta\epsilon\iota$ ) the course of all things" with B, 66: "Fire in its advance will judge and convict all things" (Burnet's tr. following Diels): the "thought" is inherent in the fire; like "justice" above, simply another expression for the relentless orderliness of fire.

<sup>42</sup> Diels, B, 30 l. 31; cf. ll. 14 and 37.

theory of the state.<sup>49</sup> The first gives rise to the second, and each to atheism. The basic error is the idea that physical bodies "are moved by the interplay of their respective forces, according as they chance to come together and somehow combine fittingly" (889B)<sup>50</sup>; in other words, that nature is a self-regulating system, and is not governed by the art of a divine mind. This implies that the stars are products of a natural process, not gods, but inanimate material bodies (886DE; 889B). It implies further that legislation (like every other art) is a late product of the same process, so that laws are not absolute commands, but man-made agreements (889C-890E). Instead of deriving the laws [300] from the gods, this impious view derives the gods from the laws, and variable laws at that.

To refute all this Plato maintains that the soul is the first cause of all physical motions. His elaborate argument need not be examined here. We need only note that the point of his thesis is to prove that the soul, being "older" than the body, has the right to "rule" the body.<sup>51</sup> And what he means by the soul's "rule" is clear from a parallel passage in the *Timaeus* (34C): soul is *despotis*; it rules the body as master rules slave. If he can prove this, Plato feels he has destroyed Ionian materialism. He can then have everything his own way: that soul or souls direct every bodily motion (896DE); that the stars have soul or souls and are divine (898D-899B); and that, in short, "all things are full of gods" (899B). Thus cosmology supports religion by establishing the existence of its gods.<sup>52</sup> And the link between religious cosmology and political religion is the slave metaphor.

<sup>49</sup> How easily this point may be missed is clear from A. E. Taylor's paraphrase of this passage (in the Introduction to his translation of the *Laws*, lii): "Plato's view is that atheism is the product of two historical factors, the corporealism of the early Ionian men of science . . . , and the 'sophistic' theory of the purely conventional and relative character of moral distinctions." But the text says nothing about "two historical factors." It is the same people (the σοφοί ἄνδρες of 888E) whose cosmology is expounded in 889B-D and whose politics is given in 889D-890A.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Sph.* 265C5-8: τῶ τῶν πολλῶν δόγματι καὶ ῥήματι χρώμενοι . . . τὴν φύσιν αὐτὰ γενεῶν ἀπὸ τινος αἰτίας αὐτομάτης καὶ ἀνευ διανοίας φυσοῦσης . . .

<sup>51</sup> E.g., 892A: [ψυχῆ] ὡς ἐν πρώτοις ἐστὶ σωμάτων, ἐμπροσθεν πάντων γενομένην, whence it is assumed by a simple conjunction (καὶ) that it rules every bodily change. The inference from superior age to the right to rule is made explicit in *Tm* 34C.

<sup>52</sup> The "gods according to the laws": 885B, 890AB, 904A. Serious confusion results when this limitation is not recognized. *Laws* x does not even attempt to prove the existence of the Demiurge, who is never mentioned among the official divinities.

## III. PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

Any discussion of Plato's views on slavery invites comparison with the most famous text of antiquity on this topic: the first book of the *Politics*. Aristotle's polemic is mainly directed against those who hold that slavery is contrary to nature.<sup>53</sup> The word "nature" is used here in at least three senses: a moral, a biological, and a cosmological one. The first states the *demonstrandum* of Aristotle's argument; the latter two decide the demonstration. *To prove*: that slavery is natural, in the sense of being good and just:<sup>54</sup> good for the master, to whom it provides a necessary instrument (1253B23 ff.); good also for the slave,<sup>55</sup> whose intellectual deficiency is supplemented by the master's superior reason.<sup>56</sup> This is proved first by the contention that the [301] difference of master and slave, commensurate with that of soul and body or of man and beast (1254B17), is a congenital one: "some things are marked out from the moment of birth to rule or to be ruled" (1254A23). This is the part of Aristotle's argument that has given greatest offense to posterity and thus attracted widest attention. Yet no less important in Aristotle's eyes is the metaphysical sanction of slavery. The difference between master and slave, he holds, is natural because it follows a pattern that pervades all nature: "because in every composite thing, where a plurality of parts, whether continuous or discrete, is combined to make a single common whole, there is always found a ruling and a subject factor, and this characteristic of living things is present in them as an outcome of the whole of nature [ἐκ τῆς ἀπάσης φύσεως]."<sup>57</sup>

