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ORDER  
AND  
HISTORY

*The World  
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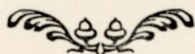
ERIC VOEGELIN

# ORDER AND HISTORY

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VOLUME TWO

*The World of the Polis*



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exclusions bear the signature of willfulness. Toynbee considers Judaism a "fossil" of the Syriac civilization and throws it out of the representative assembly of "higher religions"; Jaspers courteously admits the prophets, but in his turn excludes Christianity from "validity" for all mankind; and neither of them seems to have any use for Moses. I do not intend to rush to the aid of the outcasts—Judaism and Christianity need no defense; in the present context the wilfulness is of interest only as the symptom of a profound misconception of history and its structure. In his conscientious manner Jaspers himself has articulated the misconception, and even formulated the conflict between the objective structure of history and his own construction to which it must inevitably lead. For, on the one hand, he acknowledges that "philosophy of history in the Occident had its root in Christian faith"; while, on the other hand, he finds that "a view of universal history" in which the epiphany of Christ is the central event can be valid only for Christians.<sup>15</sup> Setting aside the fact that Christian faith is by far not the only root of Western philosophy of history—Israel and Hellas also have something to do with it—there still remains the hard fact that philosophy of history has indeed arisen in the West and nowhere *but* in the West. There is no such thing as a non-Western philosophy of history. For a philosophy of history can arise only where mankind has become historical through existence in the present under God. Leaps in being, to be sure, have occurred elsewhere; but a Chinese personal existence under the cosmic *tao*, or an Indian personal existence in acosmistic illumination, is not an Israelite or Christian existence under God. While the Chinese and Indian societies have certainly gained the consciousness of universal humanity, only the Judaeo-Christian response to revelation has achieved historical consciousness. The program of a universal history valid for all men, when it is thought through, can mean only one of two things: the destruction of Western historical form, and the reduction of Western societies to a compact form of order in which the differentiations of truth through philosophy and revelation are forgotten; or, an assimilation of the societies, in which the leap in being has not broken the cosmological order as thoroughly as in the West, to existence in Western historical form. The same inconclusiveness with regard to theoretical issues marks the attitude of Toynbee. In defending his equal ranking of the four "higher religions," he takes shelter in the generically human inability to discern truth in matters

<sup>15</sup> Jaspers, *Ursprung*, 19.



osophical form without a concrete society. Nevertheless, we can relieve the suspense somewhat by a few reflections on an obvious fact: Philosophy, as an experience and symbolization of universally valid order, arises from the orbit of the polis. This phenomenon, now, is reminiscent of the Deutero-Isaianic "exodus of Israel from itself"; that is, of the process in which the universalist component in the experience of the Kingdom of God separates from the attempt to realize the Kingdom in the institutions of a concrete society. The similarity, to be sure, must not induce rash speculations that would obscure the profound differences between Israelite and Hellenic phenomena, but it suggests as relevant the further observation that the two experiences of order that arose from concrete societies without forming them became ordering forces on a world-historic scale, in both instances with explosive vehemence. Both Hellenism and Christianity must be understood, it seems, as the continued operation, on the imperial scale, of ordering forces for which Israel and Hellas, the concrete societies of their origin, had proved too narrow. And if the parallelism of imperial expansion should indeed be essentially connected with the similarity first observed, the suspicion may prove justified that the Hellenic tension and explosion has roots as deeply burrowed in time as the corresponding Israelite phenomenon. As in the case of Israel the problems of the prophets have their origin in the age of Moses, and even of Abraham, so in the case of Hellas it may prove necessary to ascend beyond the eighth century B.C., toward the pre-Hellenic phases of Greek history, in order to arrive at some clarity about the origin of the problems which mark the classic period.

Before the problem can be advanced any further, certain questions of terminology must be clarified. Our contemporary political and historical science has a vocabulary to designate several types of concrete societies in organized form—such as empire, kingdom, state, city state, federation; and it has a vocabulary for at least some types of governmental organization—such as monarchy, republic, democracy, and tyranny. These vocabularies, while they are quite insufficient to cover the historical manifold of institutional types, will at least serve as instruments of rough reference. But we have no technical vocabulary at all by which we could briefly refer to phenomena of the just adumbrated Hellenic type; and as these phenomena are of world-historic importance, and hence one must talk about them a good deal, semantic vacillation and confusion is the inevitable result. While the problems arising from this



source cannot be resolved here and now, a few terminological decisions must be made in order to avoid misunderstandings.

The term most commonly used for the historical complex in question (as we shall say cautiously) is *civilization*. And since the concept of a civilizational society (for our present interests, fortunately) is poorly theorized, we shall not prejudice our own analysis if we continue to use the term as a convenience. More critical care is indicated, however, with regard to the choice of adjectives. One frequently speaks of Greek or Hellenic civilization, using the two terms synonymously. This usage is not only wasteful, since we badly need a larger number of distinguishing terms in order to meet the complexities of the phenomenon, but it also appears unsuitable in the present state of our empirical knowledge. For the study of Greek order must extend, as we shall see presently, over a historical complex which comprises three so-called civilizations, that is, not only the Hellenic, but the Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations as well. And since the decipherment of Linear B has revealed the Mycenaean language to be Greek, a decisive argument has been added in support of the view that the Mycenaean and Hellenic civilizations must be considered two phases of Greek history. It will be advisable, therefore, to reserve the term *Greek* for the historical complex in question as a whole, however far back we may have to extend it, and for the rest to accept the conventional language of Minoan, Mycenaean, and Hellenic civilizations. This decision is far from satisfactory, but it will permit us to embark on our study with a minimum of deviation from established usage and without extensive methodological explanations.

We cannot dispense, however, with a critical supplement that will bring the theoretical issue, now blotted out by the conventional terminology, again into focus. The names of the three civilizations, as they stand, are formed according to three different principles. The Minoan civilization derives its name from the royal style of the ruler of Cnossus; the Mycenaean civilization from the palace and settlement of Mycenae; and the Hellenic civilization from the post-Homeric self-designation of the people as *Hellenes*. Only the last one of these names makes theoretical sense in a study of order in as much as it derives from a self-designation, that is, from a symbolic form developed by the society itself. The names of the other two civilizations make no sense of this kind; and the pertinent question might be raised whether the terms refer to anything at all relevant in our context. It must be stressed, therefore, that the Minoan

and Mycenaean civilizations have as their carriers societies about whose names we know at least something. If we let Homer be our guide, the carrier of the Mycenaean civilization was a society which had developed the self-designation of *Achaeans*.<sup>1</sup> And while, in the absence of sources, we do not know whether the society behind the Minoan civilization had developed a comparable self-designation or not, we are at least informed about the name by which this society was known in Hellenic times. For Homer speaks of the people of the island as Cretans and, furthermore, distinguishes, on linguistic grounds, between Eteocretans (original or true Cretans) and population groups which speak other languages. And the account of Herodotus suggests that the name *Cretans* applied to the inhabitants of the island from the time of Minos and did not change with their re-composition through migrations, so that the name, in his own time, referred already to the third "Cretans."<sup>2</sup> Scanty as these indications are, they assure us of the existence of societies with names somewhat closer to their own time than the terminological conventions of modern archaeologists and historians. Hence we shall speak of Cretans, Achaeans, and Hellenes in the sense of the societies which are the subjects of order in the corresponding Minoan, Mycenaean, and Hellenic civilizations.

The terminological digression has advanced the problem of delimitation to the point where it can be formulated with precision: A study of Greek order needs, for the identification of its subject matter, a set of criteria which have their origin in the symbolism of Greek order itself. Moreover, there can be no doubt that the search for such criteria must concentrate on the time when the dangers to freedom and survival of society made the problem of its order a topic of general discussion, and on the literary sources in which the problem was made the object of

<sup>1</sup> This probability is supported by the appearance of a Western power under the name of *Akhijava* in the Hittite archives—though some authorities have their doubts about the identification. The identification is favored by Sir John L. Myres, "Kleinasien," *Historia Mundi II* (Bern, 1953) 463ff.; it is treated as a piece of fancy by Albrecht Goetze, *Hethiter, Churriter und Assyrer* (Oslo, 1936), 58. In the Cnossos tablets, the name occurs in a form which philologically could be the basis for the Hittite form, but the evidence is inconclusive. Cf. Michael Ventris and John Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek* (Cambridge, 1956), 138 and 209.

<sup>2</sup> Homer, *Odyssey* XIX, 172ff. Herodotus VII, 171. In this connection the Ugaritic legend of Krt is of interest. If the vocalization of the name as Keret should prove correct, it possibly designates the Cretan founder of a Ugaritic dynasty. Cyrus H. Gordon, *Homer and Bible. The Origin and Character of East Mediterranean Literature* (Off-print from Hebrew Union College Annual, 26, 1955), 53, feels sure of the Cretan derivation of the name and even ventures to speak of the legend of Krt as an "Ur-Iliad." Others are more cautious. Cf. G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh, 1956), 5 n. 3.



The content of the Hellenic memory, as we have said, is inseparable from the process of its growth. Whatever could be understood as a constituent factor of Hellenic society and its order in the present of the classic period became historically memorable: The populations of the geographical area, with their origins, migrations, languages, and myths; the great civilizational enterprises, such as the Minoan and Mycenaean, in which these populations had participated; the power organizations of the Cretan thalassocracy and of the Achaean federation against Troy; the antecedents of the present poleis; the pragmatic events of the great migrations as well as of the conflicts with Asia; and the genesis of symbolic forms, such as the gods, their names, and functions. These variegated contents, however, were not at the disposition of historians in the form of official records or monographic studies, but existed only in the form of traditions—if we may use a neutral term that will have to embrace the epic literature, heroic ballads, hymns, the myths of the gods, and local traditions concerning pragmatic events. From this complex manifold of sources, once they had collected it, the historians of the fifth century had to extricate a course of pragmatic events. The attempt, to be sure, could not avail itself of our contemporary critical methods, but had to rely on comparison of conflicting traditions, shrewd guesses concerning the pragmatic core of a legend or myth, and common sense in the reconstruction of a probable course of events. Especially for the earlier periods it could produce, therefore, no more than a skeleton history, thin with regard to facts and vague in chronology. Nevertheless, while our modern knowledge surpasses the ancient by far in quantity and accuracy of detail, the Hellenic construction of the course of Greek history has been proven substantially correct by the discoveries of modern archaeology. And even with regard to the specific date of the expedition against Troy, c.1184 B.C., the modern methods can only confirm the ancient calculation.

No strand of pragmatic history would ever have been pulled from the fabric of traditions unless there had been men who conceived the project and were able to execute it. From the problems of content we are, thus, referred back to the growth of the Hellenic consciousness of history. The consciousness was not a body of knowledge mysteriously diffused among the members of Hellenic society, but a symbolism by which historians and philosophers representatively articulated their experience of Hellenic society and the meaning of its order. Hence, before

we can explore this creation of a Greek history in Hellenic retrospect any further, we must survey some of the forms which the phenomenon assumed. Our brief survey will properly begin with the *Histories* of Herodotus, the first Hellenic thinker who made the deliberate attempt to preserve the living traditions before time had erased them from the memory of the living.

## 2. Herodotus

The *historiai* were the inquiries undertaken by Herodotus with the purpose of generally preserving *ta genomena*, the recollections or traditions, and of specifically preserving the traditions which had a bearing on the prehistory of the great conflict between Hellenes and barbarians in the Persian Wars (I, 5). At the moment we are concerned, not with the rich detail of the *Histories*, but with the method used by Herodotus for extracting what he considered the truth of events from his sources. Two examples will illustrate the problem.

The most comprehensive source for the prehistory of the European-Asiatic conflict was Homer. But Herodotus distrusted Homer, and on several occasions doubted the correctness of his account, because he was familiar with the Asiatic versions of the same events. And he preferred to lean on the Asiatic versions when he became critical, because they had already transformed the mythical and poetic traditions of the Greeks into the new type of pragmatic account that he wanted to develop himself. The spirit of this transformation can be gathered best from the account of the Trojan War given to Herodotus by Egyptian priests.

The historian questioned the Egyptians concerning their opinion about the reliability of Homer's story in the *Iliad*; and he found them quite willing to set him right and to tell him how it all really happened. This is their story condensed:

Helen was indeed abducted by Paris; and the Greeks really went with a great host to Troy. They demanded by a mission the return of Helen and the stolen treasure. But the Trojans swore that they had neither the woman nor her possessions but that both were in Egypt in the hands of King Proteus. The Greeks, not believing the Trojans, embarked on the long siege; and when they had conquered the city, they found that the Trojans had spoken the truth. Menelaus, then, was dispatched to Egypt and there he received back Helen and the treasure.



empire gained life in the three venerable elders who discussed the foundation of a rejuvenated, healthy polis on the island that once had been the center of political power.

The three old men met in Cnossus, "the mighty city where Minos was king," the mythical lawgiver who received from Zeus himself the laws which he gave to his city. Every ninth year the king repaired to the cave of Zeus on Mount Ida to converse with the gods, and returned to lay down the law. The Cretan and Lacedaemonian, thus, were chosen as participants in the dialogue not only because they represented earlier Greek institutions, but also because these earlier institutions were closer to the divine origin and, therefore, nearer to perfection. For the Cretan institutions of Plato's day were supposed to have preserved essential features of the divinely instituted Minoan polis; and the Lacedaemonian constitution, according to Aristotle, was supposed to be in a great measure a copy of the Cretan. Hence, the Athenian stranger in the *Laws* started the dialogue by suggesting that the two men "who were brought up in legal institutions of so noble a kind" would have no aversion to discuss the subject of government and laws. And the three men agreed to discuss the topic while they took a walk from the city of Minos up to the temple and cave of Zeus. In this construction Plato reached a high point of his unsurpassed art of embedding the subject matter of his discourse into the form of its presentation. The topic was the foundation of a savior polis in the hour of Greek decay; the solution had to come through the combination of the living forces of Greece, personified by the three men, and through recourse to their fountainhead in the Minoan civilization; and the spiritual recourse to the divine fountainhead took place while the actors of the dialogue repeated the actual recourse from the habitat of the king to the cave of the god. Let us add that the number of three participants was probably not an accident, since the trinity was the sacred symbol of Cretan civilization (*Laws* 624-625).

The *Laws* is the sublime expression of the experiences which connected the order of classic Hellas with its origins. Crete was still the divine omphalos of Greece. And the island as the omphalos was not an antiquarian curiosity cherished by the old Plato, but a rather pervasive idea in Greek thought. The visual impression of this omphalos of a sea dominion may be gathered from the wonderfully sonorous verse in which Homer celebrated Crete as the island "in the mid of the wine dark sea." (*Od.* XIX, 178f). On the level of a dry strategic consideration, the im-

pression recurred in Aristotle's description: "The island seems to be intended by nature for dominion in Hellas, and to be well situated; it extends right across the sea, around which all the Hellenes are settled. Hence Minos acquired the empire of the sea." (*Politics* 1271 b). And we remember the reflections of Thucydides on Crete as the strategically situated pacifier of the area of Greek civilization. The idea was so essential to Hellenic culture that the myth connected the foundation of Apollinian Delphi, the omphalos of the Hellenic world, with the older Cretan center. According to the Hymn to the Pythian Apollo, the god was born on Delos by Latona as the son of the Cretan Zeus. In search of a resting place he came to the rocky Pytho which in Minoan times was a sanctuary of the Great Mother goddess. In order to secure the foundation of a sanctuary of his own at this place he assumed the form of a dolphin, one of the Cretan sacred animals. In such disguise he appeared to a company of Cretans travelling to Pylos and guided them to the Gulf of Corinth. He installed them as a sacerdotal body at Pytho which from then on was called Delphi. Through the myth of its omphalos the new Hellas, thus, was securely linked to the Minoan past.<sup>3</sup>

##### 5. Conclusions

The issues of the Hellenic consciousness of history can now be formulated on the basis of the sources introduced in the preceding survey.

With regard to the spatial and temporal extension of the classic memory the facts are fairly clear—the sources bear out the picture that we have drawn in the section "General Characteristics." The whole extent of the Aegean area that was considered Hellenic at the time became the stage on which Greek history was enacted; and in the drama itself were included the Mycenaean and Minoan civilizations, as well as the migration events back to approximately the turn from the third to the second millennium. One should especially note the manner in which Cretan society, in spite of its apparently non-Greek language, was taken for granted as part of Greek society. Not only was there no hesitation in the matter, but the Minoan order was even accorded the rank of the origin of Greek order, with equal regard to both power and substance. This should be a warning against overrating the importance of archaeological discoveries for the problems that occupy the philosopher of order and

<sup>3</sup> *The Homeric Hymns*, Allen, Halliday and Sikes, eds., 2d ed. (Oxford, 1936), III, 388 to end.



Crete to Delphi, had been in existence so that Plato could draw on them; and unless they had been so widely diffused and accepted that he could build them into his symbolism without appearing absurd or becoming unintelligible.

The materials used in the constructions, thus, belong to a body of traditions living among the people at large; and quite probably even the dominant motifs were already dominant on the general level of Greek conversations on power and order. Still, there remain the formal constructions themselves, the works of the concrete historians and philosophers. What motivated their creators to organize the Hellenic memory in these specific forms?

With regard to the motive itself, the organizers of the classic memory were quite outspoken: it was the experience of the Hellenic crisis. Herodotus wanted to explore the antecedents of the situation in which the Hellenes found themselves involved in a death struggle with the Persians; Thucydides wanted to explore the causes of the great *kinesis* in which the Athenians and Lacedaemonians fought Hellas to death together with themselves; and Plato wanted to understand the disintegration of substantive order which made Athens unfit to discharge its functions as the hegemonic power of a united Hellas. Beyond this point, however, the issues become more complicated. And since they are the subject matter of the following study, I shall at present reflect only on the central issue, *i.e.*, the conception of the historical course of a society as a cycle with a beginning and an end, as well as on its principal implications.

Before the conception of the historical course itself can be analyzed, however, a preliminary question must be solved. Up to this point we have spoken of Greek history, of the Hellenic consciousness of history, of the historical memory of the classic period, of the historical course of Greek society, of a cycle of order extending from the rule of the Minos to the exhaustion of substance in Plato's time, and so forth, taking it for granted that such language can be legitimately used in a study of Greek phenomena. In a critical study of experiences of order and their symbolization, however, no symbols can be taken for granted, even though they are used in accordance with contemporary conventions. Hence, before proceeding further it must be ascertained whether we can speak of history in the present context at all.

The term *history*, though it derives from the Greek *historia*, does not

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Plato!

cycle of history is a new symbolic form. Nothing comparable is to be found either in the Near Eastern societies in cosmological form, or in the Israel in historical form. For the Mesopotamian and Egyptian empires never developed the conception of a society with a beginning and end in historical time, but remained compactly bound in the experience of cosmic divine order and of the participation of the respective societies in its rhythm. And the Israel that existed as the Chosen People under God, while it had a beginning in historical time, could have no end because the divine will, which had created Israel as the omphalos of salvation for all mankind, was irreversible and remained unchanged beyond both the rhythms of the cosmos and the phases of history. While the Hellenic symbolism, thus, belongs neither to the cosmological nor the Israelite historical type, it seems to partake of both of these forms; and this apparently intermediate structure has indeed motivated the divergent opinions that, on the one hand, the Greeks had no genuine idea of history at all but fundamentally expressed themselves in the symbolism of eternal return, and that, on the other hand, the Greeks were the creators of historiography, that in particular Herodotus was the Father of History and the work of Thucydides one of the greatest histories ever written. Such indulgences of opinion can be avoided only if the analysis goes beyond the surface of disparate characteristics and penetrates to the motivating center of the symbolism.

This motivating center can be circumscribed through comparisons with the Israelite motivating experiences and their articulation. The Hellenic consciousness of history is motivated by the experience of a crisis; the society itself, as well as the course of its order, is constituted in retrospect from its end. The Israelite consciousness of history is motivated by the experience of a divine revelation; the society is constituted through the response to revelation, and from this beginning it projects its existence into the open horizon of time. The Hellenic consciousness arrives, through the understanding of disorder, at the understanding of true order—that is the process for which Aeschylus has found the formula of wisdom through suffering; the Israelite consciousness begins, through the Message and Decalogue from Sinai, with the knowledge of true order. The Mosaic and prophetic leap in being creates the society in which it occurs in historical form for the future; the philosophic leap in being discovers the historical form, and with it the past, of the society in which it occurs. Such contrapuntal formulations will bring into focus



Cnossus, Mycenae, and Pylos; and new source materials concerning the order of Achaean society are available. The enthusiasm about the brilliant feat of decipherment, as well as about the general importance of the fact that a Greek dialect, closely related to the Homeric language, is now established in writing for the fifteenth century B.C., must not deceive, however, about the narrowness of the information offered by the documents. The clay tablets in question, rather perishable in their original state, have been preserved because they were baked hard at the time when the respective palaces and storage rooms went up in fire on occasion of a conquest. And since they contain bookkeeping accounts, and such accounts on clay were probably pulped after a year or two, the preserved tablets almost certainly represent only vouchers of the year immediately preceding the destruction of the site. The tablets from Cnossus, thus, represent a year around 1400, when the palace was destroyed for the last time, never to be rebuilt; while the tablets from Pylos and Mycenae date from the year in which the respective palaces and towns were destroyed, some time after 1200.<sup>13</sup>

About the age of the Achaean language and script nothing is known except what can be inferred from the state of the tablet materials. Certainly both language and script existed in the second half of the fifteenth century B.C. Since the Linear B was derived from the Minoan Linear A, with considerable innovations to make it usable for the Achaean language, some time must be allowed for the development of the script and its standardization. Whether the time of the Achaean rule in Cnossus, c. 1460 to 1400, was sufficient for this process is doubtful, especially in view of "the astonishing uniformity which the Knossos tablets show with those of Pylos and Mycenae, in script, spelling, and arrangement." The possibility cannot be rejected that the invention goes back to the critical decades of contact with Crete in 1600-1570. In that case, an Achaean *koine* and script for commercial purposes may have prevailed in the whole area of Mycenaean civilization ever since the middle of the sixteenth century B.C.<sup>14</sup> Whether the script was used for other than commercial purposes is not known, though its forms betray that it was de-

Four-handled Cups: Greek Inventories in the Minoan Script," *Archaeology* 7, 1 (1954), 15-21. M. G. F. Ventris and J. Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek. 300 Selected Tablets from Knossos, Pylos and Mycenae with Commentary and Vocabulary* (Cambridge, 1956). For the history of excavation, publication, and decipherment of the tablets, as well as for the bibliography, the reader should refer to the last quoted work.

<sup>13</sup> Ventris and Chadwick, *Documents*, 37f.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 38f.



veloped for writing on papyrus or leather rather than for incision on clay; and whether any literary texts, if they ever existed, will come to light is doubtful in view of the perishable character of the writing materials. Still, there are archaeologists who will not be happy before they have found an Achaean *Ur-Ilias*, or at least a personal letter from Agamemnon—and perhaps they will.

While the facts to be derived from the tablets are restricted with regard to time and locality, they are sufficient to prove the existence of an Achaean society of substantially the type that appears in the Homeric epic. The unit of organization was a small territory with a few townships; the absence of an occupational designation for peasants suggests that everybody was still close to the soil and derived his living at least in part from agriculture; no completely urbanized sector of the population had yet formed. These units were organized as monarchies. At the head stood a *wanax*, a lord or master. The term still occurs in Homer (*Il.* 1.442), where Agamemnon is designated as the *anax andron*, the master of men. The administration was feudal in the sense that the functionaries were recompensed by landholdings, the *temene* or preserves. Next in rank to the *wanax* as holder of a *temenos* stood a *lawagetas*, a military commander; but it is not clear whether this office was permanent or only created in time of emergency. The word *lagetas* still appears in classic Greek with the meaning of a leader of men. Then there were a number of fief holders, the *te-re-ta* (Gk. *telestai*) of higher and the *ka-ma-e-u* of lower rank, whose feudal services cannot be determined with certainty. A type of landholder, the *begetas* (Gk. *bepetes*), must have been of some importance since the names associated with this rank are given with their patronymic. They were probably *comites*, comrades-in-arms, companions of the king, corresponding to the Homeric *hetaroi* (*Il.* 1.179). Of special interest is the title *pa-si-re-u* (Gk. *basileus*) for the minor lord of an outlying district. It corresponds to the Homeric use of *basileus* as feudal lord, and makes more intelligible the ruling clique of *basileis* in Hesiod's small town. Furthermore there appear cultorganizations as landholders, and temples with "slaves of the god" as tenants. About the legal status of the people at large not much can be said except that there were, besides the free population, a considerable number of slaves, especially women slaves acquired by overseas raids. Trades were richly diversified; there are mentioned various types of building and metal workers, carders,

spinners, weavers, fullers, unguent boilers, goldsmiths, and even one physician.<sup>15</sup>

More than one half of all the words on the tablets are proper names. Of the names of persons, fifty-eight could be identified with names occurring in the Homeric epic. Since among them are to be found such names as Achilles and Hector, Priamus and Ajax for men in humble positions, the Achaean range of names was apparently limited. That should be a warning against rash identifications of names occurring in Hittite sources with persons that have been made famous by myth or epic. Moreover, twenty of the fifty-eight names are attributed by Homer to Trojans, or to heroes fighting on the Trojan side. This surprisingly high percentage perhaps indicates that the cultural homogeneity between Achaeans and Trojans, as well as the possession of a common pantheon, presupposed by Homer, is not fictitious.<sup>16</sup> And finally, the tablets attest some of the figures of the Homeric pantheon, though the restricted character of the sources does not permit inferences concerning the nature and function of the gods. Among the names appear with certainty Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Hermes, Athena, Artemis; with probability Ares and Hephaestus. The name of Apollo does not appear, but there is a god with the name of Paiawon, the epithet of Apollo in the classic period; the Potnia, the epithet of Athena, also stands by itself as the name of a divinity. Besides Hera, there is coupled with Zeus a Diwja, presumably a Magna Mater; and in Cnossus, but not on the mainland, appear dedications to All the Gods.<sup>17</sup>

The thirteenth and twelfth centuries B.C. are the period in which the whole area of town culture suffered a severe setback. The kingdom of Mittanni fell to an Assyrian attack. Invaders from the north destroyed the Hittite empire and penetrated to the borders of Egypt. Assyria was weakened commercially by the Hittite breakdown and had to struggle with the reviving Babylonian power. The Peoples of the Sea had to be repelled by the Pharaoh Merneptah in 1221; and a second wave, which met with the invaders fresh from their destruction of the Hittites, could be contained by Ramses III; but Egyptian authority in Asia remained

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, the section on "Social Organization," 119-25.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, the chapter on "The Personal Names," 92-105.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, the section on "Mycenaean Religion," 125-29.



## *Homer and Mycenae*

The primitive, Greek-speaking invaders of 1950 B.C. had become, through cultural syncretism and amalgamation with the indigenous population, the Achaeans of 1600. They had then through Minoization as well as through contacts with Egypt and Syria, gained their civilizational momentum. And after the demise of Cretan society in 1400, the Mycenaean had become the dominant civilization of the Aegean area. The area as a whole, thus, had been civilizationally penetrated for more than eight hundred years, before substantial parts of the Achaeans moved eastward under the pressure of the Doric migration.

The depth and strength of this past must not be forgotten in any consideration of the problems of order during the dark age that extends from c. 1100 to the emergence of the Homeric epic in the eighth century B.C. However severe the loss of power and wealth, the fact of the Achaean mass migration as well as the foundation of new towns on the coast of Anatolia and the islands, proves that neither the cohesion of the society nor its spirits were broken; however straitened and precarious the material circumstances of the reorganized communities, the Achaeans were still the carriers of Mycenaean order. The Doric migration had displaced, not a primitive tribe, but the active center of civilization that once before had moved from Crete to Mycenae. From its new geopolitical and reduced material position, the Achaean nobility could recapture its past, if it had the stamina and ability. It could engage in its *recherche du temps perdu* and make the glory of its past the guide for its present and future; and it could even impose its own past as *their* history on the primitive ethnic relatives who now were sitting in Mycenae, Tiryns, and Crete, if a convincing form was found. An Aegean-wide society, in continuity with the earlier civilizational societies, could be formed in spite of the discouraging circumstances of the moment, if the consciousness of a common Aegean order in terms of the Minoan-Mycenaean past was awak-



ened. This feat was indeed performed through the creation of the Homeric epic.

If the problem of transition from the pre-Hellenic to the Hellenic phase of Greek history be formulated in this manner, the connection between the work of Homer and the formation of the classic consciousness of history will become apparent. The symbolism of the historical course was created in retrospect at its end; but the study of the phenomenon, in Chapter I, had to stress the living traditions which provided the material for the construction of the course and at the same time, by the fact of their existence, attested its reality. The continuum of Greek society back to the Cretans was real, before the experience of its course was expressed by the historians and philosophers of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. And the critical event in this course was the conversion, by the epic, of Mycenaean civilization into the past of the Aegean-wide society, that now was growing from the center in Ionia. From the historical consciousness of the classic period we are, thus, referred back to its origin in the epic consciousness of Homer, from the relation Hellas-and-History to the relation Homer-and-Mycenae.

#### § 1. HOMERIC QUESTIONS

The question of Homer and Mycenae in the sense just adumbrated must be disengaged from the great philological controversy concerning genesis, date, and authorship of the epics, that is, from the "Homeric question" in the conventional sense. The controversy, which goes back to Friedrich August Wolf's *Prolegomena* of 1795, closely resembles, with regard to its structure, the controversy concerning the Biblical narrative. Since in *Israel and Revelation* I have devoted a special note to the changing climate of opinion in Pentateuchal criticism, it will not be necessary to furnish a similar digression on the Homeric question.<sup>1</sup> For our purpose, a brief indication of the parallels between the two controversies will be sufficient, followed by an equally brief statement of those points in the Homeric question which are of immediate relevance to the present study.

The Bible critics abolished Moses as the author of the Pentateuch; Wolf abolished Homer as the author of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The fatherless works fell apart into component literary units—the "sources" of the Wellhausen school, the "lays" of Lachmann; and somebody had to be

<sup>1</sup> *Order and History* I, Ch. 6, § 1.



absorbed pre-existing stocks of sagas, belonging to more than one cycle, in the case of the *Iliad* perhaps going back to the middle of the second millennium; they furthermore contain inventions by the poet who welded the materials into a literary whole; and they finally betray, in various sections, reworkings of a nuclear composition as well as interpolations. The internal stratification of the epics will, therefore, support the argument that they have grown over a long period of time and that the date of their ultimate composition must be placed rather late. If, however, the date is assumed to be late, perhaps as late as the eighth or seventh century B.C., the miracle of a cultural tradition which saved the final author from mistakes with regard to details of material civilization becomes somewhat unbelievable. Hence, some scholars want to move the date closer to the time of the events narrated, as high up as the tenth or even the eleventh century. Under that assumption the quality of the poems would have caused the preservation of their material content, while otherwise it would be difficult to explain how a deliberately archaizing poet could achieve the freshness of accurate detail in describing a past that had grown dim by his time. To the reasons for an early date, the advocates of a late one can, however, answer that "heroic poetry" and its tradition by the "oral composition" of rhapsodes has a peculiar strength of survival, as proven by the preservation of south-Slavic epics of even larger size than the Homeric. A late poet would have had sufficient amounts of impeccable, archaic traditions at hand to weld them into his composition.<sup>2</sup>

If the various arguments be taken into account, and especially if the archaeological evidence be weighed, one can arrive at the dates for the

<sup>2</sup> For a balanced brief introduction to the Homeric question cf. Werner Jaeger, *Paideia I* (2d ed., New York, 1945), especially the Notes to Chapter II. A comprehensive survey of recent literature is given in Albin Lesky, *Die Homerforschung in der Gegenwart* (Vienna, 1952). My own views approach most closely those of Albin Lesky, "Muendlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit im Homerischen Epos" (Reprint from *Festschrift fuer Dietrich Kralik*, 1954). Of the older literature the following were especially used: U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Die Ilias und Homer* (Berlin, 1920); John A. Scott, *The Unity of Homer* (Berkeley, 1921); J. T. Sheppard, *The Pattern of the Iliad* (London, 1922); T. W. Allen, *Homer* (Oxford, 1923); C. M. Bowra, *Tradition and Design in the Iliad* (Oxford, 1930); S. E. Bassett, *The Poetry of Homer* (Berkeley, 1938); Wolfgang Schadewaldt, *Homer und die Homerische Frage* (Berlin, 1938). Of the more recent literature: Renata von Scheliha, *Patroklos. Gedanken ueber Homers Dichtung und Gestalten* (Basel, 1943); Wolfgang Schadewaldt, *Von Homers Welt und Werk. Aufsätze und Auslegungen zur Homerischen Frage* (2d ed., Stuttgart, 1944); Heinrich Pestalozzi, *Die Achilleis als Quelle der Ilias* (Zurich, 1945); Ernst Howald, *Der Dichter der Ilias* (Zurich, 1946); H. T. Wade-Gerry, *The Poet of the Iliad* (Cambridge, 1952); C. M. Bowra, *Heroic Poetry* (London, 1952).



blind fellow men, but the latter seems to be the more probable meaning. The Homeric and Pindaric passages together formulate the great theme of blindness and seeing that recurs in Aeschylus and Plato: Who sees the world is blind and needs the help of the Muses to gain the true sight of wisdom; and who is blind to the world, is seeing in the wisdom of sweet song. The Muses, and through them the poets, are the helpers of man who seeks to ascend from his darkness to light.

More explicit on the subject is Hesiod in the opening pages of the *Theogony*. A tale of the gods must begin with the Muses, for whatever the poet knows about them he has learned from the Heliconian maids. They were begotten, by Zeus on Mnemosyne, to sing to the gods about the things that are, and shall be, and were aforetime; and to praise to men the Olympians. They sing to remember—the world to the gods, and the gods to man—and they remember in order to make forget. They are “a forgetting of ills and a rest from sorrow.” For though a man’s soul be troubled and his heart be distressed, when “a singer, the servant of the Muses” sings the deeds of the forbears and the blessedness of the gods, he will forget his heaviness, and the gifts of the goddesses will turn him away from his sorrows. This antinomy of remembrance and forgetting corresponds to the previous one of blindness and seeing. The sorrow of “the newly-troubled soul” will be forgotten when the truly memorable is remembered; and the tenaciously held grief and distress is a forgetfulness about the things that are preserved by true memory, by Mnemosyne. The same opposition of true and false reality recurs in the tragedy, in the Aeschylean distinction between true action in conformity with the order of Zeus and the evasive or indifferent conduct which does not even deserve the name of action; and it is ultimately transformed by the philosophers into the tension between true Being and the turgid stream of Becoming.

The Hesiodian text (99–100) refers to the singer as the servant (companion, attendant, *therapon*) of the Muses; the same formula occurs in *Homeric Hymns* XXII, 19–20. More frequently he is the *prophetes*, the interpreter or spokesman of the gods. The term is generally applied to the interpreters of oracles at temples; Herodotus speaks of the prophets at a shrine of Dionysus (VII, 111) and of a prophet at Delphi (VIII, 36–37). The “truthful seer” Teiresias is for Pindar the “prophet of Zeus” (*Nem.* I, 60–61). And Pindar himself, “the holy mouth of the Muses,”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Lyra Graeca*, ed. J. M. Edmonds (Loeb Classical Library), I, 2 (*Anth. Pal.* 9.184).



succinctly enjoins them: "Reveal [*manteueo*], O Muse, and prophesy shall I" (fragm. 150). The parallel with the relation of Israelite prophets to the *dabar* of Yahweh is obvious—with the important difference, however, that in Israel the transcendent God manifests himself through the word, while in Hellas the gods are still present and visible within the world and the "word" spoken is the poet's song. The *logos* has no function yet in the symbolism of the prophetic poets; only with the philosophers does it begin to replace the earlier theophanies.<sup>6</sup>

The poets sing what is memorable; and the life of man reaches its climax, even in suffering, when his action and passion is worthy to be sung. A few texts will illuminate the problem. In *Iliad* VI, 354–58 Helen speaks of the evil fate that Zeus has brought on her and Paris "so that in days to come we shall be a song for men yet to be." In *Odyssey* VIII, 579–80 Alcinous speaks of the ruin which the gods have wrought on men at Troy "that there might be a song for those yet to be." Pindar (*Nem.* VI, 29–31) invokes the Muses to praise the victor; for, when the heroes have passed away, "songs and legends store their noble deeds." And Euripides (*Troïades* 1242–45) lets Hecuba, about to be carried off into slavery, reflect: Had not a god thrown us down, even beneath the earth, "we would have been unfamed, unhymned by lays, and not a song to the mortals to come." The poet himself is not exempt from the hunger for survival through his song. A fragment betrays the proud consciousness of a Sappho: "Happy in truth have made me the golden Muses—when I die I shall not be forgotten."<sup>7</sup>

The Hellenes had no Message and Covenant from Sinai to create them a Chosen People in historical form. They had no Moses to lead them from the bondage of Pharaoh to the freedom of God. But they had the prophetic singers who experienced man in his immediacy under the gods; who articulated the gulf between the misery of the mortal condition and the glory of memorable deeds, between human blindness and divine wisdom; and who created the paradigms of noble action as guides for men who desired to live in Memory. That was less than the Mosaic insight which placed the people in the present under God; but it was more in as much as the singers appealed to the psyche of every man singly. From its very

beginning the appeal went to the divine essence of order in the soul, to the immortal core. The experience of immortality, to be sure, was still bound by the cosmos as were the gods. Man could not yet, through the sanctification of life and divine grace in death, move toward the beatific vision; but he could place himself before the gods forever by action that entered the stream of Memory through the song of their prophets.<sup>8</sup>

We still know nothing about the historical Homer. But we know that the Hellenes believed him to be the man who first transfigured their past into song.

When the memorable events are transfigured by song, they become the past of the society for which the poet sings. But the events transformed into past by the Homeric epic belong to the Achaeian society with its power seat in Mycenae, while the poem is sung for the inchoate Hellenic society with its active center on the Anatolian coast. And the two are separated by the disasters of the Achaeian and Ionic migrations. Hence, the question must be asked: What interest could the descendants of the refugees in Ionia have in the exploits of a society which, if the middle of the eighth century be accepted as the date of the epics, had been defunct for more than two hundred years? The answer to this question must be sought in the act of transfiguration which links the two societies into one.