Now let us ask: What is there in this argument that Plato too could not have said in full consistency with his own ideas about slavery? It is, of

<sup>53</sup> παρὰ φύσιν τὸ δεσπόζειν, 1253B20.

<sup>54</sup> βέλτιον καὶ δίκαιον, 1254A18.

<sup>55</sup> φύσει δούλοι οἷς βέλτιόν ἐστιν ἀρχεσθαι ταύτην τὴν ἀρχήν, 1254B19.

<sup>56</sup> 1252A31; cf. *Nic. Eth.* 1161A35-B1.

<sup>57</sup> 1254A29-32, Rackham's tr. Other passages too show that Aristotle thinks of slavery not as an isolated fact but as a special instance of a general relation which connects slavery with his whole philosophic system: e.g., *Eud. Eth.* 1249B6 ff., *Nic. Eth.* 1161A32 ff.

The analogy of the master-slave to the soul-body relation enables us to connect it with the most general pattern of Aristotelian metaphysics, the relation of form to matter. Soul is the form of the body, and body the matter of the soul (*de An.* 412A16). And since ἐν τῇ ὄλῃ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον, τὸ δ' οὐ ἕνεκα ἐν τῷ λόγῳ (*Phys.* 200A14), the Aristotelian contrast of mechanism to teleology is, as in Plato, analogous to the contrast of slave to master.

course, the A B C of exegesis to distinguish between what a writer has actually said and what he could have said or ought to have said. That the Platonic dialogues give us no equivalent to the first book of the *Politics* points to a difference of temper between Plato's and Aristotle's views which must not be minimized. Nevertheless when we have made full allowance for this difference, we must still observe a fact which has escaped the notice of many modern interpreters and might modify their conclusions about Plato's moral and social philosophy: that in every one of these three points Plato would have to agree with his pupil's argument in defence of slavery:

- (1) that slavery is good for the slave (as well as for the master): better to be ruled by an alien reason, than not to be ruled by reason at all (Section I of this paper);
- (2) that this difference in intellectual and social status rests on a diversity of native endowment: nature is the original factor [302] in differentiating the philosopher from the producer and *a fortiori* from the slave;<sup>58</sup>
- (3) that this difference only repeats on the human plane a pattern writ large over the cosmos: the master's benevolent reason persuading the slave's irrational force fulfils a function analogous to that of the Demiurge, persuading towards the Good the irrational *ananke* of the material universe (Section II of this paper).

## IV. CONCLUSION

This study does not suggest that Plato deduced his political theory, his psychology, or his cosmology from his concept of slavery. No such deduction is to be found in his writings, and it is profitless to speculate about the unpublished adventures of his mind. What it does suggest is that his views about slavery, state, man, and the world all illustrate a single hierarchic pattern, and that the key to the pattern is in his idea of *logos* with all the implications of a dualist epistemology.<sup>59</sup> The slave lacks *logos*; so does the multitude in the state, the body in man, and material necessity

<sup>58</sup> See the use of φύσις, φύω, etc. in *R.* 370AB, 374E-376C, 428E9, 431C7, 590C3; *Plt.* 301E, 309AB, 310A; *Laws* 875C.

<sup>59</sup> I refer to the separation (χωρισμός) of the Forms from the particulars. Attempts to explain this away have been made by Natorp, C. Ritter, and many others. They are not convincing. See F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 2 ff., and *Plato and Parmenides*, 74 ff.

in the universe. Let to itself each of these would be disorderly and vicious in the sense of that untranslatable Greek word, *hybris*. Order is imposed upon them by a benevolent superior: master, guardian, mind, demiurge. Each of these rules (*ἀρχαί*) in his own domain. The common title to authority is the possession of *logos*. In such an intellectual scheme slavery is "natural": in perfect harmony with one's notions about the nature of the world and of man.