As the subject matter of the *Iliad*, Homer did not choose a splendid enterprise, but an episode of disorder which presaged the catastrophe that was to overcome Mycenaean civilization. In an earlier context we have suggested the internal exhaustion of civilizational societies in the area of town culture by the twelfth century B.C. The *Iliad*, now, furnishes a paradigmatic study of the causes of decline in the Aegean-wide Mycenaean order. For Homer's Achaeians are not Hellenes, and his Trojans are not barbarians; they both belong to the same society and their strife is a civil war. The one Olympian order extends over them all: the Zeus who endows Agamemnon with his royal authority is also the protector of Troy against Hera who sides with the Achaeians. But the gods are divided. The rift among men is a disturbance in the Olympian order of the world; and the division among the gods is a disturbance of human

<sup>6</sup> Thorleif Boman, *Das Hebraeische Denken im Vergleich mit dem Griechischen* (2d ed., Göttingen, 1954), 54.

<sup>7</sup> *Lyra Graeca*, I, 192.

<sup>8</sup> On this section cf. Walter F. Otto, *Theophrasia* (Hamburg, 1956), 28–33, and in general the same author's *Die Götter Griechenlands* (4th ed., Frankfurt, 1956).



order. While the war is conducted, on the pragmatic level, as a sanction against a Trojan violation of law, the human disorder reaches into the divine sphere. Something more is at stake than a breach of order that could be repaired by due compensation or by an Achaean victory. For the war itself, destructive for Troy and exhaustive for the Achaeans, is a wanton indulgence; it reveals a universal order—embracing both gods and men, both Trojans and Achaeans—in decline and judgment. The misery of the vanquished will fall back on the victors.

In the fall of Achaean society the poet found more than a political catastrophe. In the action and passion of the heroes he discovered the touch of divinely ordained fate, the element of tragedy which lets the events ascend to the realm of Mnemosyne. From the disaster he wrested his insight into the order of gods and men, from the suffering grew wisdom when the fall became song. In this act of transfiguration the poet transcended Achaean society and created the Hellenic symbolic form. We can speak of it as the style of self-transcendence, corresponding to the Israelite style of exodus from civilization and ultimately from itself. For with its past the new society had acquired its future. The Hellenic society did not have to die as did the Babylonian or Egyptian, the Cretan or Achaean. Hellas could transcend itself into Hellenism; and it could transcend the symbolic form of the Olympian myth, in which it had constituted itself, into philosophy as the symbolic form of mankind.

## § 2. ORDER AND DISORDER

The *Iliad* studies an episode of disorder in a society which the poet considers to be Achaean. The formulation must be cautious for two reasons. In the first place, the study extends in fact also to the order and disorder of the Trojans who are, together with the Achaeans in the narrower sense, part of the nameless, Aegean-wide civilizational society. And second, the picture of order drawn by the poet has absorbed materials from more than one phase of Mycenaean civilization; and furthermore there have been added material and ethnic features of post-Mycenaean history down to the poet's own time. We shall accept the Homeric intention and continue to speak of Achaean society; but the reader must remain aware that the following analysis of constitutional order, which must be furnished as the background to the study of disorder, pertains to the specifically Homeric society of the epic. While it

certainly closely resembles the historical Achaean society, the exactness of the picture cannot be demonstrated in detail.

### 1. *The Constitutional Order of Achaean Kingdoms*

The age is in decline. The *Odyssey* is more expansive on the symptoms of constitutional disorder than the *Iliad*. The situation of an army in the field, held together by a military purpose and the tension of effort, does not allow for a weakening of institutions so deep that victory would be endangered. For an understanding of late Achaean political culture, therefore, the two epics most felicitously supplement one another. If only the institutions of the *Iliad* were known, it would be difficult to decide whether they reflect the political order of Achaean kingdoms, or whether they must be considered the specific organization of a federal army in war time; but the *Odyssey* proves that the constitution of the army before Troy roughly corresponds to the constitution of a kingdom. If only the dismal situation of the leaderless kingdom of Ithaca were known through the *Odyssey*, it would be difficult to form an opinion about the functioning of its order under less unfortunate conditions; but the *Iliad* shows such a constitution in operation, at least effective enough for successful conduct of the war. As a consequence we can attempt to draw a composite picture of the constitutional order of the Achaean age, of its operation, and of its decline.

The constitutional order of an Achaean kingdom appears in outline on occasion of the events in Ithaca. A kingdom was a region of moderate extent, settled by a primarily agricultural population. Economically the population was stratified on the scale from small homesteads to large manorial enterprises with dependent (slave?) labor for field work, the tending of herds, and home industry; socially the stratification expressed itself in the distinction of nobles (*aristoi*) and common men. The king (*basileus*) was one of the nobles, a *primus inter pares*, whose position depended on his recognized superiority through noble ancestry, wealth, strength, and intelligence. The political organs of such a region were the king, a council (*boule*) of elders (all or the most distinguished of the nobles) and a popular assembly (*agore*) of the arms-bearing freemen. A region of this type had local subdivisions. The manor of a noble was the center of a local district; and if the district was large and wealthy enough it might contain a village or town. The manor of Odysseus had a town (*asty*) in its neighborhood, and since its neighborhood character



him. Homer traces the procedure of preparing the attack, step by step, from the psychological formation of the royal initiative to the final assent of the army.

The fateful decision of the king is born from a turmoil of anger, frustration, envy, righteous pride, guilt, and anxiety. The masterful symbolization of the unconscious processes must be presupposed in this context. The action itself begins with the crystallization of the turmoil in a dream image. A messenger of Zeus appears to the sleeping Agamemnon, assuming the likeness of Nestor, the king's most respected counselling elder, in order to add to his persuasiveness. He reveals that he comes at the bidding of Zeus who advises the attack because the Olympians at last have become unanimous in their support of the Achaeans. The king rises from his slumber and begins to act on the divinely inspired dream. While the heralds call the army to assembly, he meets with his elders in council (*Il. II, 1-52*).

The meeting of the council opens with a speech from the king. Agamemnon lays his dream before the nobles; he then calls upon them to proceed with him to the assembly in order to move the army to battle; and, finally, he proposes an interesting procedure for moving the army toward the desired end. The procedure consists in something like a play enacted by the king and the elders. The king will first "try" (or "put to a test") the men by a speech in which he will tell them to abandon the war, to repair to the ships, and to return home; and then the elders are supposed to play their part by making counter-speeches that will hold the army back. The formulation of Homer suggests that this is not a royal whim of the moment but standard procedure for such an occasion. The "trial" is expressly designated as a legal custom or constitutional convention by the words "*he themis esti*." And since the trial is a ceremonial game, hallowed by custom, we must assume that the army is supposed to play its part in it. The assent of the army to the real will of the king should assume the form of an expressed will of the army to which the king assents (*Il. II, 53-75*).

The speech of the king to his council, in substance an order by the commander-in-chief to his generals, is answered by Nestor who addresses the other nobles. With courteous caution he remarks that they would consider such a dream, if told by anybody else, a cobweb (falsehood, *pseudos*) and turn away with contempt; but since it was seen by the man who considers himself by far the noblest (or: mightiest) of the



tention of Agamemnon really was. Common soldiers he beats with the sceptre and chides them, telling them to sit down and listen to their betters

For we shall not all be kings, we Achaeans;  
Not good is a multitude of lords [*polykoiranie*]; one lord [*koiranos*] shall be,  
One king, to whom Zeus gave  
Sceptre and judgments [*themistas*] that he may take counsel for the others.

A more drastic declaration of the principle of royal rule is hardly imaginable than this scene: Odysseus reminding the soldiers that they are not kings but just the people for whom the king will do their thinking, and accentuating his argument by blows with the Jovian sceptre (188-206). This Homeric passage had a prodigious career in Hellenistic politics, from Aristotle to Philo, as the great support for the politico-theological analogy between the rule of one god in the cosmos and one emperor on earth.

The assembly is at last restored to order. Before business is resumed, however, a little symbolic byplay underlines the meaning of order. The spirit of disorderly individualism that just manifested itself in the dangerous outburst of the army is concentrated in Thersites, an ill-favored, cantankerous common man who now rises in speech against Agamemnon, reviling the king and ultimately touching the sore spot of his responsibility for the wrath of Achilles. At this point Odysseus again intervenes, administering the accustomed blow with the sceptre; he warns Thersites not to strive singly against kings and threatens to strip him and to beat him naked out of the assembly. That was just the incident needed to swing the mood of the army back to order. They respond with good-natured laughter to the punishment of their own mutiny in the shape of the scurrilous Thersites, and express the hope that his castigation will teach him never again to rail at kings. The atmosphere is cleansed (211-77). The procedure can now be resumed. The elders speak in opposition to Agamemnon, as planned; and the king lets himself be persuaded to issue the order for battle. At the suggestion of Nestor the contingents will fight by tribes and clans so that one can easily discern who is brave and who is a coward (278-418).

In the *Iliad*, the constitutional order of the Achaean army still functions in the specific instance just considered. Nevertheless, the strain

under which it works, as well as the critical situation in which the fateful decision for battle is taken, are symptoms of a general malaise. And they forbode disaster.

## 2. *The Wrath of Achilles*

The epics are not concerned with causes and effects on the level of pragmatic history but with the phenomenon of decline itself. The Homeric society is disordered in as much as on decisive occasions the conduct of its members is guided by passion rather than by reason and the common good. The blinding through passion, the *ate*, is not the cause of disorder, it is the disorder itself. Something is badly wrong with the leading Homeric characters; and under one aspect, therefore, the *Iliad* is a study in the pathology of heroes. The retracing of Homer's analysis will appropriately begin with his deliberate parallel construction of the wrath of Achilles with the war against Troy. The great war is caused by the abduction of Helen by Paris; the Trojan prince has violated the rule that a guest should not start an affair with the wife of his host, and the violation of this basic rule of civilized societies requires counter-measures. The wrath of Achilles is caused by Agamemnon's taking of Briseis; that is an insult to the honor of a king, and it also requires some counteraction on the part of Achilles. The parallel construction offers Homer the opportunity to analyze the cases of both Achilles and Helen.

Achilles, as can be expected, makes the most of the parallel in order to keep his wrath at a fine, heroic boiling point. He will not be appeased. There the Achaeans conduct a long and costly war about Helen, in whom he is only mildly interested, and he should not indulge his wrath when he is deprived of his darling companion? Do these Argive brothers believe they are the only men who love their women? (*Il.* IX, 337-41). The argument from analogy, however, does not impress the delegation that has come from Agamemnon with an offer of reconciliation and honorable amends. He can have his Briseis back, with the guaranty of a great oath that she is untouched. And as compensation for the insult he will receive seven beautiful, skilled girls, plenty of gold and other treasure, an offer to become Agamemnon's son-in-law (with the right to take his choice from three daughters, with a huge dowry), and seven cities in Argos, all well situated near the sea on the trade routes. That offer should assuage the most magnificent wrath, as compensations for



nates in the myth of the Wrath of Meleager; and in the course of this speech the various aspects of the hero's conduct, personal and public, are touched (IX, 434-605). As a member of the embassy, charged with an official duty, he does his best to persuade Achilles to accept the king's offer and to return to battle; and by means of the myth he points out to him the folly of his conduct on the utilitarian level. The young man cannot escape the exigencies of the situation. If he rejects the offer, he will have to fight nevertheless as soon as the Trojans have carried their attack down to the Achaean encampment and execute their plan of setting fire to the ships; and then, when he has waited until he must fight, he will be in the profitless situation of Meleager who did not receive any grateful reward for withholding his help until the last moment (IX, 600-605).

Phoenix, however, is also the educator, a second father to Achilles; he knows that the trouble is deep-seated and that the wrath will not be overcome by offers in accordance with custom or by an appeal to material interest. Hence, he prefaces the paraenetic myth of Meleager with a serious disquisition on the dialectics of guilt (*ate*) and prayers (*litai*) (IX, 496-512). The soul of Achilles must first be touched to the core, if that is possible, the obsession must be broken and a healing conversion must be initiated, before ordinary argument can be effective. He points out to his "dear child" what is wrong with him on principle. The specious prediction of fate need not even be mentioned; it is no more than one of the symptoms that Achilles has a "proud spirit [*thymos*]" and a "pitiless heart [*betor*]." The "dear child" is violating a fundamental rule of the order of things. Even the gods who exceed him by far in worth, honor, and strength bend to prayers when men have transgressed; for prayers are the daughters of Zeus. Guilt is rash and causes men to fall, and prayers come after to heal the hurt. The daughters of Zeus must be honored. When a man rejects prayers, the insulted divinities will carry their case to Zeus himself, and then *ate* will follow the culprit and make him atone to the full.

The compact sentences of Phoenix' admonition need a little explication. The Homeric *ate* means the folly of the heart, the blindness of passion, that makes a man fall into guilt; and it also means the sinful act, the transgression of the law. And the Homeric *litai* correspondingly means the repentance of the heart, as well as the acts (prayers and sacrifices to god, prayers and offers of recompense to men) in



which repentance expresses itself. *Litai* are the daughters of Zeus in so far as they express the active willingness to rise from the fall into disorder, to heal the guilt, and to return to the Jovian order. That is the reason why prayers are acceptable to the gods, and sacrifices more than a bribe. Hence, if a man repels another man's manifest willingness to repair the broken order, he himself falls into the guilt of perpetuating disorder; the disorder is now his *ate* for which he will have to make full atonement. The conduct of Achilles, thus, is more than a mere nuisance that may cause the Achaeans to lose a war; it rather is a sinister failing of the heart that places the hero outside the order of gods and men. The rhythmical movement of war and peace that goes from order through fall, transgression, punishment, repentance and healing compensation back to order is interrupted by the wrath of Achilles; the Pelide blocks the dynamics of order; with the wrath, the *cholos*, of Achilles a concrete order reaches its irreparable end.

The specific wrath that precipitates the events of the *Iliad* must be distinguished from the void, the blackness of which it is a manifestation. This void in Achilles disturbs the formation of normal social relations from his boyhood. His own father who knows the child well sends him to war with admonitions to curb his "proudhearted spirit" and to keep him out of "mischiefmaking strife"; honor will be gained rather by "gentlemindedness [*philopbrosyne*]" (IX, 254-56). But the son does not take such counsel to heart. Agamemnon characterizes him as a hateful man, always bent on strife (*eris*), war (*polemos*) and fighting (*mache*), who forgets that his valor is a gift of the gods to be used in war but not a title to royal rule over all men (I, 173-87). And even his comrades in arms turn from him with embarrassment and contempt because he works up to fury his proudheartedness, does not respond with graciousness to their love and respect, is of an obdurate and ugly spirit, and disgraces his house by his haughty rejection of their request for help (IX, 624-42). The nature and source of this isolating iciness is, then, more closely circumscribed by scraps of self-analysis when Achilles reflects on the alternatives of action in face of his fate. The meaning of the divine revelation as a personal obsession can be discerned perhaps most clearly in the fact that Achilles is the only one among the princes who toys with the idea of leaving the war and returning home. Odd as it may sound, Achilles is afraid of death to the point of openly considering the possibility of desertion.



moved emotionally to counteraction in the face of unjust action; and *sophia*, wisdom, is required for guiding and restraining courage, since emotion, however justly aroused, may overstep the measure. The Homeric *cholos* contains these components embedded in the compact medium of *themis* (right order, custom). Functioning within an established order, the *cholos*, as an emotion, will supply the force that will resist injustice and restore just order; and it will even discourage violations of order in so far as *cholos* can be expected as an expensive consequence of unjust action. The proper functioning of *cholos*, thus, is essential for the maintenance of order. If the *cholos* is not forthcoming, transgression will be encouraged; if it is unbridled, order cannot be restored. As an instrument of order *cholos* must be duly worked up and called off as required by custom.

Measured by these criteria the *cholos* of Achilles has a highly improper complexion. To be sure, it breaks out properly on occasion of the insult. But the outbreak is sensed by the others as something more than a fitting reaction to the situation; its roots seem to reach deeper into a disorderly disposition of Achilles. The proper *cholos* should be a sensitive reaction of the emotions against a threat to the customary status of a person; for if the first attack is not checked immediately, the threat may grow into a formidable danger that can no longer be met with success at a later stage. The *cholos* of Achilles, however, is not a finite reaction against a finite threat, with the purpose of repairing the momentary breach of order; it is rather an outburst of the deep-seated anxiety that has grown in him through preoccupation with his fate; it is caused by an emotional short-circuit between the diminution of his honor and the anticipation of his death. This outburst rightly causes uneasiness in the others because it is sensed as an absolute threat to the meaning of order. For the game of order, with its partial diminutions and restitutions, can be played only as long as life is accepted with a will to act it out regardless of the mystery of death. If death is not accepted as a mystery in life, as part of the mystery of life itself; if the attempt is made to transform the mystery through reflection into an experience of something, of a reality; then the reality of death will become the nothingness which destroys the reality of life. When a walking ghost like Achilles appears on the scene, the pallor of death falls over the game of order; it can no longer be taken seriously and the drama sputters out in futility and disorder. The other lords

sense rightly the threat of deadly destruction in the conduct of Achilles; this particular *cholos* cannot be closed by customary compensation and reconciliation. But how, then, can it be closed at all?

The answer to this question is the content of the *Iliad*. The wrath of Achilles has an inner development, an action; and the inner drama of the wrath determines the external action of the *Iliad*. To the episode of the wrath corresponds militarily the great battle in which the Trojans throw the Achaeans back to their camp and set fire to the first ship. This terrible defeat of the Achaeans, approaching their destruction, is pragmatically caused by the abstention of Achilles from battle; but in the drama of Achilles it is a disaster that he inflicts on them by his active wish. When the hero receives the insult from Agamemnon he appeals to his divine mother: Thetis should move Zeus to bring the Achaeans to the brink of disaster so that they could see how they had profited by their great king and the king would learn what it meant to insult the best of his lords (I, 407-12). The good mother, deeply distressed that the short life of her son should be darkened by such ignoble treatment, fulfills his wish. The motivation of the wish is transparent. As Agamemnon rightly suspects, Achilles wants to triumph over the king; his overbearing conduct betrays a boundless desire to dominate. A triumph, however, would be impossible if the Achaeans were really destroyed and none were left to bear witness to the hero's exaltation; or if Achilles had returned home and could not witness the defeat. The wish, therefore, is carefully tailored to requirements: It must be a near defeat, Achilles must be on hand to witness it, and he must be able to appear as the savior at the last moment. Moreover, the wish betrays the nihilism of the Pelide's dreaming. Achilles wants a moment of triumph in which everybody recognizes his superiority; but he does not want to continue that moment into a permanent order by replacing Agamemnon as king of the Achaeans. The wish for that moment is not nurtured by political ambition; it is a subtle attempt to cheat his fate by converting the imperishable fame after death into a triumph in life. In order to achieve the fleeting moment he is quite willing to let his comrades perish in battle until his intervention is the last and uncontested means for turning defeat to victory.

Achilles carries the program out by sustaining his wrath against all reasonable attempts at reconciliation. But when the great moment approaches the chain of events slips from his hands. The Achaeans are



was no more than an episode in the greater disturbance, in the war that had been caused by the fatal attraction of Helen. We shall now turn to the question: Why did the Trojans not prevent the war, or at least end it, by restoring Helen to her husband with customary reparations? And this question is inseparable from the other one: Why did they not deal summarily with Paris-Alexander, that apparently useless individual, who was the more immediate cause of their troubles? Homer unfolded the various aspects of the problem in *Iliad* III, on occasion of the single combat between Paris and Menelaus for Helen and her possessions.

The occasion itself indicates the range and complexities of the problem. The simple legal solution (restoration with compensation) is impossible because the fatality of Paris, besides Helen's, is involved in the disturbance. The next best solution as against a long war between two peoples would be the single combat between Menelaus and Paris, the winner taking the prize. That is the solution on which the belligerent parties agree with enthusiasm in *Iliad* III. Obviously the next question will be: Why did the warring parties not resort to it somewhat earlier? And, finally, the question must be answered as to why this attempt to end the war proves abortive even now. The interweaving of these various problems makes the Third Book of the *Iliad* a masterpiece of artistic construction. Regrettably, a complete analysis is impossible in the present context; we must presuppose the reader's knowledge of this wonderful interpenetration of tragedy and comedy. For our purpose the various strands will be separated, and we shall begin the work by isolating the legal procedure which, as throughout the *Iliad*, furnishes the backbone of the story.

The single combat is the result of a challenge issued by Paris and accepted by Menelaus. The agreement between the protagonists must be, and is, accepted by the commanders on both sides. A formal armistice is concluded, stipulating that the victor in the single combat will receive Helen and her possessions. While the combat is going on, there will be no hostilities. And indeed, as soon as the agreement is reached, the soldiers on both sides break their battle lines, joyously put aside their arms, and form a ring of eager spectators around a clearance on which the combat will take place. No matter who the victor, the combat will end the war between Trojans and Achaeans. It looks like an ironclad agreement, and the end of the war within an hour is in sight.

The actual course of events does not fulfill the expectations. The com-



bat begins, but the sword of Menelaus splinters on the helmet of Paris. Then Menelaus attacks with his bare hands; he pulls Paris by the helmet and drags him, choking him with the strap; and the combat is practically over. At this moment Aphrodite intervenes, the strap breaks, Paris is whisked away by the goddess to safety in Troy, and Menelaus is left with the empty helmet, furiously looking for Paris. Understandably there is some consternation. Everybody, including the Trojans, help Menelaus in the search for the elusive Paris, but in vain. Nevertheless, there is still hope of a happy end because Menelaus obviously is the victor. Then the gods intervene again. Under divine inspiration, one of the Trojan allied leaders conceives the idea of carving a distinguished career for himself by taking a potshot at Menelaus. Not much damage is done by the superficial wound, but the truce is broken, and the battle is resumed (*Il.* IV, 85ff.). Even now all hopes for peace are not extinguished, considering that the Achaeans are still ready at any time to accept a fair settlement. In the Trojan council Antenor warns his peers that they are fighting against their oath; he admonishes them to fulfill their obligation, to return Helen and her treasure, and to close the war. But Paris refuses to surrender Helen, though he is willing to part with the treasure; and the council upholds him against Antenor (*VII*, 345-78). The fate of the Trojans is sealed, for the Achaeans now continue the war with the certainty that the oath-breakers will meet their due fate. Every phase of this longish procedure is gone through by Homer with care until every rational means for ending the war is exhausted. Not a shadow of a doubt is left that this war is not governed by the rationality of politics and law, but by irrational forces which spell the end of civilizational order. The analytical isolation of the disruptive force is, in the case of Helen-Paris, quite as careful as in the case of Achilles.

The irrational force governs the procedure of the combat between Paris and Menelaus from its very inception. The combat and the truce are not the result of rational action (which could have been taken at any time) but of an accident. The lines of the Trojans and Achaeans are moving to battle; in the grim moment before the clash the elegantly garbed Paris does a little parading in front and challenges the best of the Achaeans to fight him. Menelaus happens to notice the show-off and eagerly rushes toward him, with the result that Paris quickly falls back into inconspicuous safety behind the line (*III*, 15-37). But too late.



gloomily: "Few sons grow like their fathers; most are worse, and only few are better" (*Od.* II, 276f.). With this generalization from the disheartening appearance of Telemachus, Athena continues the reflections of Nestor in the *Iliad* that the generation of Troy is no match to the companions of his youth; the generation of Telemachus is a further decline.

Next in the hierarchy come the nobles of the Cephallenian region. The most distinguished among them should form the constitutional council and see to it that a regency is established in the absence of Odysseus, or that the succession to the kingship be regulated. The older members of the nobility, as far as they have not joined the expedition against Troy, are on the whole decent-minded but few in number and powerless against the trend of the younger generation. And the younger lords are the wastrels who, a hundred strong, have occupied the manor of Odysseus and devour its substance while beleaguering Penelope. They presume Odysseus to be dead but neither do they recognize his son as the king, nor does any one among them have sufficient stature to reach for the kingship himself. The kingdom is in leaderless anarchy. The contrast between the old and the young, for the rest, plays an important role throughout the *Odyssey*. Its meaning appears perhaps most clearly in the figures of the swineherd Eumaeus and the Odysseus in beggar's disguise: The old men of quality are in disguise and low station, while rank and public status belong to the young vulgarity.

The role of the people, finally, as well as its relation to the nobility, is characterized on occasion of the assembly which Telemachus convokes at the behest of Athena. No session of the assembly has been held since Odysseus left for Troy. An old lord (one of whose sons is among the suitors), a friend of Odysseus, presides over the meeting. Telemachus appears, not as king or successor to the kingship, but as a private plaintiff, seeking help from the people against the nobles who destroy his property. The constitutional order as a whole thus comes into play. The noble suitors are incensed by this appeal to the assembly; but they are also afraid, and by heated argument they try to avert the people's attention from the issue. The assembly, however, has not much stomach anyway for armed action, amounting to civil war, that is, for the only action that could dislodge the brazen suitors. The sullen hesitation of the people becomes so nauseating that Mentor puts a curse on them: May no king in the future be kind and righteous, let him be stern and unrighteous,

since Odysseus is not remembered by the people over whom he ruled like a father! (*Od.* II, 229-41). The corruption reaches down to the people; if the future should bring a decline from kingship to tyranny they would not deserve any better.

### 5. *The Aetiology of Disorder*

It will be possible now to appraise the theory of order that emerges from the Homeric epics—if, for lack of a more appropriate one, the term theory will be allowed to signify a technique of symbolization which is distinctly pre-theoretical. The appraisal will best commence from a problem that lies at the heart of the Homeric symbolism, that is, from the function of the gods. It has been frequently observed that the reflections of Zeus at the opening of the *Odyssey* are something like a theodicy. The gods are absolved from causing evil in the world. That seems to be a purer, or at least more carefully reflected, conception of the gods than can be found in the *Iliad*; and the apparent advance of religious sentiment and theology is used as an argument for dating the *Odyssey* later than the *Iliad*.

We do not question the later date of the *Odyssey*, but we are inclined to question the premises on which the argument is based. For the argument from increasing purity presupposes that "gods" are something of which one can have purer or less pure conceptions independent of a larger context; that there is a "theological" development in isolation from a general view concerning the order of human existence in society. Such presuppositions, however, will appear dubious as soon as they are examined more closely. Let us assume, as an hypothesis, that there are no more than two sources of evil, *i.e.*, gods and men. In that case a shifting of responsibility from one source to the other can only purify gods at the expense of men, or men at the expense of gods; the purer the one side becomes, the impurer will be the other side. Neither the reality nor the amount of evil are touched by such shiftings; and what precisely is to be gained by locating evil in man rather than in the gods will remain obscure as long as such operations are interpreted under the aspect of their "purifying" results.

The opening of the *Odyssey* will acquire a new significance if we recognize that Homer is concerned, not with purification of the gods, but with the aetiology of disorder. Evil is experienced as real; and the evil forces which disrupt order certainly are disturbing enough to invite



exploration of their nature and source. The location, or transfer, of responsibility will become of lively interest if it is understood as a search for *truth* about the source of evil. Truth is Homer's concern rather than purification. And since the "gods" are not self-contained entities but power complexes in the order of being that also embraces man, an increase of truth about the gods will also be an increase of truth about man. What really is at stake, therefore, is not a progress of morality or theology but the genuinely theoretical issue of the nature of being as far as order and disorder of human existence in society are concerned.

If the issue, thus, is restated in ontological terms, the relation between gods and men will appear in a new light. Gods and men are not fixed entities but more or less clearly discerned forces in an order which embraces them both. The primary experience is that of an order of being which permeates man and transcends him. Both relations are of equal importance; there is no clearly circumscribed order of man, over-arched by a transcendent order of the gods; the forces that operate and interact in the comprehensive order of being rather reach into man himself in such a manner that the borderline between human and transhuman is blurred. If in the interplay of forces man is distinguishable as a unit at all, it is by virtue of his bodily existence in space that will be terminated by death. And even this formulation attributes to the complex called man more of a demarcation than it actually has in the epics. For in the language of Homer there are no words for body and soul.

The word *soma* which in later Greek means "body" occurs indeed but it has the meaning of "dead body," "corpse." The living human shape can only be designated by *chros*, skin; and *chros* does not mean skin in the anatomical sense (the skin or pelt that can be skinned off an animal, *derma*), but skin in the sense of a surface that is the bearer of color and visibility. This Homeric visibility of surface (as distinguished from our notion of bodily existence) is an immaterial, intangible quality to which unexpected things may happen. The visible shape may become invisible at the right tactical moment and reappear elsewhere, as in the case of the vanishing Paris. And then again it may expand demonically as in the appearance of Achilles when he frightens the Trojans from the body of Patroclus, with a thick golden cloud around his head and shining flames rising from the cloud, shouting with the sound of a trumpet. Such diminutions and exaltations of visible shape, however, are understood as more than human; they only occur with the help of the



Hence, we shall approach the problem casuistically by analyzing the two main classes of action as they appear in the epics, that is, first the actions which maintain and restore order, and second the actions which disturb order.

All through the epics run divine interventions which result in human decisions of public importance. A typical case is the energetic action of Odysseus, in *Iliad* II, when he holds back the army that is on the point of boarding ship for home; it is an action at the behest of Athena. The cases of this type are rather frequent. Any human decision, hesitation, or resolution somewhat out of the ordinary is apt to appear as inspired by divine counsel. They are so frequent indeed that sometimes the interventions themselves become a routine; Athena is a ubiquitous lady, especially in the *Odyssey*, arranging the voyage of Telemachus step by step, from pushing the young man into action, to outfitting the ship and getting him on his way. On the whole, however, the interventions effectively serve the purpose of raising the otherwise irrelevant doings of man to the rank of actions which are transparent toward the order of being. Ordinary men, going about their ordinary business, are not favored in this manner; the divine appearances are bestowed on the heroes when the consequences of their action affect public order. Hence, action in this limited sense acquires the more-than-human meaning of a manifestation of divine order; and the hero in the Homeric sense can be defined as the man in whose actions a more-than-human order of being becomes manifest. The Homeric clarification of the meaning of action was continued by Aeschylus. In his *Suppliants* especially, Aeschylus characterized heroic action (that is the only action deserving the name, as distinguished from ordinary doings) as the decision for Dike against demonic disorder; the order of the polis, in so far as it was established and maintained by such action, represented the order of Zeus. Action at the heroic height, thus, is as much human as it is the manifestation of a divine force. And the public order of a society, in so far as at critical junctures it depends on the forthcoming of such action, is precariously maintained in being at the borderline of this meeting of human with divine forces.

The aetiology of order and disorder obviously cannot be reduced to a simple formula. Are the gods who inspire, or the men who obey, responsible for heroic action? And who is responsible for a debacle when a hero did not receive a divine inspiration at the right moment—the god who

played truant or the man who embarked on an unfortunate course of action by his own light? And such questions become even more pungent when actions are disruptive. What is the status of *ate* in Homeric ethics? On the one hand, she is blinding passion that motivates actions in violation of just order; on the other hand, she is a goddess, the oldest daughter of Zeus who, on occasion, plays a trick even on her own father. Who is responsible for misdeeds caused by *ate*? A detailed answer to such questions would require a monograph. We can do no more than state the principle of Homer's position, supported by a few cases.

Throughout the *Iliad* the poet seems to be engaged in a subtle polemic against the morality of several of his figures—and the polemic quite probably is also aimed at his social environment which sympathized with the figures. Take the case of Achilles. From Homer's descriptions he emerges as a splendid warrior, useful to have on your side in an emergency, but as a not very appealing figure, almost a pathological case. And the poet leaves no doubt that the trouble stems from toying and tampering with fate, from misusing the divine Thetis for satisfying the hero's childish desires, and from a reluctance to shoulder the burden of humanity. The difficulties fall apart when the burden of fate and responsibility is accepted with humility.

A second important instance is furnished by Agamemnon's apology to Achilles (*Il.* XIX, 78–144). The king casts the responsibility for his unjust action on a whole assembly of gods (Zeus, Moira, Erinyes, Ate) who blinded him. But when the blindness falls from him, and he becomes seeing again, he assumes responsibility for his action and offers amends. With Homer a man's actions are his own only when he sees what he is doing; as long as he is blinded they are not his own and he is not responsible for them; but when in retrospect he sees again, then what he committed in blindness becomes his own through seeing and he compensates for his misdeeds. The analysis by means of the symbolism of "blindness" and "seeing" is of considerable interest for the later development of a theory of action. For Homer is on the way toward discovering what the philosophers will call the "true self," that is, the area in a man's soul in which he is oriented toward noetic order. When the true self dominates, then the man "sees"; and through the retroactive recognition of "blindness," the misdeed is integrated (as it were by a "conscience") into the acting self. Still, in the case of Agamemnon, the blindness re-



mains the work of the gods; the absorption of the misdeed into the self does not yet go to the point of accepting the guilt for temporary "blindness." And in general there is no tendency toward an understanding of guilt in the Christian sense—either in Homer, or in the philosophers of the classic period who, though they develop the problem further, retain the Homeric position on principle. The continuity with regard to this problem, from Homer to the fourth century, will go far to explain the odd idea of Socrates-Plato of solving the problem of true order in the soul and society through "seeing," that is, through knowledge.

Nevertheless, the self-interpretation of Agamemnon in his apology to Achilles is perhaps not the last word of Homer in this matter. A wary psychologist will ask himself the question how "true" Agamemnon's story about his temporary blindness really is. Does a man, even in anger, not know in some corner of his mind that just now he is doing something which he ought not to do? Is there really a time interval between blindness and seeing? Is man really at one time a passionate self, blinded, and at a later time a true self horrified at the deeds of his passionate self? Homer certainly asked himself such questions. The proof is the scene of Paris in his chamber. There is the case of the elegant rotter who, in excellent self-analysis, informs Helen that his mind is obsessed by Eros, and then pleasantly proceeds to act not on the "seeing" of his analysis, but on the "blindness" of his passion. The case of Paris shows the simultaneity of blindness and seeing. And what happens in this case is most illuminating for Homeric as well as for Greek theory of action in general. We do not fall into the abysmally desperate situation described by St. Paul in Romans 7, but into a refined rascality, not lacking in profoundness.

The case of Paris shows that Homer knew about the mysteries of blindness and seeing. Nevertheless, it should not be taken as an expression of his own opinion in the matter. The apology of Agamemnon certainly does not mean to characterize the king as a hypocrite who tries to cover up the fact that he knew quite well what he was doing at the time and preferred to indulge in the voluptuousness of his anger.<sup>10</sup> The case of Agamemnon must be taken at its face value as one of the various types in a psychology of action. Homer's own position should rather be in-

<sup>10</sup> "Cholos . . . sweeter far than honey" (*Il.* XVIII, 108-109).

ferred from the manner in which he constructs the story of the epics on principle. In both epics the story rests, as we have seen, on the careful analysis of the legal issues involved in the various actions. The public knowledge of order, of *themis*, of what is right, is the foundation for the actions of the heroes. *Everybody* knows, as a matter of public knowledge, exactly what he *ought* to do—and then he does something else. As an extreme case, to support this point, let us remember the old Priam who knows quite well what is wrong but cannot wrest from himself the effort to maintain public order; he throws the responsibility on the gods and lets Troy go to destruction. The various figures of the epics, thus, are set by Homer against a background of public knowledge about what is right. They all "see" while they are "blinded"; but there are various degrees of blindness and sight, as well as a variety of relations between them.

On the basis of the preceding analysis we can venture to formulate the relation between the two epics. The *Iliad*, so it seems, is much richer in its exploration of the mysteries of action than the second epic. It is hardly permissible to consider the *Odyssey* an advance beyond the *Iliad* with regard to theology or religious sentiments. At most one can say that in the prologue in heaven Homer states in explicit terms the problem that occupied him all through the *Iliad*, *i.e.*, the aetiology of evil. The term "aetiology," hitherto used undefined, does require, and can now receive, some precision. We are using the term because it is Homer's word in dealing with his problem. The question is whether the gods are *aitioi* or not *aitioi* with regard to the evil that befalls man. The meaning of *aitios* (*Il.* III, 164) ranges, in the Homeric contexts, from "guilty" or "blame-worthy" to "responsible for" or "being the cause of." When Homer speaks of men who ascribe evil to the gods, he uses the word *aitioontai*, (*Od.* I, 32), with a corresponding range of meaning from "they accuse" or "blame" the gods to "they make them responsible," or see in them the "source" or "cause" of evil. The primary concern of Homer is not a vindication of the gods but the interpretation which men put on their own misconduct. The tendency of his aetiological interest can, therefore, be circumscribed by the following theses:

- (1) Man is in the habit of making the gods responsible for his misdeeds, as well as for the evil consequences engendered by his misconduct.



It must start with it because the style of existence created by the aristocratic genes, as we know it from the Homeric poems, has remained the dominant style of Hellenic political culture through all transformations and democratizations down to the Macedonian conquest in the fourth century B.C. The political power of the aristocracy might be broken but its culture permeated the people; democratization in Hellas meant an extension of aristocratic culture to the people—even though in the process of diffusion the quality was diluted. We must never forget that the people who committed the atrocities described by Thucydides were the people of the Periclean Golden Age, that the corrupt slaughterers and conspirators were the men who performed and appreciated the drama of Sophocles and Euripides, and that the enlightened urbanized rabble, hated by Plato and Aristotle, were the people in whose midst the Academy and Lyceum could flourish. In the history of the Hellenic polis we do not find the dramatic cultural upheavals which accompany the social rise of the urban classes in Western civilization. With the changes in social and economic structure, and with the development of personality, the epic gave way to lyric, lyric to tragedy, and tragedy to philosophy—but the music and gymnastic culture of Homeric society remained the paradigm of culture from Homer to Plato and Aristotle.

The gentilitian structure, while securing the unity of Hellenic culture through the centuries, did not provide the institutional order in which it developed. Above the manifold of tribes, phratries, and genes rose the polis which embraced them all. The polis was the autonomous, nontribal unit of political order.

With regard to the early period of this autonomous factor, as we said, we know next to nothing. And when the literary sources begin to flow more richly, we still can only form reasonable conclusions with regard to the social changes which must underlie the changes of literary form and of the experiences expressed. Moreover, the several regions of Hellenic civilization—Anatolia and the islands, the mainland, Sicily and *Magna Graecia*—differed in the nature of their political problems and in the rhythm of their development. The history of the poleis was not uniform and, as a consequence, institutions and ideas differed from region to region, and even within a region from polis to polis. Only in the fifth and fourth centuries, after the Persian Wars, when Athens became the center of power and culture, do we find the continuous oc-



cupation with the problem of order that culminated in the work of Plato and Aristotle.