There is another world-view that is the antithesis of Platonic idealism, and would be persecuted in the Platonic utopia as false, wicked, impious, subversive.<sup>60</sup> It is associated with Ionian physics<sup>61</sup> and the contract theory of the state. It is scientific in [303] temper, empirical in its theory of knowledge, democratic in its political sympathies. Plato and others of his class complained that democracy was much too lenient with slaves.<sup>62</sup> They never went so far as to charge what seems so evident to us today: that a consistent democratic philosophy would repudiate slavery altogether. [304]

#### POSTSCRIPT (1959)\*

In the twenty years which have passed since I wrote this paper I have learned and unlearned things which would lead me to express myself differently on some topics. I do not mean that there are statements in this paper which I now think false. I mean only that some of them carry different shadings of emphasis than would seem to me proper now, and a few may leave a wrong impression on the reader's mind. For example, I speak of Protagoras (p. 152) as a "democratically minded theorist." This is vague enough to fall safely short of saying what I would now believe to be definitely false: that the philosophy of Protagoras provided either necessary or sufficient conditions for holding that democracy is the best form of government possible for Greeks at this time. I could not even now say that Protagoras himself thought that his philosophy provided such condi-

<sup>60</sup> *Laws* 891B; 907D ff. Cf. Grote's *Plato* III, 406 ff. in the 1865 edition. See also B. Farrington's *Science and Politics in the Ancient World*, London, 1939. I owe much to this stimulating essay.

<sup>61</sup> Is "Ionian" unnecessarily restrictive? "All the men who have ever yet handled physical investigation" constitute the fountain-head of impious unreason (*Laws* 891C) denounced by the Athenian stranger.

<sup>62</sup> *R.* 563B; "The Old Oligarch," *Ath. Pol.* 1. 10 ff.; Aristotle, *Pol.* 1313B35, 1319B28.

\* This was added when the above essay was reprinted in M. I. Finley, editor, *Slavery in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, England, 1960).

tions. That he was held in high repute by responsible democrats, like Pericles, is certainly "significant," as I say in note 13. It may be taken as evidence of personal sympathy for democracy, but scarcely even of personal commitment to it. Any reader interested in my present assessment of the philosophy of Protagoras (though without explicit discussion of its political implications) may consult my Introduction to Plato's *Protagoras*, Liberal Arts Press, New York, 1956.

I am also uneasy about my remarks on "immanent necessity" in Heraclitus at page 157 and note 41. It is true that the fire which "governs" the world is immanent in the world, since it is a part of the world; and that the orderliness of fire is immanent in fire, since it is the product of its own "wisdom". But then the orderliness of water and earth (the other two main constituents of the Heraclitean world) is somehow imparted to them by fire, hence is not purely immanent in them; I say "somehow," for the way in which this is supposed to happen is not clear.

As for the "slave metaphor" in Plato, I do believe that it illuminates important aspects of Plato's thought which do not otherwise make sense or as good sense. But I would gladly confess that there are many, and equally important, aspects of Plato's thought which this metaphor does not illuminate. I would not wish to suggest that slavery is the key to Plato's philosophy. There are many locks in this marvelously complex and delicate mechanism, and I know of no one key, or set of keys, that opens all of them. Of the statements I make on this topic, the one which stands in greatest need of correction is the following, on page 156: "The notion of 'persuading necessity' and the implied idea of 'compelling necessity' make sense only if one keeps steadily in mind the slave metaphor." If this suggests, as in its context it well may, that the Demiurge could have "compelled" necessity had he so chosen, the suggestion would be groundless, indeed inconsistent with Plato's conception of the Demiurge. I should also disclaim the suggestion that "persuading necessity" makes sense only in terms of the slave metaphor.