The earliest literary documents convey the impression of a decline of the old aristocratic order rather than of a strong consciousness of the polis. On the mainland, the work of Hesiod (c.700 B.C.) is the magnificent beginning of articulate concern about right order, but with regard to the polis, however important in other respects, it is rather negative. For Hesiod was in the position of a victimized subject. He complained about the princes whose corruption endangered his property; he expressed the ethos of work; but he had nothing to say about rulership and constitutional order. The pathos of the polis was not alive in him. In Ionia, the century of lyric from Archilochus (c.700) to Sappho (c.600) marks the beginning of the life of the soul. But again, it attests the decline of an aristocratic order of life, setting the individual soul free, rather than betraying a new political will. Nor does the Milesian speculation of Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes (c.650-550) suggest anything but a new intellectual freedom as it will unfold when style and tension of a political culture dissolve.

Literary evidence for the process in which the consciousness of the polis was formed becomes tangible for the first time on the mainland, in Sparta and Athens. The political circumstances of the two occasions differed greatly. In Sparta it was the emergency of the Messenian revolt which occasioned the poems of Tyrtaeus in praise of the specific virtue, different from aristocratic heroism, that will defend and maintain the polis. And in the wake of the revolt, the Eunomia (c.610) was resolved upon which transformed Sparta into a formidable military organization, ready and able at all times to cow rebelliously inclined subjects. In Athens it was the social and economic paralysis, due to debt-slavery, which induced the Seisachtheia and the constitutional reform of 594. The poems of Solon described the difficulties of the polis and, for the first time, they expressed its pathos through the principle of *eunomia*, of the right order that will integrate all sections of the people into the one unit of the polis.

The aftermath of the reform, the tyranny of Peisistratus (561-527), reminds us that the Solonian effort was probably no more than a partial solution of the type of crisis which engulfed the whole polis world from Ionia to Sicily and manifested itself in the rise of tyrants, in the period from 650-500 B.C. In the Athenian case we are informed, through Ar-



line of successors down to Pericles. After Pericles began the decline of the institution because the people now adopted a head, Cleon, who was not in good repute with the upper classes. And after Cleophon "the leadership of the people [*demagogia*] was handed on in unbroken succession by the men who talked biggest and gratified the many, looking only to the interest of the moment."<sup>5</sup> The "head of the people" was the accepted designation for the leader of the democratic party; no comparable title had evolved for the leader of the aristocratic party. To the critical observation of Aristotle, the line of the great "heads" defined the significant sector of the constitutional history of Athens. It began with Solon and the tyrant Peisistratus, and it came to a close with Cleophon, toward the end of the Peloponnesian War. The history of the polis in the narrower sense became identical with the period from the first stirring of its pathos to its conquest by urbanized democracy. The effective polis, from its integration through Solon and tyranny to its dissolution by the demagogues, lasted barely two centuries.

The pattern of Athenian constitutional history can be no more than a means of orientation in the maze of Hellenic political history. It is not transferable to other regions and not even to other poleis of the mainland. In Anatolia for instance, the course of constitutional history was decisively interrupted by the external event of the Persian conquest in 546 B.C. In Sicily, on the other hand, the "tyranny" was much more than a passing phase in the process of democratization because the dangerous situation of a frontier against Carthaginians and Etruscans, as well as against the non-Hellenic native population, required a more effective, permanent military organization of greater striking power than could be afforded by the small-scale single poleis. And Sparta, finally, had neither a tyranny nor a democratic development because, after the Messenian revolt, the situation of conquest was permanently fossilized as the "aristocratic" constitution.

With due allowance for all necessary qualifications, we may venture the generalization: The pathos of the polis was the pathos of a dynamic participation of the people in a culture that originated in the aristocratic society. The dynamics was on the side of the "people." That may be the reason why we hear so little about the aristocracy which after all had created the paradigm of Hellenic culture. In fact, no early post-Homeric expression of aristocratic pathos is preserved at all. The aristocracy be-

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII, 1 and 4.



pertinent to our study, it is all the more necessary to be aware of the embracing literary form which in fact determines the meaning of the component parts. As to their literary form, now, the poems derive from Homer. The *Theogony* is an *Aristeia*, *i.e.* a ballad or story of an heroic adventure; and the *Works and Days* is a *Paraenesis* or *Protrepticus*, *i.e.* an admonitory speech.

We shall, in the present section, deal with some problems of the *Theogony* that will illustrate the state of theoretization reached by Hesiod. The subsequent section will deal more extensively with Hesiod's speculation on political order in the *Works and Days*.

The *Theogony*, as we said, is an *Aristeia*. Its subject matter is the victory of Zeus over the older divinities; and the story culminates in the *Titanomachia*, the description of the battle between Zeus and the *Cronian* generation of gods. Since Zeus is the father of *Eunomia* (Order), *Dike* (Justice), and *Eirene* (Peace), the *Titanomachia* brings the victory of the forces of true order over the savagery of cosmic and telluric forces. This is the level of meaning determined by the literary form.

The story of the *Theogony* is a cardinal problem in a philosophy of history and order. In nonmythical language, it is the tension between a hard-won civilizational order, precariously in balance, and a rumbling underworld of demonic forces which at any time may break loose and destroy it. The danger of such a break, experienced by Hesiod, lies back of his urge toward clarification and persuasive articulation of the principles of order represented by Zeus. In the execution of this program (if we may use this rational term in connection with a theogonic poem), however, Hesiod is bound by the rules of mythical language. The tension itself becomes the epic struggle of Zeus with the forces of disorder; and the meaning of order must be found in the development of the god's personality. Hence, when from the general problem, we turn to the specifically Hesiodian achievement in its formulation, we should above all note the evolution of Zeus as an ethical personality.

This evolution does not begin with Hesiod—it is noticeable even in the *Odyssey*—,<sup>16</sup> but now it progresses beyond the Homeric range inasmuch as the predominance of ethical forces becomes the *raison d'être* of the reign of Zeus. The other gods are "earlier" gods because

<sup>16</sup> On the opening of the *Odyssey* cf. Ch. 3, § 2, 4 and 5.



trinity a piece of speculation resembling by its intention the gnosis of *Sefiroth* or potencies.<sup>22</sup> The appearance of this type of speculation in the Hesiodian myth is neither anachronistic nor surprising. In view of the scarcity of preserved sources we must always reckon, in the Hellenic eighth century B.C., with a vast mass of floating ideas of which only fragments have come to us through the literary remains. That the speculation on the origin was part of this mass is sufficiently attested through the pervasive trinitarian symbol of the fleur-de-lis in Cretan civilization. The reader should refer back to what we had to say about this problem in Chapter 2.1, on the Cretan Society, as well as to the remarks on that occasion about the probable meaning of the Pythagorean *tetraktys*.

It must be, finally, noted that the Hesiodian speculation presupposes a considerable flexibility of the myth, a wide range of freedom granted to invention and transformation. For the single myths which have entered the *Theogony* are by far not the people's myths which are bound to specific localities and rites. On the contrary, Hesiod makes a deliberate effort to overcome, if not to abolish, the manifold of the local myths and to replace it with a system of typical gods—sometimes the local variants can still be discerned in the new type, as for instance in the story of the birth of Aphrodite with its explanation of her various names as Cytherea and Cyprogena.<sup>23</sup> Hesiod, as Homer, was a creator of gods for the whole area of Hellenic civilization and thereby one of the great formers of its unity. The mythopoetic work of the two poets was a spiritual and intellectual revolution; for inasmuch as it established the types of cosmic and ethical forces, as well as the types of their

<sup>22</sup> Gershom G. Sholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (Jerusalem, 1941), 213: "The crisis can be pictured as the break-through of the primordial will, but theosophic Kabbalism frequently employs the bolder metaphor of Nothing. The primary start or wrench in which the introspective God is externalized and the light that shines inwardly made visible, this revolution of perspective, transforms En-Sof, the inexpressible fullness, into nothingness. It is this mystical "nothingness" from which all other stages of God's gradual unfolding in the Sefiroth emanate." Cf. also G. Sholem, *Die Geheimnisse der Schoepfung. Ein Kapitel aus dem Sobar* (Berlin, 1935). The Cabbala type of gnosis differs from the Hesiodian speculation in so far as the En-Sof is the point of origin of creation as well as the medium in which the process runs its course; such a medium does not appear as a separate person in Hesiod. The idea of the En-Sof (or Boehme's *Ungrund*) can develop only within the symbolism of a monotheistic religion. While this is not the place to develop the problem further, the suggestion may be thrown out that gnostic speculation, when it appears as a theosophic movement within a monotheistic culture, is a reversion to the myth. The demythization of the world is not an unbroken process; there may break through again, in the monotheistic phase of religiousness, a desire for remythization on the highest level of intellectual speculation. This certainly was the case of Schelling's *Weltalter*.

<sup>23</sup> *Theogony*, 188–200.

relations and tensions, it created, in the form of the myth, a highly theorized body of knowledge concerning the position of man in his world that could be used by the philosophers as the starting point for metaphysical analysis and differentiation.<sup>24</sup> The freedom of such creation, while it assumes revolutionary proportions in Homer and Hesiod, is a general characteristic of the mythopoetic process in Hellas.<sup>25</sup> It remains the presupposition for the further evolution of the gods from Hesiod, through the tragedy of the fifth century, down to Plato who, after the disintegration of the myth in the age of enlightenment, regains its true function as the instrument of symbolization for transcendental border-problems beyond the reach of world-immanent metaphysical construction.

### 3. *The Works and Days. Invocation and Exhortation*

The *Works and Days* is a Paraenesis, an exhortatory speech addressed by Hesiod to his brother Perses. As in the case of the *Theogony*, the meaning determined by the literary form must be established before we can proceed to an analysis of various subdivisions of the poem. This is especially necessary, because the argument of the poem is supported by the famous paradigmatic fables of Pandora and of the Ages of the World (or, more precisely, of the races of men), which have tempted more than one interpreter to treat them without regard for the meaning which they have in the larger context.

The theme of the exhortation is formulated in the opening invocation of the Muses. They are called upon by the poet to chant the praise of Zeus, since the fate of man is in the hands of the God; men will be famed or unfamed, sung or unsung as the God wills. Easily he raises a man, and easily he breaks him; easily he humbles those who walk in the light, and easily he advances the obscure; easily he straightens what is bent, and easily he brings down the overbearing. And then the poet

<sup>24</sup> In the construction of the *Symposium*, for instance, Plato lets the first speaker, Phaedrus, render a survey of what has hitherto been said about Eros. And this survey begins with the respective passages from Hesiod and Parmenides (178). The same procedure, though leading to an entirely different metaphysical result, is followed by Aristotle: In *Metaphysics* I, 4 he opens the discussion again with the same passages from Hesiod and Parmenides.

<sup>25</sup> For the impressive production of gods in a continuity which links the Cretan with the Hellenic society, cf. the fine survey in Axel W. Persson, *The Religion of Greece in Prehistoric Times* (Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1942), Chapter V: "Minoan-Mycenaean Survivals in the Greek Religion of Classic Times."



ages of Ovidius.<sup>37</sup> Hesiod was less interested in the content of the supposed source, if it was articulate enough, than in securing three fabulous, humanly not too intelligible races that could serve as a parallel to the theogony. Moreover, the genesis of the races seems to have been left deliberately vague in order to serve this purpose. The first race was created by the "Olympians" and lived "under Cronos"; but was it created by Cronos, or, rather, under the first generation of the *Theogony*? The second race, again created by the "Olympians," gets into trouble "under Zeus"; but was it created by Zeus, or perhaps under the second generation of the *Theogony*? Only the third race was certainly created by Zeus. That causes a difficulty for Hesiod because he runs out of generations of gods and must let the heroic race also be created by Zeus; and that makes us wonder why Zeus should have created the rather hopeless-looking hard wood creatures in the first place.

All these curiosities become meaningful as soon as we cease to insist that an unbroken line of evolution or dissolution must run through the five ages, as soon as we recognize the incision between the two groups as determined by a principle of mythico-speculative construction. Then the first three races become an anthropogony paralleling the theogony, while with the fourth and fifth races we enter the realm of man proper under the rule of Zeus. We shall, therefore, distinguish the two groups terminologically and speak of the first part of the logos as the "anthropogonic myth," and of the second part as the "epic myth."

We designate the second part of the logos an "epic myth" because Hesiod's view of the problem of man under the dispensation of Zeus obviously develops within the horizon of the epics of Homer and the Homerids. The noble society whose historical existence is well attested by the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* belongs to the past; as far as the experience of Hesiod is concerned, no trace of it is left. Mankind has two ages, the heroic past and the iron present. This raises the question whether the meaning of the "iron" age cannot be determined within the epic myth, independent of the metals of the anthropogonic myth. The logos itself offers a clue to the answer. The metals of the anthropogonic myth seem to have no other function than to symbolize the decrease in value of the successive races—unless we want to assume (what also has been done on occasion) that the three races were really meant to consist of gold, silver, and bronze respectively. In the description of the third race,

<sup>37</sup> Ovidius, *Metamorphoses*, I, 89-150.



bearing, not knowing the vengeance of the gods; nor will they make return to their aged parents of the cost of their upbringing. . . . Neither will be in favor the man who keeps his oath, or the law-abiding, or the man of excellence; men will rather praise the evil-doer and the works of hybris. Right will lie with brute strength, and shame will be no more; the worse will damage the better man, speaking crooked words against him and swearing an oath upon them. Envy, discord-talking, rejoicing in mischief, will be the companion of all men to their sorrow.

To this vision we find such parallels in the prophets as Isaiah 3:4ff. :

And I will give children to be their princes,  
and babes shall rule over them.  
And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another,  
and every one by his neighbor.  
The child shall behave proudly against the ancient,  
and the base against the honourable.

Or, Hosea 4:1ff.:

No truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.  
By swearing, and lying, and killing,  
and stealing, and committing adultery,  
they break out, and blood toucheth blood.  
Therefore shall the land mourn,  
and everyone that dwelleth therein shall languish,  
with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven;  
yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.

Or, Micah 7:2ff.:

The good man is perished out of the earth:  
and there is none upright among men:  
they all lie in wait for blood;  
they hunt every man his brother with a net.  
That they may do evil with both hands earnestly,  
the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward;  
and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire:  
so they wrap it up.

. . . . .

Trust ye not in a friend,  
put ye not confidence in a guide;  
keep the doors of thy mouth



what they must."<sup>52</sup> When the Melians express their trust in the gods who will support the just man in his fight against the unjust, the Athenians answer:

When you speak of the favour of the gods, we may as fairly hope for that as yourselves; neither our pretensions nor our conduct being in any way contrary to what men believe of the gods, or practise among themselves. Of the gods we believe, and of men we know, that by a necessary law of their nature they rule wherever they can. And it is not as if we were the first to make this law, or to act upon it when made; we found it existing before us, and shall leave it to exist for ever after us; all we do is to make use of it, knowing that you and everybody else, having the same power as we have, would do the same as we do.<sup>53</sup>

We remember Hesiod's warning to his brother (attached to the fable) that hybris is bad for a "poor man," with the implication that the "princes" are granted a somewhat larger range in this respect than "miserable mortals." This subordinate strain in the Hesiodian experience has now gained a monstrous life of its own by making the order of the gods identical with the order of hybris, and by identifying the order of hybris with the order of politics. The appeal to the gods is cut off when the order of power unrelieved by Dike is experienced as the order of the gods. The apocalypse becomes historical reality when the apocalyptic tension of the soul is crushed and the bleakness of annihilation creeps over a society. When this comes to pass it is doubtful whether one can still speak of order at all. We remember Hesiod's vision of the future of the iron age (182ff.) with its destruction and perversion of social relations. We may compare with it the Thucydidean description of society in revolution:

Words had to change their ordinary meaning and take that which was now given them. Reckless audacity came to be considered the courage of a loyal ally; prudent hesitation, specious cowardice; moderation was held to be a cloak for unmanliness; ability to see all sides of a question inaptness to act on any. . . . The advocate of extreme measures was always trustworthy; his opponent a man to

<sup>52</sup> Thucydides, *Historiae*, ed. by H. S. Jones and J. E. Powell (Oxford, 1942), V, 89. The translation is Crawley's in Everyman's Library.

<sup>53</sup> Thucydides, V, 105, 1-2.



be suspected. . . . Oaths of reconciliation, proffered only on either side to meet an immediate difficulty, only held good so long as no other weapon was at hand. . . . Thus religion was in honour with neither party; but the use of fair phrases to arrive at guilty ends was in high reputation. Meanwhile the moderate part of the citizens perished between the two, either for not joining in the quarrel, or because envy would not suffer them to escape.<sup>54</sup>

The parallels between Hesiod and Thucydides suggest serious problems for an epistemology of political science. If the visions engendered by the anxiety of annihilation can become the structure of society—what is reality? Is it Hesiod's anxiety, or the nihilism of the Athenians? What status of reality has a society that could be created by an apocalyptic vision? And what is the "realism" of a Thucydides when his types are fables and visions? These are the questions from which the science of politics has sprung with Plato and Aristotle. There is an interesting sentence in the passage of the Melian Dialogue that we quoted: "all we do is to make use of [the law of rule by power], knowing that you and everybody else, having the same power as we have, would do the same as we do." This assumption of the nihilist that his personal nothingness is the measure of man is the great error of "realism." The assumption recurs in the mouth of Polus, the sophistic representative of nihilism, when (in Plato's *Gorgias*) he charges the disagreeing Socrates with ill-will:

*Socrates:* I cannot admit a word which you have been saying.

*Polus:* That is because you will not; for surely you must think as I do.<sup>55</sup>

If we understand the "reality" described by Thucydides as an apocalyptic nightmare, we gain a first approach to Plato's much-misunderstood "idealism" as the attempt to overcome a nightmare through the restoration of reality.

<sup>54</sup> Thucydides, III, 82, *passim*.

<sup>55</sup> Plato, *Gorgias*, 471 d-e.



of the soul in opposition to the order of the polis. By the middle of the fifth century, finally, the philosophical scene shifted from the Italy of Parmenides and Zeno to the Athens of Anaxagoras and Democritus.

Most important, however, is the point that there were no "schools" in any conceivable sense of the word. The style of Hellenic civilization is indelibly characterized by the absence of temporal and ecclesiastic bureaucracies. Through a miracle of history the geographic area of Hellenic civilization remained undisturbed by foreign invasions from the Doric migration to the Persian Wars, that is, roughly from 1100-500 B.C. During six hundred years, while in the Near and Far East the imperial civilizations with their inevitable bureaucracies were founded, overthrown, and re-established, the geopolitical paradise around the Aegean could develop the "free" civilizations, first, of local clans and aristocracies, and later, of poleis that were so small that no bureaucratic administration of formidable size was needed. Under these historically unique circumstances the transition from archaic to classic Hellas could assume the form of intellectual adventures by individuals, unhampered by the pressure of hierarchies which tend to preserve traditions.

The earliest recorded adventure of this type, the Homeric epic, revealed the free manipulation of a stock of myths. The mythical form was transformed into the image of an aristocratic, courtly society of gods and men, into a world of masterly drawn, intelligible personalities of the "Olympian" clearness that is due to the radical elimination of chthonic horrors. Here was born and moulded the Ionian component of Greek religiousness, that peculiar freedom from horror as well as from the *tremendum* of a "dread God." Man faced the immortals, not with a shudder at his own nothingness, but with a sense of wretchedness, as "the creature of the day," before the splendor of such heightened life, or with the Homeric astonishment, shading off into admiration, when Achilles turns around and sees Athena standing behind him, counselling restraint with a courteous "if you will obey me." From the respectful intimacy of such astonishment (*thambos*) stems the wondering admiration, the Ionian *thaumazein*, before the spectacle of the cosmos which Aristotle still recognized as the origin of philosophical inquiry.

The next adventure, the Hesiodian, brought the inrush of primordial, chthonic divinities into the material of speculation. That inrush was characteristic of the Greek mainland where the continuity of the myth was less broken than in the Ionian cities of the refugees who had been sepa-

rated from the divinities of their rivers and hills and of the earth under their feet. While the basis of the myth, thus, was broader for Hesiod than for Homer, his work was nevertheless the first great document of both the awakening and the effects of speculation. The materials of the people's myth were submitted, with an almost incredible freedom and insouciance, to the exigencies of the speculative quest for the origins of being and order. Moreover, at the dynamic center of the mythopoetic and speculative effort the personality of a great poet and thinker did not have to be surmised, as in the case of Homer; the creator of the work presented himself in person, fully conscious of what he was doing when he opposed the principle of his new Aletheia to the untruth of older pseudo-inspirations. With the victorious emergence of Jovian Dike over the cosmic and telluric gods, there emerged the self-consciousness of the thinker as the carrier of a new truth in history. The personality of the man who can distinguish verities of order and create the symbols to express them became with Hesiod a new element in the structure of reality.

The same style of intellectual adventure characterized the philosophizing of the great Milesians, of Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes, when they replaced the divine figures of the myth, in their search of origins, with symbols drawn from objects and substances of the world of sense perception. Unfortunately we know entirely too little about their work because the Persian conquest, as we have indicated, apparently interrupted the formation of a tradition. The memory of Thales was preserved through anecdotes; his works were so thoroughly lost, that one cannot be quite sure he ever wrote a treatise. Anaximander and Anaximenes were completely forgotten. Their names came to light again when Aristotle and his school undertook a search for predecessors; practically all that we know about their work stems from the excerpts which Aristotle and Theophrastus made from a manuscript they must have obtained. That is not to say that the work of the Milesians remained without effect. For the elimination of the mythical personnel from speculation proper was established. Neither the attack of Xenophanes on the myth, nor the Heraclitean analysis of the soul, nor even the speculation of Parmenides in spite of the fact that it is embedded in a *mythos*, can well be imagined without the Milesian background.

A "school," in the sense of successive generations of thinkers who draw on a common substance provided by the "founder," is possible only when the substance is spiritually and intellectually rich enough to become



the order of the human psyche beyond the order of the polis and articulated their discovery in the symbolic form which they called philosophy. Hence, philosophy was more than an intellectual endeavor in which certain Greek individuals excelled; it was a symbolic form which expressed definite experiences of order in opposition to the polis. The tension between the Hellas of the poets and philosophers, and the polis to which they were in opposition, was the very form of Hellenic civilization. Nevertheless, this form had something elusive in comparison with the Near Eastern empires, because the personal order of a soul through orientation toward transcendent reality could not be institutionalized, but had to rely on its autonomous formation by individual human beings. And since this elusiveness of the form is the cause of the error that philosophy is an "intellectual" or "cultural" activity conducted in a vacuum, without relation to the problems of human existence in society, it becomes all the more important to stress the roots of philosophy in the order of the polis. This problem can be clarified best by a comparison between the Hellenic and the Israelite mortgage of society on the symbolic form.

The leap in being had different results in Israel and Hellas. In Israel it assumed the form of historical existence of a people under God; in Hellas it assumed the form of personal existence of individual human beings under God. If the issue be formulated in this manner, it will be apparent that the "perpetual mortgage of the world-immanent, concrete event on the transcendent truth that on its occasion was revealed," of which we had to speak in the case of Israel,<sup>2</sup> would be less of a burden on Hellenic philosophy than on Israelite revelation. The universal validity of transcendent truth, the universality of the one God over the one mankind, could be more easily disengaged from an individual's discovery of the existence of his psyche under the gods than from the Sinaitic revelation of a people's existence under God. Nevertheless, as Israel had to carry the burden of Canaan, so philosophy had to carry the burden of the polis. For the discoveries, though made by individuals, were made by citizens of a polis; and the new order of the soul, when communicated by its discoverers and creators, inevitably was in opposition to the public order, with the implied or explicit appeal to the fellow citizens to reform their personal conduct, the mores of society, and ultimately the institutions in conformity with the new order. Hellenic philosophy became, therefore, to a considerable extent the articulation of true order of ex-

<sup>2</sup> *Order and History* I, 164, 180.



is an element of fancy (*dokos*) in assertions concerning gods and other things whereof Xenophanes speaks; and since there are no objective criteria the full truth will not be recognized as such even if attained. Xenophanes himself might even be exposed to charges similar to the ones which he levels against Homer and Hesiod if the notions about seemliness should change.

That is exactly what happened to Xenophanes in the next generation at the hands of Heraclitus. For the Ephesian said: "Much learning [*polymathie*] does not teach understanding [*noon*]; else it would have taught Hesiod, Pythagoras, Xenophanes, and Hecataeus" (B 40). On this occasion, however, it became clear that the criteria of seemliness, though changing, were not arbitrary. For Heraclitus gave, if not a definition of criteria, at least an indication of the region of experience which authorized the notion of seemliness; in one of the fragments (B 45) he said: "You will not find the boundaries of the soul though travelling every path; so deep is its logos." Heraclitus had discovered the soul and its dimension in depth; he could oppose "deep-knowing" (*bathys*) to "much-knowing" (*polys*). The depth of the soul revealed itself as the new source of knowledge. We shall return to this problem in the chapter on Heraclitus.

While the notion of *epiprepei* required considerable further elaboration it was, nevertheless, Xenophanes who conceived it for the first time. With his opposition to the myth of Homer and Hesiod began the conscious distinction between various types of symbolic forms that unfolded in the following centuries until it culminated in the Varronic classification of the *genera theologiae* as mythical, civil, and physical theology. From Varro's *De rebus divinis* and Cicero's *De natura Deorum* it entered the Christian literature and developed into the Augustinian distinction between a *theologia naturalis* (the former physical or philosophical) and a *theologia civilis* (to which St. Augustine was inclined to subordinate also the poetic or mythical theology); to both of these latter categories was then opposed the Christian *theologia supranaturalis*.<sup>5</sup> The classification of symbolic forms, thus, has a long history, beginning with Xenophanes.

An epoch in that history was marked by Plato's treatment of the problem in *Republic* II, since it involved the creation of the term *theology*. In discussing the education of children who will grow into the

<sup>5</sup> Jaeger, *Theology*, 1ff. and 49ff.



the occasion of the Milesian discovery, emerged the experience of the process of nature as infinite. The openness of man toward nature, when it was experienced as a new type of transcendence into the boundlessness of the world, found its fit symbol in Anaximander's Apeiron. The Milesian transcendence into nature must be ranked as an independent experience by the side of the Xenophantic universal transcendence. The "physiologist" in the Aristotelian sense is a philosopher of transcendence in his own right, by the side of the "theologian." The two experiences of transcendence, represented in the fourth century by Aristotle and Plato respectively, have remained the motivating forces of two types of philosophizing to this day.

As soon, however, as the new type of transcendence was discovered, its relation to the transcendence of the gods became problematic. The Aristotelian report is revealing with regard to this question. The "boundless" that was experienced as the beginning (*arche*) of all things had to be "unborn and unperishable"; it was something that "encompassed all and governed all things." These, however, were the attributes of divinity. Hence Anaximander, reasoning that the something was "immortal and imperishable," endowed it with the predicate "the Divine." It is the first occasion on which the abstract *to theion* appeared. In Anaximander's formulation the "physiological" and "theological" experiences of transcendence converged toward the point where the One would become the God of the "monists." In the immanent logic of this process, there is no reason why the blending of the experiences should result in "monotheism" rather than in "pantheism." On the contrary, the analysis shows that a fixation of theological systems was improbable as long as the originating experiences were alive. Moreover, the experiences were capable of variations which do not fit into any theological "system"; and that was true in particular of the Xenophantic variety. For Xenophanes' "glance at the expanse of the Heaven" by which he recognized the One as the God, was neither a speculation on *physis*, nor the experience of universal transcendence, but an experience *sui generis* in which is prefigured the religiousness of the late Plato and of Philippus of Opus, and even of the Aristotelian *bios theoretikos*.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Through the mediation of Aristotle this complex of experiences and speculations has continued as a "type" of theologizing into Western Christianity. The Xenophantic formula "the One is the God" is still recognizable in the Thomistic *primum ens quod Deum dicimus* (*Contra Gentiles* I, 14). The reader should compare our analysis in the text with St. Thomas, *Contra Gentiles* I, 10-14, i.e., with the classic example of the transposition of the pre-Socratic complex of experiences into the Christian medium of theologizing.



for the others, who supposedly have no proper regard for it, indeed do not possess it at all.

Knowledge and existence depend on one another; the order of being becomes visible only to those whose souls are well ordered. The correlation, which becomes an issue on occasion of the Xenophantic attacks, developed into the fundamental problem of an epistemology of political science, that is, into the problem of the double status of types of cognition as (a) cognitive functions of the mind and (b) as excellences or virtues of the soul. In Plato we shall see the problem unfolding into the insight that the "true" science of man in society is accessible only to the philosophers who have seen the Agathon. And in Aristotle we shall find the types of cognition (wisdom, science, art, prudence, and intellection) as the dianoetic excellences which enable man to lead the *bios theoretikos*. In Xenophanes the problem appears still in a rudimentary form, embedded in the practical act of a rebellion of "holy wisdom" against a glory that contributes nothing to the right order (*eunomia*) of the polis.

The practical aspects of the rebellion set a further pattern which governed Hellenic politics down to Aristotle. The fallacy of berating people for their preferences, while in fact they live innocently in a tradition without knowledge of a preferable alternative, was more than a theoretical problem; as so frequently with fallacies of this type, there was a practical issue behind the façade of a theoretical mistake. Xenophanes was not satisfied with having gained his wisdom; he also wanted public recognition. This desire must not be understood in the cheap meaning of modern parlance. Xenophanes did not want attention for idiosyncrasies. He had discovered new areas of experience; and he knew that the differentiation of such experiences was an actualization of the common essence of man. The traditional culture of the polis had not yet risen to the new level of human actualization; but he sensed the rise as the duty of every human being individually, as well as of the community in general. The qualification of the cultural tradition as a "preference" (while indeed no such preference exists) must be understood, therefore, against the background of the implied postulate that knowledge with regard to the essentials of humanity is a duty and, consequently, that ignorance in such matters is preference.

The discovery of transcendence, of intellectual and spiritual order, while occurring in the souls of individual human beings, is not a matter

of "subjective opinion"; once the discovery is made, it is endowed with the quality of an authoritative appeal to every man to actualize it in his own soul; the differentiation of man, the discovery of his nature, is a source of social authority. The assertion of such authority as well as the appeal to the ignorant to actualize the potentialities of their humanity, is a permanent factor in the dynamics of order. It is discernible as the justifying core even in such atrocious distortions as the colonization of "backward" peoples by the more "progressive" ones. While the objective authority of the appeal does not endow the prophet or discoverer from whom it emanates with a subjective right to maltreat his ignorant fellow men, there certainly is on the other side no subjective right to be ignorant. The unity of mankind is the community of the spirit. With the unfolding of the nature of man in history the men who actualize hitherto dormant potentialities in their souls live under the duty of communicating their insights to their fellow men; and on the others is incumbent the duty of living in openness to such communication.<sup>1</sup>

This fundamental structure of the progress of mankind in history must be presupposed in the Xenophantic attack on agonal culture. The attack is not a personal affair but a type-creating event. The critique of society with the authority of the spiritual appeal remains from now on a type for the expression of political thought. The awareness of this type created by Xenophanes will help us to understand certain aspects of the Platonic work which otherwise might remain puzzling. The peculiar tension of the *Republic*, for instance, stems from its character as an appeal, directed to the Athenians with the spiritual authority of the philosopher. It would be an unfortunate misunderstanding to interpret this intense call for spiritual reform as a rational blueprint of an "ideal constitution."

Moreover, even the specific limitation of the Xenophantic appeal has set a type for later Hellenic politics. On principle, the appeal might be directed to mankind at large; it might transcend the limits of the polis and even of Hellas. In fact, however, both rebellion and appeal of Xenophanes accept the polis as its social field. Agonal culture comes under attack because a victory at Olympia contributes nothing to the *eunomia*

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the violent assertion of the right to be ignorant with regard to essentials of humanity, which is characteristic of the contemporary movements of progressivism, positivism, communism, and national-socialism, is an epochal event in the history of order in so far as for the first time movements of worldwide effectiveness systematically propagate the destruction of the unity of mankind.



appeal the poet reveals in the second part of the great elegy. Valor in battle is the "common good" of the polis—and the polis has to offer something in return for valorous service, even to the dead. For, when a man loses his "dear life" in battle, thus gaining glory "for the city, its people and his father," he will be lamented alike by young and old and the whole polis will mourn for him in sad grief. "His tomb and his children will be honored among men, and his children's children and his race in all future; never will his good fame [*kleros*] perish nor his name [*onoma*]; and though he lie beneath the earth he becomes immortal [*athbanatos*]" (12, 20-44).

In order to gauge the full weight of the Tyrtaean appeal one must remember that men of the seventh century B.C. had no soul, immortal or otherwise. The terms immortal and mortal simply meant gods and men. A man could become immortal only by becoming a god. The Tyrtaean promise of transfiguration through death into the eternal memory of the polis reveals the desire for immortality as a motivating experience of its order. The immortality of the aristocratic society, through the Mnemosyne of the poets, has become the citizen's immortality through survival in the memory of the grateful polis. Other factors, to be sure, have entered into the making of the polis and the Tyrtaean promise is not the key to all of its riddles. Nevertheless, here we touch upon the experience which decisively determined the pathos of the polis, the passionate character of its existence that could not be broken by the most obvious exigencies of rational politics. Life in the polis was truly life in a sense which Christians will have difficulty in reconstructing imaginatively because it presupposes an undifferentiated compactness of experience that we no longer have. It is a compactness just becoming luminous with transcendence through the prefiguring immortality of fame and name. The tenacity of the polis becomes intelligible if we understand it as the immortalizing faith of men whose differentiating self-consciousness has reached the stage of the "name" but not yet of the soul. Its strength should be measured by the fact that it remained the ultimately limiting faith even for Plato and Aristotle.

If now the Tyrtaean answer to the problem of Arete be held by the side of the Xenophantic, a pattern both theoretical and historical begins to emerge. The Hellenic poets and thinkers were engaged in the search for Arete. What they found was not the one true Arete but a whole

series of Aretai. With each new discovery the claim for superior rank of the previous discovery was broken; and in the end the problem had to arise whether the latest discovery invalidated all previous ones, or whether each discovery differentiated a certain sector of human experience so that only a balanced practice of all the Aretai fully expressed the potentialities of man. That ultimate phase of a systematic, ordering survey of Aretai was reached in the work of Plato, in particular in the *Republic* with its hierarchic order of the excellences from wisdom to temperance.

The transition from the discovery of new Aretai to their systematic ordering, however, must not be misunderstood as some mysterious awakening of a "scientific spirit" or as the beginning of a "science" of ethics; rather, it indicates that the search has reached its end. The search for the true Arete ends in the discovery that the Aretai are habituations of the soul which attune the life of man with transcendent reality; with the full differentiation of the field of Aretai there emerges the "true self" of man, the center at which he lives in openness toward the transcendental highest good, the Platonic Agathon. The transition to the ordering survey of Aretai means that the Agathon has been discovered as the principle of order in the soul.

When the whole range of Aretai is understood as the transparency of life for the realissimum, the single Aretai must undergo a revaluation through relativation. The compactness which an Arete has in the experience of its discovery must dissolve under the impact of further differentiating discoveries and, in particular, under the impact of the discovery of the Agathon. The compelling force of the Tyrtaean elegy is due to the fact that the experience of the new Arete carries the full weight of the experience of transcendence. With the further differentiation of the soul, with the discovery of wisdom and the nous, the transcendence through "savage valor," while retaining such truth as it has, will sink to comparatively low rank. This is the fate which the Arete of Tyrtaeus experienced at the hand of the all-weighting Plato. In the *Laws* (629f.) he reflected on the Tyrtaean elegy. He found that "savage valor" had its merits as a virtue in wars against aliens but that it would not contribute much to the just order of the polis. What the citizen-soldier can do as a warrior can also be done by mercenaries who are ready to die at their post; and yet, with few exceptions, they are insolent, unjust, brutal, and



rather senseless individuals. The courage of Tyrtaeus will rank only fourth in the order of excellences, preceded by wisdom, justice, and temperance.

### 3. *The Eunomia of Solon*

The Tyrtaean valor will maintain the polis in existence in a deadly crisis but it is not a virtue of civic order. To be sure, it is not entirely void of ordering content; for the valor of the citizen-soldier already presupposes a democratization of society in comparison with the Homeric aristocracy. Nevertheless, the Spartan democratization was limited to the freemen of the clans; the people at large remained a subject population under the Lacedaemonian ruling group. Sparta never developed a political order of the people; its constitution, as we said, was the fossilized order of conquest. The symbols of order for a whole people with its conflicts of interests were developed in Athens, through Solon. He was a statesman as well as a thinker and a poet; and enough of his poems are extant to inform us about the development of his ideas from the crisis preceding the Reform of 594 B.C. to the tyranny of Peisistratus after 561 B.C.

In an elegy antedating the Reform Solon reflects on the probable fate of "our polis."<sup>5</sup> She will never perish by the will of the gods but only by the folly of her own citizens. Unrighteous is the mind of the leaders of the people; without respect for sacred or public possessions they steal right and left; and they have no regard for the venerable foundations of Dike. But Dike, in her silence, is well aware of such doings and her revenge always comes in the end. Ineluctably (*aphyktos*) the consequences of the violation of Dike will manifest themselves in civil strife. Conventicles (*synodoi*), so dear to the unrighteous, will be formed and the government will fall into the hands of its enemies, while the poor people will be sold into slavery in foreign lands. The public evil (*demon-kakon*) will penetrate into every private house; locking of doors will not keep it out, for it jumps over high walls; and it finds every man in the innermost recess of his house. Filled with the sorrow of such prospects, Solon concludes: "My heart [*thymos*] commands me to teach the Athenians this"—that unrighteousness (*dysnomia*) will create much evil for the polis, while righteousness (*eunomia*) will make things well-

<sup>5</sup> *Elegy and Iambus*, I, Solon 4.

ordered and proper (*eukosma kai artia*). Eunomia will restrain the unrighteous, check excess, reduce hybris, straighten crooked judgments, stop factions and civil strife, and will make "all things proper and sensible in the affairs of men."

The elegy is carefully constructed and contains the principal ideas which Solon elaborates in other poems. We can follow its guidance and consider the topics in succession.

The elegy opens with a reflection on the causes of the Athenian crisis. The responsibility rests not with the gods, but with the folly of men. It is the great theme of theodicy, following the paradigm of the *Odyssey*. Solon, however, goes far beyond Homer in the exploration of the problem. Later, when the tyranny of Peisistratus is established, he chides his countrymen not to blame the gods when they suffer through their own cowardice. The Athenians themselves have given the tyrant the guards that now keep them in servitude; they step like foxes but they have no brains; they trust a man's talk and don't look at his deeds (10). For the first time, the historico-political process appears as a chain of cause and effect; human action is the cause of order or disorder in the polis. The source of the new aetiology becomes apparent in the following fragment: "From the cloud comes the strength of snow and hail, and thunder is born from bright lightning; a polis is ruined by its great men, and the people falls into the servitude of a tyrant through its simple-mindedness" (9). The historical causality is modeled on the causality of nature that was being discovered at the time by the Ionian physicists.