the rule of order, the contrary of the irresponsible tyranny; a term that might have been used by both parties that were opposed to Hippias."<sup>6</sup> Gomme gave no evidence at the time to support this pronouncement; he was reserving it doubtless for the second volume of his *Historical Commentary on Thucydides*.<sup>6</sup> So I took no account of his opinion in a paper on "Isonomia" I published in 1953.<sup>7</sup> I did allude in it to the logically related view that *isonomia* meant no more than "equality before the law." This had enjoyed considerable currency at one time. But I had thought that strong, indeed conclusive, reasons against it had been [1] already given, notably by Ehrenberg in his RE article on "*Isonomia*."<sup>8</sup> Referring to Ehrenberg then for this point, I felt free to devote my paper to other matters.

Rereading it now, nearly ten years later, I feel that one of the major items of unfinished business left over from it is the issue raised by Gomme's dissent. For this concerns not a detail but the fundamentals of our conception of the role of *isonomia* in the political thought of the classical period. If it means what Gomme thought it did, much of what has been written on the subject by others as well as myself is false or at least misleading. How widely his view is now shared I have no way of knowing. Nor would this be of any great consequence. In such a case numbers count for nothing. What does matter is that such a view could have been held, with such depth of conviction, by a scholar who, in addition to his great learning, had a critical intelligence of the first order. From this I can only infer that full justice has yet to be done to the other side of the controversy—that either the thesis has not been stated with the greatest attainable precision or the full weight of the evidence it commands has not yet been added to the balance. I have no confidence that I can make up for all this here. But I can at least try to bring out some things which do not seem to have been said, or said as fully as they should be. Moreover I am only too glad to have this opportunity to remedy one of the main deficiencies of "Isonomia": its treatment of the apparent counter-examples, *oligarchia isonomos* in *Thucydides* (3.62.3), Isocrates' application of it to Sparta (*Panath.* 178) and Plato's to

<sup>6</sup> *Class. Rev.*, 63 (1949), p. 125.

<sup>6</sup> Oxford 1956, pp. 109-10, 347, 379-80, 542. I shall refer to it hereafter by "*Comm. II*." Lest my controversial differences with it give anyone a false idea of my esteem for this work and for its author, let me say once for all that I consider this one of the finest achievements of English-speaking classical scholarship in our century.

<sup>7</sup> *Amer. Jnl. Philol.* 64 (1953), pp. 337-66. I shall refer to this paper hereafter by title only.

<sup>8</sup> Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencycl.*, Suppl. VII, cols. 293 ff., at cols. 295 ff.

the aristocratic Athens of the *Menexenus* (239A). The second and, still more, the third of these I handled in a brusque, short-winded, almost short-tempered, way, for which I now beg leave to make amends. This I shall do in Part Two: its longest section (III) I shall devote to the passage in the *Menexenus*, which presents fascinating problems all of its own. In Part One I shall deal with Herodotus and, much more briefly, with the earlier texts. [2]

## PART ONE

In the Debate in Herodotus (3.80.2-82.5) the constitution "which has<sup>9</sup> the fairest of all names, *isonomia*," is identified with democracy in the most positive and unmistakable way. It is that which exists where "the management of public affairs is made common"<sup>10</sup> and "the power is given to the masses,"<sup>11</sup> where "the masses rule,"<sup>12</sup> and do so through the characteristic devices of the democratic *polis*: magistrates are appointed by lot<sup>13</sup> and their official acts are subject to the *euthyna*<sup>14</sup>; proposals on matters of public policy are referred for decision to the assembly.<sup>15</sup> From the omission of *demokratia* throughout the whole of the Debate we may infer that the word had not yet come into use<sup>16</sup> when this text was written by Herodotus or

<sup>9</sup> Note that the speaker is not suggesting that *he* is undertaking to give it this name, but that this is the name it already has.

<sup>10</sup> ἔς μέσον . . . καταθεῖναι τὰ πρήγματα 3.80.2. (Here, and occasionally hereafter, I allow myself a rather free translation of the Greek, in order to make my text read more smoothly.)

<sup>11</sup> ἔς τὸ πλῆθος . . . φέρειν τὸ κράτος, 3.81.1.

<sup>12</sup> πλῆθος ἄρχον 3.80.6; δῆμον . . . ἄρχοντος, 82.4.

<sup>13</sup> πάλω μὲν ἀρχὰς ἄρχει, 3.80.6. One of the hallmarks of democracy: Plato, *R.* 557A, *Pl.* 289D; and cf. the reference to *Laws* 759B, at n. 73, below.

<sup>14</sup> ὑπεύθυνον δὲ ἀρχὴν ἄρχει, 3.80.6. Cf. ἀνευθύνω, of the tyrant, 80.3.

<sup>15</sup> βουλευμάτων δὲ πάντα ἔς τὸ κοινὸν ἀναφέρει, 3.80.6. The one major democratic institution to which Otanes makes no explicit reference is the participation of the *demos* in the administration of justice. This is doubtless implied. Cf., e.g., Arist., *Pol.* 1298A 4 ff.: the sovereign power deliberates (βουλευόμενον) about judicial matters (περὶ θανάτου καὶ φυγῆς καὶ δημεύσεως) no less than about war, alliances, etc., and the audit of magistrates.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. CD, p. 6. The same conclusion is reached on independent (purely linguistic) grounds by A. Debrunner, *op. cit.* The earliest epigraphical occurrence of the word would be in the Athenian decree concerning Colophon (ca. 460 B. C.) IG I<sup>2</sup> 15, line 37: καὶ δημοκρατίαν οὐ καταλύσω, if the restoration is sound; it is retained in B. D. Meritt, H. T. Wade-Gery, and F. McGregor, *The Athenian Tribute Lists* (Princeton, 1939-53), Vol. 2, p. 69, and is apparently endorsed by M. Ostwald, "Athenian Legislation Against Tyranny," *TAPhA* 86 (1955), pp. 103 ff., at p. 113, n. 51.

his source.<sup>17</sup> For the Debate goes on for several paragraphs, offering repeated opportunities for the use of abstract names for each of the three constitutions under discussion. The writer makes ample use of such names for the other two: he uses *mounarchie* four times, *tyrannis* once, *oligarchie* five times. If he had *demokratia* he would surely have [3] used it at least once, instead of resorting to obvious makeshifts such as the descriptive phrase, δῆμου ἄρχοντος,<sup>18</sup> or else the concrete δῆμος, forcing it to do double duty and stand for both the ruling power in a democracy and the constitutional form of its rule.<sup>19</sup> Why then did he not employ *isonomia* for

<sup>17</sup> I mention the possibility that Herodotus was drawing on an earlier source, (which, if true, would strengthen my argument for the early currency of *isonomia* as a name for democracy) but put no weight on it, for lack of evidence. For a survey of the literature and a judicious conclusion see K. Wüst, *Politisches Denken bei Herodot* (Diss., Munich, 1935), pp. 47 ff. Sophistic influence on Herodotus is generally admitted (especially during his residence in Athens before he joined her Panhellenic colony at Thurioi: in this connection it is extremely likely that he knew Protagoras, who took a part in drafting the legislation for the colony [Heracleides Pont. *ap.* Diogenes Laertius 9.50]). There is good reason to think that at 3.108 Herodotus is echoing a Protagorean source (cf. my "On the Pre-History in Diodorus," *AJP* 67 [1946], pp. 51 ff., at pp. 56-57). We may suspect that he is doing the same thing in this Debate, but lack the materials to prove this. Hence we had best speak of it as a conjecture (so Larsen, CD, p. 4.). T. B. L. Webster, *Political Interpretations in Greek Literature* (Manchester, 1948), p. 49, cites the Debate as a "genuine memory of Protagoras" on the ground that it represents monarchy as another form of government "beside tyranny, democracy, and oligarchy." If monarchy were so represented, the indebtedness to Protagoras would still be conjectural: we have no evidence that he invented or even expounded this idea. In any case, as Wüst points out (*op. cit.*, pp. 57 and 59), it is the *same* form of government, one-man rule, which is attacked by Otanes and Megabyzus, and defended by Darius. This is clear from the nomenclature: Otanes uses μουνάρχον (80.2) and τύραννον (80.4) interchangeably, and uses the horrors of tyranny to discredit μουναρχίη at 80.3.