Nevertheless, we are yet far from a Thucydidean causality of politics. The actions of man are still embedded in a cosmic order that is governed by the gods. Evil conduct will lead to evil results because offended Dike will have her revenge. This is the aspect of theodicy which Solon explores thoroughly in the great Prayer to the Muses (13). Grant me wealth (the Homeric *olbos*), he prays to the Muses, as well as good fame among men; and with wealth will come the power, for which he prays, to be "sweet to my friends, and a bitter taste to my foes." But the prayer for the excellences of an Homeric aristocrat is softened by concern for the Hesiodian Dike: "Wealth I desire to possess—but I would not have it unrighteously; for Dike always catches up." Zeus himself, through his Dike, watches over the actions of man; the works of hybris and force will arouse his wrath slowly but surely; the one will pay earlier, the other



later; and if he escape himself, his guiltless children and their offspring will pay for his misdeeds. Then the poem broadens into a grandiose meditation on the delusions of man. Each of us, whether good or bad, lives engrossed in his own illusion (*doxa*) until he suffers. The sick hope to be healthy, and the poor to be rich; the cowards believe they are brave, and the ugly man believes himself good-looking. Each, furthermore, follows his business and hopes to gain by it—whether as a fisherman, a peasant, a craftsman, a physician, or a seer; and he will not be deterred by hard work, failure, and little profit. But the goods of comeliness and health, of success and riches, are not at the disposition of mortal action. Moira, Fate, brings good and ill to the mortals; and the gifts of the immortals must be accepted. Honest endeavor may fail, and the wicked ones may succeed. Nevertheless, this order of things is not senseless; it appears devoid of sense only if the illusionary wishes and pursuits of man are substituted for the sense of the gods. The source of senselessness is the illusion (*doxa*) of man. And, in particular, the striving for wealth, the highest aim of all effort, cannot be a principle of order. There is no clear end (*terma*) to such striving; for the richest among us are twice as eager to have more than the others; and who could let them all have their fill? Possessions, to be sure, come from the gods; but there is a fatality attached to them, which passes along with them, from hand to hand.

In the meditative prayer of Solon, as in the elegy of Tyrtaeus, the polis asserts itself against the excellences of the old aristocracy. The citizen of a polis cannot lead the heroic life of an Homeric prince. If everybody wants to play Agamemnon or Achilles, the result will not be an aristocratic culture but a war of all against all and the destruction of the polis. In a polis heroic existence degenerates into exploitation and tyranny. The conflict becomes the occasion for a profound reconsideration of political ethics on the part of Solon. If the Athenian aristocrats use the advantages of their economic position to the full, the danger is imminent that Athens will perish and Homeric conditions will be restored, indeed. Thucydides, in his *History*, shrewdly discerned that the most backward regions of Hellas gave an idea of conditions in the age depicted by Homer. Solon recognized the truth of the Homeric excellences; but he also knew that the polis required a new temperance. The naive prosperity and magnificence of the hero could no longer be the Arete of man. "Many bad men are rich, many good men are poor; but we for our part shall not exchange Arete for riches; for Arete lasts forever, while possessions are in the hands

now of one man, then of another" (15). The true Arete of man is distinguished as something less tangible than the possessions in which the hero finds confirmation of his worth. But wherein precisely does the newly discovered Arete consist? The religious genius of Solon reveals itself in the refusal of a positive answer. The excellence of man cannot find its fulfillment in the possession of finite goods. The goods at which man aims through his action are apparent only; they belong to the *doxa* of his wishes and pursuits. The true Arete consists in man's obedience to a universal order which in its fullness is known only to the gods. "It is very hard to know the unseen measure of right judgment; and yet it alone contains the right boundaries [*peirata*] of all things" (16). The true Arete is an act of faith in the unknown order of the gods who will see to it that the man who renounces his *doxa* will act in accordance with Dike. On the one hand, "The mind of the immortals is all unseen to men" (17); on the other hand, "At the behest of the gods have I done what I said" (34, 6). We are already very close to the Platonic Agathon about which nothing can be said positively, although it is the source of order in the Politeia.

The *Doxa* is the source of disorder; renunciation of *Doxa* is the condition of right order, *Eunomia*. When man overcomes the obsession of his *Doxa* and fits his action into the unseen measure of the gods, then life in community will become possible. This is the Solonic discovery. At the core of his *Eunomia*, as its animating experience, we find the religiousness of a life in tension between the passionate, human desire for the goods of exuberant existence and the measure imposed on such desire by the ultimately inscrutable will of the gods. Neither of the two components of life is invalidated by the other. Solon is neither a middle-class type who finds virtue in a medium situation because it fits his medium stature; nor is he a broken Titan, resigned to the frustration of his desires by Fate. He passionately loves the magnificence and exuberance of life; but he experiences it as a gift of the gods, not as an aim to be realized by crooked means against the divine order. Through openness toward transcendence, the passion of life is revealed as the *Doxa* that must be curbed for the sake of order.

The concretization of this unseen measure, its translation into rules of conduct, is determined by the existence of the polis. Concretely the politics of Solon becomes the appeal, and the statesman's practice, of balancing the conflicting desires of the social groups so that their co-existence



within the polis, and thereby the existence of the polis itself, will be possible. The following fragment of an appeal is typical:

Calm the hard-burning heart in your breast,  
You who have had surfeit of many good things,  
And put within limits  
your great-mindedness [*megan noon*] (28c).

And the same principle of restraining the excess of passion underlies his advice for treating the masses:

For abundance breeds hybris  
when too much prosperity [*olbos*] comes  
To men whose mind is not fit for it. (6)

Standing between the two factions of the landed aristocrats who did not want to surrender any of their privileges and of the poor people who were greedy for more than their personal caliber could bear, Solon had to strike a balance. And he prided himself that to the people he gave such privilege as was enough for them, and that the wealthy and powerful did not suffer undue hardship through his Reform: "Holding a strong shield I protected them both, and would not let either gain unrighteously over the other" (5).

The most important part of Solon's politics, however, was the conduct of the man himself. Not only did he have to function as the arbiter and lawgiver for the conflicting social groups; he also had to resist the temptation of using his enormous power for his own advantage and of imposing himself as tyrant on the polis. In his justification, in the iambic poem, he reminds his critics that another man "had he taken the goad in his hand, a man unwise and covetous, would not have restrained the people." The upper class might well praise him as a friend for, "had another man won such honor, he would not have restrained the people until he had done his churning and taken the cream off the milk" (36 and 37). The temptation must have been great because the people more or less expected him to assume the tyrant's role; not only would they have condoned it, but they considered him rather a fool because he did not avail himself of the opportunity. There were the many who sneered at him because he had not taken his chance, and who loudly proclaimed that they would gladly have submitted to any punishment afterwards if only they had first gained riches and exercised the tyranny of Athens

for a single day (33). Against such popular opinion Solon professed not to be ashamed because he did not seize tyranny and thereby disgrace his good name (32). Criticisms and sneers of this kind must have been trying, for on occasion he sighed: "In great matters it is hard to please all" (7). He left Athens for ten years in order to escape such molestation; and from the judgment of the citizenry he proudly appealed to "the tribunal of Time" (36).

Sweeping judgments in such matters are as easy as they are dangerous. Nevertheless, we risk to say that, through his restraint and its motivation, Solon was the most important single personality in Hellenic politics. Very few individuals in the history of mankind, like Alexander or Caesar, have had the privilege of creating a new personal type. Solon was one of them. He created the type of the lawgiver, the *nomothetes*, in the classical sense, not for Hellas only, but as a model for mankind. He was a statesman, not above the parties, but between them; he shared the passions of the people and, thus, could make himself accepted as one of them in politics; and he could act with authority as the statesman *for* the people, because in his soul these passions had submitted to universal order. The *Eunomia* he created in the polis was the *Eunomia* of his soul. In his person came to life the prototype of the spiritual statesman. His soul had a unique amplitude and elasticity. He could share the pessimism of the Ionians when he wrote: "No man is happy; all mortals on whom the Sun gazes are wretched" (14); and he could wish to live to the age of eighty (20) because he felt his mind still growing: "As I grow old I learn many things" (18). Moreover, the miracle of his life has determined the later concern with order inestimably in so far as the work of Plato is hardly conceivable, and certainly not intelligible, without the paradigmatic life of Solon. In the *Timaeus*, in retrospect, Plato interprets the *Republic* as the Solonic phase of his own life. The conception of the *Politeia* as "man written large" is fundamentally the Solonic conception of the polis whose order embodies the *Eunomia* of the soul; while the conception of the philosopher-king as the substance of order hearkens back to the paradigm of Solon as the substantive source of Athenian order. Between Solon and Plato lies the history of the Athenian polis—from the creation of its order through the soul of Solon to its disintegration when the renovation of order through the soul of Socrates and Plato was rejected. The union of human passions and divine order in the *Eunomia* dissociated into the passions of the *demos* and the order that lives through the work of Plato.



brings Being into grasp, does not articulate its content. The content of Being is articulated by a further faculty that appears on this occasion for the first time, by the *logos* in the narrower sense of logical argumentation. The Nous, together with the Logos, is the Parmenidean cognitive organ for determining the nature of Being.

The revelation of the truth about Being assumes the form of a classification of the various ways of inquiry. Spinning out the metaphor of the "Way," the goddess informs Parmenides about the "ways of inquiry" that alone are thinkable. The meaning of way, of the *bodos*, shifts in this opening from the mystical to the logical way, foreshadowing the meaning of *methodos*, of the method of scientific inquiry. There are two such ways: "The one way, that *Is* and that *Not is* cannot be,<sup>9</sup> is the path of Persuasion [*Peitbo*] which is attendant upon Truth [*Aletheia*]. But the other path is utterly undiscernible; for, Notbeing you can neither know nor pronounce; for, what is, is the same [*auto*] to thinking and being" (B 2 and 3). The goddess warns Parmenides away from this second path. And then she informs him about the third path, equally to be shunned, that is, the assumption that both Being and Notbeing exist. This is the way on which "mortals wander who know nothing, the doubleheads. Perplexity guides the wandering mind in their breasts. They are borne along, deaf and blind, a bemused, undiscerning crowd, by whom Being and Notbeing is reckoned [*nenomistai*] the same and not the same, for whom in all things there is a way that turns upon itself" (B 6).

These terse lines contain the first piece of methodical philosophizing in Western history. The truth about Being is the object of inquiry. The inquiry is conducted through (1) a logically exhaustive enumeration of theses concerning the nature of Being, and (2) the elimination of the wrong theses. In the present context we cannot go through the technical details of the process of elimination; we should merely like to draw attention to one point. The philosopher is warned against the second way (that Notbeing exists): "Restrain your thought [*noema*] from this way of inquiry; let not much-experienced habit force you on this way, giving reign to the unseeing eye and the droning ear and the tongue, but make your decision in the much-disputed inquiry by means of argument [*logos*]" (B 7). The Logos is the instrument for ascertaining the truth; and parallel with the Logos appears the source of error, that is, the habit, or custom (*ethos*) of "much-experience," as transmitted uncritically

<sup>9</sup> Or, more discursively: "that Being is and that Not-Being is not."



by ear, eye, and tongue. The commonly accepted "experience" (*poly-peiria*) moves, on the epistemological level, into the position of the commonly accepted valuations against which the new insight asserted itself from Sappho to Xenophanes. A further shade of meaning is added to this common experience through the characterization of the third way on which Being and Notbeing are "reckoned" or "considered" (*nenomistai*) the same, with the implication (in the Greek term) that the *nomos*, the custom, is the source of confusion. This Parmenidean meaning of *nomos* enters as an important component into the later Sophistic concepts of *physis* and *nomos*.

In the description of the one true way of inquiry into Being, there appears a peculiarity of expression that is much debated among philosophers. The reader will have noticed that in the description of the way "that *Is* and that *Not is* cannot be" the "Is" has no subject in the grammatical sense. Translators frequently supply a subject, such as "It is," or "Being is." As far as the sense of the passage is concerned the supplementing of "Being" as the grammatical subject is perfectly legitimate; and the *Eon* indeed appears in other passages in this function. Nevertheless, it does not appear in these preliminary formulations, and we are not satisfied with the explanation (so ready at hand in dealing with early Greek thinkers) that the good man was "clumsy" and did not quite know yet how to handle the philosophical vocabulary that he was just about to create. Rather, we suspect that there was a good reason for the hesitation to use the subject *Eon* and that in this hesitation the true philosophical genius of Parmenides reveals itself. For the "Being" which becomes the object of inquiry can be grasped in the mystical transport, and the area of the soul in which the object is experienced can be named *Nous*; but that does not make "Being" a datum in the immanent sense, a thing with a form that can be discerned by noesis. To speak of such an object, which is not an object, in propositions with subject and predicate ought to give pause. As far as the predicates of a transcendental subject are concerned, the matter has been cleared up on principle by the Thomistic *analogia entis*; but even the Thomistic exposition of the problem leaves the question of the subject wide open. To name the subject "God," as is done in Christian theology, is a convenience, but quite unsatisfactory in critical philosophy. With great circumspection Parmenides has resisted the temptation of calling his Being God—a temptation which must have been great in the face of the preceding Ionian and Italian



of Being on the one true way of inquiry. They are: uncreated, imperishable, whole (or complete), unmoved (or immovable), and without end (*ateleston*) (B 8, 1-4). The last of the predicates seems to mean that Being cannot exist toward an end because an end, however understood, would imply a becoming or a ceasing.

(2) The enumeration is followed by a new type of predication with regard to time: "And it was not and it will not be, for it is altogether Now [*nyn*]" (B 8, 5). Being is not a flux with a past and a future. The predication expresses what we considered the primary experience of Parmenides, the "Is!" In exclamatory form he repeats the question: "Is or Is not" (B 8, 16). When we decide for *Is* it cannot have a becoming. "Thus is 'becoming' extinguished and 'passing away' not to be heard of" (B 8, 21). The predication accomplishes by this first speculative stroke the philosophy of time which Plato and St. Augustine have further elaborated; that is, the philosophy of a ground of being that exists in the eternity of the *nunc stans*. Parmenides arrives at it by means of argumentation on the "Is." "Dike has not set free [*sc.* the "Is"] for becoming or passing, releasing her fetters, but holds fast" (B 8, 13-15). If it were otherwise, the present of the "Is" would be negated, since Parmenides equates becoming or passing away, in past or future tense, with "it was" or "it will be." The conception of the *Nyn*, the Now, as the predicate of Being follows from the meaning of the "Is."

(3) A similar argument is used to establish the continuum of Being as one, homogeneous, and indivisible (B 8, 6 and 22ff.). As the same in the same it rests in the selfsame place, abiding in itself. Powerful Ananke (Necessity) keeps it in the bonds of the boundary that surrounds it on every side, because Being must not be unbounded (*ateleuteton*). For Being is in need of nothing; but, if it were unbounded it would be in need of everything (B 8, 29-33). The self-contained, homogeneous continuum is the spatial predicate of Being, corresponding to the temporal Now. Like the Now, it has a rich later development in philosophy, beginning with its elaboration into the theory of the continuum of being of Anaxagoras and with the conception of homogeneous, indivisible (*atomos*) particles of matter in the atomic theory of Democritus.

(4) Of special interest is the concluding metaphorical description of Being as a "well-rounded sphere" (B 8, 42-49). The idea of a boundary of Being, thus, is elaborated by the idea of a spatial form which, by its limitation, would transform Being into a shape in an environment of



perience of "Is!" Again, as in the analysis of Xenophanes, we are confronted with the problem of a plurality of experiences in which transcendence comes into grasp. In Faith and Revelation levels of transcendence beyond the Truth of Being become accessible—but the symbolism of Faith and Revelation retains the qualities of "likeness" that characterized Doxa and Myth, as distinguished from the Ananke of the Logos. Revelation does not abolish the Truth of Being. Hence, with the entrance of Revelation into history we enter into the history of permanent rivalry between the two sources of Truth. It is a rivalry which occupied Jewish, Christian, and Islamic thinkers. It could express itself in the demand that the Truth of the philosopher be subordinated to revealed Truth, that philosophy should serve as the handmaid of Scripture or theology; or in the demand of allegorical interpretation of Scripture in order to conform its meaning to philosophy; or in the theory of a harmony between Faith and Reason; or in the Arabic conception of Scripture as giving to the people the same Truth in doxic form that speculation gives to the philosopher in logical form. Or, finally, the intellect could take the offensive and substitute the truth of speculation for the truth of faith, as it has happened in the modern gnostic movements of Progressivism, Hegelianism, Comtism, and Marxism.

The struggle between the Ways of Truth is the fundamental issue of Western intellectual history from the blending of Hellenism and Christianity to the present. And Parmenides is the thinker who has created the "type" for this world-historic struggle through his unshakable establishment of the Way of the Logos.



and from such final incarnation they will rise to the immortals and again join the company of the gods (B 146, B 147).

From the general conception of the soul as a *daimon* that has fallen from blessedness, and is now imprisoned successively in a series of mortal bodies, follow the Pythagorean rules for purity and purification of life.<sup>5</sup> Of the manifold of detail we mention only the abhorrence of "slaughter" for sacrificial purposes as well as for the consumption of meat, as one of the roots of vegetarianism.

Of greater interest for us is the question: Whence do Pythagoras and Empedocles derive their knowledge of metempsychosis? With regard to this question we have no more than the barest indications of an answer. In a fragment which even in Hellenic antiquity was understood as referring to Pythagoras, Empedocles speaks of a man of unusual knowledge who, when he strained with all his mind, could see all things that are "for ten or twenty life-times of men" (B 129). Of himself he has to say that before his present life he had been a boy and a girl, a plant and a bird and a fish (B 117). Such fragments seem to point to an ecstatic experience in which the mind "reaches out" or "strains" to the utmost (*orexaito* in B 129). From an ecstasis of this kind, which (as the formulations suggest) may have been induced by a discipline, probably stems the sure conviction which Empedocles expresses in his address to the citizens of Akragas: "I go about among you, an immortal god, no longer a mortal" (B 112). This assurance of essential divinity, combined with the experience of the fall into mortal embodiment, and with a high degree of empathy for the psyche in plant and animal life, seems to be the experiential aggregate which, on the doctrinal level, results in the conception of metempsychosis.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. *The Exploration of the Soul*

The conception of the immortal soul, of its origin, fall, wanderings, and ultimate bliss, which we just have assembled from the fragments

<sup>5</sup> The conception of the body (*soma*) as the prison or tomb (*sema*) of the soul is Pythagorean. It appears in Plato's *Phaedo* (62), attributed to Philolaus but with the implication of an older origin. Cf. Plato's *Gorgias* (493) where the *soma-sema* conception is attributed to a "sage"; and *Phaedrus* (250c) where Plato speaks of the state in which the souls are still "pure and untombded."

<sup>6</sup> The Pythagorean metempsychosis was further developed by Plato into the Judgment of the Dead.



of Empedocles, must be presupposed in the thinkers of the generation around 500 B.C. In particular, it must be presupposed in Heraclitus who consciously explores the dimensions of this soul.<sup>7</sup>

2  
So?  
See  
13 129

The new deliberateness and radicalism of the inquiry can perhaps be sensed most clearly in the famous fragment: "Character—to man—demon" (B 119). It is not easy to gauge the full importance of the fragment because it is isolated. In a first approach one might attribute to it as little technical meaning as possible and consider it no more than a formulation in opposition to conventional opinions about character as the inner and demon as the external factor of human fate. Even if we exert such caution, there still remains the important fact that the demon is immanentized and identified with character (*ethos*). If, however, we put the fragment into the context of the Pythagorean conception of the soul (a procedure that seems to us well justified), then it identifies the *daimon* in the Pythagorean sense with that structure of the soul which Heraclitus designates by the term *ethos*. This identification would imply the momentous break with the archaic inseparable connection of immortality with divinity. The soul, in order to be immortal, would not have to be a *daimon*; we would advance from a theomorphic conception of the soul to a truly human one. The basis for a critical, philosophical anthropology would be created.<sup>8</sup>

We believe, indeed, that this is the great achievement of Heraclitus. And we find our interpretation supported when we place the fragment into the context of Heraclitean meanings. For even if B 119 is understood to identify *daimon* and *ethos*, we have not advanced very far as long as we do not know what Heraclitus means by *ethos* and the conventional translation as "character" does not help. The needed help comes from B 78: "Human *ethos* has no insights, but divine has." Human *ethos* is distinguished from divine through the absence of insight (*gnome*). Hence, the term *ethos* must have a range of meaning beyond

<sup>7</sup> The following interpretation of Heraclitus is principally guided by Olof Gigon, *Untersuchungen zu Heraklit* (Leipzig, 1935); by the same author's *Der Ursprung der griechischen Philosophie*; and by Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers*. Of great value were the pages on Heraclitus in Bruno Snell, *Die Entdeckung des Geistes* (2d ed., Hamburg, 1948), 32ff. The works just enumerated have put the understanding of Heraclitus on a new basis.

<sup>8</sup> The term "theomorphic" has theoretical implications which cannot be elaborated on this occasion. The so-called "anthropomorphism" of archaic symbolization is indeed not a symbolization of gods in human shape but, on the contrary, a symbolization of areas and forces of the soul by means of divinities. "Anthropomorphism" disappears when the divinities are absorbed into the soul.

character; it must designate the "nature" of a being in general, whether human or divine (*theion*). Moreover, the difference between human and divine *ethos* is very considerable. The proportion is expressed in B 79: "Man is called a baby by the divinity [*daimon*], as a child is by man." *Daimon* is used in this fragment specifically in order to distinguish god and man. Beyond this point, unfortunately, we run into certain difficulties because the texts are not too well preserved. It seems that Heraclitus used of his divinity the predicate "the alone wise," as in B 32: "One, the alone wise [*to sophon mounon*], wants and wants not to be called by the name of Zeus." Moreover, in B 108 he considers as the distinguishing feature of his philosophizing the recognition "that the Wise is apart from all things." But in B 41 he speaks of the *hen to sophon*, of the One that is Wise, as "the understanding of the insight [*gnome*] that steers all things through all things [that is, rules the universe]." The *sophon* seems to designate a human wisdom concerning the *gnome* that rules the world.<sup>9</sup> If we accept both fragments as they stand, the term *sophon* would be used of god as well as of man—with the distinction, however, that the predicate the "Alone Wise" is reserved for god. Human wisdom would then consist in the understanding that it has no wisdom of its own; human nature (*ethos*) is wise when it has understood the *gnome* that governs the cosmos as god's alone.

Human and divine natures, thus, are distinguished by the "types" of wisdom, and related with each other in so far as human wisdom consists in the consciousness of a limitation in comparison with the divine. We know about the divine wisdom but we do not have it; we participate in it far enough to touch it with our understanding, but we cannot hold it as a possession. The Heraclitean experience resembles the Parmenidean. But Heraclitus does not attempt to articulate "Being" through logical explication; he is rather concerned with the relation between

<sup>9</sup> On the meaning of the corrupt text, as well as on the various attempts at reconstruction, cf. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, I/2 (Leipzig, 1920), 839ff. Heidel (1913) and Reinhardt (1916) have suggested reconstructions that would result in substantially the following meaning: "One, the Wise, alone has the insight to govern through all." Recent opinion is divided on the question. Jaeger, *Theology*, 125, n. 58 makes the "one, the Wise" of B 41 refer to the divinity as the same phrase in B 32; Gigon, *Ursprung*, 258, interprets it as human wisdom. The reconstructions as an attribute of divinity are motivated by the sound conviction that the phrase *hen to sophon* so clearly refers to the divinity that the text must have suffered. The acceptance as human wisdom takes into account that the fragment appears in Diogenes Laertius IX, 1 in a context which proves that the ancient author understood it without hesitation as human wisdom. In our opinion a final decision is impossible at present.



the two natures and their types of wisdom. On the level of logic, as a consequence, we find "contradictory" formulations which by their very contradiction express a wisdom that partakes of true wisdom without possessing it fully. Thus, in the previously quoted B 108 Heraclitus praises as the specific result of his *logos* (discourse), as distinguished from the *logoi* of all other thinkers, the insight that the "*sophon* is apart from all things." In B 50, on the other hand, he insists that it is wise (*sophon*) for all who hear his *logos* to agree (*homologeîn*) that "all is one." The One that is wise is apart from all things; but for the man who is wise all things are the One. The meaning is elucidated by another pair of contradictory fragments. In B 40 (to which we referred already in the section on Xenophanes) Heraclitus speaks of the *polymathie*, the "much-knowing," which does not teach "understanding"; and more specifically in B 129 he speaks of Pythagoras who pursued scientific inquiries (*hístorie*) more than any other man, and only arrived at a wisdom (*sophie*) of his own, at a *polymathie*, a "bad art." In B 35, on the other hand, he insists that the "lover of wisdom" (*philosophos*) must of necessity have inquired (*hístoreîn*) into many things. The intention of Heraclitus comes now more clearly into view. Human wisdom is not a completed possession but a process. The participation in the divine wisdom that is apart from all things, cannot be achieved through a leap beyond all things; it is the result of the occupation with these very things, ascending from the manifold to the One that is to be found in them all. The attempt may fail; and the lover of wisdom, the philosopher, may end as a polyhistor.

The first appearance of the term "philosopher" in this context suggests the passages in the *Phaedrus* where Plato—undoubtedly following Heraclitus—contemplates a new term for the poets, orators, and legislators who can go beyond the written word of their compositions and prove through oral defense and elaboration that their work indeed is based on knowledge of "truth." The new term for the man of such higher knowledge should not be *sophos*—for that is a great name "seemly to God alone"—but the more humble and befitting *philosophos* (278d). And those who cannot rise beyond their compilation and composition, the patching and piecing, they by right will be called poets, orators, and lawmakers (278d-e). The Platonic opposition of the living, spoken word to the merely written—which is still a subject of debate—illuminates the Heraclitean intention, and in its turn receives light from it.

Literary composition in itself seems to be fraught with danger because it engenders the illusion that "truth" or "wisdom" can be fully expressed and stored away in the work. The living truth, however, is a movement of the soul in the direction of the divine *sophon*, and such movement can never be banned completely into form. Hence, the work has quality only in so far as it has banned this movement so that the formulations will stimulate the corresponding movement in the soul of the reader; and the acid test of such quality is the ability of the creator to elaborate on his subject matter orally from the resources of his soul. By such free oral expression in conversation the creator will prove that he is a creator indeed, and not merely a skilled polyhistor or craftsman who has done a piece of patchwork with instruments supplied by tradition. The Heraclitean attack is primarily directed against the polyhistoric collector of facts, the Platonic primarily against the poetic, legal, and oratorical craftsmen. Both Heraclitus and Plato, however, agree that no composition can lay claim to "truth" unless it is authenticated by the movement of the psyche toward the *sophon*. The problem of truth now is differentiated so far that the loving movement of the soul toward the "Alone Wise" is recognized as the source of such truth as the production of the thinker or poet may have. In so far as this recognition implies a clear distinction between the divinity of "wisdom" and the humanity of "love for wisdom," the philosophical orientation of the soul becomes the essential criterion of "true" humanity. The soul of man is a source of truth only when it is oriented toward god through the love of wisdom. In Heraclitus the idea of an order of the soul begins to form which in Plato unfolds into the perennial principle of political science that the right order of the soul through philosophy furnishes the standards for the right order of human society.

If the nature, the *ethos*, of man is to be found in a process or movement that will result either in an increase of wisdom or in a failure of achievement, we may expect at least an attempt to describe the dynamics of the psyche. A few of the preserved fragments show that Heraclitus was, indeed, occupied by this question. In B 45 he says: "You could not find the limits of the soul, even if you travelled every path; so deep is its *logos*." Whether "logos" in this fragment simply means extension or measure (as suggested by Burnet), or whether *logos* means an intelligent substance with a depth of understanding, cannot be decided on the basis of this sentence alone. We prefer the second assump-



that the title *On Nature* was given by Heraclitus himself; from its ascription we can only conclude that the work must have contained a sufficient number of pronouncements to allow anybody who was so minded to classify Heraclitus as a "physiologist" of the Milesian type and to extract a cosmology from the "book."<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, we have the opinion of the grammarian Diodotus who insisted that the book was not on nature but on government (*peri politeias*) and that the part on natural matters served only "by way of paradigm."<sup>13</sup> The extant fragments suggest that Diodotus comes considerably closer to the truth than the naturalist opinion. It seems to us that Heraclitus was concerned with a philosophy of order which had as its experiential center the order of the soul and from there branched out into the order of society and the cosmos. The three types of order would be related with each other ontologically in so far as the ordering principle of the cosmos was conceived as an intelligent substance, and the order of the soul as part of cosmic order. It would be a conception very near to the late Plato in *Timaeus* and *Critias*. The question what the subject matter actually was, if it can be answered at all at this date, must be decided through an analysis of the extant fragments, under the assumption that Heraclitus was a thinker of the first rank and that the lines of meaning to be found in the preserved pieces can, therefore, legitimately be used in reconstructing his thought. Such a reconstruction, we believe, will bear out the opinion of Diodotus rather than that of the "physiologists."

Fortunately there are preserved the opening sentences of the work, presumably setting the theme:

This Logos here, though it is eternal, men are unable to understand before they hear it as well as when they hear it first. For, though all things come to pass in accordance with this Logos, they are like untried [*sc. inexperienced*] men when they try words and deeds such as I set forth, explaining each thing according to its nature and showing what the real state of the case is. But as to these other men, it escapes their notice what they do when awake, as it escapes their memory what they do when asleep (B 1).

Into the oracular compactness of these sentences Heraclitus has woven a considerable number of his principal motifs. He speaks of the Logos, meaning his discourse; but this Logos is at the same time a sense or meaning, existing from eternity, whether proclaimed by the Heraclitean

<sup>12</sup> Diogenes Laertius IX, 5.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, IX, 15.



Since the Heraclitean mode of expression is not discursive but oracular we shall employ the method of pursuing the word-pattern through the fragments in order to reconstruct a more comprehensive body of meanings:

(1) If the opening sentences (B 1) be used as a starting point, we can move in the direction indicated by the term Logos. In B 2 Heraclitus makes it a duty for all men to "follow the common [*xynon*]." And then he continues with the complaint: "But though the Logos is common, the many live as if they had a wisdom of their own [*idian phronesin*]." The Logos is what men have in common, and when they are in agreement with regard to the Logos (*homologia*) then they are truly in community.

(2) The pair common-private is then identified with the pair wake-asleep (B 1) in B 89: "Those who are awake have a world [*kosmos*] one and common, but those who are asleep each turn aside into their private worlds."

(3) On the occasion of B 2 there appears the term Phronesis in specific relation with the community-creating quality of the Logos, further supported by B 113: "It is common to all men to understand [*phroneein*]." The tendency toward the meaning of Phronesis as the prudential wisdom in matters ethical and political, as we find it fully developed in Aristotle, is unmistakable.

(4) Phronesis, however, has to share this function with the Nous that we know from Xenophanes and Parmenides. For, playing with a phonetic association, Heraclitus says in B 114: "Those who speak with the mind [*xyn nooi*] must strengthen themselves with that which is common [*xynoi*] to all." The community of the Logos, thus, moves also into opposition to the "much-knowing" (B 40), which does not teach understanding (*noon*), while the *polymathie* of Hesiod, Pythagoras, Xenophanes, and Hecataeus moves to the side of the sleepwalkers.

(5) Moreover, the phonetic play of B 114 carries the meaning of the common Nous over into the common Nomos: "Those who speak with the mind [*nooi*] must strengthen themselves with that which is common to all, as the polis does with the law [*nomoi*] and more strongly so. For all human laws nourish themselves from the one divine—which prevails as it will, and suffices for all things and more than suffices." It is probable that the later Platonic play with Nous and Nomos hearkens back to this Heraclitean sentence.



for they pay one another penalty [*dike*] and compensation for their injustice [*adikia*] according to the ordinance [or: decree, *taxis*] of Time."<sup>16</sup> While the term *kosmos* does not appear in this passage, "the things" are clearly conceived as a universe with an ordered process. And the order, as the legal terminology shows, is conceived after the model of a lawsuit in which justice is administered—the decree of Time rules "the things" out of existence, back to where they came from, so that other things may have being for their allotted time. The "cosmos" is not something that is found through observation of the external world; it rather is the projection of a human order into the universe. This is fundamentally already the experience which Heraclitus expressed in the formula: "they live each other's death and die each other's life." With their projection of order from society into the cosmos Anaximander and Heraclitus have created a "type" that has determined the whole later course of Greek and Western political theory in so far as the paradigm of this projection (as Jaeger has recognized) was followed by Plato in his conception of the Polis of the Idea as "man writ large" and further (as we may add) in his conception of the cosmos as a psyche.

The line that is running from Anaximander to Heraclitus is unmistakable. Nevertheless, Heraclitus is not simply a continuator of the Milesian naturalists. On occasion of our analysis of Xenophanes we distinguished between the two experiences of transcendence leading to the respective symbols of an *arche* of "things" and of a universal divinity. In the first of these experiences nature in its infinite flow became transparent for an origin of the flow itself; in the second of these experiences the transcendence of the soul toward the realissimum was understood as the universal characteristic of all men. The two experiences were then interpreted as pointing toward the same transcendental reality, and the identity found its expression in the formula "the One is God." This identity, still at the stage of discovery and tentative expression in Anaximander, and even in Xenophanes, is presupposed as established in Heraclitus; the Ephesian thinker takes it for granted and elaborates its speculative consequences. The cosmos now is nature in the Milesian sense and, at the same time, it is the manifesta-

<sup>16</sup> Diels-Kranz, Anaximander 9. For the interpretation cf. Jaeger, *Paideia* I, 158ff. and *Theology*, 34ff.

tion of the invisible, universal divinity; it is a universe given to the senses and, at the same time, the "sign" of the invisible God.

The preliminary formulation of the problem may serve as a guide through a group of fragments, not all of which can be deciphered easily when taken in isolation without such guidance. There is, first of all, a plain statement concerning the identity of the visible world and its invisible ground in B 10: "From all is One, and from One is all." But the same thought may also be expressed through "contradictions." There are, on the one hand, the previously quoted fragments on the *kosmos* that is one, and common, and animated by the ever-living order of the fire; and there is, on the other hand, B 124: "The most beautiful *kosmos* is like a garbage-heap strewn at random." The cosmos, thus, is order only as far as it is transparent for the invisible ordering force, while it is disorder when seen as an opaque, external arrangement of "things." Then there are two fragments which seem to "hint" at the two dimensions of transcendental experience separately. There is the deceptively simple B 103: "Common [*xynon*—beginning and end [*arche kai peras*]]—in the periphery of the circle." Most probably this sentence does not betray an interest in geometry, but uses the circle as a symbol for the identity of beginning and end in the *xynon*, articulating more adequately the Anaximandrian thought that "the things" perish into that from which they were born. The Milesian search for the beginning in the horizontal line of the flux of things is now bent back, through the symbol of the circle, so that the beginning and the end will meet in the permanent presence of the *xynon* that is experienced in the vertical direction of the soul toward the "All-Wise." And this vertical direction itself is expressed in B 60: "The way [*bodos*]]—upward and downward—one and the same"—a sentence which almost sounds like an answer to the one-way speculation of Parmenides, bridging the ontological gap of the Eleatic thinker. And, finally, we must in this context consider one of the most enigmatic pronouncements of Heraclitus, the B 52: "Aion is a child playing draughts; the royal rule [or: kingdom, *basileie*] is a child's." The conventional translations of Aion as "time" (Diels, Bywater, Nestle, Burnet) do not help, for Aion is a divinity and was understood as such in antiquity. Even Clement of Alexandria still took it for granted that the playing child was Zeus.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Clement, *Paedagogus* 22, 1.



And Euripides associated Aion, "the child of Kronos," with Moira in bringing on and ripening "many things."<sup>18</sup> Moreover, there is quite probably an Orphic and Cretan background to the "playing child."<sup>19</sup> Whatever the mythological ancestry of the Heraclitean Aion may be, it seems to us fairly certain that the Ephesian wanted to create a symbol expressing the ambiguity of order and disorder in the *kosmos*, the ambiguity which is made explicit in B 102: "To God all things are beautiful and good and just, but men hold some things just and some unjust." Certainly this was the sense in which Plato understood the symbol when he developed the child playing draughts (*paizon*, *petteuon*) into the God of the *Laws* (903d), the player (*petteutes*) who shifts the pieces according to an order that appears as disorder to man.<sup>20</sup>

The tension between the experience of the flow of "things" and the experience of a direction in the soul toward the divine "All-Wise," as well as the tension between the symbols expressing these experiences, will remain from now on, in varying degrees of consciousness, a dominant type of Hellenic speculation on order into the late work of Plato and into Aristotle. The tension did not break. Neither did the erotic orientation of the soul toward the *sophon* grow into an eschatological desire to escape the world; nor did the passionate participation in the flux and strife of "things" degenerate into a romantic surrender to the flux of history or to eternal recurrence. The emotional balance between the two possibilities was precarious, and in the generation of sophists after Heraclitus the strain began to show; lesser figures would break under it, but the great thinkers maintained the balance. A good deal of misinterpretation of Plato and Aristotle could be avoided if this problem were understood; and we must be aware of it now when we interpret the delicately shaded meanings of the all-too-few fragments of Heraclitus which carry his philosophy of order to the more concrete level of human destiny and political conduct.

We shall start with the flux of things. Heraclitus has expressed his experience of flux in such famous sentences as: "You cannot step twice into the same river" (B 91) and "You step into the same rivers, and

<sup>18</sup> Euripides, *Heraclidae* 898-900.

<sup>19</sup> Persson, *The Religion of Greece in Prehistoric Times*, 136ff., and Vittorio D. Macchiore, *From Orpheus to Paul* (New York, 1930), 171ff.

<sup>20</sup> We suspect that the "royal ruler" of Plato's *Statesman* also finds part of his ancestry in the Heraclitean Aion.

other and other waters will flow on" (B 12). Man participates in the flux, and the feat of stepping into the same river twice is impossible also because man has changed in the meantime and is no longer the same: "Into the same waves we step and do not step: we are it and we are not it" (B 49a). The permanent change may even become monotonous: "One day is like every other" (B 106). The aimless monotony of the flux, then, is broken through a desire to participate in it, through something like an animal urge: "When they are born, they desire to live, and to meet their fate; and they leave children behind also to suffer their fate [*morous*]" (B 20). And this animal urge to live at the price of death has even deeper roots in the cosmic urge of the Eris (B 80) that brings all things into being.

Eris and the desire to live symbolize the passion to participate in the flux, but they do not suggest a purpose. The question of the end is raised, in the most general form, in an account of Heraclitus' philosophy given by Diogenes Laertius. The reporter says: "Of the opposites that which urges toward birth [*genesis*] is called war and strife, and that which urges toward destruction by fire [*ekpyrosis*] is called *homologia* and peace."<sup>21</sup> The Stoic *ekpyrosis* is a doubtful item in this account but, for the rest, the language sounds genuine enough to justify the assumption that Heraclitus had indeed conceived the end of being as a liberation from the war of existence and a transfiguration into the peace of the *homologia*. The direction toward the peace of the Logos, however, is counterbalanced by the reflection that Homer was wrong in wishing "that strife [*eris*] might perish from among gods and men" for then life, which is existence in strife, would disappear altogether.<sup>22</sup> On the level of the animal and cosmic urge, death is the price that must be paid for life; on the level of the reflection on the end, life is the price that must be paid for the transfiguration in death. The tension is masterfully expressed in the symbol: "The name of the bow [*bios*] is life [*bios*], but its work is death" (B 48).

Life, thus, becomes the arena for the struggle in which union with the Logos is achieved, or rather should be achieved, for not all men are willing to undertake it. "The many do not understand such things, even though they run into them; and when learning they do not experience them, though they believe they do" (B 17). "For what thought or wis-

<sup>21</sup> Diogenes Laertius IX, 8. Diels-Kranz, *Heraclitus* A 1.

<sup>22</sup> Diels-Kranz, *Heraclitus* A 22.



dom have they? They believe the singer in the street and take the vulgar as their teacher; not knowing that 'the many are bad, and few are the good' " (B 104). The ways divide sharply: "The best choose one thing before all others: eternal fame among mortals; the many eat their fill like cattle" (B 29). And the way of the few is not easy to walk; it is a continuous struggle, as suggested by the elliptic B 85: "It is hard to fight with one's heart desire [*thymos*]" and nevertheless it must be done because "whatever it wishes to get, it buys at the price of the soul." The soul, the psyche, appears for the first time as the object of human concern; its well-being must be sought through the repression of desires. "For men to gain whatever they desire is not good" (B 110); and when the desires become exuberant then "Hybris must be put out, more than a fire" (B 43). The soul should burn, but with the divine fire of the cosmos: "The dry soul is wisest and best" (B 118); on the other side: "When a man gets drunk, he is led by a beardless boy; he stumbles, not knowing where he steps; for his soul is moist" (B 117); but unfortunately: "It is a delight to souls to become moist" (B 77).<sup>23</sup> The discipline which creates and preserves the health of the soul, however, is not theoretical like the later Aristotelian; it is the discipline of a warrior and aristocrat in obedience to the War that is father and king of all things: "Gods and men honor those who are slain in battle" (B 24). The peace of the Logos can be reached only through participation in the war of existence; and there is held out the promise that "Greater fates will gain greater portions" (B 25).<sup>24</sup>

A final group of fragments has most intensely absorbed the experiences which Heraclitus had with his Ephesians. "The Ephesians would do well to hang themselves, every grown man, and leave their polis to the beardless boys, for they have banned Hermodorus, the best man among them, saying: 'None of us will be the best, and if he is, he will have to be it elsewhere and among others'" (B 121). Hermodorus went to Rome and, according to tradition, his advice was taken in giving the law of the Twelve Tables. To a sensitive witness an event of this kind might well reveal the fundamental foulness of a society and open his eyes to the possibility that one man might be right and the whole

<sup>23</sup> Into this context of the health of the soul also belongs the indirect report B 46 that Heraclitus called common opinion or self-conceit (*oiesis*) a "sacred disease." If the report (in Diogenes Laertius IX, 7) is authentic, Heraclitus would have used the concept of a disease of the soul (*nosos*) in the same sense as Plato in the *Laws*.

<sup>24</sup> With regard to the connection between love of the All-Wise and *askesis* of the warrior, a comparison with Zen mysticism would be especially helpful for the understanding of Heraclitus.

people wrong. From such experience may have sprung the pointed B 39: "In Priene lives Bias, the son of Teutamas, who is of greater account [*logos*] than the rest," as well as the grim B 49: "One man is to me ten-thousand if he be the best." In a corrupt society there may be only one man in whose soul burns the cosmic fire, who lives in love to the divine *nomos*; then the situation envisaged by B 33 may arise: "It may be law [*nomos*] to obey the will [or: counsel] of one." In the light of this sentence must also be read B 44: "The people [*demos*] must fight for its law as for its walls"—with the implication that the actual people is not desirous to engage in the fight for the law that nourishes itself from the divine (B 114).

#### 4. Conclusions

The mystic-philosophers break with the myth because they have discovered a new source of truth in their souls. The "unseemly" gods of Homer and Hesiod must pale before the invisible harmony of the transcendental realissimum; and the magnificent Homeric epic that was enacted on the two planes of gods and men must sink to the level of "poetry" when the drama of the soul with its intangible, silent movements of love, hope, and faith toward the *sophon* is discovered. The order of the polis cannot remain the unquestioned, ultimate order of society when an idea of man is in formation that identifies humanity with the life of the common Logos in every soul. What appears negatively as the break with the myth is positively the transition from a theomorphic symbolization of experiences to their understanding as movements of the human soul itself. The true range of humanity comes into view correlatively with the radical transcendence of the divine realissimum. It is a process that may overshoot its mark—and actually did so in the century after Heraclitus—in so far as the recognition of the invisible God may degenerate into the denial of the existence of God when visibility becomes the criterion of existence. The movements of the soul which animate the speculation of a Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Heraclitus are not everybody's affair—as Heraclitus had diagnosed rightly. The many need gods with "shapes." When the "shapes" of the gods are destroyed with social effectiveness, the many will not become mystics but agnostics. The agnostic empiricist, if we may define him historically, is an enlightened polytheist who is spiritually not strong enough for faith.



## PART THREE

### *The Athenian Century*

The tension between the polis and the spiritual adventure of the poets and philosophers was the civilizational form of Hellas. The potentialities of the adventure had been fully actualized, however, and perhaps were exhausted, with the generation of Heraclitus and Parmenides. The myth, the *terminus a quo* of the movement toward transcendence, had been disintegrated through the discovery of the soul and its authority; and a *terminus ad quem*, a people that would live by the insights of the mystic-philosophers, had not been found. The authoritative "But I say unto you . . ." required a social response if it was not to peter out into repetitions, from time to time, by solitary individuals.<sup>1</sup> The Heraclitean reflections on the "sleepwalkers" ominously illuminate the social impasse of the magnificent adventure. In order to become truly the form of a civilization, the tension had to be something more than an irritation of the polis by odd individuals. Something like a Great Awakening was required to create a society in wakeful response to the depth of the soul, to the new humanity in love of the *sophon*, discovered by the philosophers.

The Great Awakening was the feat of the Athenian people in the fifth century B.C.—with consequences for the history of mankind which have not been exhausted to this day. For without the paradigmatic existence of the Athens of Marathon, the spiritual and intellectual community substance from which the political philosophy of Plato and Aristotle nourished itself would not have existed. Only with the paradigm of such a society in historical existence could a philosophy of order for a society of mature men be developed with conviction.

A history of Athens under the aspect just indicated has yet to be

<sup>1</sup> The problem of communal growth through response to solitary individuals, at which I can only hint in the text, is the great topic, under the title of transition from the closed to the open society, of Bergson's *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (Paris, 1932).



## Tragedy

### 1. *The Truth of Tragedy*

The awakening from the sleep was an awakening to a new consciousness. The Athenians were supremely aware of the historic rôle that had become their fate in its glory and its bitter end. In the great funeral oration the Thucydidean Pericles praised Athens as the "school [*paideusis*] of Hellas." In the pathos of the polis, as voiced by its leading statesman, the consciousness of power had merged with the consciousness of highest human rank; the people had reached the rank of the adventurous individuals; and the people of Athens collectively had become the school-head of the Hellenes. Power and spirit were linked in history for one golden hour through the inseparable events of the Athenian victory in the Persian War and the Aeschylean creation of the tragedy.

The setting of the scene goes back to Solon. His conception of the Eunomia of the polis set the pattern for the rough but sure evolution toward constitutional democracy, drawing the people into the culture of the aristocracy and bending the old nobility under the principle of isonomy.<sup>2</sup> Solon's faith in Dike and the unseen measure was fundamentally the faith of Aeschylus. The principal intermediate events were the tyranny of Peisistratus and the reform of Cleisthenes.

The reform of Solon had been unsatisfactory in detail, and a period of civil strife was followed in 561 by the rule of Peisistratus as the leader of the poor people from the hills. Under his rule the cult of Dionysus was introduced as a state-cult in order to break the power of the hereditary priesthods of the noble clans. For the first time, at the Dionysian festivals of 535 (or one of the two following years) Thespis appeared with his chorus of *tragodoi*, the goat-singers, the archaic form out of which a generation later the tragedy was to grow.

<sup>2</sup> "Isonomy" is the older term. "Democracy" appears only in the fifth century.



From its very beginning the tragedy was established as a cult-institution of the people.

After the expulsion of the Peisistratides and a short interlude of party strife, Cleisthenes could effect the great democratic reform of 508 that we have described in an earlier chapter. With the reorganization of Athens on a territorial basis, the power of the noble clans was broken on principle, and immediately afterwards the style of the new democracy made itself felt in the conduct of politics—in the beginning friction with aristocratic Sparta, the expansion into Euboea, the naval support of the Ionians in their struggle with Persia which precipitated the Persian expedition against Athens, the development of the Piraeus, the great military quality displayed at Marathon, and the hysterical punishment of the victorious general Miltiades because he failed to capture Paros in addition. Most illuminating for the new nervousness of politics was the decade between Marathon and Salamis. Everybody knew that the Persian defeat of 490 would be followed by a full-scale major war in due course. But instead of systematically preparing for the great onslaught, Athens conducted an inconclusive war with Aegina (489–483), had a major constitutional reform in 488/7, introduced the institution of ostracism, practiced it by banishing successively Hipparchus, Megacles, Xanthippus, and Aristides, and in spite of such messy activity was able to propel to the decisive position of *strategos autocrator* Themistocles, the new leader of the people, the first genuinely “modern” Athenian, who prefigured in his complex personality the qualities that were to determine the greatness and fall of Athens through Pericles and Alcibiades.

What the tragedy meant in the life of the Athenian democracy can be gathered—in no more than a first approach, however—from the confrontation of Aeschylus and Euripides in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes. The poets appear as the educators of the people, holding up to them a model humanity; the quality of the people will depend on the type of humanity that is presented in the great performances at the Dionysian festivals. Aeschylus appears as the educator, the moulder of the generation of the Persian Wars; Euripides as the corrupter, responsible for a generation of effeminate indulgence without warlike vigor, of sophistic frauds and rhetors, of incestuous relationships, crimes of passion, general loose living, weakening of morale in the navy and discipline in the army,

and loss of excellence even in gymnastic exercises. The idea of elevating the poets into the causes of Athenian greatness and decline certainly was far-fetched. Whatever effects the conduct of a Phaedra on the stage may have had on the love-life of a naturalistically experiencing lady in the audience, the problem of the tragedy did not lie on this level. Nevertheless, the excitement of Aristophanes reveals the evolution of tragedy from Aeschylus to Euripides as the representative expression of the political decline of Athens.

While the accusation against Euripides is hardly tenable, the nature of the charge is of interest. For the form which the criticism assumes is in itself an intellectual form of political decay. The Aeschylus of the comedy insists that the poet has, with regard to grown-up men, the function which the schoolteacher has with regard to boys. The poet is the teacher (*didaskalos*) of the people, apparently in the elementary form of straight information concerning right and wrong in matters of politics and morals. If we understand Aristophanes rightly, he accepts what we may call the “naturalistic” attitude toward complex works of art, that is, the attitude in which the many-storied edifice of meaning is disregarded and nothing extracted from the work but the “story.” It is the attitude of contemporary literary critics who classify Thomas Mann’s *Magic Mountain* as a story about life in a sanitarium, or condemn James Joyce’s *Ulysses* as “immoral” or “indecent.” Aristophanes takes the attitude of the audience for granted—and Euripidean tragedies performed before an audience of this kind may, indeed, have had unwholesome effects. But when communication through indirection has become impossible because the audience can understand only direct speech, the time for such complex structures as the great tragedies has run its course. It is symptomatic that the *Frogs* netted rare honors for Aristophanes, as well as the unusual distinction of a second performance, not because of the great qualities of the comedy, but because of a direct political exhortation to the Athenians (vv.686–705) to restore civic rights to the persons who had participated in the plottings of the period of The Four Hundred, in 411 B.C. The exhortation was considered a patriotic feat meriting rewards. To be sure, it is an afterglow of a great period that a political speech can have a particularly strong effect if presented incidental to a literary work of distinction, but it is no more than an afterglow, and the time is ripe for “teaching” through direct, discursive treatment of politics.



The disintegration of tragedy is complete when we reach the standard treatise on the subject, the *Poetics* of Aristotle. Tragedy has become a literary genus, to be dissected with regard to its formal characteristics, its "parts." It is the most important genus because of its formal complexity; he who understands tragedy has understood all other literary forms. As far as the substance and historical function of tragedy is concerned, however, there is barely an elusive hint in the *Poetics*; obviously the problem had moved for Aristotle entirely beyond his horizon of interests. The situation is illuminated by the famous definition of tragedy as "a representation of an action that is serious, coming to an end, and of a certain magnitude—enriched by language of all kind, used appropriately in the various parts of the play—representing through action, not through narrative—and through pity and fear effecting catharsis of these and other emotions."<sup>3</sup> We take Aristotle by his word, as we did Aristophanes; and we assume that he described to the best of his knowledge what an audience of the fourth century experienced when attending the performance of a tragedy. In its effect on the spectators, tragedy has now become something like a psychological therapy. The events on the stage arouse pity and fear, and other emotions, in the spectators and thereby give relief to pent-up quantities of passion. If again we may venture a comparison with contemporary phenomena, the theory of Aristotle resembles the theory of certain modern psychologists who consider football games and similar sportive events a good thing because they provide the spectators with virtual satisfaction of their aggressiveness. To be sure, it is a considerable cultural difference whether such relief is furnished by a Greek tragedy, or by games and movies, but the principle is the same; the spirit of the tragedy is gone.

Nevertheless, Aristotle hints at the real problem when he compares the object of the poet with the object of the historian. The poet does not tell what actually happened, as does the historian (*historikos*), but what happens "according to likelihood and necessity." For that reason, poetry is something "more philosophical and serious" than history; it does not relate mere facts, but it conveys what is "general"; we may say, perhaps, what is "essential."<sup>4</sup> Elusive as these hints are, we hear in them nevertheless an echo of the problems of the time of Heraclitus and Aeschylus. The "much-knowing" of the historian is opposed to the "deep-knowing" of the philosopher. The poet creates an action which conveys a

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* VI, 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, IX, 1-4.

"general" insight; he participates in the great search for truth from Hesiod to the mystic-philosophers.

The tragedy continues the search for truth; and Aristotle has seen rightly that there is something "general" about this truth. The action of tragedy, its *drama*, is neither information about particular events, nor amusing fiction. The material used for the action is drawn from the stock of myths, but the tragedy neither narrates it in the manner of the Homeric epic, with the yet unreflected intention of telling a "true" story, nor does it recast the material into speculative form in the manner of Hesiod, with the intention of opposing the new truth to the old falsehood. The tragedy from Aeschylus to Euripides is quite deliberately a play. Neither the poet nor his audience is in doubt that the action is invented, that it uses the mythical materials quite freely, rearranges them to meet exigencies of literary form, and adds numerous imaginative details. There is not even that element of reality which was attached to the older cult dances and choric lyrics, of reenacting a paradigmatic mythical event. For chorus and audience have separated; the chorus has become part of the play, acting on the stage, and the audience does not participate in the action. Only when all erroneous associations are eliminated do we arrive at the true core of the problem: The truth of the tragedy is action itself, that is, action on the new, differentiated level of a movement in the soul that culminates in the decision (*proairesis*) of a mature, responsible man. The newly discovered humanity of the soul expands into the realm of action. Tragedy as a form is the study of the human soul in the process of making decisions, while the single tragedies construct conditions and experimental situations, in which a fully developed, self-conscious soul is forced into action.

## 2. The Meaning of Action

The character of the tragedy as an experimental study, as well as its search for the truth of decision, will become clear through an analysis of the *Suppliants* of Aeschylus. We shall not analyze the whole tragedy, however, but confine ourselves to the exposition of the argument that leads to the decision and subsequently to action.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The *Suppliants* was supposed to be the earliest extant tragedy of Aeschylus, but the recent analysis of a papyrus fragment by Albin Lesky, "Die Datierung der Hiketiden und der Tragiker



injustice (168-69), and will bring ruin on Pelasgus and his polis (468ff.).

Aeschylus carefully constructs an unpleasant situation. The right order of *themis* is not free of conflicts. Themis governs the order of marriage. The Egyptians have legal control over the Danaides and can demand them in marriage. Only if the marriage is abhorrent to the women is its enforcement *me themis*, unrighteous (336). That is the case which the Danaides plead for themselves. Their plea, however, is not quite sincere, because they dislike not only the Egyptians but the bond of marriage on principle (1030-34). While the rejection of a specific man is justified, the rejection of marriage on principle is not *themis*. The order of Themis, furthermore, protects suppliants, especially when they are relatives (through Io). Hence, the supplication cannot be simply rejected, even if its justice is not beyond doubt. And, finally, Themis governs piety toward the gods. The pollution of the statues through suicide will have terrible consequences for Argos, even though the threat of suicide is a clear case of blackmail against Pelasgus, as well as of *hybris* against Zeus. What then shall the King do, threatened by the conflicts of *themis*, and forced to violate either the *nomos* of the Egyptians with the consequence of war, or to bring the wrath of the gods on himself and his polis?

The King is in a state of indecision and formulates his dilemma: "Without harm I do not know how to help you; and yet again it is not advisable to slight such supplications." He is gripped by helpless confusion (*amechanos*); and his soul (*phren*) is fearful whether "to act, or not to act and take what fortune brings" (376-80). Gravely he reflects: "There is need of deep and saving counsel, like a diver's, descending to the depth, with keen eye and not too much perturbed" (407ff.). Clearly the lines recall the Heraclitean "deep-knowing" of the soul whose border cannot be measured because its Logos is too deep. The Heraclitean dimension of the soul in depth is dramatized by Aeschylus into the actual descent of a soul in a concrete situation that requires a decision.<sup>6</sup>

From the depth the King is supposed to bring up a decision in accordance with *dike*. The Chorus admonishes him to make Dike his ally (395) and assures him that Dike protects her allies powerfully (343). Beyond the order of *themis* with its conflicts, there lies an order of

<sup>6</sup> The Aeschylean simile points to a dictum attributed to Socrates that it requires a Delphic diver to descend to the meaning of Heraclitean formulations.



*dike*, in the double sense of a higher law and of concrete decisions. The situation that is not covered by *themis* will have to be ordered by a concrete decision, a *dike*, of ultimate rightness. That *dike* beyond *themis* has its source in the depth of reflection into which the King is ready to descend. At this point, when the actual descent should occur, however, it becomes clear that Aeschylus has moved far beyond the situation of the solitary Heraclitus into the community of a polis whose citizens are willing to descend into the soul as a people. For the King informs the Danaides that they are not taking refuge at the hearth of his private home, but in a polis. "The common" (*to koinon*) of the polis is threatened by them; and "in common" (*xyne*) the people will have to find a solution. The King can make no promise before he has "communicated" (*koinos*) with all the citizens (365-69). The *xynon* of Heraclitus is institutionalized as the community of citizens in council. The Chorus protests vehemently with an appeal to his absolute kingship: "You are the polis! You are the people!" (370). But Pelasgus is not a mystic-philosopher; he has a people, and energetically he tells the Chorus: "Nothing without the people [*demos*]" (398). He leaves the suppliants in order to assemble the people and to submit the case to the general body (*koinon*) of the citizens (518), and he hopes that Persuasion (*peitho*) will aid him (523). The speech of the King is indeed successful. The decrees extending *proxenia* to the suppliants are passed. "It was the Pelasgian people that willingly heard the subtle windings of the speech; but it was Zeus who brought the end to pass" (623-24). The descent into the depth was taken in common and what the people found was the Dike of Zeus.

We have assembled the main elements of the Aeschylean theory of action. The order of Themis still governs the gods, the world, and society, as in the Homeric epics. But the existence of man under the order has become difficult, in so far as *themis* is no longer a guide for decisions in the concrete situation. In the Homeric epic a decision could be reached either by weighing the consequences of action on the utilitarian level, or by following counsel, divine or human. That was the burden of the great, paraenetic speech of Phoenix to Achilles. With Aeschylus both possibilities are excluded. The utilitarian weighing is expressly rejected as a motive (443-54); and Aeschylus, in order to prepare the case in

experimental purity, even resorts to the technique of building up sound reasons which man must reject in order to arrive at the right decision (477). And no external counsel through the helpful appearance of an Homeric god or man is available. The decision must be reached, without such counsel, from a searching of the soul. The leap in being does not assume the form of an Israelite revelation of God, but of the Dionysiac descent into man, to the depth where Dike is to be found. Not every type of conduct, therefore, is action. We can speak of action only when the decision was reached through the Dionysiac descent into the divine depth. And conversely, not every situation is tragic. We can speak of tragedy only when man is forced into the recourse to Dike. Only in that case is he faced with the dilemma expressed by the line "to act or not to act." Apparently Aeschylus considered as action only the decision in favor of Dike. A negative decision, an evasion through utilitarian calculus, or a mere insensitiveness toward the issue, would not be considered action.

The Aeschylean meaning of *drama*, of action, symbolizes the Dionysiac order of Dike. The great symbol raises serious questions with regard to the history both of Athens and of tragedy. The action, experienced and expressed by Aeschylus, requires a certain human stature. There may arise a tragic situation without a tragic actor. If the soul is not responsive to Dike, and man is not willing to descend into its depth, an easy way out may be found by weighing present losses against uncertain future profits. The passion of the moment, utilitarian calculation, or plain cowardice, may blur, or completely obfuscate, the tragic issue. Tragedy of the Aeschylean type, in order to be socially possible as an expensive state-cult in a democracy, requires a citizenry that willingly opens its soul to the tragic conflict. Even if the audience is not an assembly of heroes, the spectators must at least be disposed to recognize tragic action as paradigmatic. The heroic soul-searching and suffering of consequences must be experienced as the cult of Dike and the fate of the hero must arouse the shudder of his own fate in the soul of the spectator—even if he himself should succumb to his weakness in a similar situation. The meaning of tragedy as a state-cult must be sought in such representative suffering. The binding of the soul to its own fate through representative suffering, rather than the Aristotelian catharsis through pity and fear, is the function of tragedy. The Epitaph, according to tradition written by Aeschylus himself, unmistakably speaks to us:



"His glorious valor [*alke*] the precinct of Marathon may proclaim,  
And the long-haired Medes who knew it well."

To have proven his worth as the soldier of the polis in action is his proud title to fame rather than his work as a poet; Marathon is the test of tragedy.

With the spirit of Marathon the tragedy would have to die. The shouldering of fate would become too heavy a burden. In the full unfolding of tragedy, in the grandiose personalities of Sophocles, one can sense the exceptional character of such suffering; a solitude begins to spread around the hero that makes his suffering unrepresentative for the common man. And Euripides, as we shall see, was preoccupied already with the problem of the hero who breaks under his fate. A sense of demonic capriciousness of the gods becomes stronger than the faith in the ultimately harmonizing order of Dike. Under such conditions the social function of tragedy will become problematic and, finally, impossible. The *Suppliants* has its distinctive place in the history of order because the line along which the tragedy as an institution of the polis will break emerges from the action itself. Pelasgus, the King, as we have seen, has gone through the decision in his own soul; and then he must induce the same process in the soul of the citizens through his speech, re-acting his own argument and that of the Chorus before the assembly. Through Peitho (persuasion) the paradigmatic action of the hero must expand into the soul of the people, binding it to the communal purpose. In the last work of Aeschylus, the *Oresteia*, Peitho becomes the great instrument of the order of Zeus by which the demonic divinities of the old law, the Erinyes, are themselves bent to Dike and are transformed into the Eumenides. In the *Suppliants* this meaning of Peitho as the persuasion of Jovian Dike (not perhaps as psychological management) is suggested in the lines of the Chorus that the people made the decision but that "Zeus brought the end to pass" (623-24). When Peitho, persuasion in this pregnant sense, is no longer socially effective, the political order of the democracy which must rest on Dike will disintegrate and give way to the nightmarish disorder that we find described by Thucydides. The restoration of social order in the polis, when it is to rest on spirit and not on fearful subservience to power, will then require the restoration of spiritual persuasion. And this has, indeed, become one of the great themes of Platonic politics, with increasing intenseness in the later works, until

in the *Timaeus* Peitho appears as the force of the psyche that imposes order on the recalcitrant Ananke of the cosmos.

### 3. *Tragedy and History*

The *Suppliants* is the finest study of the essence of tragic action, but of no more than this very essence. The central action is surrounded by an area of issues, some of them of a rather disquieting nature. The hero follows Dike, the highest ordering principle of cosmos and polis—and woe to him if he does not—but the situation as a whole does not show the ordering principle as a particularly effective one. There is the beastly conduct of the Egyptians and the corresponding misery of the Danaides; in the background of this affair lies the equally unjust fate of the ancestress of the cousins, Io, who was loved by Zeus, metamorphosed into a cow by Hera, and driven over the earth in madness by a gadfly, all without any guilt of her own; and Pelasgus rightly does some cursing about a situation that involves him in all sorts of peril though he would much prefer to mind his own business. The only point in the universe at which Dike really dwells seems to be the soul of the King, while the surroundings look rather like a world of demonic mischief. Moreover, the Dike in the heroic soul would not help the Danaides much unless it were the soul of a king who can use his persuasion on his soldier-citizens so that his decision will be implemented by an army when the clash with the Egyptians comes. The King does not consider for a moment using his powers of persuasion on the Egyptians—though he engages in legal argument with their herald. The Hellenic polis thus appears, through its combination of Dike and Valor in the body of its militant citizenry, as a shining bulwark of order in a very disorderly world.

The disquieting background of tragic action must be clear, when now we approach *Prometheus Bound*, the work of Aeschylus in which the morass of demonic evil surrounding the island of order becomes the great problem.

The interpretation is faced with the difficulty that the extant *Prometheus* is one part of a trilogy, probably its middle part (though even that is contested), so that one cannot always be certain where the lines of meaning running through the play have their beginning and their end. Moreover, the isolation of the extant *Prometheus* has become



The movement of philosophical speculation from the Milesians to Heraclitus, we may say, is a movement away from the experience of actual disorder in the direction of a principle of meaningful order. The discovery of the Solonic unseen measure, or of the Parmenidean Being, or the orientation of the soul through love, hope, and faith toward the *sophon*, are truly great discoveries; in fact, they are the foundation of philosophical speculation as a critical exploration of the constitution of being. Nevertheless, this movement and its discoveries are beset by a grave danger. The occupation with transcendental being and with the orientation of the soul toward the unseen measure may become a preoccupation which lets man forget that he lives in a world of unoriented souls. The movement of a soul toward the truth of being does not abolish the demonic reality from which it moves away. The order of the soul is nothing on which one can sit down and be happy ever after. The discovery of truth by the mystic-philosophers, and still more the Christian revelation, can become a source of serious disorder if it is misunderstood as an ordering force that effectively governs society and history. From such misunderstandings result the psychologically understandable, but intellectually deplorable, "great" problems of theodicy, such as the reconciliation of the all-too-present evil in the world with the omnipotence and goodness of God. In problems of this kind there is implied the speculative fallacy that the transcendental order, which is sensed in the orienting movements of the soul, is a world-immanent order, realizing itself in society independent of the life of the soul. In brief: the discovery may produce an intoxication which lets man forget that the world is what it is.

It was the greatness of Aeschylus that he understood the order of Dike in society as a precarious incarnation of divine order, as a passing realization wrung from the forces of disorder through tragic action by sacrifices and risks, and—even if momentarily successful—under the shadow that ultimately will envelop it. The *Prometheus* is not a return to the Hesiodian type of speculation on the myth. It is not a "true story" about a theogonic episode, but quite consciously a study of the forces in the human soul that will create social order when they are properly balanced, and will destroy this order when the balance is disturbed. It was the good fortune of Aeschylus the artist that the theomorphic symbolization of the soul in the myth provided him with a divine personnel which could credibly act out the tragedy of the soul.

The problem of the balance and struggle of forces is carefully built



man Orestes by the neat device of a tie between his human judges does not satisfy the Erinyes whose *time*, their allotted right and honor, is slighted. And now Athena must subdue the muttering Erinyes through her persuasive argument, offering them compensating honors. Peitho is used for settling a difficulty that has arisen under the régime of Zeus; the Erinyes with their claims belonging to the older generation of gods are not simply beaten down—but even now, when an older and wiser Zeus prefers gentler means, the threat of force is in the background and Athena reminds the Erinyes (827f.) that she holds the key to the armory wherein the thunderbolt is sealed. Dike, thus, evolves from rigid enforcement to flexibility and persuasion; and in the *Oresteia*, as in the *Suppliants*, the development is underlined by the institution of a court of citizens who will decide the case (literally: diagnose Dike), not giving way to “anarchy or despotism,” inspired by “reverence and fear.”

The analysis of the Prometheus figure must avoid the traps of romantic Titanism. To be sure, there is something like a revolt of man against God in the conduct of Prometheus, but the formula does not mean much as long as the terms God and man are not defined. We must start from the firm basis that Prometheus is not a man but a god himself like Zeus; both are generically co-ordinated; both equally stand for forces that are experienced in the soul of man. The divinity of Prometheus is especially stressed by the executioner (29); the god should have had more sense of loyalty toward his fellow gods, he should not have aroused their wrath by indulging his philanthropic inclination (*philanthropos tropos*) (28). There is, thus, a divine force in man which can ally itself with the order of Dike, as Prometheus did in the Titanomachia with Zeus; but it nevertheless belongs to the conquered race of gods and is apt to assert itself disloyally against the new order. And its philanthropic inclination is probably not quite accidental. For the race of men itself was not created by Zeus, but found by him as part of the older world; the race of men shares with Prometheus the character of a relic of the old dispensation, accepted into the new one, but apparently still partaking of the demonic, disorderly qualities of the older period.<sup>8</sup>

With regard to the nature of the divine-demonic force one must again cling as closely as possible to the Aeschylean text. Prometheus is

<sup>8</sup> The characterization cannot go beyond probabilities because the first part of the trilogy, in which questions of this type must have been clarified, is lost.



a *sophistes*. He is riveted to the rock in order to learn that for all his being a *sophistes* he is a dullard compared with Zeus (62); and again Hermes addresses himself to "You, the *sophistes*, bitter beyond all bitterness," and so forth (944). The wisdom or knowledge to which he owes the title *sophistes* has a considerable amplitude of meaning. He is a sophist because he has brought science to man, and especially mathematics, the "chiefest of sciences" (*sophismata*). But *sophisma* may also have the meaning of plan, device, or trick, when he complains that he has no *sophisma* for extricating himself from the present predicament in spite of all the inventions (*mechanemata*) which he devised for the mortals (469-71). And a further facet of meaning appears in the passages which reflect on his lack of wisdom. The deficiency expresses itself in his *authadia* (1012, 1037), a term that cannot be translated by a single word, but may be circumscribed as a brazen, shameless, conceited, self-reliant self-satisfaction. To persist in this attitude is shameful and dishonorable; it is not worthy of a *sophos*; and the Chorus admonishes him to take "good and wise [*sophen*] counsel" (1036-39).

From the various passages the sophist emerges as a complex figure. There is no doubt about his inventiveness and his discovery of the sciences; but such wisdom still leaves him incomparably the inferior to the wisdom of Zeus. The *polymathie* in the Heraclitean sense is no true *sophia*. Nevertheless, at least potentially he is more than a sophist; he is "wise" in the sense of being capable of taking "wise" counsel; if he does not take it, he is prevented by his *authadia*. This *authadia* is an ambiguous mood of existence. It manifests itself in the self-willed disloyalty to the order of the gods. Zeus wanted to abolish the race of men but Prometheus intervened on their behalf because he had "pity" on them. When he had saved them, however, he experienced more pity and tried to improve their miserable lot in various ways. At this point, the pity with man and the philanthropy begin to be pervaded by the pride of inventiveness. Aeschylus lets his Prometheus give the magnificent catalogue of civilizational history: Man received the art of housing, of observing the seasons and the stars, the science of numbers, the domestication of animals, the art of shipbuilding and sailing, medicine, the art of reading omens, metallurgy, and above all he received fire. In brief, the catalogue concludes: "All arts came to mortals from Prometheus" (506). The pride of civilizational achievement breaks through; and we may suspect that

this showering of gifts on the mortals was not all due to pity but in part at least to the joy of creative invention, and that creative exuberance led to the final act of transgression.

There is a still deeper stratum in the *authadia*. In the dialogue with Oceanus it appears that Prometheus has omitted a few points in his great confession. We hear Oceanus counsel Prometheus to be a bit less bitter and loud in his complaints about his fate at the hands of Zeus because the angered tyrant might inflict even worse punishment on him. His present plight has come to him as a consequence of his former overbearing language (320-21), but not even now has he learned humility. The "overbearing language" is the cause of punishment; the theft of the fire is not mentioned at all. Besides philanthropy and the pride in civilizational inventiveness, so it would seem, there was a more primordial defiance at work of which the theft was only the most tangible symptom. The nature of this sentiment is perhaps revealed in the admonition: "Learn to know yourself and to acquire new ways; for the tyrant is also new among the gods" (311-12). The Delphic "Know thyself!" is recommended as the cure for the Promethean trouble; and this self-knowledge, significantly, is required as a correlate to the rulership of Zeus. The *authadia* belongs to the pre-Jovian period, it is a survival of demonic dynamism, not yet improved (*metbarmozein*) by the reflective self-knowledge that makes one aware of limitations and obligations under order. The self-willed defiance of Prometheus (see especially 268) is not the assertion of a righteous claim against despotism. The selfhood of Prometheus is not endangered by the gods; on the contrary, the absence of a self in the Delphic sense is the source of the difficulty. The new order requires maturity and humility of "deeply" reflected action. The Prometheus of the extant tragedy is yet far from being a tragic hero; he is punished for his pre-tragic, demonic action.

The theme that appears in the scene with Oceanus is, then, made the center of the later scene with Hermes. Again Prometheus proclaims in no uncertain terms his contempt for the new, the upstart gods. The Titan of the old order remembers two tyrants being cast from power. He will outlast the third one and see him in the distress that changing fortune will bring on him. The struggle has become clearly the case of the old gods against the new ones. And he summarizes his feelings in the lines: "In one word, I hate all the gods who received good from me and



wrongfully returned evil" (975-76).<sup>9</sup> The diagnosis of the trouble that was begun by Oceanus is now continued by Hermes in his answer: "I hear it, and it strikes me as no small madness" (977). The *authadia* is a madness, a *nosos*, a disease. The same term appears here in Aeschylus as in the Heraclitean characterization of conceit as a "sacred disease." It is a spiritual disease that can be healed only by self-conquering submission (999f.); and if that should prove impossible as a personal act, the redemption would have to come from another source, announced by Hermes: "Look for no end of this your agony, until a god appear to take upon himself your suffering, who willingly descends to unlighted Hades and the dark depth of Tartarus" (1026ff.). The tragic action in which the demonic Prometheus failed will have to be completed by the representative suffering of the divine descent to the "depth."

The complexities of the *Prometheus* are by far not exhausted, but it will have become sufficiently clear that we are dealing with the evolution of the soul toward the level of maturity on which tragic action is possible, as well as with the ramifications of the process in society and history. The order of Dike struggles into existence with the dynamic aid of the forces represented by Prometheus. On these forces depends civilizational progress through inventions, through the imaginativeness of pragmatic intellect and the sciences of the external world, and through the creation of a sense of security that comes with predictability of events. The civilizing force, however, does not by itself create an order of the soul or of society. Aeschylus has advanced beyond the Heraclitean deprecation of *polymathie* to a critique of civilization. Before the Age of the Sophists proper had begun, he understood power and achievement of the sophistic intellect as well as its danger of overreaching itself and destroying the order of Dike through the unmeasured, demonic pursuit of its possibilities. The concepts used in the psychological diagnosis of the disease are highly developed. Prometheus has given "first place in his pity" to man (241), and he could indulge in this sentiment because he had "no fear of Zeus" (542). When reading such lines we can only admire the Aeschylean insight into the connection between excess of pity and a deficiency in fear of God. For the excess of pity distorts the sense of the place of man in his relation to God, of his *conditio humana*: Prometheus tried to bestow honors (*timas*) on man "beyond

<sup>9</sup> The line "In one word, I hate all the gods" deeply impressed the young Marx. He quoted it as the confession of philosophy and made it the carrier of his own antitheistic revolt.

his true portion" (30), and he replaced the divine decision with regard to the fate of man by his "private opinion or decision" (*idia gnome*) (544).<sup>10</sup> In a fascinating passage Aeschylus, finally, identifies the Prometheus of the tragedy with the Promethean drive in man in an explicit declaration. The indulgence of *philanthropia* and *authadia* has resulted in grief: "See now, my friend, how unblessed are your blessings!" (545). When the civilizational drive has disrupted the order of Dike and caused a social catastrophe, then man is helpless: "What succour do you have now, what help, from the creatures of a day?" (546-47). Was Prometheus unaware of the infirmity of man? And in direct speech Aeschylus concludes: "Never shall the counsels of mortals disturb the harmony of Zeus" (550-51).