<sup>18</sup> 82.4 These genitives here do the same job which was done by ἐν ὀλιγαρχίᾳ in the period which starts at 82.3.

<sup>19</sup> Thus in δῆμω . . . χράσθων at 3.81.3 (where the use of δῆμος in the purely concrete sense would have required the speaker to supply something like ἄρχοντι), and in δῆμον τε ἀρίστου καὶ ὀλιγαρχίης καὶ μουνάρχου at 82.1 (where all three terms stand for the constitutions, not merely for those who rule in them). Larsen (CD, p. 6, n. 6; and "The Judgment of Antiquity on Democracy," *CP* 49 [1954], pp. 1 ff., at p. 14, n. 2) has invalidated much supposed evidence for the view that δῆμος could be used to mean "democracy." I now agree with him that in δῆμον καταλύειν (or καταπαύειν) δῆμος need not refer to democracy as a form of government in sharp distinction from the people who rule under this form. He might have cited the repeated disjunc-

this purpose if, as we have just seen, it names democracy unambiguously? —Because it would not have suited the other two speakers in the Debate.<sup>20</sup> We can tell from their diction how sensitive to the evaluative overtones of names for constitutions are these Greek sophists who masquerade as Persian nobles. The advocate of one-man rule, Darius, speaks consistently of "monarchy" and "monarch"; "tyranny" and "tyrant" are used only by his opponents.<sup>21</sup> Megabyzus, defending oligarchy, avoids the word; for "Let us set up an oligarchy" he says, "Let us select the best men and give them the power."<sup>22</sup> So it [4] is perfectly understandable that the two detractors of popular government should have screened out *isonomia* from their speeches. If the word had half the glamor Otanes claimed for it, they would have served his cause, not theirs, by employing it.

Herodotus makes three more uses of our word in the course of the *History*. Two of them occur in his account of the Ionian revolt: Maeandrius offers to abandon the tyranny and proclaim *isonomia* to the Samians (3.142.3); Aristagoras abolishes tyranny to establish *isonomia* in Miletus and other Ionian cities (5.37.2). Here the word is used in strongest opposi-

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tions in the recently published inscription of the decree of Eucrates (*Hesperia* 21 [1952], pp. 355-59: τὸν δῆμον τῶν Ἀθηναίων ἢ τὴν δημοκρατίαν τὴν Ἀθηνησιν καταλύσει, lines 8-10; much the same at lines 12-14), where it is certain that δῆμον καταλύειν does not mean the same thing as δημοκρατίαν καταλύειν, else the juxtaposition of the two expressions would be a pure redundancy. On the other hand, it would be well to recognize (I) that δῆμος was used at times in the fourth century to mean purely and strictly the democratic constitution: e.g., τῶν πολιτειῶν [εἶδη] δύο, δῆμος καὶ ὀλιγαρχία, *Pol.* 1290A16; other examples in Bonitz, *Index Aristotelicus*, 176b 15 ff.; and (II) that in the earlier legal documents which speak only of κατάλυσις τοῦ δήμου (so ἐπὶ καταλύσει τοῦ δήμου in the Bouleutic Oath, *ap.* Demosth. 24. 144, which I take to be part of the original oath mentioned in Arist., *Ath. Pol.* 22.2), almost certainly because their writers did not have δημοκρατία in their vocabulary (note the three uses of this in the decree of Demophantus, *ap.* Andoc. 1.96), *demos* was used as a kind of hybrid, standing for both the ruling people and the form of their rule, and hence to that extent made to do the job which the abstract *demokratia* did more efficiently and unambiguously later on.

<sup>20</sup> They being the only ones who would have had the occasion to use it as their speeches have been composed: the makeshifts to which I have just referred all occur in the second and third speeches.