Prometheus symbolizes the demonic drive of human existence in its self-assertion and expansiveness. Since he represents only this one force in the soul, he is not the tragic hero; for only the soul as a whole is capable of tragic action. The tragedy of order in history comes into view in the interplay of Jovian Dike with the Promethean drive. On the one hand, Prometheus is more than a villain who breaks the law; and on the other hand, Zeus is less than a pure force of goodness and right. As far as Prometheus is concerned, the tone of sympathy with the fate of the sufferer is unmistakable throughout the play. Sea, heaven, earth, and the stars are stirred up by the execution and nature responds to the clang of the fettering with the appearance of the Oceanids. Man and his Promethean drive are part of the order of things; the mortals, to be sure, are wretched creatures of a day, but all the more are they in need of pity, of inventiveness, and imaginative self-help. Prometheus has sinned through excess, but short of excess his pity is a legitimate element of order. Zeus appears in a dubious light because he fails in pity himself when he refuses to consider the pity in the Promethean transgression as an extenuating circumstance (241f.). As far as Zeus is concerned, his order is not a divine, eternal order in the Christian sense. It has come into existence and will pass away, being no more than a phase in the life of the cosmos. And Zeus himself is not the God beyond the world, but a god within it. The traits that mark the historicity of his order, traits that will bring about its fall, are visible even now. Zeus had

<sup>10</sup> In his opposition of divine allotment of *time* to gods and men to private opinion Aeschylus again is very close to the Heraclitean opposition of the Logos that is common for all to the "private worlds."



to rely on the help of some of the Titans for conquering the others. As a consequence there is something demonic in the foundation of his own rule, represented in the victimization of Prometheus by Power and Force. Moreover, he is the Zeus who by his philandering has brought the terrible fate on Io, and Io appears on the stage to give an object lesson of the demonic component in Zeus that strikes the innocent with misery. One of the most impressive features in the performance of the play must have been the sinister scene in which Prometheus is fettered, immovable, high up on the rock, while down on the beach-strip Io writhes in the madness of her dance, stung by the gadfly, both related in fate through the prediction of the foreknowing sufferer on the rock that an offspring of Jovian licentiousness will do to his father what Zeus did to Cronos. The executioner believed that "Nobody is free save Zeus" (50) but Prometheus knows better. Even Zeus is enmeshed in the network of Ananke (Necessity) against which no art is of avail (514), and Ananke herself is steered by the Moirae and Erinyes (515ff.). The rule of Zeus will not last forever; and Prometheus, the immortal, can wait until it has run its "short time" (939). The loss of the *Prometheus Unbound* makes it impossible to know how Aeschylus carried these problems to their conclusion. The antagonists, it appears, would have come to an agreement, and the surrender of Prometheus' foreknowledge of the doom of Zeus would have played a rôle in it. A considerable theme would certainly have been the growth of wisdom through suffering on both sides—for "ever-aging time teaches all things" (982). But whether the revelation of the secret would have forestalled the doom of Zeus only for a time or forever, we do not know. It is certain only that the tragic "action" would have been completed by securing the balance of wisdom for the present aeon.

In the *Prometheus* Aeschylus has used the form of tragedy for presenting the historical drama of the soul. The order of the soul in historical evolution is the "hero" of the trilogy, not any of the *dramatis personae*. Such formulations, however, do not mean that Aeschylus attempted a tour de force, that he used the form of tragedy for treating an unsuitable subject. On the contrary, the experience of history grows out of tragedy. Only when the ideas of a completely human soul, of the reflective descent into its depth, of a decision that is drawn from its depth, and of an action that is the responsibility of man, are fully developed, can the meaning

of tragic action radiate over, and illuminate, the order of human existence in society. The social order itself acquires the hue of tragedy when it is understood as the work of man, as an order wrested by man from the demonic forces of disorder, as a precarious incarnation of Dike achieved and preserved by the efforts of tragic action. The course of human affairs becomes a course of history when the order of the soul becomes the ordering force of society. For only then can the rise and fall of a polity be experienced in terms of a growing or disintegrating psyche.

The formulations of the preceding paragraph must be qualified, however, by comparison with the genesis of history in other civilizations. History was born from tragedy in Hellas, but nowhere else. The Hellenic experience of history, as well as its symbolization, can be determined more precisely by comparing it with the more compact Chinese, as well as with the less compact Israelite forms. The Chinese meaning of history grew, not from the experience of tragedy, but from the experience of the flowering, decay, and extinction of organically conceived forces. Such a force might live in a family and make it, for a limited time, the carrier of cosmic order in society. Historiography, then, was the account of an indefinite series of such life-forces, the "dynasties." Moreover, the symbolism of the dynasties was embedded in the wider symbolic form of society as a universal organization of mankind analogous to the order of the cosmos, that is, in the stratum of symbolization common to all cosmological civilizations, Far Eastern as well as Near Eastern. The tragedy of rise and fall, to be sure, was present in Chinese historiography, but it was still compactly bound by the cosmological myth. The radical break with the cosmological myth was achieved only by Israel. And the break was so thorough that at once history was established as the symbolic form of existence for the Chosen People in the present under God. Israel, though, still had to carry the "mortgage" of its revelation in so far as the universalism of existence under God was still narrowed down to a particular people. The existence of the Chosen People, therefore, prefigured the universal history of mankind under God through Christ. The Hellenic experience of tragic history has a degree of compactness in between the Chinese and the Israelite. Athenian tragedy is certainly no longer bound by the myth of a cosmological empire, but it carries the "mortgage" of the polis, as Israel carried its "mortgage" of the Chosen People. Moreover, the polis of Aeschylus, unlike the people



that will draw the world into her own annihilation. With self-debasement and cunning she prepares the blinding of Polymnestor who had betrayed his trust and murdered her son for the treasure in his possession. And before the blinding she has killed his two innocent little children. The horror ends with the blind Polymnestor's information, received from Dionysus, that the queen will be metamorphosed into a red-eyed dog. The order of Dike has fallen apart; the soul no longer becomes wise through suffering but breaks under its fate; and the heroine becomes a dog.

Similarly devastating is the end of the *Madness of Heracles* (c.421). Heracles, like Io, is an offspring of Zeus, persecuted by Hera. The demonism of the gods governs the events of the tragedy without relief. In the absence of Heracles a usurpator has made himself the ruler of Thebes and prepares to extinguish the family of the hero. At the last moment Heracles returns, after the impending fate of his family has given occasion to characterize the invidious Zeus, saves his family, and kills the tyrant. The dissatisfied Hera sends the demon of madness, so that the stricken Heracles continues his butchery and kills his own family. When Heracles awakens to the realization of his deed, his first thought is the classic solution: "The first man of Hellas" cannot continue to live after such dishonor. And now comes the surprising turn. His friend Theseus persuades him to live, with the revealing argument that the gods have committed all sorts of misdeeds and still live merrily on. Does he, a man, want to be more exacting than the gods themselves? The work of the mystic-philosophers is undone by Euripides. The upsurge of the soul toward the *sophon* has fallen back; the gods have become a shameless vulgarity, and man should not try to be better than they are. Heracles is led off by Theseus into a resigned old age on the estate of his friend in Athens. Exit the hero into retirement with a pension.

In the *Troïades* (c.415), finally, Euripides holds up the mirror to Athens herself. The extant tragedy is the third part of a trilogy; the first two parts, the *Alexandros* and the *Palamedes* are lost. Of the *Palamedes* we know that the wise hero, a humanization of the civilizing Prometheus, falls a victim to the jealous treachery of Odysseus; the fourth century understood the tragedy as a prediction of the fate of Socrates at the hands of Athens. The issue of the *Troïades* is the suicide of the Greek soul in the hour of victory. What began as an heroic adventure, ends in the vulgarity and atrocity of the conquest. The morass



## CHAPTER 11

### *The Sophists*

The tragedy was eminently the creation of Athens in so far as the great poets were Athenians themselves, drawing for their work on the spiritual resources of their people; it was the gift of the new democracy to Hellas and to mankind. The people had awakened to the call for action in the tragic sense, and it had put its maturity to the test in the Persian Wars.

The victory brought a complete change in the intellectual and political atmosphere. Before the war Athens had been a politically rather insignificant town, and it hardly had participated in the intellectual adventures of Ionia and Italy. After the war, the city was propelled into political leadership in rivalry with Sparta, its hegemony in the Delian League was soon converted into the rule over a maritime empire held together by force, and Athens became the expanding, wealthy capital of this new political structure. Moreover, the Hellenic poleis emerged from the war as a much more tightly knit world, as an area of intense intercourse, and in Athens this world found a city that was able to play the rôle, not only of a political center, but of a cultural capital as well. The city played this rôle brilliantly—but in order to play it, the people had to leave the safe backwater of ancestral piety, from which the greatness of the generation of Marathon had come, and to merge its abilities with the intellectual life of Hellas. In order to become, in the proud words of Pericles, the school of Hellas, Athens had to be its schoolboy for two generations. The education of Athens through Hellas to the point where the pupil became the undoubted representative of Hellenic culture was the decisive event of the so-called Age of the Sophists. In this interpenetration of Athenian abilities with the older culture of the border regions came into being what in retrospect appears as classic Hellenic culture. It was the process from which, after the political disaster, Plato and Aristotle emerged.



oras on the formation of Pericles was considerable. Moreover, they were the mediating link between the philosophy of Parmenides and the methods of argumentation developed by Protagoras and Gorgias. And there must also be included the personnel which mediated Pythagorean wisdom, especially after the disaster of Croton in 440, as well as the men who mediated knowledge from the medical school of Cos.

Even if we stretch the term to the utmost, however, the category of the migratory, foreign teacher will not cover all human aspects of the process that are relevant to our purpose. We hesitate to speak of the Ionian Herodotus as a sophist, though he lived for a time at Athens and his *History*, with its information on customs of foreign civilizations, was a splendid support of sophistic relativism with regard to ethics. We do not apply the term to Democritus of Abdera, though he touched Athens at one time on his travels and met the old Anaxagoras, because his philosophical stature is too high to put him in the company even of a Protagoras or Gorgias—and nevertheless he is one of the most interesting figures in the education of Athens in so far as he found his way from ancient piety to the new conscience and ataraxy unscathed by the relativism of the age, and inestimably affected the philosophies of conduct that grew in Athens after 400 B.C. Difficulties in applying the term, furthermore, arise when we approach the end of the fifth century and Athenians themselves begin to show the effects of sophistic education in their politics as well as in their intellectual achievements. Should we include among the sophists their products of education among Athenian oligarchs of whom we have a composite picture in Plato's Callicles? Was the tyrant Critias a sophist? And we hesitate to speak of Thucydides as a sophist, although his *History of the Peloponnesian War* is the grandiose epitaph of the age, in every accomplished sentence the product of sophistic culture at its best.

With Socrates and Plato, finally, we reach the opposition to the sophists. Under the present aspect this opposition means that Athens had come to the end of its ordeal of being educated by "foreigners." Athenians at last were able to articulate their problems for themselves, in their own manner. The antiforeign sentiment of Socrates and Plato has deeply colored their opposition to the sophists; but this opposition does not mean that the achievements of the sophistic age were rejected; on the contrary, the achievements were taken over, to an extent that is still not quite recognized because our historiography of ideas pays more attention to



Plato's vociferous criticism of sophists than to his quiet acceptance of their work.

In characterizing the achievements we must proceed summarily. The sophists were migratory teachers. In order to find an audience and an income they had to dispense what their public needed. Nature and form of their teaching was inseparable from the needs of the new democracy and in particular of Athens. From our study of the tragedy we are acquainted with the meaning of action as well as with the necessity of translating the decision reached by the political leader into the will of the people through persuasive speech. The political supremacy of the aristocratic clans was broken, and while the aristocrats might transmit their traditional way of life to their sons through education, such transmission had become the private affair of a social class but did not lead by itself to political success in a polis of freemen. The old style was breaking down, as we have seen, in the time of Solon; and now, in the age of the democratizing constitutional reforms of Cleisthenes, Themistocles, and Pericles, it was dead as a political force. The leading statesmen, generals, and magistrates might still come from the old families but their political success depended on their ability to gain the favor of the people against competitors as well as to gain continued popular support for their policies in the face of the intense criticism, gossiping, and intriguing of a compact, comparatively small town. The mastery of typical situations and arguments in public debate, a stock of thorough knowledge with regard to the public affairs of the polis in domestic and imperial relations, a ready wit, a good memory improved by training, a disciplined intellect ready to grasp the essentials of an issue, the trained ability of marshalling arguments on the spur of the moment, a ready stock of anecdotes, paradigmata and sayings drawn from the poets for illustrating a point, general oratorical perfection, skill in debate leading to more or less graceful discomfiture of an opponent, a good deal of psychological knowledge in handling people, good appearance and bearing, natural and trained charm in conversation—all these were required for success in the competitive game of the polis. Anybody would be welcome who could train the mind in arriving at sound decisions and in imposing them on others in this new form of politics through debate, speech, argument, and persuasion.

Obviously, neither Milesian cosmological speculation nor the study



nity. And since the laws were the embodiment of the ultimate principles on which the order of the community rested, the process was crowned by imparting to the young man a thorough knowledge of the laws of his polis. At this point the decisive difference between the old aristocratic and the new democratic education perhaps becomes most clearly visible. The appeal to authority in education no longer goes to the conduct of honorable ancestors and heroes, nor to the paradigmatic Aristeia or the paraenetic sections of the epic; it goes, rather, to the laws of the polis as the ultimately obligatory standards of conduct in command and obedience. The new education was bound by the horizon of the polis; its purpose was the formation of the responsible and successful citizen.

As far as the almost complete loss of primary sources permits a judgment in such matters, the most noteworthy contributions to the art of politics were due to Protagoras. If we accept the self-presentation of the great sophist in Plato's *Protagoras* as a substantially correct account of his ideas, he must have developed a rather detailed theory of education, history, and politics. Moreover, the ideas which appear in his profession (*epangelia*) are on the whole not at variance with the ideas that we know as Plato's own from his dialogues. It seems that the sophistic art of politics developed a body of theory that could pass as an important part into the politics of Plato. In his theory of education Protagoras arrived at the notion of the "nature" of a child or student, this nature and its gifts being the precondition of educational work. The educator will have to improve on the student's nature from as early an age as possible, by means of instruction that will impart knowledge, as well as by practice that will make this knowledge a second nature. The principles of Protagoras recur as the fundamentals of education in Plato, as indeed we find them ever since in every theory of education. Plato, furthermore, adopted the Protagorean conception of the law as the supreme teacher of the citizen and developed it, in the *Laws*, into the Proems of the laws with their educational, epodic function. In particular, Protagoras insisted that "reverence and justice" (*aidos, dike*) be living forces in the soul of every human being because without their presence the order of a community could not be maintained. The laws should provide that a man be put to death as a "disease of the polis" if he were found wanting in this respect. And this express Protagorean demand recurs in the *Laws* as the rule of Plato that a man who is spiritually diseased should be condemned to die

when educational attempts, continued through five years, have proved ineffective.<sup>1</sup>

The sophistic art of politics dealt, finally, with the right principles of social order. The appeal to the laws as the ultimate educational authority inevitably led to questions of principle because the laws are given and changed, and the rules governing the giving and changing of laws rank higher than the content of the actually valid law. The budding statesmen among the students would need information on principles of justice and right conduct. We know more about the nature of this debate than about the conclusions reached. The debate was concerned with the manifold of Aretai as it had grown historically. The question was raised whether virtue was fundamentally one, or whether there was an irreducible plurality of virtues; and if there were a plurality of virtues, the further question whether their number was indefinite or limited had to be asked. From the debate resulted the attempts at establishing exhaustive lists of virtues, such as justice, wisdom, courage, and temperance, the group of four that we find in Plato's *Republic*. There may have been other such groups; and there was certainly no agreement on any particular list as the right one, for even in the dialogues of Plato we still can notice the hesitations about this or that virtue and its place in a "system." The ethical debates, furthermore, extended to the excellences of the somatic sphere, resulting in the list of health, beauty, and strength. And if, finally, we consider the debates on the arts (*technai*), on the various sciences on which the arts are based, as well as on political prudence, there must have existed fairly comprehensive surveys, if not actual lists, of the excellences which Aristotle classified as dianoetic virtues. Altogether the sophists must have left as their heritage a broad and solid inventory of the problems that later appear in the more highly theorized contexts of Plato and Aristotle.

The very considerable extent to which the politics of Plato rests on the achievements of the sophists, and in particular of Protagoras, should not obscure, however, the decisive difference between their worlds of thought. Plato opposed his "God is the Measure" deliberately as the counter-formula to Protagoras' "Man is the Measure." In sophistic

<sup>1</sup> Plato's agreement with Protagoras on this particular point deserves attention, as Plato is still maltreated, because of this rule, as an illiberal, authoritarian, if not "fascist" thinker by a good number of historians. That the liberal criticism of Plato would also have to be directed against the great sophist, should give some food for thought.



thought, we may say succinctly, there was missing the link between the well-observed and classified phenomena of ethics and politics and the "invisible measure" that radiates order into the soul. The opposition to a world of thought without spiritual order was repeatedly expressed by Plato at critical junctures of his work. In particular he quoted twice, as a target for criticism, a set of agnostic, if not atheistic, propositions that may well have come from a sophistic source.<sup>2</sup> They summarize an argument concerning the gods:

- (1) It seems that no gods exist;
- (2) Even if they do exist, they do not care about men;
- (3) Even if they care, they can be propitiated by gifts.

Plato opposes to them his counter-propositions that the gods do exist, that they care about men, and that they cannot be appeased by prayer and sacrifice.

We are inclined to assume sophistic origin (perhaps Protagoras' book *On the Gods*) for these propositions, because the pattern of argument is authenticated as sophistic through Gorgias' essay *On Being*, the only work of a sophist that is preserved as a whole at least in an abstract.<sup>3</sup> For once we have an opportunity to study the organization of argument by a major sophist from a source that comes close to the original. The Gorgian tract was concerned with Parmenidean problems. It was organized into three parts defending successively the following propositions:

- (1) Nothing exists;
- (2) If anything exists, it is incomprehensible;
- (3) If it is comprehensible, it is incommunicable.

In the first part of his tract Gorgias proved the nonexistence of Being. He proceeded by demonstrating the contradictions to which the Parmenidean predicates of Being will lead. We select as representative the argument on the predicate "everlasting":

Being cannot be everlasting because in that case it would have no beginning; what has no beginning is boundless; and what is boundless is nowhere. For if it were anywhere it would have to be surrounded by something that is greater than itself; but there is nothing that is greater than the boundless; hence the boundless is nowhere; and what is nowhere does not exist.

<sup>2</sup> *Republic* 365 d-e and *Laws* 885b.

<sup>3</sup> Diels-Kranz, Gorgias B 3.



the truth and relevance being guaranteed by the "homophylic" character of the items. And "homophylic" may mean a widespread agreement of the sources which is taken as proof of a common origin of the information. The fragment may be the program of an encyclopedist who sifts his sources in order to find a common wisdom of humanity that speaks through various authors and various nations.

The assumption gains probability in the light of a conversation between Socrates and Hippias on the nature of law, as reported by Xenophon in the *Memorabilia*. Socrates maintains that just (*dikaion*) and lawful (*nomimon*) are the same. Hippias at first has misgivings about the identification; laws do not seem to be such a serious business considering that the same men who make them quite frequently change them. Socrates ultimately wins him over by raising the problem of "unwritten laws" (*agraphoi nomoi*). Unwritten laws are defined by Hippias as those which are uniformly observed in all countries; and since such uniformity was not produced by an agreement of mankind, the gods must have made these laws for men. The term "law" in this conversation does not necessarily refer to positive, enacted law, as it includes such customs as gratitude for benefits; the nonobservation of such rules entails unpleasant consequences without legal sanction, and this self-enforcing character of the "unwritten law" is taken as proof of its divine origin. Since the gods do not order what is unjust, the interlocutors agree on the identification of just and lawful.<sup>9</sup> Back of this conception of the "unwritten laws" there must again lie a polyhistoric study of institutions resulting in the observation of uniformities. Scanty as the evidence is, it points to an attempt on the part of Hippias to create an empirical theory of human nature by extracting a common denominator from a comparative study

<sup>9</sup> Xenophon, *Memorabilia* IV, 4. I have rendered the argument as far as it concerns the problem of law with special care, because such care is usually missing in the accounts given of this Xenophontic chapter. Since it is used as the favorite source of Hippias' idea of natural law, one should be aware that the term "nature" does not occur in it. Moreover, the use of the conversation as a source of Hippias' ideas rests on the assumption that Socrates (who leads the dialogue) introduced the argument of the "unwritten laws" because it would appeal to Hippias and force his consent to the identification of just and lawful of which Hippias otherwise was not convinced at all. The assumption seems to be justified because the idea of "unwritten laws" does not look very Socratic. The whole chapter, as a theoretical argument, is a rather poor piece of work. Unfortunately we do not know the Socratic dialogue on which Xenophon drew and, hence, we do not know how far he has mutilated or garbled the original. The break in the argument between IV, 4, 18, and 19 suggests that a good deal of subject matter must have disappeared under the hands of the suave editor.

of civilizations and literary sources. The *polymathie*, the much-knowing, which Heraclitus had berated, tries to become philosophical by substituting empirical generality for the universality of transcendence.

Such antiphilosophical philosophy could hardly be to the taste of Plato. The attempt to found the order of man in society on comparative study can only arouse the irony of a philosopher, as we see it displayed by Socrates in the *Hippias Minor*. The soul as the organ which experiences the unseen measure and through such experience creates its own order would be abandoned. The true order would have to be found through far-flung empirical studies; for the knowledge of this order, a society would be at the mercy of polyhistoric intellectuals; these "experts" would become the authoritative nucleus of a society; and the order that has grown historically would be devaluated by the argument that the people change their laws, thereby admitting their injustice. The immediacy and concreteness of order in the soul would be replaced by learned information. In brief: Man would abdicate before the sophistic intellectual. The sophist, by virtue of his comprehensive mastery of all things human, would be an epitome of humanity—but he would be such an epitome by the omniversality of his skills, not by the universality of his essence. The anecdote that we are discussing may well be a caricaturistic invention aimed at this externalized, surrogate humanity of the sophist.

The famous intervention of Hippias in Plato's *Protagoras*, finally, seems to fit into the interpretation suggested. Socrates and Protagoras have reached an impasse in the debate; Hippias counsels agreement with the following admonition:

All of us present here I reckon to be of one kin, household and polis—by nature [*physei*], not by law [*nomos*]. For, by nature like is akin to like, while law, the tyrant of men, forces many things through against nature. How disgraceful then would it be if we, who know the nature of things and are the wisest of the Hellenes, and as such have foregathered now in Hellas' capital of wisdom and, in this city, in its greatest and most glorious house—if we should have to show nothing worthy of such worth, but should quarrel with one another like the meanest of men! (337 c-e).

The passage renders its full meaning only if it is taken in its entirety. If we isolate the first part on *physis* and *nomos*, the meaning of the terms



munity. Ordinary men, and in particular the "meanest," belong to the sphere of *nomos* with its three types of community; the wisest belong to the sphere of *physis* by virtue of their association in the knowledge of the nature of things. The admonition of Hippias, far from being a declaration of the community of mankind, is the declaration of a *république de savants*.

Hippias' evocation has its place in the history of order as the attempt to transfer the idea of a community of mankind from the level of the mystic-philosophers to the level of the encyclopedic intellectuals. A Xenophantic movement toward the realissimum, or a Heraclitean exploration of the deep logos, is an event in the soul of the solitary thinker. It results in the insight into the existence of community among men through the universal spirit that is living in them all. The mystic-philosopher has no information to tender; he can only communicate the discovery which he has made in his own soul, hoping that such communication will stir up parallel discoveries in the souls of others. If he has this effect on others, he will have actualized the existing community to the extent of his effects. Nothing follows from this adventure with regard to social organization directly, though indirectly the differentiation of the life of the soul in a great number of men in a community may have the effect of changing the mores, and ultimately the institutions of a society, because the hierarchy of purposes for individual action has changed. In the case of Hippias, to be sure, a sense of the community of mankind is present. The sophist, however, cannot come to grips with it at the point of its concrete presence, that is, in his own soul. He must search for it in its cultural objectifications in time and space, among the manifold of peoples, among Hellenes and barbarians. The result is not at all negligible, extending as it does to the arts and sciences, to a digest of the common wisdom of mankind, and to the "unwritten laws." Nevertheless, the nature of things is a register of opaque, external manifestations; the search does not go into the depth of the psyche. Teaching, therefore, must become information about things and training in skills; learning cannot be the intimate movement in which a slumbering soul awakens and opens to a differentiated, mature soul. The result of such teaching is not spiritual growth within a concrete community but the peculiar formation of a new supercommunity "by nature" beyond the historically concrete societies of the *nomos*. The community "by nature" of the encyclopedic sages is a figuration of the community of mankind



but it is not this community itself. The obvious danger of such a development, if the community of intellectuals should become socially effective, is the destruction of spiritual substance and its replacement by external information which cannot build the order of the soul and society.

This is as far as we can go in an interpretation of Platonic and related sources concerning Hippias of Elis. And now we must face the question: How much of all this is true in the sense that the ideas can, indeed, be attributed to a historical person named Hippias? The only answer can be that we do not know. We have one direct quotation in which the word "homophylic" appears—but with regard to its meaning we cannot form more than a reasonable guess. The Xenophontic chapter renders the term "unwritten laws"—but the source is in theoretical matters so dilettantic and superficial that again we gain no clear meaning. The anecdote in the *Hippias Minor* is highly suspicious; it may be an invention to illustrate Hippias ideas about self-sufficiency—about which unfortunately we have no independent information. The admonition put in the mouth of Hippias in the *Protagoras* is the most precise bit of information—but the passage is determined by its function in the dialogue: It is supposed to illustrate the attitude of a "foreigner," of an intellectual without a country, in contrast with a Socrates who is firmly rooted in the society of his polis and will die in obedience to the *nomos* which Hippias despises. The passage as a whole is suspect; it cannot be used as direct information about Hippias, and certainly we have no right to tear the sentence about nature and law out of context and quote it as a saying of the sophist—setting aside the fact that we would not gain much by the procedure because the removal from the context deprives the term "nature" of its meaning. We arrive at the conclusion that, with rare exceptions, the task of separating direct historical information from the form which it has received at the hands of Plato is hopeless. That does not mean, however, that the dialogues cannot be used as sources. On the contrary, a superbly competent critic has preserved the essence of ideas of which otherwise we would have no knowledge at all. Hence the dialogue can be used if the information that can be gained from them is recognized as the essence of sophistic ideas as seen by Plato.

This situation raises serious technical problems of presentation. On the one hand, the Platonic dialogues must not be neglected in an appraisal of sophistic ideas; on the other hand, the ideas are so firmly a



but not for existence in community, for political wisdom was in the keeping of Zeus in his citadel where Prometheus could not penetrate. Released with their equipment to the light, men were the only living creatures to have gods; for through the Promethean gifts man participated in their attributes; he alone was their kindred. Nor was he slow in creating speech and names with his skill, in constructing shelter and clothing, and drawing sustenance from the earth. While thus provided for mere life, men lived scattered, without poleis, and were an easy prey to wild animals, for they did not have the political art of common action of which the art of warfare (*polemiike*) is a part.<sup>11</sup> In order to prevent the extermination of the race Zeus sent Hermes to equip men with reverence (*aidos*) and justice (*dike*) as the ordering and binding principles of friendship. Moreover, these qualities should not be distributed in the manner of other skills where one man is gifted for others, but all men should equally share in them since otherwise poleis cannot exist.

We have explained why there is no sense in speculating whether Protagoras or any other sophist ever told a myth of this kind. We must accept the myth as a rendering of the essence of sophistic ideas about political virtue. Above all it appears that the sophists not only talked about the nature of man but made a serious theoretical effort at determining it more closely. Man belongs to the genus of mortal creatures; he is distinguished from them by the *differentia specifica* of inventive skills; he is defined as *homo faber*. Moreover, the skills are not on the same level as the natural equipment of other creatures but are divine attributes; through their possession man partakes of divinity and becomes of one kin with the gods—a quality which manifests itself in the “having” of gods and the institution of their cults. The inventive skill, furthermore, is a creative faculty. The Protagorean Prometheus does not, like the Aeschylean, endow man with the single arts but with the general faculty to invent them for himself. Civilizational progress, thus, becomes a specifically human achievement; we see in formation the conception of a human history of civilization. And then the Jovian Dike, in the Aeschylean sense, is introduced as the source of “reverence and justice,” the virtues that make political order possible, distributed to all men alike. On the surface it seems that the sophistic theory of politics

<sup>11</sup> The association between a *techne politike* and *polemiike* is still to be found in Aristotle's *Politics* where the term *politeia* is associated with the soldier-citizens who are its members.

and history has absorbed the problems at the stage at which they were left by Aeschylus.

The myth is told by Protagoras in support of his thesis that virtue is teachable. All men are equally equipped with the gifts of Zeus. This is the really decisive point for Protagoras—that no polis can exist unless all its members participate in the specifically political virtues, that is, in justice (*dikaiosyne*), temperance (*sophrosyne*), piety (*hosiotetes*), courage (*andreia*), and wisdom (*sophia*) (324e–325a). Socrates' doubt is absurd because the whole life of a polis with its education from childhood is built on this assumption, and on the whole is built on it successfully (325c–326e). The argument that great statesmen have dubious sons is worthless because Socrates has overlooked the fact that in every skill besides the general human faculty there must also be present a natural ability; and there is no guaranty that the sons of great fathers inherit their natural talent. The teaching of virtue, thus, is possible; and he, Protagoras, professes to be such a teacher of men. He has the knowledge with which to make men “noble and good” (*kalos k'agathos*). He freely admits to being a Sophist, that is, a teacher of men, continuing a noble tradition; for the same profession was formerly pursued under the names of poets, hierophants, and prophets by such men as Homer, Hesiod, Simonides, Orpheus, and Musaeus.

Socrates, however, is not satisfied. He wants to know whether the list of virtues enumerated by Protagoras is meant to be a list of parts to be distinguished in a whole, or whether virtue is only one so that the Protagorean enumeration would be a list of synonyms. There is more behind this question than appears at first sight; in fact, though important in itself, the question becomes in the hands of Socrates the instrument for drawing Protagoras himself into question—as a teacher, as a for-eigner, and as a gentleman.

The insistence on the precise, pointed question opens the Socratic attack on the sophistic method of teaching through speeches. The splendid discourse, he reminds Protagoras, is also at the disposition of Pericles and other Athenian speakers; but when these orators have made a speech, they are like books which you cannot ask questions; if you challenge the least part of their speech, they will answer you by a new speech, and you never can nail them down on a problem (329a). He now challenges Pro-



By means of such persistent prodding, urbane in form but hard in substance, Protagoras is pressured through the Socratic questions and answers on the issue of the one virtue. The result of the inquiry is the Socratic thesis that no human being errs voluntarily, or will voluntarily commit evil and dishonorable actions (345e). If he commits evil deeds he does so from ignorance of what is truly pleasant and good. The wrong things are preferred because their consequences are misjudged. Imminent evils loom larger than distant consequences, and present pleasures are overrated because of the same distortion of perspective through time. Just as in spatial perspective one cannot judge true dimensions by appearances but must apply the measuring rod directly, so in the temporal distortions of goods and evils an art of measurement is required in order to recognize the true proportions. The art of measurement (*metretike techne*) would do away with appearances and let the soul find rest in truth, saving our life (356d-e). To be overcome by pleasure, thus, truly means to be overcome by one's ignorance (357e). To be inferior to oneself is ignorance, to be superior to oneself is wisdom (358c). Virtue ultimately is one, the wisdom of measurement.

At this point the argument breaks off. The structure of the dialogue is completed because all its motifs are now gathered together in the Socratic conclusion. Protagoras started with the thesis that virtue can be taught; Socrates doubted the thesis—and he was right because virtue cannot be taught on Protagoras' assumption that the virtues differ from each other and are not reducible to wisdom which alone can be "taught." Moreover, the sophistic method of teaching by discourse is unfit for teaching virtue, even if it can be taught, because his very oratory prevents Protagoras from ever finding out what the virtue is that supposedly he can teach. Then, in the course of the argument, Socrates shifts to the position that virtue can be taught—and again he is right, under the condition that the different virtues are varieties of knowledge about the good. "Knowledge [*episteme*] is a noble and ruling thing"; it cannot be overcome by pleasures; wisdom (*sophia*) founded on knowledge (*episteme*) is the substance of all virtue (352c-d). If virtue is the art of measurement, then, and only then, is it teachable. The conclusion is hypothetical. Virtue is teachable *if* it is knowledge; but *is* it knowledge? The question remains in suspense. Socrates professes his desire (*prothymia*) to clear up this further question; and he desires such ultimate clarity because he prefers Prometheus to Epimetheus, in forethinking



frequently be found out after a short while, that dishonest conduct in business matters will ruin your credit, that discourtesy will make no friends, that overindulgence of sensual pleasures will ruin your health or make you fat, that cowardice in battle will bring no honors, and that widespread disobedience to laws will disorganize a country. If reflections of this type were the sum of the Socratic wisdom, however, the impact of Socrates on his contemporaries would hardly be intelligible—though it is highly probable that a good deal of his conversation in fact dealt with distortions of judgment through such short-range perspectives. We are inclined to put it beyond doubt that the real importance of the “art of measurement” must have consisted in its application to the long-range perspectives, and especially to the longest of all, that is, to the whole of life that ends in death. In the Promethean wisdom that affects the whole of life all distortions of perspective through time will be corrected by the perspective of death and eternity. It certainly is no accident that the conception of wisdom as the art of measurement is developed in a dialogue with Protagoras, the Protagoras who opened his *Aletheia* with the affirmation that “of all things the measure is man.”<sup>12</sup> We feel justified in extrapolating the Socratic art of measurement into the Platonic counter-formula of God as the Measure. Whatever the formulations of the “historic” Socrates may have been, the “essence” of his identification of virtue with knowledge, as a principle in opposition to the Sophists, makes sense only if the distortions of time were meant to be corrected by the love of the measure that is out of time.

#### § 4. THE FRAGMENTS OF PRIMARY SOURCES

The sophistic literature as a whole has perished. The extant primary sources consist of fragments, for the most part too small to allow reconstruction of the context of ideas from which they are torn; and frequently even so small that their own meaning cannot be determined with precision. If such fragments are treated in isolation, fanciful interpretations are difficult to avoid. The following survey of such fragments will, therefore, adopt a procedure that is likely to minimize the dangers of misinterpretation. Since the literary context that would illuminate their meaning is lost, they will be placed into a context of theoretical issues. This procedure is based on the assumption that there exists an historical

<sup>12</sup> Diels-Kranz, Protagoras B 1.



Among the fragments of Anaxagoras there is preserved a sentence that can be considered the declaration of independence of the mind from the rest of being:

The other things contain of all a part; the Nous, however, is something unlimited [*apeiron*] and self-ruling [*autokrates*], and is mixed with no other thing, but is alone for itself (B 12).

The autonomy of the Nous is asserted in this sentence even more forcefully than by Parmenides. The earlier thinker's predicates of Being and Truth, "well-rounded" and "eternal," indicated a self-contained remoteness, a resting within itself; Anaxagoras, while preserving these shades of meaning, adds a quality of action, of dynamism, through the predicate "self-ruling." This increased volume of sovereignty is due to a decisive change in the ontological status of the Nous. The Parmenidean Nous was the organ of cognition for Being; the Nous of Anaxagoras has become a part of being, though its highest ranking, sovereign part. And this "finest" and "purest" among things is, furthermore, the ordering force for all other things from the universal revolution and the celestial bodies to the qualitatively differentiated manifold of all things; it is especially the ruler of everything that has *psyche*, the greater as well as the smaller beings; and it can exert this ordering and ruling function because it has complete knowledge (*gnome*) of everything, and of all things has the greatest power (B 12).

The fragments of Anaxagoras fortunately are large enough to grant an understanding of his theoretical motivations. In his didactic poem Parmenides had left open the question how the gap between the Being discovered in mystical transport and the world of Delusion could be bridged; there was no answer to the question in what manner the Being revealed to the Nous and the world of appearances could be understood as parts of one universe. Anaxagoras wanted to solve the great problem by combining the Parmenidean philosophy of the Nous with an ontology of the Milesian type. In order to achieve his purpose he, first, preserved the Nous as an autonomous organ of knowledge and, second, made it a being that by virtue of its autocratic knowledge and power organized all other things into an ordered universe.

As a feat of metaphysical construction the attempt deserves respect—but the success was purchased at the price of a serious destruction of the insights gained by Parmenides. For, when the Nous becomes the



sovereign organizer of being, its function as the revealer of Being is lost, and with it Being itself. The Parmenidean Nous and Being have their meaning as symbols in explicating an experience of transcendence; if they are torn out of their experiential context they become opaque terms of metaphysical construction from an immanentist position. The gap between the Truth of Being and the world of Doxa cannot be bridged by speculation, as we have pointed out in the chapter on Parmenides, but only by a myth of the type created by Plato in the *Timaeus*. And such merit as there can be found in the speculation of Anaxagoras on the Nous will have to be sought, therefore, in its nature as a myth that comes rather close to the Platonic Demiurge.

The procedure of Anaxagoras in solving his problem is characteristic of what may be called sophistic thinking in a technical sense. The problem of the mystic-philosopher, as well as his symbols (Nous and Being) are accepted, while the experience of transcendence, which lies at the root of the problem and motivates the creation of the symbols for its expression, is abandoned. As a consequence, the symbols of transcendence will now be used, or rather misused, in the speculation on immanent problems. A peculiar style of thinking develops that permits men who are no philosophers in the existential sense to express their opinions on problems involving the experience of transcendence with the usurped authority of the existential philosopher. This is the style of the sophistic intellectual. Whether Anaxagoras himself was guilty of such usurpation is doubtful because (1) as we shall see presently, he developed an epistemology of immanent knowledge, not relying on the Nous, and (2) the state of the fragments makes it impossible to see how the two parts of his philosophy were linked with each other.

In the case of his younger contemporary Protagoras, however, the new attitude is fully developed. Of his work *On Truth* the famous opening sentence is preserved:

Of all things the measure is man, of the being that they are, of the not being that they are not (B 1).

The Parmenidean correlation between Nous-Logos and Being has become the correlation between man and immanent things; the autonomy of the Logos in exploring the Truth about transcendent Being has become the autonomy of man in exploring his surrounding world. The consequences of this radical immanentism, as far as problems of tran-



the one cosmos, and not hacked off from each other with an axe, neither the hot from the cold, nor the cold from the hot (B 8).

Hence, man is composed of the same being as all other parts of the surrounding world; and sense perception is a participation of being in being. It occurs through the meeting of the component parts in the things with their opposites in man. For instance, we receive the sensation of warm or cold from what is warmer or colder than our body. The Parmenidean correlation of Nous and transcendent Being is translated into the immanent correlation between man and things perceived (A 92, A 94, A 106).

Through Anaxagoras' speculation on being we again arrive at Protagoras' principle of *Homomensura*, which now becomes intelligible with regard to its ontological foundation. As far as the implications of the principle are concerned, the opinions of scholars differ widely. This is not the occasion for a detailed discussion of the issue; we shall only indicate our preference for the ancient tradition. According to the ancients, especially according to Plato's explanation in *Theaetetus* 152ff., the principle means that things are to every man as what they appear to him, and that no truth about things can be reached independent of their relation with the perceiving subject.