<sup>21</sup> And cf. n. 17 *sub fin.*, above.

<sup>22</sup> 3.81.3. He does not use ὀλιγοκρατία, which would have suited him admirably (cf. J. de Romilly, "Le Classement des Constitutions jusqu'à Aristote," *REG* 72 [1959], pp. 81 ff., at p. 85), because he does not have it; the word is later than Herodotus, and is even absent from ps.-Xen., *Ath. Pol.*, where we would certainly expect it.

the first word in its composition that whatever the compound might mean this would involve some application or specification of the notion of equality. And this is amply sufficient to mark off etymologically the meaning of *isonomia* from that of *demokratia*, which does not mention equality,<sup>36</sup> as *isonomia* does not mention the people's [7] rule. And there is another difference between the two words which affects profoundly their connotations. *Demokratia* is a utility word. It would be hard to imagine a simpler, more exact, and more serviceable label for the Greek form of popular government.<sup>37</sup> *Isonomia* belongs to a totally different sort of linguistic genre. It

<sup>36</sup> The form of government named by *demokratia* has, of course, a strong commitment to the principle of equality (cf. notes 109 and 110 below). But there is all the difference in the world between what is mentioned by a linguistic term and what is implied by the concept named by the term. When critics of democracy impugn its profession to be an equal government they do not assail the word. Thus pseudo-Xenophon, complaining that in democracy  $\delta$  δῆμος πλέον ἔχει τῶν γενναίων, etc., *Ath. Pol.* 1.1, does not suggest for a moment that *demokratia* is a misnomer. Aristotle, holding more moderately that democracy need not be "equal" government, does not say that when οὐ καθιστάσι κοινὴν πολιτείαν οὐδ' ἴσῃν, *Pol.* 1296A30, the democrats belie the name of their constitution, but its "law," i.e. the constitutional principle of the "first" (and best) kind of democracy, ἡ λεγομένη μάλιστα κατὰ τὸ ἴσον: ἴσον γὰρ φησιν ὁ νόμος ὁ τῆς τοιαύτης δημοκρατίας that neither rich nor poor should be the masters, but ὁμοίους ἀμφοτέρους, 1291B30-34.

<sup>37</sup> The ambiguity in δῆμος (*plebs* or *populus*) is all to the good. Opponents of democracy can take it in the first sense (cf. ps-Xen. in the preceding note), while thoughtful democrats can invoke the second: so Athenagoras in Thuc. 6.39.1, ἐγὼ δὲ φημι . . . δῆμον ζύμπαν ὀνομάσθαι. This ambiguity might even have been a reason for the shift to the concrete demos from the abstract quantifiers in the progression, μοναρχία, ὀλιγαρχία, δημοκρατία: *demos* would cover both of the theoretical possibilities, "many" and "all," left over from "one" and "a few" in the first two terms of the series; both possibilities apply in democratic government, since *all* share in basic rights and the *majority* ("many") decide.—The assumption that *demos* can have only the first sense has been read into the analysis of Thuc. 2.37.1 most recently by I. Th. Kakridis, in his notable monograph, *Der Thukydideische Epitaphios*, Zetemata 26 (Munich, 1961), p. 25 (hereafter I shall refer to this by "Kakridis"). He thinks that in μέτεστι πᾶσι τὸ ἴσον democracy "outstrips" its name, which would have committed it rather to τὸ ἴσον for the πλείους only. He cites δῆμον ζύμπαν from Thuc. above only to dismiss it as idiosyncratic (because of ἐγὼ φημι), failing to consider (I) the long-standing use of *demos* with just this sense (cf. Callinus, frag. 1, δῆμω at v. 16 = λαῶν σύμπαντι at v. 18; Plato, *Plt.* 298C, συλλέξει δ' ἑκατησίαν ἡμῶν αὐτῶν, ἢ σύμπαντα του δῆμον ἢ τοὺς πλουσίους μόνον, and (II) that the normal sense of *demos* in constitutional contexts is precisely τὸ ζύμπαν: in ἔδοξε τῷ δῆμω, *demos* can only mean *populus*, all of it, not just the majority which passes a decree, concludes a treaty, etc., since the action of this majority is an act of