## 2. Democritus

The problems left by Parmenides were further developed in the work of Democritus of Abdera. His speculation, like that of Anaxagoras, attempted to reconcile the experienced manifold of things with Parmenides' propositions that Being is One, and that Non-Being does not exist. In order to make being one he assumed all appearing bodies to be composed of an "original being" (*archai*), consisting of invisibly small, indivisible units, the "atoms." The construction of being as an infinity of atoms shows a speculative refinement, since it takes into account the Zenonic arguments concerning infinite divisibility of things which leads to the border of non-being. In order to have finite atoms compose the visible things, Democritus furthermore assumed a void (*kenon*) in which they could move; the divisibility of visible things could then be explained by their composition of atoms and the void. By the speculative symbol of the "void" Democritus had invented a Non-Being that did not exist in the manner of the Being, and nevertheless was something, whatever it was. He expressed the peculiar ontological status of the void

in relation to the atoms in the compact formula: "No more [or higher, stronger, *mallon*] the Aught than the Naught" (B 156)—avoiding a predicate of being, which therefore should also be avoided in the translation.<sup>14</sup>

The details of Democritean physics are not the present concern. The analysis must concentrate on certain epistemological consequences which affect the theory of ethics and politics. Under the surface of appearances there lies the true reality of atomic Being. Man must learn that he "is removed from reality" (B 6). "In reality [*etee*] we know nothing; in the depth [*bytho*] lies the truth" (B 117)—a sentence with a Heraclitean touch. "Of knowledge there are two forms [*ideai*], the true one and the dark one; to the dark one belong all the following: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch" (B 11). The dark knowledge is the one that conventionally is called knowledge: "By convention [*nomo*] exist color, sweet and bitter"; "in reality" (*etee*) there exist only the atoms and the void (B 125, B 9).

With regard to the interpretation of these fragments, opinions differ. The temptation is great to recognize in them something like the Lockean theory of primary and secondary qualities; others oppose this interpretation. We agree with the opponents because interpretation by means of modernist analogies is a methodological mistake on principle. The meaning must be found by placing the fragments into the context of their own problems; and about the Parmenidean character of the context there can be no doubt. Even though Democritus attributes to his invisible atoms extension, substance, infinite variety of shape, and variety of specific weight, these are no primary qualities of appearing things but the speculative hypotheses that must be made in order to explain the manifold of things in terms of the Parmenidean One Being. The metaphors by which Democritus expresses the relation between appearance and underlying reality, furthermore, do not point forward to Locke but hark back to Heraclitus. We noted the Heraclitean touch in the fragment on the depth (*bythos*) in which lies the truth; and other fragments bear out this ancestry: "Many much-knowing men [*polymathees*] do not have much insight [*nous*]" (B 64); "One should practice much-insight [*polynoiēn*], not much-knowing [*polymathien*]" (B 65); "Do not strive to know everything, lest you become ignorant of everything"

<sup>14</sup> The best study of Democritean problems is still Eduard Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen* I/2 (6th ed., Leipzig, 1920).



(B 207). The great joys come from contemplating works [or actions] that are noble (B 194). [Happy is] the intellect [*logos*] that is accustomed to derive its joys [*terpsias*] from itself (B 146).

These fragments seem to reflect a study of moral phenomena, critically much more carefully considered than is usually assumed in interpretations of Democritus. He clearly distinguishes between good and bad pleasures, the problem of Plato in the *Philebus* and the *Laws*. And the fragments even indicate a conscious terminological differentiation between pleasure in general (*hedone*, B 189, B 207), and the pleasure that becomes the criterion of what is advantageous (*terpsis*, B 198, B 194, B 146). Only the specific pleasure, the joy (*terpsis*) defines the *sympheron*, not pleasure (*hedone*) at large. The difference between pleasure and joy is suggested by B 174:

The serene man [*euthymos*], impelled towards just and lawful works [or actions, *erga*], is joyful, stronghearted and free from care; but who neglects justice, and does not what he ought, to him all this is discontent when he remembers it, and he is in fear and torments himself.

The eudaimonia of the soul is in this fragment more closely characterized as *euthymia*, serenity. And such serenity is the consequence of just action. The ethics of Democritus has absorbed the Aeschylean idea of action. "Justice [*dike*] is to do what should be done; injustice [*adikia*] is not to do what should be done but to evade it" (B 256). Only actions in conformity with Dike can properly be considered actions, while attitudes in neglect of justice, evading the issue and taking the easy way out, are the source of a lower tonality of the soul, of the discontent that leads to fear and self-abasement. Diogenes Laertius (IX, 45) apparently was right when he reported the central idea of Democritean ethics, guarding it against misunderstandings: "The end of action is *euthymia*, which is not the same as *hedone*, as some have falsely understood, but a continuously calm and strong state of the soul, undisturbed by any fear or superstition or any other emotion."

Serenity as a continuous state of the soul is dependent on right action. A continuous course of right action, with the effect of serenity, however, does not ordinarily flow by itself. It requires knowledge and practice. "The cause of wrong action [*hamartia*] is ignorance [*amathia*]



of the better" (B 83); and "More men become good by training [*askesis*] than by nature [*physis*]" (B 242). At this point the ethics of Democritus closely approaches Protagoras, and probably other sophists as well. It was Protagoras who said: "The art of the teacher must rely on nature [*physis*] and training [*askesis*]" (B 3). And Democritus spins the thought further in the fragment: "Nature and instruction are similar. For instruction transforms the man, and in transforming creates his nature" (B 33). Intelligent habituation through knowledge and training, thus, will be the condition of true *epithymia*, not merely external conformity to rules, perhaps under compulsion; hence:

A more effective guide toward virtue [*arete*] will prove to be he who uses exhortation and persuasive speech than he who uses law and compulsion. For in secret he will probably do wrong who is held back from wrongdoing by law; but he who is led toward duty by persuasion will probably neither secretly nor openly commit a misdemeanor (B 181).

The purpose of education is the building of a center of resistance to misconduct in the soul, of a moral personality that will function autonomously, without regard for external pressure:

Not more should one be ashamed before other men than before oneself; and not more should one do evil if nobody will know than if all mankind will know. Rather before oneself should one have most shame. And that must stand as law before the soul: to do nothing that is improper (B 264, see also B 84, B 179, B 244).

A wealth of gnomic sayings and other fragments elaborates the principles in detail. Some of them deserve special attention as forming a step toward the ethics of Plato:

A man who wishes to live in serenity should not engage in many activities, either in personal or in common life; and whatever he does, he should not burden himself beyond his own strength and nature. But he should carefully keep guard that, even when fortune strikes and leads him on to excess by its delusion, he will rate it low and not undertake things beyond his powers. For right weight is safer than overweight (B 3). Serenity will accrue to men through moderation of enjoyment [*terpsis*] and balance [*symmetrie*] of life. Want and excess of things is apt to turn into its opposite and cause great motions in the soul. And the souls that move in great amplitudes are neither stable nor serene. (B 191).

These fragments deal, in a compact form, with two aspects of excess in action that were later differentiated more clearly by Plato. The serenity of the soul will be disturbed, in the first place, by multifarious activities, in personal or communal affairs, beyond the limited powers of an individual. It is the excess which Plato has stigmatized as the *polypragmosyne* of the sophists, as he did in the caricature of Hippias and, with more conceptual elaboration, in the *Republic*. A man can lead a just life only if he adjusts his range of action to his powers so that the multitude of obligations will not compel him to fail in the adequate discharge of duties. Second, even if serenity does not sink under the overweight of multifariousness, the balance may be badly disturbed by excess in one direction to the detriment of other sectors of normally required action. And such excess would disturb the "symmetry" of life even if it were an excess of *terpsis*, of enjoyment, and not perhaps an indulgence in a lower type of *hedone*. In order to understand the theoretical importance of this point it will be necessary to recall a passage from Alcmeon of Croton, the physician who flourished in the early fifth century:

According to Alcmeon what constitutes health is the balance [*isonomia*] of forces, wet-dry, cold-hot, bitter-sweet, and the rest; but single rule [*monarchia*] among them works disease. . . . Health is the harmonious [*symmetros*] mixture of the qualities (B 4).

Here we touch the origin of the conception of a balanced life in the medical idea of health; and this medical idea in its turn is couched in political terminology. At the beginning of the fifth century *isonomia* meant the constitutional balance between the old aristocracy and the rising forces of the people, a political equipoise of forces. Health was defined by Alcmeon as such an equipoise of the forces in the body, while disease would be caused by predominance of one of the forces, a *monarchia*. The fragments of Democritus are of importance as the mediating link between the medical conception of health and disease and the later Platonic conception of a "true politeia," characterized by the balanced mixture of component forces, and the "no-constitutions," as democracy, oligarchy, and tyranny, characterized by the domination of one of their component parts.

The physician's conception of health and disease may be said to be for Democritus the governing idea in judging human affairs. "Disease of the household and the life comes about in the same way as disease



of the body" (B 288). And this principle he extends from the individual life (*bios*) and the household (*oikos*) to the polis:

The affairs of the polis must be considered the greatest of all, that it may be well governed; neither must one strive in rivalry beyond equity, nor arrogate to oneself power beyond what is good for the community [*xynon*]. For a well-governed polis is the greatest supporting structure, and all is contained in it. As long as that is well preserved, all will be well preserved; and when that perishes, all will perish (B 252).

The means to preserve the polis in the balance of its health is the law. "The law wants to bestow weal on the life of men, but it can do it only if they want to receive weal; for only to the obedient does it reveal its proper virtue" (B 248). The restraint of the law is necessary because human beings are inclined to do harm to each other out of rivalry and envy; and such envy is the beginning of strife in the community (B 245). And if such strife (*stasis*) breaks out it is equally evil for both parties; both conquerors and conquered suffer the same destruction of the balanced life of the community (B 249). Only under the condition of concord (*homonoie*) can the great works of peace as well as of war be undertaken (B 250); for likemindedness (*homophrosyne*) makes for friendship among the members of the commonwealth (B 186).

As far as the state of the fragments permits a judgment, Democritus' theoretization of ethics, while not going far into the ramification of problems, has touched at least the essential issues. It has introduced the medical idea of health as a balanced constitution of the organism into the discussion of order, an idea that further determined the course of Greek ethics, especially in Plato's conception of justice and the mixed form of government. By means of this idea he, furthermore, arrived at criteria for healthy preservation and unhealthy disturbance, criteria which again make their influence felt in the Platonic and Aristotelian conception of *philia* and *homonoia* as the specifically political virtues, as well as in the later debate on the "advantageous," the *sympheron*, in moral conduct. And, finally, he has developed the conception of serenity, of *euthymia*, as the highest good to be achieved by proper conduct, and thereby has opened the great philosophical debate on conduct conducive to happiness that fills the fourth century. Beyond these special problems the ethics of Democritus should be a general reminder that the age of the sophists was not an age of moral



with the oneness of the divine Nomos, (2) of interpreting the historical Nomoi in the light of their conformance with, or deviation from, the divine Nomos, and (3) of the tension between the Nomos that lives in the philosopher and the Nomos of the surrounding society.

In the complex of meanings determined by Heraclitean speculation there is no room for an idea of Physis in opposition to Nomos. The source of order is the divine Nomos; and the human Nomos is essentially right order in the measure in which it participates in divine Nomos. Hence, when the term *physis* occurs in Heraclitean fragments it has no bearing on the later sophistic distinction; it rather has the meaning of the nature of a thing or a problem. The idea of Physis, of Nature as an autonomous source of order in competition with Nomos can be formed only when the idea of a transcendent divine Nomos as the source of order has atrophied; and that can happen in a theoretical context only when philosophizing in the existential sense is abandoned.

This further stage of theorizing was reached by the middle of the fifth century, in the person of Protagoras, though Protagoras himself did not yet introduce the idea of Physis. The great sophist, as presented by Plato, professed to be a teacher of the art of politics. In order to discharge the duties of his profession effectively he had to accept the Nomos of the polis as it existed historically and to teach his pupils how to move with success in the concrete environment. His substantive ethics, as previously noted, probably did not differ much from that of Democritus, or from prevailing traditions in general. With such conservative conventionalism, however, he combined his immanentist relativism with regard to theory of knowledge. As a skeptic and agnostic, therefore, he rejected all speculation on the basis of experiences of transcendence; and, in particular, he could not allow speculation on the source of order and its validity in a transcendent divine law. The keystone of Heraclitean speculation on the Nomos, the *theios nomos*, was eliminated by Protagoras. The obvious theoretical gap left by this elimination, however, was not filled by him; he did not replace the transcendent source of order by an immanent source, the Physis of his sophistic successors, but left the problem wide open by simply accepting as valid order whatever (in any political civilization) men believed to be valid.

It would be rash, however, to see in the peculiar attitude of Protagoras nothing but a theoretical insufficiency. To be sure, he was unable to solve the problem. But when he accepted as valid what men believed he



since not everybody by far has this gift, one may speak of a Protagorean conception of a "natural aristocracy," capable of developing into the leaders of their polis and the preservers of its Nomos. Only when the orientation of the Physis toward the Nomos is lost, can Physis become an autonomous source of authoritative order, as in the Platonic Callicles. But even in such derailment the ethics of the "strong man" still bears the marks of the aristocratic tradition of which it is the caricature.

On several occasions a further meaning of "physis" was touched, that is, its meaning as "nature" or "essence" of things. In the sophistic opposition of Physis to Nomos this meaning became all-important because it carried the authority of a true nature of things against what uninformed people only believe (*nomizein*) they are. The origin of the meaning must be sought in the environment of Ionian speculation. Xenophanes, speaking of the rainbow, says: "And what they call [*kalein*] Iris is by its nature [*pephyke*] a cloud" (B 32). Heraclitus, in fragment B 1, proposes to expound words and things, analyzing each "according to its nature" (*kata physin*); and in B 112 he defines wisdom as "saying what is true and acting according to the nature [of things] observingly." Both philosophers use the term "physis" with a polemical tone that is of importance for our problem. They expound or insist on the "nature" of things because they are in search of truth; and the truth about things is different from what people ordinarily believe. In this compact archaic language "believing wrongly" is still the same as "calling things by a wrong name"; the philosophical search for truth, in its beginnings, is a struggle for a new vocabulary in opposition to mythical language; hence, the uninformed "call" (*kalein*) the rainbow Iris. This point is well illuminated by a line from Empedocles: "Not what is right [*themis*] do they say [*kalein*], but following custom [*nomos*] I use the same language" (B 9, 5). With Empedocles, whose prime lies about 450, *nomos* already has a derogatory connotation as the custom of the people who call (*kalein*) things by wrong names. And in the previously quoted B 17 of Anaxagoras (that the Hellenes do not opine, *nomizousin*, rightly concerning certain questions) the verb *nomizein*, substituting for the older *kalein*, has acquired the meaning of uninformed believing or thinking. The philosophers' search for the true nature of things, their *physis*, thus forces *nomos*, the unreflected body of civilizational traditions in the widest sense, into the position of erroneous beliefs of the unenlightened common people.

The lines along which the terms Physis and Nomos change their meaning have been traced independently of each other to the point where they converge toward the late-sophistic pair of opposites. There remains to be considered the historical situation in which they began to form a pair at all. As far as the sources allow a judgment on this question, the pair seems to have formed in the wake of the Persian Wars with their surprising victory of the weaker Greek power over the Persians. In search of an explanation for the victory the idea suggested itself that the numerical superiority of an army was in itself no guaranty of victory; an important factor will be the spirit in which the army fights, and this spirit is formed by the institutions, by the Nomos. This idea can be gathered from the Hippocratic treatise on *Airs, Waters, Places* which must be dated shortly before 430 B.C. In the second, ethnographic part of the treatise (Chapters XII-XXIV) the unknown author compares Asia and Europe, surveying their climatic, hydrographic, and topographic differences, as well as the differences of their peoples with regard to physical appearance and select character traits. In describing the differences now the author carefully distinguishes between characteristics due to "nature," caused by the climatic and topographic factors of the landscape, and characteristics that are caused by customs and political institutions, the Nomos. In particular, he reflects on the warlike character of Europeans and the more feeble, peaceable temper of Asiatics, finding in the Nomos an important factor determining the difference: "Europeans are more warlike because of their *nomoi*, not being under kings as are the Asiatics. For those who live under kings are by necessity the most cowardly men. For men's souls become slavish and unwilling to run dangers readily to increase somebody else's power. But independent men [*autonomoi*]-taking risks for themselves and not for others-are willing and eager to meet danger, for they gain the prize of victory for themselves. The *nomoi*, thus, have an especially strong share in forming courageousness" (XXIII).<sup>16</sup>

The same argument, elaborated more dramatically, is to be found in Herodotus VII, 101-104. The occasion is a review and census of his army and navy by Xerxes. Impressed by the result, Xerxes requests the opinion of Demaratus, the exiled king of Sparta who resides at his court, whether against such overwhelming strength the Greeks will dare to make a stand at all. Demaratus explains to the king that poverty is truly

<sup>16</sup> Hippocrates I (Loeb Classical Library), 132.



vocabulary and used it consistently. He attempted a theory of the laws which govern the life of man, using for them the term *ta nomima*. In order to avoid confusion, we shall render this term as "rules." The rules originate either in nature (*physis*) or in human institution (*nomos*). The rules of nature are necessary (*anankaia*); the rules of human origin are adventitious (or fictitious, *epitheta*). The rules of nature, furthermore, are grown (*phynta*); the rules of the *nomos* are agreed or covenanted (*homologethenta*). In the environment of rules man has to find his way by orienting his conduct toward what is advantageous or profitable (*sympheron*) for him.

Conduct in pursuit of the *sympheron* requires examination of the two types of rules; for it is not *a priori* certain whether they are both advantageous, or whether only one of the types is advantageous, or whether they are partially advantageous and partially disadvantageous. For guidance in this matter Antiphon lays down two principles. The first principle concerns nature: A man who tries, against possibility, to violate one of the rules implanted by nature in us will do damage to himself; and the damage will not be a matter of opinion (*doxa*) only, but a damage in truth (*aletheia*). The second principle concerns the *nomos*: Most of what is considered just according to rules of law is inimical to nature. The principle is less demonstrated than oratorically enhanced by the passage: "There are laws made for the eyes, what they should see and what not; for the ears, what they should hear and what not; for the tongue, what it should say and what not; for the hands, what they should do and what not; for the feet, where they should go and where not; and for the mind, what it should desire and what not. And what the laws prohibit and enjoin to men, is equally little friendly and agreeable to nature." The law, thus, on the whole is a "chain on nature."

Equipped with the two principles one may approach the question of the *sympheron*. Antiphon's argument goes through the following steps:

(1) To nature belong both living and dying. Men draw life from things that are advantageous (*sympheronta*); they incur death from things disadvantageous. Things conducive to death, therefore, can be excluded from further discussion; we are interested only in things that enhance life. (It should be noted that *physis* is far from being the source of the advantageous only; in so far as nature entails death it is disadvantageous.)



Physis, is then put to duty as the carrier of a corresponding dichotomy with regard to Nomos. To the pair painful-delightful (*algynonta-euphrainonta*), as we have seen, corresponds the pair restraining-pleasurable (*lypounta-bedonta*). The rules of law are restraining, not pleasurable; that the order of the Nomos has a meaning of its own does not become an issue; the rules of law have meaning only in so far as they affect Physis; and by analogy, sliding on a line of synonyms from painful to restraining and from delightful to pleasurable, the medical dichotomy is extended into the dichotomy concerning rules of law. It is a rhetorical trick, relying on a dubious syllogism by analogy. Even if one accepts Antiphon's disregard for the Nomos as an independent source of order as well as his faith in the Physis as a guide to the *sympheron*, still there would be required some proof that the *sympheron* of the Nomos are actually harmful to Physis. And at this point, as we have seen, there is to be found nothing but the bland assertion that this is the case.

The "theoretical" treatment of the Nomos is so unconvincing that it must be assumed to be no more than a rhetorical mechanism covering a deeper issue. Even a not very astute thinker must have seen that very little "living" will accrue to anybody's Physis if everybody disregards the restraints of the law and acts according to the "necessities of nature." And Antiphon, to be sure, saw this point quite well. A further section of the fragment must be considered the key to his otherwise incomprehensible conception of the truly advantageous. In this section Antiphon explains that obedience to the laws would, indeed, not be without benefit if those who obeyed them received help from the laws, while those who violated them suffered evil effects. In actual court practice, however, the victim is not sure at all of finding redress; and the criminal through superior skills in pleading may easily sway the people's court in his favor. The Nomos of Antiphon, thus, turns out to be not the law in the philosophical sense at all, but the mores and courthouse practice of a corrupt society. In this jungle of blackmailing informers, perjurers, emotional and bribed judges, the man who abides by the rules of the law may indeed go under. And in this situation the introductory sentence of the fragment makes sense as a rule of survival: A man will use justice to his best advantage if he upholds the law in the presence of witnesses, but without witnesses follows the natural interest. Hence, even for Antiphon it will be *sympheron* to obey the law if the



The fragments of Antiphon, far from containing important new theories, look, rather, like an emergency structure erected by a third-rate intellectual in the ruins of Hellenic culture. That does not mean that the fragments are without interest. The fact of their preservation suggests they were considered a representative piece of writing and, therefore, worth preserving. If they are indeed representative for sophistic debate of the problems at the time (they probably have to be placed in the 420's), they furnish valuable insights into the rapid disintegration of Athens in the last quarter of the fifth century, as well as into the decay of intellectual culture. The polis must have appeared so rotten to a sophist like Antiphon, who probably was an Athenian, that its Nomos had become devoid of obligatory substance and legitimated the withdrawal into the apolitism of Physis. The sophistic response to the state of disintegration must, in its turn, have aggravated the situation. When we read Antiphon we can understand the wrath which a conservative like Aristophanes displays in the *Clouds* against the sophists, especially in the contest between the allegoric figures of Dikaïos Logos and Adikaïos Logos (889-1104); and if Antiphon is typical for a class of literature, one must admit that the great comedian had hardly any room left for satirical exaggeration. The situation must have resembled our own in which Karl Kraus despaired of writing satire because he could not outdo the satire performed by reality on the truth of order. It is difficult to see, however, what thinkers of mediocre stature could have done under the circumstances of progressive disintegration, unless they should have kept quiet. It required men of a different caliber, a Socrates and a Plato, to restore the problems of order and to elaborate them further. And here again, in relation to Plato, the Antiphon fragments are of historical importance because they prove that Plato, in his polemic against the sophists, did not draw caricatures; if anything they were worse than they appear in the Platonic portraits of a Thrasymachus or a Polus.

##### 5. *Critias*

Under the impact of the Peloponnesian War, in the last third of the fifth century, the Nomos of Athens disintegrated and parallel with it the idea of the Nomos. The antilogies of ethical speculation and the substitution of Physis as a criterion of order for Nomos were expressions of this process. A further such expression is the conception of Nomos as a



social existence, of the Panhellenism of Isocrates, of the Cynic and Stoic idea of a cosmopolis, and of Alexander's attempt to blend Persians and Hellenes in the harmony, the *homonoia*, of his empire.

Similar reflections are suggested by the *Sisyphus* fragment of Critias. The idea that laws are "devised" and the gods "invented" by somebody was a rationalization of the phenomena of order which can be dismissed as the fancy of an aristocratic dilettante bewildered by such problems. Nevertheless, the fancy was based on the experience of declining Athens, on the observation of an emotional populace, ready for any dishonesty and crime, and even for self-destructive, stupid political actions. Civilizational order could be wasted and destroyed by this free and sovereign rabble, but certainly not created. In such a crisis it became pellucid that not all men were equal, that the creation and maintenance of civilizational order was the work of minorities, of the excellent, and in emergencies had to rely perhaps on a single "wise and knowing man." Again, setting aside the inadequate rationalization, this was the insight on which Plato based his conceptions of the philosopher-king and of the royal ruler, and Aristotle his conception of the mature man, the *spoudaios*, who was the carrier of moral excellence as well as order in the polis.

From the disintegration of the polis and its *Nomos* the great problems of the fourth century begin to emerge: The quest for the nature of man that is the same for all human beings, the problem of the inequality of men within the amplitude of their equal nature, the search for a common order that will harmoniously hold together the unequals without destroying excellence, and the historical diversification of national civilizations. The sophists see these problems, even though their solutions are clumsy and inadequate. However fallacious their reasoning may be, they are, as we have seen with Antiphon and Critias, in search of truth, *aletheia*. The search for the truth of being goes in unbroken continuity from Parmenides to Plato. The fact must neither be obscured by the odd forms which the search assumes in the hands of the late sophists, nor by Plato's protest against the immanentist perversion of the search.

The late-sophistic fragments are not primarily important because of their reasoning or their theoretical content; their value must, rather, be sought in their motivations, in their character of symptoms of disintegration of an older order as well as their function as signposts point-

ing toward a new one. Under this aspect a number of brief fragments must be listed which in spite of their brevity illuminate the intellectual setting of the fragments of Antiphon and Critias.

There is preserved a passage from Prodicus of Ceos:

He said: "Sun and moon, rivers and sources, and in general everything that is of use to our life, the ancients have believed to be gods because of their usefulness, such as the Egyptians the Nile," and that is why bread was believed to be Demeter, wine to be Dionysus, water to be Poseidon, fire to be Hephaestus, and so everything that could be put to good use (B 5).

The utilitarian explanation of the belief in gods shows that the rationalization of Critias was not isolated in its time. Prodicus seems to have shared with Critias a dogmatic agnosticism as it would arise in the wake of the Protagorean critical agnosticism. There is no indication that either Prodicus or Critias used their criticism of polytheistic symbols as a first step in arriving at the idea of a greatest god as did Xenophanes.

There are extant two references by Aristotle to the political ideas of Lycophron. In *Politics* 1280b Aristotle speaks of the true polis as concerned with the excellence of its citizens; without such concern it would sink to the level of a mere contractual relationship, as in the case of an alliance between poleis. In this case the law would be a covenant (*syntheke*) or, "in the phrase of the sophist Lycophron, a guarantor of men's rights against one another"; it would not be designed to make the citizens good and just. The term "covenant" or "contract" in this passage, it should be noted, is Aristotle's, not Lycophron's, as is sometimes erroneously assumed. As far as Lycophron is concerned one can say only that he conceived law as a guarantor (*engyetes*) of men's rights—apparently without displaying any interest in the moral substance of a community. An Aristotelian fragment, furthermore, attributes to Lycophron the sentence: "The splendor of noble birth is spurious, it rests on talk only."<sup>20</sup> The Lycophron fragments betray affinity with the intellectual environment of Antiphon and, since Lycophron was probably a pupil of Gorgias, perhaps also the wider ancestry of Antiphon's ideas.

The most radical expressions of the idea of equality, extending it beyond nobility, Hellenes and barbarians, to include slaves, already ap-

<sup>20</sup> Diels-Kranz, Lycophron 4.



pear in the fourth century. They are contained in a few fragments of Alcidas, the pupil of Gorgias and his successor in the direction of his school of rhetoric. In *Politics* 1253 b 20–22, on the subject of slavery, Aristotle reports that some authors maintain “it is against nature to be another man’s master, for only by law [*nomos*] is one man a slave, another a freeman; by nature [*physis*] they do not differ; the rule of master over slave is based on force and, therefore, not just.” On this occasion Aristotle does not specify who “they” are who maintain this principle. But one of them must have been Alcidas, for in his *Rhetoric* Aristotle refers to a passage from Alcidas’ *Messeniakos*: “God has released all men into freedom; nature has made nobody a slave.”<sup>21</sup> *Nomos* is the tyrant who deprives men of the freedom given to them by God and nature. Another passage of the *Rhetoric* (1406 a 22) lets Alcidas contemptuously refer to “the laws: these kings of the poleis by tradition”—a devaluating allusion to Pindar’s verse. But against these kings, Alcidas assures mankind, a protector has arisen: “Philosophy: this bulwark against the *nomoi*.”<sup>22</sup>

Finally, there must be considered a number of longer, discursive fragments of unknown authorship which indicate a conservative trend, in opposition to the disintegrating sophistic ideas, at the end of the fifth century. One group of these fragments stems from a treatise on *Harmony* (*Homonoia*), attributed to Antiphon and printed under his name in Diels-Kranz. If they are really by the man who wrote the previously discussed fragments on *Truth*, Antiphon must have experienced an interesting change of heart sometime in his life. More probably they are by somebody else. A second group stems from the *Protrepticus* of Iamblichus. It was recognized as excerpts from an author of the late fifth century, and goes under the title of *Anonymus Iamblichi*.

The author of the tract *On Harmony* is a subtle moralist, a man of considerable stature and literary gifts. The life of man he experiences as a night watch, to be passed on, when day breaks, to the next generation (B 50). Life, even when it is happy, has nothing remarkable, great, or noble, but in reality is petty, feeble, short-lived, and mixed with sorrow (B 51). Still, it is the only life that man has. But oddly enough there are people who do not live their present life, but are wondrously active as if they had another life to live; and meanwhile time runs out

<sup>21</sup> *Rhetoric* 1373 b 18 Scholion.

<sup>22</sup> *Rhetoric* 1406 b 11.

(B 53a). The time of life cannot be recaptured; it is not possible to rearrange the past as if it were a draught on the board (B 52). In some of the sentences we hear a faint echo of Aeschylus’ theory of action, as when the author speaks of men who hesitate where there is no place for hesitation (B 55), or of men to whom illness is a holiday for then they do not have to face action (B 57). And such scattered reflections are chained into a longer meditation on the man who is going out to do some harm to his neighbor. On the way he may become afraid that he will not realize his intention but reap an unexpected consequence. This is a beginning of wisdom; for, while he fears, he hesitates; and while he hesitates, time lapses and his mind may change. What has been done cannot be taken back; but hesitation is fraught with the possibility that the deed will not be done. For, he who believes he can do harm to his neighbor and not suffer harm himself, is unwise (B 58). Such temptation and resistance to it is essential for moral discipline; for a man who has not desired or touched evil is not self-restrained, there being nothing over which he could gain control and thereby prove his true decency (B 59). And of the prudence in another man no one will be a better judge than the man who is capable of repressing the desire of the moment and of conquering himself (B 58).

The sensitive spiritual culture of these fragments stands in sharp contrast against the brittle intellectualism and the brashness of other sophists. One almost could doubt that the author of the tract was a contemporary of Antiphon, unless one remembered that he also was a contemporary of Democritus and Socrates. His ideas, however, were not isolated in their time as is shown by the fragments of the *Anonymus Iamblichi*. These fragments do not have the literary quality of the tract *On Harmony* but they, too, betray the revulsion against extreme individualism, its unrealistic nonsense and its consequences. The unknown author is bitter about men who indulge their pleonexy, consider unrestrained force the virtue of man, and obedience to the laws a weakness. That is a reprehensible attitude because men are by nature unable to live as individuals; they have united under the pressure of necessity and invented the skills for maintaining life. And once they are in community they cannot live in a state of lawlessness for that would be even worse than separate existence. Hence, law and justice rule by necessity among men; and that order of things cannot be changed, for it is established by nature (6).



While the sentences sound like a polemic against Antiphon, the immediately following passage seems to ridicule an idea of the "strong man" as it is advocated by Plato's Calicles in the *Gorgias*. Even if there should exist a man with an extraordinary natural constitution, the *Anonymus* continues, immune from wounds and disease, insensitive, supernatural (*hyperphyes*), and adamant in body and soul, he would not be able to establish a rule of force beyond the law; for the multitude of the other men, by virtue of their legal order, would overcome such a character and subjugate him by stealth and stronger force (6). If a strong man, however, establishes a tyranny, it should be understood that he could gain his position only because of the general state of lawlessness (*anomia*). Some men, to be sure, are of the erroneous opinion that a people can be deprived of its freedom by a tyrant without its being at fault. But this is not so. Only when the mass of the people has turned toward evil can such things happen. For a community cannot exist without law and justice; and only when the people turn away from them, will their administration pass into the hands of one man. The man would have to be made of iron who could rob the law, the common advantage of all, from the multitude; since he is a being of flesh and blood, he can gain his rule only after he has debased the people into *anomia* (7).

Even our summarizing contractions have not quite eliminated the repetitious clumsiness of the text. Nevertheless, in substance it is a shrewd analysis of the origin of tyranny, and in general of the sophistic idea of the "strong man," in the lawlessness of the people. Moreover, in reflections of this type is prefigured Plato's idea that the order of a society writes large the order living in the men who compose it, and in particular his insight that the Athenian social order is the sophist written large.

#### 7. *Hippodamus and Phaleas*

It would be strange if the rapid constitutional development of the fifth century, as well as the frequent civil wars and changes of regimes in the various poleis, had not given rise to a literature on constitutional devices for creating a comparatively stable political order. Attempts of this kind would have suggested themselves all the more since the practice of colonization, even though the great age of expansion through

colonies had passed, offered the occasion for putting new devices to the test. Regrettably, however, this whole branch of literature which must have existed has perished. We know nothing about it except what Aristotle chooses to tell in Book II of his *Politics*. On one occasion, having concluded his analysis and criticism of the constitutions proposed by Plato in *Republic* and *Laws*, he says: "There are other constitutions, some proposed by private persons, others by philosophers and statesmen, all of them coming nearer to the established and actually existing constitutions" than the Platonic proposals (1266 a 30-33). The passage indicates a considerable body of literature as well as a certain range of authors. In the earlier period, the writing on constitutions apparently was an occupation for statesmen. One of them he mentions on occasion, "Pheidon the Corinthian, one of the most ancient lawgivers" (1265 b 13); and he makes it a point that Hippodamus of Miletus was the first man not engaged in politics to make inquiries about the "best constitution" (1267 b 29-31). Since, however, we know nothing at all about Pheidon the Corinthian, while Hippodamus had a long life probably extending from 480 to 400, this information does not permit one to fix the date when "private persons" began to write on constitutions. All one can say is that the extension of the constitutional debate beyond professional circles must have occurred sometime in the second half of the fifth century. With regard to the content of the debate, again Aristotle's information is only incidental. The Spartan constitution must have attracted favorable attention because of its stability, for there are "some" who say that "the best constitution is mixed of all constitutions" and, therefore, praise the constitution of the Lacedaemonians. "They say" it consists of oligarchy, monarchy, and democracy, these forms being represented by the council of elders, the king and the ephors (1265 b 33-1266 a 1). Others, however, concentrate on the question of property; for the distribution of property is the point on which all revolutions turn and an equitable distribution would, therefore, be the key to constitutional stability (1266 a 37-38). No more can be extracted by way of general information on this class of literature.

Aristotle deals specifically with two such proposals for a stable constitution. They are the projects of Phaleas of Chalcedon and of Hippodamus of Miletus. About Phaleas we know nothing beyond his appearance in this context. He probably lived toward the end of the fifth, or



that keep it moving become visible—wealth and great military power in the hands of a man who is desirous for expansive action. The Scythian success of two centuries ago is rather a pretext barely veiling the royal desire as the real motive of action. And this factor, shorn even of wealth and power, is isolated as the moving force by Herodotus in the case of Deioces, the Mede, who is possessed by the “desire for lordship” (*erastheis tyrannidos*) and by sheer wits manoeuvres himself to the place where wealth and power are at his disposition for further action (I, 96).

The drive in its nakedness is more discursively characterized in the speech of Atossa to Darius. The queen wants to incite the king to the expedition against Hellas. Why, she asks, does a mighty king sit idle instead of gaining more subjects and more power for the Persians? A man who is young and lord of great wealth should let his qualities shine so that the Persians will know they are ruled by a man—and besides, the stress of war will prevent the breeding of revolt. Youth is the time for great deeds. For as the mind grows in strength with the body, so it ages with the aging body and declines to dullness and inaction (III, 134). The expansionist drive, thus, is of the essence of man. There is war because it is human nature to expand from youth to maturity, blind to consequences; to be a man means to participate in the drama of warlike action and retaliation; to sit idle means decline and death, for as soon as the tension of the drive relaxes, the drive of others will assert itself in revolt. This indefiniteness of expansion raises the question whether the power drive of a nation, if maintained by successive rulers, cannot swallow up all human societies, weld them into one empire, and thereby make an end to strife? The answer of Herodotus is negative. The drive will not become the stone that fills the world and makes an end to all empires; it will be checked in due course, and the war will go on. After the battle of Salamis, Themistocles tells the Athenians: “It is not we that have achieved this victory, but the gods and heroes who were envious that one man should be king of Asia and Europe” (VIII, 109). And not only the Greeks know it as a piece of hindsight, but the Persians themselves go knowingly toward disaster. On the eve of Plataea a Persian lord tells his Theban friend at the banquet that soon few of them will be left. But nothing can be done about it: “What shall come to pass by the will of God cannot be averted by man, for nobody will believe what is most certainly true. Many of the Persians know it, but we follow in the bond of necessity. It is the most

hateful of sorrows afflicting mankind to have knowledge of so much and power over nothing” (IX, 16). This is one of the rare occasions where the undercurrent of pessimism and bitterness in Herodotus breaks through the narrative of great and wonderful deeds. Man is bound by a purposeless necessity to the game of expansion and defeat without hope of escape; he knows how it all happens but the why remains a mystery. This bitterness, heavily overlaid in Herodotus by the joy in the wonder and grandeur of the spectacle, will come near its breaking point in Thucydides’ icy pathos of despair and pride.

The course of events illuminates the principles and the principles illuminate the meaning of the story. This technique of mutual illumination is the method of historiography invented by Herodotus. It is admirably suited to his style of chaining episodes and, in general, he uses it with the same freedom as Homer does with his interventions of the gods. The principles can appear, as we have seen, in reflections of the author, in traditions related by him, in public speeches, in conversations between husband and wife, in diplomatic exchanges, in confidences at the dinner table, and in letters.

Herodotus, however, can also tighten his method, so pleasantly pliable to the contingencies of the meandering story, and develop it into a more formal instrument for writing history. Two instances occur in which these further potentialities of the method become visible. The great expedition of Xerxes against Hellas opens with a debate in the royal council, the intentions of the king as well as the arguments for and against the enterprise being set forth in a series of speeches (VII, 8–11). And the same opening is used on occasion of the revolt of Darius and his friends against the false Smerdis. After successful conclusion of the revolt the seven lords meet in council in order to determine the future form of government for Persia, the arguments for and against the various forms again being set forth in a series of speeches (III, 80–82). The method of placing a group of speeches, each illuminating another aspect of the problem, at critical junctures before a great decision offers the opportunity of casting a light of meaning over long courses of events. Such a course, set by the decision, may take unexpected turns and have results at variance with the original intention; the arguments of the speeches can systematically present the forces which determine the actual configuration of the course and its issue. The method has his-



as a whole: the dream of world dominion and the fear of such hybris, the drive of the king and the hesitation of the nobles, the facile assent of the general who underrates the enemy's military strength and the warning against such irresponsible assumptions, the technical problem of bridging the Hellespont and the weakness of this link that may be cut by a surprise attack with subsequent disaster, and above all the candid admission that the pursuit of power is a purpose in itself without relation to any wrongs committed by the victims of the attack. With the adjournment of the council the analysis of an imperialistic adventure is closed and the stage seems to be set for action.

Action, however, does not immediately ensue. The debate is followed by an episode of profound meaning. The arguments of Artabanus begin to sink in and Xerxes reconsiders his decision; on the next morning he calls the expedition off, to the unrestrained joy of the nobles. But this again is not the end. The night before rescinding his decision the king had had a vision which he disregarded, and the vision comes back the next night. An impressive man appears in the dream and threatens the king with his downfall unless he reverses himself and throws himself into the adventure. The frightened king implores his uncle to don the royal robes and sleep in his bed, in order to see whether the same vision will come to him; and the vision indeed threatens the uncle, too. The divine sign finally determines both in favor of the campaign. The decision, thus, ultimately does not spring from a rational debate but from the dream that comes to a man when he wears the mantle of a king. Herodotus does no more than tell the story, but it would be difficult not to recognize Heraclitean ideas of the sleepwalkers who live in their private worlds cut off from the *xynon*. The debate in council, the *xynon*, turns against the adventure; it requires a dream to throw a nation into the disaster. One is, furthermore, reminded of Plato's insight that a tyrant realizes in action what other men only dream. And, finally, the construction of the episode of the council and the dream recalls that other episode of dream and council before the disastrous battle of the Achaeans, in *Iliad* II. By its literary form, the Herodotean transposes the Homeric episode into the medium of history; by its psychology it forms an important link between Heraclitus and Plato.

The second group of speeches has a special place in the history of order because it is the earliest preserved argument on the best form of



an oligarchy but from a monarch; they should not reject their ancient institutions (*patrious nomous*) (III, 82).

The three speeches in their aggregate have an intricate structure. They argue in succession that monarchy, democracy, and oligarchy are bad forms of government in so far as they all are potentially vitiated by the hybris of the rulers. In the same succession they argue that democracy, oligarchy, and monarchy are the best forms of government in so far as the rulers are the best men and intelligently pursue the common good. Neither of the two lines of argument invalidates the other one; we move in a cycle and the result is a draw. Herodotus breaks this cycle of antilogical reasoning by penetrating to the deeper cycle of historical reality. The goodness of each form is transitory at best; and when the form in reality is corrupted by hybris the situation must be remedied by action of a leader. The good monarch is the cure for despotism, tyranny is the cure for oligarchy, and prostatesia the cure for democracy. The rule of one man restores order to its goodness; and monarchy in this dynamic sense is the stabilizing constant lasting through the cycle of static forms. The empirical observation, however, cannot become an argument for monarchy as a static form which as such is exposed to the same corruption as the others; on this level the question of the preferable form must be settled by recourse to the concrete historical situation. And to the historical situation Darius appeals in fact when he supports his preference by praising the freedom gained for the Persians by Cyrus, as well as the venerable antiquity of the monarchical institution in Persia. Nevertheless, this appeal still leaves open the question whether in the concrete revolutionary situation there is a best man to be found who can dynamically fill the static form of monarchy. This ultimate question lies beyond argument; it must be solved by action in the concrete. As in the Xerxes debate, the historical decision does not spring from rational argument but from the forces of reality itself. Darius becomes the monarch because he outwits his competitors by a trick (III, 83-87). The debate, thus, issues into the course of history itself and the wheel of human affairs turns on.

The turning of the wheel is inexorable. The pessimism of Herodotus expresses itself unreservedly in the story of the Scythian advance into the land of the Cimmerians, a story which he prefers to alternative versions of the event (IV, 11). At the approach of the Scythians who outnumber the Cimmerians hopelessly the threatened nation takes coun-



the aristocrats who gave it birth and formed it; there still exists an Athenian people, more powerful than ever, but it no longer accepts the ethos of Homer and Pindar; it is still the defender of Hellas, but no longer the city of the hoplites who were victorious at Marathon; the pathos of Athens lives strongly in Pericles, but is no longer the pathos of Attica and is dangerously close to becoming the pathos of the Piraeus. When history, thus, runs away with the essence of a city, some will no longer even recognize its identity; a strange monster has taken the place of the polis they loved. Against such romantic resentment the author of the tract asserts the vitality, intelligent policy, and victorious viability of democratic Athens; the end of the world has not yet come, it is only that history is moving on. He can only hold this position, however, because he transfers the identity of the polis from its aristocratic ethos of the past to its existence as a power unit in history which, as in the past, it is also at present. The essential shift from ethos to power creates the idea of history as the medium in which power units remain identical while undergoing changes of ethos, as well as the idea of political entities which have history in so far as their ethos changes. In dealing with this formidable problem the unknown author has neither the insight nor the discipline of a Thucydides who never let his own valuations intrude when he described the breakdown of ethos; and still less so does he have the range and vision of a Plato who understood the process as a decline of civilization. His tract displays the ethos of the oligarch in stark contrast with the reality of democracy. And the same rift runs through his language when side by side he uses the vocabulary of the old ethos since Homer with that of the new sophistic era. Sometimes he even uses the same words in the old and new meanings as, for instance, in the case of *poneroi* which regularly occurs as the technical term for "the lower classes," "the proletarians," and then without a warning appears with the old meaning of "bad."<sup>2</sup>

The tract as a whole is an extended argument against the misconception that the merits of Athenian democracy can be appraised in terms of oligarchic ethos. Not that the judgment of the oligarchs was unsound; on the contrary, the author assures his audience that he disapproves of the Athenian constitution just as much as they do, because it favors the vulgar people at the expense of the good (or: righteous, best).

<sup>2</sup> For the linguistic problems cf. the chapter "Sophistics and Sociology" in Fritsch, *Constitution of the Athenians*.



diminished but politically it is more profitable to drain their wealth off to Athens and to leave the local rabble with just enough to live on so that they have no time and means for starting revolutions (I, 14-15). It is, furthermore, good policy to have legal conflicts decided in Athens because by this method the verdicts can be safely rigged against the oligarchs (I, 16). If the lawsuits were decided on the spot by Athenian generals, admirals, and ambassadors, these personages might gain a position of power to the detriment of the demos of Athens (I, 18).

The second group of arguments is concerned with the position of Athens as a sea power. The author does not mention any specific charges against which he directs his argument; but he conducts it in such a manner that plainly the development of sea power as such must have been a grievance of the oligarchs everywhere in Hellas. He takes pains, therefore, to point out the advantages of sea power over land power. First he mollifies his audience by the assurance that Athenian infantry is nothing to be proud of; it could not hold its own against a first class land power but is deliberately kept at a strength sufficient only for use against the tributary cities (II, 1). No more is necessary, because military superiority is secured through the navy. Rebellious subjects of the island empire cannot hope to succeed because they cannot pool their forces as neighboring poleis on the continent could do; as long as the Athenians control the sea, they have to deal only with single, weak enemies. The larger continental towns under Athenian rule are controlled by fear, the smaller ones entirely by need; none of them could hold out if its imports and exports were cut off (II, 2-3). In fighting a superior opponent the Athenians can use their navy as transports and engage in raids under conditions favorable to them (II, 5). Economically, they are largely independent of bad harvests because such a misfortune will never strike their far-flung empire as a whole; the luxuries of the whole world are at their disposition through trade; from their rich revenue they beautify their city and provide gymnasia and public baths for the masses; they control international trade and thereby all the raw materials for maintaining their navy (II, 6-12). Their position has only one disadvantage—Athens does not lie on an island. If the rulers of the sea were islanders they could inflict damage on others without being in danger of retaliation. As it is, the farmers and the rich people of Athens who have their holdings and properties in Attica must be afraid of devastation by an enemy; this however is of little concern to the mass of the people who



The nature of the unit cannot be concentrated in a brief definition, unless one is satisfied with a summary reference to the "fall of the Athenian Empire." The new creation required not only a theory but also very serious efforts at methodological clarification. In the following sections we shall deal, first, with the method of Thucydides and, second, with his theory of the new historical unit itself.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. *The Method*

Thucydides gave the name *kinesis* to the type of unit created by him; the war he described was a movement, or upheaval. It was the greatest *kinesis* that had ever occurred, since it affected not only "the Hellenes but also part of the barbarians, one might almost say the majority of mankind." The greatness of the *kinesis* in a quantitative sense apparently was a strong motive in Thucydides' occupation with the events of the war. He embarked on his recording work right at the outbreak of hostilities, because the protagonists were at the height of their strength and the rest of the Greeks were supporting one side or the other. He could see that the war would be "greater and more important" than any that had preceded it (I, 1). The proof of this judgment he furnished by the *Archaeology*, a survey of Hellenic history from its earliest times to the present. It showed that at no previous time had the population, wealth, military equipment, and organization of power in Hellas come near the magnitude which it had at the outbreak of the war (I, 2-19). Moreover, the Peloponnesian War was without parallel both by its length and the misfortunes which it brought upon Hellas. Never were so many cities conquered, destroyed, and depopulated; never were so many killed in battle; never was there so much banishing and bloodshed by civil war within the cities (I, 23).

Thucydides takes a peculiar pride in the greatness of disaster. This sentiment is rare but not singular; it recurs in Italian writers of the fifteenth century who, by the pride in the upheavals of their age, assert their independence from a paradigmatic antiquity; the greatness of *kinesis* heightens a "modern" self-consciousness in opposition to the

<sup>3</sup> For this section were used Thucydides, *Historiae*, ed. Jones and Powell; A. W. Gomme, *Essays in Greek History and Literature* (Oxford, 1937); A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, I (Oxford, 1945); the chapter on Thucydides in Jaeger, *Paideia* I; Finley, *Thucydides*; G. B. Grundy, *Thucydides and the History of His Age*, I (2d ed., Oxford, 1948); David Greene, *Man in His Pride. A Study in the Political Philosophy of Thucydides and Plato* (Chicago, 1950); also the translations by Jowett, Crawley, and Smith.



point, therefore, speculative physics was a genuine advance of knowledge; the results of empirical inquiry by the physicists had their value even if they were submitted to "hypothetical" misconstruction; and the advance would be genuine until the point of diminishing returns was reached at which the hypothetical construction prevented the digestion of facts and even their observation. If, however, hypothetical construction extended to an area of phenomena that was already occupied by an empirical science, as was the case of medicine, the resistance of the scientists would be aroused. Hence, hypothetical speculation appeared in different perspectives according to the maturity which an empirical science had reached at the time. To a physician with his old science, the hypotheses would be a new fashion. To a Thucydides, occupied with politics, the same hypotheses would be old and obsolete because a political science was just about to be created by his efforts and the efforts of his contemporaries.

Empirical science is an independent factor in intellectual history; and, in particular, its independence from the development of philosophy must be recognized. Unless one has preconceived ideas about the origin of science, the existence of this factor should not be too surprising; for a more or less extended knowledge of causes and effects in the surrounding world is an ineluctable condition of human survival even on primitive levels of civilization. And wherever this knowledge is intensified through specialization of crafts, the basis for systematic elaboration into an empirical science is present. In all civilizations, Western or Eastern, ancient or medieval, empirical science does not originate in philosophy but in the knowledge of craftsmen. When such a body of empirical knowledge falls into the hands of professional theorists, it may flower into a science if the methods (as, for instance, experimentation and mathematization) are suitable; but, obviously, it also may be ruined if the method is a fashion of fallacious speculation. That was the danger which a rather highly developed science like Greek medicine had to face. But the same fate might befall the empirical knowledge of politics as it was to be found in the art of the statesmen, the craftsmen of politics. A foretaste of what could happen in this respect was furnished by the cases of Hippodamus and Phaleas, of whom the former was singled out by Aristotle as the first private person, that is, the first non-craftsman who speculated on the best form of government, apparently using a Pythagorean "hypothesis." Thucydides has his place in this development as the first craftsman who

tried to transform the empirical knowledge of politics into a science, using the science of medicine as his model for this purpose. The speeches in the *Syngraphē* gain a particular importance under this aspect, because in the speeches Thucydides let the political craftsmen, the leading statesmen, generals, and ambassadors, form and formulate the *eidos* of the *kinesis* which he as a scientist described.

Thucydides' feat of transforming the knowledge of the craftsmen into a science, however, inevitably raised grave problems for the future of political science. The *kinesis* was a "disease" of political order; the craftsmen who shaped and defined its *eidos* were the gravediggers of Hellas, as Plato characterized them in the *Gorgias*; and the political science of Thucydides was a model study of the suicide of a nation but hardly a study of successful political order. If Cimon, Miltiades, and Pericles, according to the diagnosis of Plato, were poor statesmen who shaped a *kinesis* and thereby destroyed the order of the Athenian polis and its empire, where was the craftsman to be found, and what would he look like, who could shape a just order? Plato's answer to this question was the philosopher-king, the ruler who carried the right order in his soul and, as a craftsman, could shape the order of the polis in the image, the paradigm, of his soul, which in its turn was shaped after the paradigm that is laid up in heaven. The science of Thucydides explored the *idea* only of *kinesis*, of the disturbance of order; Plato explored the *idea* of order itself. This relation between Thucydides and Plato needs emphasis, because on occasion one can still hear voiced the nostalgic sentiment: How marvellously could political science have advanced if others had followed in the footsteps of Thucydides, and if this promising beginning of a science of politics had not been cut off by the influence of Plato's philosophy. This preconception of empiricists overlooks the fact that the two thinkers complement each other: Thucydides studied a political society in crisis, and created the empirical science of the lethal disease of order; Plato created the other half of politics, the empirical science of order. If Plato understood his task as a search for the ideas of virtue in general, and of justice in particular, and for his purpose used the same terms *eidos* and *idea* as the physicians and Thucydides, the usage should not be considered a philological curiosity but a clue to Plato's intentions. The understanding of this complicated phase of Greek intellectual history will certainly increase if one does not dispose of Plato by classifying him as a philosophical "idealist," but recognizes him as the empirical



was also not a jingo who would justify imperial domination by the civilizational superiority of the aggressor. He clearly was on the side of Athenian enterprise and innovating activity, but he was appalled by the moral disintegration and physical destruction which, apparently of necessity, balanced the ephemeral splendor of Periclean Athens.

Further aspects of the *kinesis* came into view when the apparent necessity of this connection was more closely examined. The responsibility for the peculiar form which the political and civilizational expansion assumed did not rest on Athens alone. The defense of Hellas against the Persian threat required a strong navy, as Salamis had shown, and the Delian confederates were quite willing to let Athens carry the burden of energetic action. The concentration of naval power in Athens was largely due to the fact that the members of the Delian League preferred the payment of money contributions to the building, maintenance, and manning of their own fleets; they built the instrument of their subjugation out of their own treasure and had themselves no military strength to resist encroachments of the hegemonic city when it increased in power at their expense. When after the Peace of Callias the Persian danger had become less imminent, the social structure of Athens had changed from the semi-aristocratic, agricultural polis of Marathon to a bustling industrial and commercial democracy, a shipbuilding center for the confederacy, and a maritime power. No statesman could reverse the evolution against the interest and will of the people. Athens had adjusted herself to the exigencies of the new age; and now the former allies had to adjust themselves to the new Athens and submit to the transformation of the League into an Empire.

A similar problem arose in relation to the Peloponnesian League. The Peloponnesians certainly had reason to fear the new and still growing power of Athens. But they had to fear it because the Lacedaemonians and their allies chose to preserve their old pattern of existence. Willingness and imagination were missing to balance the Athenian transformation by adjustments of policy and constitutional order of the same radical character. The conditions of power were changing, and only Athens among the Hellenic poleis was pliable and venturesome enough to meet them. The Peloponnesians, the islands, and the Asiatic Greeks were inclined to consider the new order a violation of justice and the revolutionary power an aggressor.

The frictions arising from the changes in the relative strength of



forces, carefully detailed by Thucydides, furnished the historian with material for reflections on the causality of political action and its conflict with principles of justice. The expedition of Xerxes had been a brute fact of history, a cause that had set off a chain of effects. The first of these effects was the naval policy of Themistocles which saved the independence of Hellas. The success at Salamis became a further cause, determining the continued naval policy of the Delian League, which in its turn caused the transformation of Athens. By 450 the new order of Athens had become an accomplished fact; and its irreversibility became the initiating cause of the empire policy. The expedition of Xerxes, the battle of Salamis, the foundation of the League, and the transformation of Athens form a chain of cause and effect ending in the disturbing power of the hegemonic city; we are in the realm of the *aitiai* which have their effect with necessity. Causality, however, is no argument in the issues of justice and morality. Thucydides does not expect the Athenian masses to act against their interest, to surrender their profitable occupation and agreeable life, and to return to tilling the soil of Attica as modest peasants under cramped conditions, once the Persian danger is over; they are "compelled" to organize their empire. And once it is organized with brutality they cannot be expected to give it up and to abolish their navy as a gesture of appeasement, for their former subjects would ally among themselves or with Sparta and take their vengeance against the former oppressors; hence they are "compelled" to maintain it ruthlessly. Nevertheless, the "compulsion" to commit injustices and atrocities still is a moral breakdown; and never is it more evident than when the compulsion of interest is erected into the law of action which justifies transgressions of morals and justice.

The conflict between necessity and justice is further complicated by the dubious conduct of the enemies of Athens. The increasing difference of power between the empire city and its enemies is only in part caused by Athenian action; in another part it is caused by the inaction of the members of the symmarchy and of the Peloponnesians. In the ethics of tragedy, however, inaction is evasion of Dike; the man who does not meet circumstance with decisive action is remiss in his duties. It is immoral to let oneself become weak through changing circumstance if remedial action could maintain or restore strength. A power that has become relatively weak through inaction cannot put all of the blame for its misfortunes on a stronger power that avails itself of its opportunities.

Thucydides was faced with the problem that the very genius, courage, and energy of Athens which saved Hellas, as well as the continued operation of the released forces which resulted in material benefits and cultural achievements, had disastrous consequences in a civilizational environment of less energetic partners. It is the perennial problem of the effects of a progressive power on the slower neighbors. Should it be considered a principle of justice in social relations in general, and in political relations in particular, that a man or society, willing to put their energies to good use, should restrain themselves and courteously keep step with the marginal stragglers and laggards? Especially when energetic action has a clear nucleus of service to the common interest, and the defenders of the *status quo* by their resistance endanger the safety of the community? Thucydides decides for the progressive side. The problem is well illuminated by the famous difference of opinion between Thucydides and Plato concerning the merits of Archelaus, the king of Macedonia. Thucydides sees him as the benefactor of his country who constructed the fortifications which for the first time made Macedonia safe against invasions, built a new road system, organized a military force, and increased the resources of defense more than the eight kings who preceded him (II, 100). In Plato's *Gorgias* the same Archelaus appears as the prototype of an unsavory politician who rises to power by murder and assorted crimes. The trouble is that probably both portraits are equally correct; there are situations where the nature of the opposition requires brutal means for the achievement of political ends desirable in themselves.

The tortuous boring into structure and meaning of the great movement, however, does not end in the flatness of intentionalist ethics. The means remain means to an end in the order of causality and do not rise to the dignity of morally justified action because the end is valuable; and if they are crimes they remain crimes in the order of morality. Only on one important occasion, in the Funeral Oration, does Thucydides present an argument that is meant to bridge the gulf between the orders of necessity and morality. This occurs when he lets Pericles plead: "No enemy will suffer indignity when he is defeated by such a city, and the subjects will not complain of being ruled by an unworthy master" (II, 41). If by the order of necessity there have to be conquerors and defeated, masters and subjects, this bleakness without sense will gain meaning by the worthiness of the conqueror or master. The necessity of power is something like a fate to be borne by mankind—the master is suffering



it just as much as the subject; and in the worthiness of the master the subject is experiencing (or supposed to experience) something like a common representation of human greatness. Obviously, the argument is thin; Thucydides himself furnishes examples of prospective subjects who would rather run the risk of extermination than experience a representation by Athenian worthiness. Nevertheless, this very thinness is important in so far as it reveals the desperateness of the dilemma. Not even the leading Athenian statesman would, in the presentation of Thucydides, stoop so low as to smear the slime of moral hypocrisy over the brutal reality. All Thucydides can do is to fall back on the pride of Athens; and in his pathos one can feel his suffering under the burden of a necessity which needs Athens to atone for its shame.

There is no solution to the conflict. The deepest stratum that can be touched in the theory of the *kinesis* is despair. Athens is moving on, under compulsion of necessity, and each further step leads deeper into the morass of injustice. The brilliant expansion is self-destructive in the most literal sense of a destruction of moral personality. The process, spreading from the public to the private sphere, begins with habituation to unjust action in affairs of state and ends with the dissolution of honesty, loyalty, and shame in personal relations. Thucydides describes the process and its results with the passion of an anatomist dissecting a diseased organ; and with an eye trained by his description we can discern the despair caused by the corrosion of personality in the sophistic fragments of the last quarter of the fifth century as well as in the sophists portrayed by Plato. This advice to follow the *sympheron* in transgression of the law, these truculent assertions that justice is what benefits the stronger, these claims that the strong man rules by right because he is the better man, these "theories" of law and justice as the invention of the weak to keep the strong men down—all this desperate opining, never approaching theoretical coherence, reflects the moral confusion of the great *kinesis*. These various *doxai* illuminate aspects of the conflict between necessity and justice that shook the age.

Even the intellectual discipline of a Thucydides could not entirely escape the profound confusion of the conflict. Here and there we find reflections that, in spite of necessity, the actual course of events was not inevitable. The war, to be sure, was inevitable but it was not necessary that Athens lose it. The Periclean policy of cutting the losses of over-

expansion in the 460's and 450's, of abandoning Attica to invasion in case of war, and of holding the empire by the control of the sea would have assured victory. But after his death in 428, under the leadership of the emotional and ambitious Cleon, the best chances for a peace after the affair of Pylos were missed; and neither Cleon nor his successors had the integrity and personality that would keep the imperialist rabble in check and prevent disastrous adventures. Such failure of personal leadership that lost a war which by military calculation should have been won, Thucydides is inclined to consider accidental, an unpredictable misfortune playing havoc with the co-ordination of means and ends in the order of necessity in the same manner in which the plague disturbed the well-laid plans of Pericles.

Reflections of this kind show an unclearness in the mind of Thucydides concerning the connection between rationality and ethos. Apparently his sense was numbed, like that of his sophistic contemporaries, and he could not see that the sphere of power and pragmatic rationalism is not autonomous but part of human existence which as a whole includes the rationality of spiritual and moral order. If the controlling order of spirit and morality breaks down, the formation of ends in the pragmatic order will be controlled by the irrationality of passions; the co-ordination of means and ends may continue to be rational but action nevertheless will become irrational because the ends no longer make sense in terms of spiritual and moral order. When the corrosion of reason has reached a certain degree in depth and has befallen a sufficiently large proportion of the people, effective leadership in terms of reason becomes difficult and perhaps impossible, even if the man at the head under more favorable conditions could exert such leadership; in a further degree of corrosion a man of such qualities will, precisely because he possesses them, find it impossible to reach the position of leadership; and in a final degree the society by its corruption may prevent the formation of a man of such qualities even if by nature he should not be lacking in gifts. This connection between corruption of society and the impossibility of rational leadership Thucydides was unwilling to admit. He could not or did not want to see that a society and its political system was doomed if it could maintain itself in existence only by the miracle of a succession of Periclean personalities; nor would he admit that with progressive corrosion of ethos another Pericles could hardly emerge from Athenian society.



quence, the question of "historical reliability" in the modern sense cannot be answered with a plain Yes or No, but requires a distinction drawn by Thucydides himself. In I, 22 he distinguishes between speeches (*logoi*) and events (*erga*), and the degrees of exactness (*akribēia*) which he could achieve in reporting the two classes of historical materials. With regard to events he used the method of collecting reports of eyewitnesses, of comparing them, and of ascertaining the truth as far as possible when they were in conflict. With regard to the speeches he made no attempt at reporting them literally, since his own memory as well as that of others was too defective an instrument. Rather, he ascertained the situation in which the speech was made as well as the general purport of what actually was said, and then put into the mouth of his speakers the language that was "suitable" (*ta deonta*) to the occasion. The speeches, therefore, render neither the exact words nor the style of the speaker, but bring the "suitable" arguments uniformly transposed into the rhetorical style of Thucydides.

The speeches are inseparable from the events. It is not permissible to extract the events from the work and be satisfied with a harvest of reliable "facts" about Greek history; the events are true only as long as they remain parts of the whole that is constituted by the literary form. That raises a delicate problem. On the one hand, the speeches are themselves an integral part of reality, persuading and moving their audience toward specific action, the events; on the other hand, they are clearly a literary device, used with artistic circumspection, in order to create a unit of meaning. And in this latter function they shade off into the direct reflections of the author himself. Where, under these circumstances, does reality end, and where does the literary form begin? There seems to be only one answer possible: This peculiar structure can claim to be a description of reality only under the condition that reality itself contains the formal elements which can be heightened, without distortion, into the artistic form. Concretely: The Thucydidean use of the speeches presupposes a political culture in continuity with the culture that produced tragedy as its representative expression; government by argument and persuasion is the reality that can be heightened, without falsification, into well-defined courses of events through the meaning which radiates from strategically placed speeches. Moreover, the placing itself need not be in conflict with reality. We may safely assume that speeches were delivered on the occasions selected by Thucydides—for the good reason that the

style of Hellenic politics required them on every occasion. Rather than doubt the three speeches of Pericles reported in the *Syngraphē*, one would assume that he made many more of a similar type. And with regard to their content, again there is no reason to doubt their substantially correct rendering; however, it is possible, and even probable, that Thucydides concentrated into his selected speeches a body of argument that actually was dispersed over several oratorical occasions. The speeches, in general, are probably composite pictures of an indefinite stream of debate that was going on among Greeks on these burning issues. Such preformation of reality through debate and persuasion could be raised to the dramatic form of representative speeches; and the dramatic luminosity of history thus gained could be further heightened to the great drama of the *kinesis* through the compositional art of the author as well as through the added touches of his personal reflections.

The Thucydidean form of historiography is unique in the sense that it was an efflorescence of Hellenic political culture in the fifth century; it could not be imitated as a literary model under different circumstances. Its artistic means, however, were not unique in their own time. The heightening of human reality into great types by an artist was generally possible in a culture with a high sense of form, with a gift and trained ability for discerning the typical in human situations, functions, and actions, and a willingness to stylize reality in the direction of the discerned types; and this willingness to form life into a drama of the typical could be fortified and facilitated by the creation of great paradigms on the part of the poets. As far back as the literary records go, Hellenic culture was pervaded by this mimetic interplay between the types of life and art. In the Homeric epics the paradigmatic myth was used for influencing the conduct of heroes, and the heroes were willing to form their actions in the image of paradigms. The epics themselves, then, became the great storehouse of paradigmatic wisdom and deeds down to the imitation of Achilles by Alexander. The cult of the tragedy, furthermore, rested on the mutual representation of the political decision for Dike by the tragic heroes and the heroic decision for Dike by the assembled citizenry of the polis. And this mutual formation of paradigm and reality, finally, reached its climax in the figure of Socrates who disappeared so completely behind the types created by the Socratic literature that we know next to nothing about him unless we assume that the reality of his life and thought conformed to the literary types. Toward the end of the fifth century new



types arose in reality, and the formation of paradigms passed from the poets to the historians and philosophers; but the relationship between reality and types did not change on principle. In our study of the Sophists it became one of the great problems to discover to what extent the Platonic portraits could be used as an historical source; and the analysis of the fragments of primary sources suggested that the real sophists ran rather true to the types developed by Plato. And the climax again was the Platonic creation of the type of the philosopher out of the reality of Socratic existence. The peculiar achievement of Thucydides, in the context of this problem, was the creation of the type of *kinesis* out of a reality that was strongly preformed in the direction of the type.

### 5. Formulations

The development of theory as a subtle heightening of the typical in reality may be called the essence of classical culture. The profound realism of such theorizing, keeping so close to the object that its results are barely distinguishable from the object itself, causes, however, serious difficulties for the historian who wants to describe it adequately. The theory of Thucydides, presented in the preceding section, had to be extracted from the *Syngraphe* by relying on the suggestions of the story, especially of the speeches, rather than on the reflections of the author. Thucydides himself conveyed his theory of the *kinesis* by letting the object present itself through its self-articulation in speeches and debates. As a consequence, our extract neither rendered the words of Thucydides nor the language of the speeches. The theory, to be sure, could be extracted but the greatness of its expression was lost. No account, in fact, can substitute for reading the work itself. In order to remedy this loss at least in part, a selection of certain key passages will be given.<sup>7</sup>

The first of these selections will include passages from the speeches of the Corinthian and Athenian envoys at the first congress at Sparta which summarize the positions of the great protagonists in the war (I, 68ff.).

The Corinthian delegate presented the case of the Peloponnesian allies:

The trust, Lacedaemonians, which you have in your constitution and social order, makes you distrustful of us when we bring charge against others. Hence springs your moderation, but also your ignorance of what is going on outside your own country.

<sup>7</sup> In the following selections I have used the translations of Jowett, Crawley, and Smith, with such changes as a more exact rendering of meaning seemed to require.

Having detailed the Athenian encroachments he continued:

For all this you are responsible. For you have first allowed them to fortify their city, and then build their Long Walls. You are depriving of freedom not only those whom they have enslaved, but also those who as yet have been your allies. For he truly enslaves a people who has the power to prevent enslavement but does not use it. . . . And we know by what method and small steps the Athenians encroach upon their neighbors. They are confident even while they feel that you are too dull to observe them; but when they know that you do not want to interfere they will strike and not spare. Of all the Hellenes, you Lacedaemonians alone are inactive; you alone defend yourselves not by actions but by intentions, and try to crush an enemy not in the infancy but in the fulness of his strength. . . . The Athenians are given to innovation, equally quick in the conception and execution of every new plan; while you are careful only to keep what you have, originating nothing, and not acting even when action is most necessary. . . . They are impetuous and you are dilatory; they are always abroad, and you are always at home. . . . One might truly say, they were born into the world to take no rest themselves and to give none to others.

You fail to see that peace stays longest with those who not only use their strength justly but show equal determination not to submit to injustice. It seems to be your idea of justice not to injure others so that you will run no risk even in self-defence. This policy would hardly have been successful even if your neighbors were like yourselves; but in the present case your habits are old-fashioned compared with theirs. And of necessity, in politics as in arts, the new will prevail over the old. . . . The vast experience of Athens has carried her farther than you on the path of innovation.

Let your procrastination end. . . . Do not drive us in despair to some other alliance. . . . The true breakers of treaties are not those who, when forsaken, turn to others, but those who forsake allies whom they have sworn to defend.

The Corinthian was followed by the Athenian envoy, speaking in defense of the empire (*arche*):

That empire was not acquired by force; but you would not stay and make an end of the barbarians, and the allies came of their own accord and asked us to be their leaders. From then on circumstance compelled us to advance our power: fear was our first motive; then it was honor; and finally interest. When we had incurred the hatred of most of our allies; when some of them had already revolted and been subdued; when you were no longer the friends you once had been, but had become suspicious and ill-disposed, our hold could



not be relaxed without risk, for the cities falling away from us would have gone over to you. And no one can be reproached when in greatest danger he does what is most advantageous [*ta sympheronta*]. If you, and not we, had persevered in the leadership of the allies long enough to be hated, you would have been quite as intolerable to them as we are now and you would have been compelled to choose between ruling forcefully or endangering yourselves. You have no reason to be astonished that, acting as it is the way of human nature, we accepted an empire that was offered to us and then refused to give it up, submitting to three all-powerful motives: honor, fear, and interest. Besides, we have not set an example without precedent, for always has it been held that the weaker should be subject to the stronger. And we think that we are worthy of our position, and so you thought until now, when calculating your interest [*ta sympheronta*] you talk about justice—a consideration which never deterred any one from taking by force as much as he could. Praised as worthy should be those who, while indulging their human nature to rule others, show themselves more just than they need be.

Thucydides closed the prelude of the speeches with a reflection of his own that the Lacedaemonians declared themselves for war, not because they were convinced by the arguments of their allies, but from fear of the growing power of Athens.

One of the most important factors in the *kinesis*, that is, the pathos of Athens, cannot be translated into theoretical propositions at all. In this case the speeches which express it are not primarily concerned with a marshalling of arguments but are a manifestation of pride in existence. A few passages from the Periclean speeches will convey this pathos. A first group will be selected from the Funeral Oration (II, 35ff.):

Before I praise the dead, I should like to point out by what methods we rose to power, by what constitution and what manner of life our empire became great . . . It is called by the name of democracy because it is administered for the many, not the few. But while the law secures equal justice to all alike in their private disputes, the claim of excellence is also recognized . . . There is no exclusiveness in our public life, and in our private intercourse we are not suspicious of one another, nor angry with our neighbor if he does what he likes . . . While we are thus unconstrained in our private intercourse, a spirit of reverence pervades our public acts; we are prevented from doing wrong by respect for authority and for the laws.

Our public men have, besides politics, their affairs to attend to; and our ordinary citizens, though occupied with their business, are still

fair judges of public matters. We alone regard a man who takes no interest in public affairs, not as harmless, but as a useless character; and if few of us are originators, we are all sound judges of a policy. We do not consider discussion an impediment to action, but rather the indispensable preliminary to any wise action at all. To sum up: I say that Athens is the school of Hellas, and that the individual Athenian in his own person seems to have the power to adapt himself to the most varied forms of action with the utmost versatility and grace . . . No enemy who comes against her is indignant at the reverses which he sustains at the hands of such a city; no subject complains that his masters are unworthy of him . . . We shall not need the praises of Homer or of any other panegyrist whose poetry may please for the moment, although his representation of the facts will not bear the light of day. For we have compelled every land and every sea to open a path for our valor, and have everywhere planted eternal memorials of our friendship and of our enmity.

I would have you day by day fix your eyes upon the greatness of Athens, until you become filled with the love of her; and when you are impressed with the spectacle of her glory, reflect that this empire has been acquired by men who knew their duty and had the courage to do it, who in the hour of conflict had the fear of dishonor always present to them, and who, if ever they failed in an enterprise, would not allow their virtues to be lost to their country, but freely gave their lives to her as the fairest offering which they could present at her feast.

Even the Periclean pathos, however, comes near the breaking point under the stresses of the war, aggravated by the plague (II, 64):

You must realize that your city has the greatest name among all mankind because she has never yielded to misfortune, that she has spent more men's bodies and pains on war than any other, and that she has obtained the greatest power seen to this day. Even if some day we shall recede from it (for all that has grown must decline) the remembrance will remain that of all Hellenes we ruled more Hellenes than any other polis; that in the greatest wars we held our own against them all united and singly; and that our city was the most prosperous and abundant with regard to everything.

To be hateful and offensive has always been the fate of those who aspired to rule others . . . But hatred does not last long; the brilliance of the present, however, and the ensuing renown will remain in memory forever.

Nothing will remain but the memory of ephemeral brilliance and power. This pathos strongly resembles the archaic Tyrtæan faith in immortality



through preservation in the grateful memory of a people. The people, to be sure, now has become mankind; still, there is a wintry anachronism about this consolation with remembrance of actions both glorious and corrupt. And, indeed, if Athens is remembered today it is not because once she ruled the sea.

The glory to be remembered was spreading thinner and thinner over the mounting horrors of the war. In a probably calculated counterpoint Thucydides balanced the pathos of Pericles with his own description of the atrocities into which the party struggle between oligarchs and democrats degenerated (III, 82):

When troubles had once begun in the cities, those who followed carried the revolutionary spirit further and further, and determined to outdo the report of all who had preceded them by the ingenuity of their enterprises and the atrocity of their revenges. The meaning of words no longer had the same relation to things, but was changed by them as they thought proper. Reckless daring was held to be loyal courage; prudent delay was the excuse of a coward; moderation was the disguise of unmanly weakness; ability to see all sides of a question inaptness to act on any. . . . The lover of violence was always trusted, and his opponent suspected. . . . The tie of party was stronger than the tie of blood, because a partisan was more ready to dare without asking why. . . . The seal of good faith was not divine law, but fellowship in crime. . . . Any agreements sworn to by either party, when they could do nothing else, were binding as long as both were powerless. . . .

The cause of all this was the desire to rule, originating in pleonexy and ambition, and the party spirit engendered by them when men are fairly embarked in a contest. For the leaders on either side used specious names, the one party professing to uphold "the political equality for the masses under the law," the other "a temperate aristocracy," while they made the public interest, to which in name they were devoted, in reality their prize. . . . And the citizens who were of neither party fell a prey to both, either because they did not make common cause with them, or through mere jealousy that they should survive.

An attitude of perfidious antagonism everywhere prevailed; for there was no word binding enough, nor oath terrible enough to reconcile enemies. Each man was strong only in the conviction that nothing was secure; he must look to his own safety, and could not afford to trust others. . . . Inferior intellects generally succeeded best. For,

aware of their own deficiencies, and fearing the capacity of their opponents . . . they struck boldly and at once.

Shorn of pathos, and reduced to power in the raw, the breakdown of ethos, finally, manifested itself in the Melian Dialogue. The following two passages concern justice and the gods (V, 89 and 105):

You know as well as we do that in human discussion justice enters only where the pressure of necessity is equal. For the rest, the powerful exact what they can and the weak grant what they must.

Of the gods we believe, and of men we know, that by a necessity of nature they rule wherever they can. We neither made this law nor were the first to act on it; we found it to exist before us and shall leave it to exist forever after us; we only make use of it, knowing that you and everybody else, if you were as strong as we are, would act as we do.

The Melians did not submit; when their city was conquered all men were butchered, and the women and children were sold into slavery.

The Athenians had occasion to remember their misdeeds when at Aegospotami their last fleet was destroyed and the end had come. In his continuation of Thucydides' *Syngraphē*, in the *Hellenica*, Xenophon described the scene when the news of the disaster arrived: "It was at night that the *Paralus* [one of the fast dispatch-ships that had escaped] arrived at Athens with the tidings of the disaster, and a sound of wailing ran from the Piraeus through the long walls to the city, one man passing on the news to another; and during that night no one slept, all mourning, not for the lost alone, but far more for their own selves, thinking that they would suffer such treatment as they had visited upon the Melians."<sup>8</sup> The Corinthians and Thebans, indeed, were in the mood to destroy the city. Unless the Lacedaemonians had resisted the policy, in view of the services of Athens in the Persian War, that would have been the end of her history.

<sup>8</sup> Xenophon, *Hellenica*, trans. C. L. Brownson (Loeb Classical Library), II, ii, 3.