is more of a banner than a label. We saw how grandly it plays this role in the Debate, and can see it again in Thucydides, where πλήθους ἰσονομία πολιτική is the democrats' ὄνομα εὐπρεπέες<sup>38</sup> doing for them the job [8] which that fulsomely moralistic expression, ἀριστοκρατία σώφρων, does for the oligarchs. From Plato's satirical attentions to it in the *Republic*,<sup>39</sup> we can infer that it is still flying high on the democratic masthead in the second decade of the fourth century. And it is still respectable, if a bit faded, in the later works of Isocrates around the middle of the century.<sup>40</sup>

the *polis*: the state decrees, makes an alliance, goes to war, etc. Even πλήθος, when used in lieu of δῆμος in legal contexts, has precisely the same all-inclusive sense: so, e.g., in I. G. I<sup>2</sup> 10 (Tod, *GHI* I, 29), Athenian decree relative to Erythrae: οὐκ [ἀποσ]τήσομαι Ἀθηναίων τοῦ π[λ]ήθους = "against the Athenian people," line 22. And cf. Gomme's rebuttal, *CQ* 41 (1948), p. 10, and *Comm.* II, p. 109. Kakridis' remark of "*demokratia* . . . ihr Name beweist, daß die Gleichheit aller Bürger nicht zu ihrem Programm gehört," *l. c.*, should be revised to "ihr Name beweist nicht, daß die Gleichheit aller Bürger zu ihrem Programm gehört."

<sup>38</sup> 3.82.8. I take πλήθους here to be equivalent to δῆμος (cf. preceding note, *sub fin.*), and πολιτική to be used in contrast to arbitrary and lawless government: cf. its use in contrast to δυναστευτική (here, ὀλιγαρχία) in Arist., *Pol.* 1298A33-39; it is already charged with the sense carried increasingly by πολιτεία, so that Aristotle finally comes to use πολιτεία as a name for his "polity" (implying that a similar use of the word for moderate, law-regulated constitutions has fairly wide currency: Bobitz, *Index Aristotelicus* 613A57 ff. for references) and Attic rhetoricians feel empowered to use it for "rule of law": so, e.g., Isocr. 4.125 and Ep. 7.11; Demosth. 1.5 and 15.20 (in contrast to "monarchies" in the first two, "tyranny" in the third, "oligarchy" in the fourth). Note the redundancy we would get in ἰσονομία πολιτική on Gomme's view of the sense of the former. Gomme does not seem to notice this in commenting on Thuc. 3.82.8, perhaps because he glosses πολιτική (very loosely, it seems to me) by "such as befits free citizens," *Comm.* II, p. 379.

<sup>39</sup> ἰσονομικοῦ at 561C will be discussed in Part Two (III) below. ἰσονομία καὶ ἐλευθερία in the relations of men to women, 563B, occurs in that panorama of equality and liberty gone wild which is designed to convince us that democracy has produced its own moral *reductio ad absurdum*. Either use would be hopelessly pedantic if *isonomia* did not have a high place in the current democratic credo. Note how impossible it would be to square these uses with the notion that *isonomia* stands for the rule of law as such. And cf. n. 67, below.

<sup>40</sup> *Artep.* 20 (dated 355 B. C. by J. F. Dobson in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 1949), ὡς θ' ἡγεῖσθαι τὴν μὲν ἀκολασίαν δημοκρατίαν, τὴν δὲ παρανομίαν ἐλευθερίαν, τὴν δὲ παρηρησίαν ἰσονομίαν . . . For παρηρησία in the derogatory sense, as a characteristic of democracy, see, e.g., Plato, *R.* 557B, καὶ ἐλευθερίας ἢ πόλις μεστή καὶ παρηρησίας, and Adam's references *ad loc.*, and those of Dodds on *Grg.* 461E2. The other use of ἰσονομία is *Panath.* 178 (dated by Dobson 342-49); to be discussed in Part Two, Section II, below.